



Horyzonty Polityki  
2026, Vol. 17, N° 60



## **Editorial: A contextualist approach to political thought. Half a Century of the Cambridge School from a Polish Perspective**

The Cambridge School, whose founding works recently celebrated their fiftieth anniversary and are at last available in Polish, has radically transformed the way the history of political thought is studied. Today, everyone ‘speaks in the language of Skinner and Pocock’, and even researchers who are sceptical about the focus on the language of political debate cannot ignore the historical and linguistic context in which the works under study were conceived. They may sometimes fail to realise that they are speaking prose without knowing it—that the search for the author’s intended meaning within its historical context is a legacy of the Cambridge school. Nevertheless, today no one relies solely on reconstructing the internal logic of classical works, which was the primary method of studying the history of political thought before Pocock, Skinner and Dunn.

Do Polish—and, more broadly, Central European—scholars draw sufficiently often on the inspiration of the contextual approach to the history of political thought? It seems not; apart from researchers of republicanism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, this remains a niche approach in Polish historiography and the history of political thought. Could this result from the context of Commonwealth’s political life, which was radically different from that of the Western polities? Is the Cambridge School’s method sufficiently universal for its insights to be useful in understanding the legacy of Polish and Central European political thought, despite differing political and social contexts?

The articles presented in this issue of “Horyzonty Polityki” attempt to answer these questions. They engage with the Cambridge

School's methodology itself—primarily its limitations—and its applications to the analysis of Polish political thought. They demonstrate that Skinner and Pocock continue to inspire, and even if the methodology is rarely thrilling, the solid foundation provided by the Cambridge School's approach is essential for developing interesting interpretations of classical authors and new solutions to old problems in political thought, including Polish political thought.

Artur Wolek  
theme issue editor