

HISTORIA I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO

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(R)EVOLUTION – THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN ANCIENT GREECE

Introduction

Considering the topic of revolution, it is impossible not to notice that it appears on various levels and in different contexts. In this paper, I would like to draw attention to the concept of revolution and revolt in antiquity, but not in terms of a direct historical analysis and dry description of rather frequent political changes, but as a factor taken into account in the political theories of ancient philosophers. Due to the extremely broad range of this issue, the analysis in this paper is limited to our closest cultural field, i.e. Greek philosophy.

First of all, what we consider as a basic difference between revolution and revolt today (though these words are often used as synonyms too) did not have such importance in antiquity. Most of the modern philosophers (e.g. Samuel Huntington, Charles Tilly) distinguish the difference between revolt and revolution by their outcomes¹. Revolutions bring fundamental changes in the society and in its political structure while the scope and consequences of revolts are smaller. Due to the size of Greek

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven and London 1968, p. 264. Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Michigan 1977, pp. 7–5, 7–8.

poleis, most of the coups were also not big (in modern terms) and, generally, did not last long, which brings them closer to today's concept of revolt. However, they usually brought a major reorganization of the state, which, as stated before, is usually considered to be the main characteristic of revolution. Therefore, due to the characteristic features of the Greek city-state, our current distinction between "revolution" and "revolt" did not play such an important role and most of the uprisings could be fitted in both of these categories. Secondly, the term "revolution" is derived from Latin, so its linguistic origins cannot be followed back to the ancient Greece. It does not indicate that words carrying the meaning similar to our "revolution" unknown at the time. They are, however, more difficult to trace. In English translations, the word appears in dual sense – in relation to political changes, or circular movement. The latter one can be seen, for example, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, where it is stated, concerning those called immortals, that when they have taken their stand, the revolution carries them round (*περιφορά*) and they behold the things outside of the heaven². In *Statesman*, the Greek word is *τροπή* and means the "turn" or the process of "turning"³. Finally, in *Laws*, as well as in Aristotle's *Poetics*, the word translated as "revolution" is *períodos* (*περίοδος*)⁴ that intuitively connects with a "period of time", which is rather similar to the first meaning of "revolution", and the way it was used, for instance, by Copernicus: the revolutions of the spheres simply mean their circular movement (as in previous examples), although, practically, that movement was also used for establishing periods of time.

However, in different sections, the words translated as "revolution" are far more meaningful from the political point of view. In Plato's letter to Dion, the word *metabole* ("changes") is used⁵ and it concerns a political upheaval. Similarly, Polybius describes the process of change

² σιάσας δὲ ἀντὶς περιάγει ἢ περιφορά, αἱ δὲ θεωροῦσι τὰ ἔξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Plato, *Φαῖδρος*, [in:] *Platonis Opera*, ed. J. Burnet, Oxford 1903, 247c.

³ Plato, *Πολιτικός*, [in:] *Platonis Opera...*, 270d.

⁴ Plato, *Νόμοι*, [in:] *Platonis Opera...*, VI.771b; Aristotle, *Ars Poetica*, ed. R. Kassel, Oxford 1966, 1449b.

⁵ Plato, *Epistles*, [in:] *Platonis Opera...*, VII.324c.

in the political system with the word *μετέστησαν*⁶. Thucydides and Aristotle use a more significant term, *σασιάζω*⁷, related directly to *stasis*, which meant not only a faction or a political party, but it was also associated with distress and troublesome changes that took place in the *polis*. In Herodotus, the words concerning young Darius are also not translated as “my son is planning to attack you” (*χρᾶσθαι*), but it is rather stressed that “he is planning revolution”⁸. Nowadays, we strongly associate the term “revolution” with a “forceful change in politics” and that, in my opinion, also allows us to discover its elements in ancient texts – despite the lack of a directly connected word, readers are able to establish a connection between some political changes, described then as “conflict, attack, change or civil unrest” with the modern term of revolution⁹. I, therefore, intend to consider the concept of revolution as the main stimulus conditioning the occurrence of political changes in the theories of the philosophers who, while dealing with the analysis of the contemporary governments, devoted their attention not only to the search for the best political system, but also to the changes in each of the forms. Such a comprehensive approach will allow to observe the whole process of the evolution of political systems, starting with the causes rooted in the previous regimes, through their course, to the establishment of a new constitution. It is worth noting at the very beginning that these changes could have happened in different ways.

The second expression used in the title of this paper is also modern, however the idea of “evolution” was known to ancient Greeks not only in the biological sense, but as the concept of constant changes that were fundamental for the theories concerning the cyclical nature of time and history. Therefore, I use the phrase “evolution” to describe the change that is, in its nature, the opposite of “revolution”: the process

⁶ Polybius, *Histories*, transl. E.S. Shuckburgh, London–New York 1889, II, 41.

⁷ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, ed. J.M. Dent, London 1910, III, 69; Aristotle, *Politics*, [in:] *Aristotle in 23 Volumes. Vol. 21*, transl. H. Rackham, Cambridge 1944, II, 1262b.

⁸ Herodotus, *Histories*, translated by A.D. Godley, Cambridge 1920, I, 210.

⁹ I believe my view is confirmed by Robin Osborne, who has written: *If Greek had known revolutions there is a good case for thinking that (...) might have reckoned Athenian political history to have been full of them*. Therefore the lack of a term does not indicate the absence of the general idea, one that received its name afterwards. Simon Goldhill, Robin Osborne, *Rethinking Revolutions Through Ancient Greece*, Cambridge 2006, p. 10.

that is not sudden, or violent, but it progresses over longer periods of time. The most appropriate example of this understanding would be Polybius' description of the fall of "good" types of government, discussed below, as they require two or three generations to deteriorate¹⁰. I hope that this paper will provide a new, different perspective to the issue of revolution and changes themselves, as well as present certain trends in its understanding, developing since ancient times.

Political transformations in philosophical theories

The fate of ancient Greece was marked by a high degree of instability. The only exception in this field, Sparta, had an exceptional, unique political system, and, even so, it finally succumbed to the test of time. It is no wonder that the main idea of all philosophers dealing with the theory of the state was to provide stability and, hence, the idea of the ideal state arouse. However, it should be noted that, from the perspective of the undertaken study, the issue of the ideal state is much less important. What is crucial, is the fact that all philosophers assume that their ideal system, whether it would be *politea*, *callipolis* or Roman Republic, must fall. Such a state is more stable than all the others, but "since for everything that has come into being destruction is appointed, not even such a fabric as this will abide for all time, but it shall surely be dissolved, and this is the manner of its dissolution"¹¹. The state is a subject to a natural cycle, and, therefore, to the development, growth and decline. From the point of view of the changes taking place and their progress, it is the further development that is most interesting. The ultimate cause of changes in all the theories is the disturbance of the internal balance in the community.

¹⁰ For more detailed definitions of the terms of both evolution and revolution in political doctrines, see: Krystyna Chojnicka, *Ewolucjonizm*, [in:] *Słownik Historii Doktryn Politycznych*, Vol. 2, ed. M. Jaskólski, Warszawa 1999, pp. 150–151; Barbara Stoczevska, *Revolucja*, [in:] *Słownik Historii Doktryn Politycznych*, Vol. 5, ed. K. Chojnicka, M. Jaskólski, Warszawa 2012, pp. 109–113.

¹¹ Plato, *Republic*, [in:] *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6, transl. P. Shorey, Cambridge 1969, VIII, E546.

There are four great philosophers who discussed the issues of political changes in *polis*: Plato, Aristotle, Polybius and Cicero¹². In some ways, especially in the description of the order of those changes, their ideas differ. However, in many aspects, they are extremely similar. Generally, Greek philosophers distinguished two types of constitutions – the good and the bad ones. Names of those may differ, but in each category three types of government can be named: rule of one, few and many. That distinction is vital for observing the difference between revolutionary changes and more peaceful ones. For the first time, the basic version of that typology appears straightforwardly in the *Histories* of Herodotus, during the famous debate concerning the political systems described in Book III¹³. However, what is even more interesting from the perspective of the undertaken study, that debate is carried out immediately after the revolt. According to Herodotus, after the death of Cambyses, the son of Cyrus the Great, the rule was not taken by his brother, but a Median Magi, impersonating him. When it came to the light, seven eminent Persians stormed the palace and killed the usurper. And, the people “when they learned what had been done by the seven and how the Magi had tricked them, resolved to follow the example set, and drew their daggers and killed all the Magi they could find”¹⁴. Therefore, without that uprising, there would be no basis for a discussion concerning the government of Persia, nor for introducing Herodotus’ famous distinction between constitutions. The situation described is also coincidentally closest to modern definition of “revolt” itself, since it did not change the fundamental rules of governance, as Persia still remained a monarchy, but it provided an opportunity to consider the possibility of a regime change and led to the election of a new king.

Returning, nonetheless, to the philosophers mentioned before, I have chosen to analyze the theories of Plato, Aristotle and Polybius. They are

¹² Of course, they are not the only ones, as the matter was discussed also, to a lesser or greater extent, by poets (Solon, Hesiod) dramatists, Ionian philosophers (Thales, Heraclitus) and many others, since politics has always played an important role in Greek culture. Since it is impossible to discuss all of these conceptions in just one paper, the scope of the analysis has been confined to the most popular and profound theories.

¹³ Donald Kagan, *The Great Dialogue. History of Greek political thought from Homer to Polybius*, New York 1965, p. 69.

¹⁴ Herodotus, op. cit., III, 79.

all Greeks and even though Polybius writes about the Roman Republic, he still remains under the influence of Greek thought, seeking stability and, at the same time, assuming the inevitability of a collapse¹⁵. As it was mentioned above, they all seek and describe their ideas of the perfect state (or the one closest to it), but finally agree that its fall is inevitable. Plato sees the beginnings of that fall when more and more mixing of the character traits follows and difficulties with the division into classes arise. Then, there is inequality and a growing concern for a personal benefit. It happens in almost the same way in Polybius' theory, with addition that the prestige associated with holding offices is also deemed important. The ruling will despise physical work, but still want to benefit from it. The motivation for political activity is no longer the good of the state, but simply personal ambitions. Instead of a common sense, pride becomes the dominant trait. According to Plato, this type of government is a combination of the former with excessive ambition. Polybius does not accept such a simple explanation and believes that not the most ambitious will seize the power, but the people guided by the demagogues¹⁶. Then, "when that comes to pass, the constitution will receive a new name, which sounds better than any other in the world, liberty or democracy; but, in fact, it will become the worst of all governments, mob-rule"¹⁷. Aristotle notes that disturbing the balance and sense of justice¹⁸ will cause *politeia* to evolve into a system to which it is most inclined. Therefore, being a mixture of oligarchy and democracy – either to oligarchy, when the wealthy dominate, or democracy, when the poor seize power. Stagirite stresses that democracy and oligarchy often change into each other, but also within themselves, when they are no longer ruled by law. The law is what ensures the

¹⁵ That distinguishes him from Cicero, who demands for the state to comply with the principles of justice, as well as believes in the possibility of preserving the Republic even at the moment of its greatest crisis. For a more detailed comparison see: Anna Ceglarska, *Polibiusz i Cyceon wobec kryzysu Republiki Rzymskiej*, "Krakowskie Studia z Historii Państwa i Prawa", 9/2016, z. 2, pp. 157–167.

¹⁶ Like 'tyrant', the term 'demagogue' was to take on a pejorative undertone later, originally meaning only the 'leader of the people'. Polybius though sees in demagogues mainly sycophants, who are unable to gain favour on account of their wealth.

¹⁷ Polybius, op. cit., VI, 57.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, V, 6.3.

stability of the state. Every breaking of it should be condemned, as small but numerous violations cause disregard for established norms. The use of just law, which is equal for all, does not give basis for an awakening of the revolutionary ideas. According to the ancient, being subject to the law meant freedom for the individual, as opposed to the subordination to the arbitrary decisions of others.

At this point, theories somehow diverge. Plato describes constant deterioration of regimes from the oligarchy to democracy (law-abiding and unlawful), and then, to the worst of systems, tyranny. Aristotle allows various possibilities of change. He sees certain regularities, but, as a rule, does not determine the order of succession. In Polybius' theory, after the ochlocracy, the circle closes and re-enters a new one, from the kingdom through tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy and democracy, back to ochlocracy. To maintain a certain regularity, I will follow the Polybian *anakyklosis*, complementing it with elements of other theories, since only this concept takes into account all regimes in sequence and thus, prevents the omission of any changes.

The progressive democratization entails a danger for democracy in its good form, the law-abiding democracy¹⁹. After the reign of prosperity and justice, growing importance is attributed to the idea of freedom. Plato speaks of it in a very critical manner: “the freedom from all compulsion to hold office in such a city, even if you are qualified, or again, to submit to rule, unless you please, or to make war when the rest are at war, or to keep the peace when the others do so, unless you desire peace; and again, the liberty, in defiance of any law that forbids you, to hold office and sit on juries none the less, if it occurs to you to do so, is not all that a heavenly and delicious entertainment for the time being?”²⁰. In this perspective, it is not freedom that dominates in a democratic country, which only seemingly has all the best features, but rather anarchy, hidden behind the cloak of freedom. Of course, it should be noted that the ancient concept of freedom is closer to our

¹⁹ When I mention ‘the people’ or ‘many’ I do not of course refer to the broadest sense of that word, which would be ‘everyone’, but rather its ancient meaning. The ‘people’ were synonymous to *demos* and that phrase refers only to the citizens – free born males, usually also of a certain age and material status that lived in a deme and enjoyed political rights.

²⁰ Plato, *Republic*, VIII, E.557.

understanding of the “positive liberty” that is the ability to act upon one’s free will, but it does include a certain amount of influence from others, mostly the *polis*. The idea of freedom implied independence from the whims of others, but still allowed the significant interference of the laws, customs, or sense of civic duty into the lives of the citizens²¹. Hence, Sparta was so highly esteemed as a *polis* where citizens were truly free, since they were subject only to the generally applicable laws and that is why Plato criticizes those who do not, as quoted, want to hold offices – if they were indeed qualified, it was their duty to the state to participate in political life and serve the *polis* the best they could. Therefore, the “bad” kind of freedom, where everyone listens only to their own will and do not pay attention to others, or duty, is what leads to the downfall of the democracy. The population, not possessing anything until now, suddenly gets goods and influence, and starts to life at the expense of the rich donors. That leads people to demand more and more and give up any moderation. Meanwhile, the most ambitious individuals direct people to fight their political opponents. The leader, who will work most effectively, will not only enjoy an excellent reputation, but also more and more power, until they reach the dictatorial, or tyrannical power, especially, if they reach high offices, or take control of the army²². Exceptionally strong demagogue can independently coup, turning the system into tyranny. Polybius, however, believes that he will, again, bring order and justice, and, therefore, after the initial period, the king, not a tyrant, shall grow out of the ochlocracy. Aristotle described one more possible change concerning the democracy (an unlawful one, the ochlocracy). The origins would be the same, but the illegal actions of demagogues can unite oppressed oligarchs and those, having greater resources than the people, can finally re-take power to ensure peace.

Following Polybius, after calming the internal unrest, the relationship between the monarch and subjects will change. The leader who is just,

²¹ More on the subject: *Granice wolności w starożytnej myśli greckiej*, ed. J. Biernat, P. Biernat, Kraków 2013. For the elaboration on the concepts of liberty, especially in their positive/negative sens, see also M.H. Hansen, *Democratic Freedom and the Concept of Freedom in Plato and Aristotle*, “Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies”, 50/2010, pp. 1–27.

²² Aristotle, *Politics*, V, 4.4.

who protects their state, and holds offices well may be elected king²³. Replacing force with justice will change the factor that connects society from fear of the power of individual to the conviction of advantage of their reign. However, according to Polybius, the kingdom's degeneration occurs when heredity enters in the place of election. It is worth noting that this transformation within a single type, which is the rule of the individual, is not described by Polybius as revolutionary. On the contrary, it is a gradual change, lasting several generations. Similarly assumes Aristotle, for whom conflicts in the royal lineage could be the biggest threat, as well as the gradual decline of morality and rising to power by the less and less worthy people. The prevailing prosperity and loss of a sense of dependence on their subjects²⁴ caused the kings to exalt themselves above ordinary people. The kingdom slowly degenerated into tyranny.

The collapse of tyranny looks quite different though. Plato does not describe it, since for him it is the final, the worst political system. The philosopher does not develop his theory further, which was met with criticism, especially from Aristotle. After all, it is clear that not every state has succumbed to tyranny, what should happen if we accept the Platonic sequence unconditionally. The assumption that the tyrant shall understand the principles of philosophy which will enable him to transform the state into a better one, ruled by reason, is somewhat abstract and, again, history proves against it. Thus, what is the fate of tyranny? According to Aristotle, the most common form of tyranny arises from democracy, when the people give power to a demagogue. This transformation I discussed above. Furthermore, it is possible for tyranny to emerge from oligarchy or aristocracy, when a group of a few chooses an individual, selected from them and also, as in *anakyklosis*,

²³ Ibidem, IV, 2.2 i V, 8.2. Aristotle underlines that there were no monarchies in his days – the idea of equality makes it impossible to appoint an individual so outstanding that all would voluntarily agree to submit to his power.

²⁴ David E. Hahm argues that a ruler elected by the people will never become a tyrant, only a hereditary one. The people will not choose an unworthy man to be their king, and even if that happened by chance, there still remains a sense of dependency. See: David E. Hahm, *Polybius' applied political theory*, [in:] *Justice and Generosity. Studies in Hellenistic Social and Political Philosophy. Proceedings of the Sixth Symposium Hellenisticum*, eds. A. Laks, M. Schofield, Cambridge 1995, p. 23.

from the kingship²⁵. The change of this system is not as peaceful as the rise of the individual rule. It resembles more the end of ochlocracy. For Stagirite, there can be two causes of the riots: the person of the tyrant himself (which will only lead to the change of the ruler, not the constitution), or opposition to tyranny in general. The tyrant, desiring only their own benefit, wealth, luxury, despises the people, but also struggles with the aristocracy, seeing its members as potential candidates, who could take over power²⁶. Due to that fact, the most outstanding individuals are most vulnerable to his attacks. Therefore, a group of leaders emerges from the society, seeking to overthrow the tyrant. When they receive the support of the people and actually put an end to despotism, they are elected by the people to be their new leaders, as a way of expressing the gratitude. That is also the second way of interpreting the Platonic line of degenerating constitutions, thus transforming it into full cycle, when the bravest, most ambitious men will remove the tyrant and establish their own government. A new form of political system is created – the aristocracy²⁷.

According to the ancient philosophical thought, aristocracy is also not a permanent regime. The biggest risk is not the outbreak of discontent of the oppressed or undervalued social groups, but slow, gradual transformations. True aristocracy should combine elements of democracy and oligarchy: respect people, but give privileges to those who possess more. Hence, it is similar to *politeia* and, therefore, any changes may be primarily a result of the violation of the principles of justice. If the people gain more power, aristocracy begins to transform into democracy, or *politeia*, if they are wealthy – into oligarchy²⁸. In this case, the ideas of philosophers are convergent and similar to the ones concerning monarchy and tyranny. The change of the good system (in this case – aristocracy) into bad (oligarchy) proceeds not in a revolutionary way, but, again, gradually, through generations and so can be called evolutionary. Greed and desire for wealth become supreme values. The rulers abandon

²⁵ Donald Kagan, op. cit., p. 226.

²⁶ Polybius, op. cit., VI, 7.

²⁷ Or, in Plato's case, it might be its inferior form, timocracy.

²⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, V, 6.3–4.

ambition and courage to collect goods²⁹. Therefore, those who possess most are also the ones that are most respected, though they do not have to be prepared to exercise power or demonstrate any special qualities that once would have been required from those who govern. The division of responsibilities, necessary for the efficient functioning of the state, disappears, because, on the one hand, the wealthy do not serve the *polis*, since they accumulate goods only for their own benefit, and, on the other, the poor are unable to do so, because they do not possess anything³⁰.

In this case, the most classic revolution happens. When the poor can no longer endure their poverty and realize that, besides the fortunes, nothing differentiates them from the oligarchs, they shall oppose the current rulers. Numerous groups of oligarchs can cause widespread outrage, larger than in the case of a tyrant³¹. Conspiracy of few citizens would no longer be effective against the entire ruling class; thus, all the people will be involved in the coup. Aristotle of course considers also other possibilities of change within the oligarchy, as he did in the case of monarchy. He deems the lack of unity among the ruling class as the most important reason for transformations. If there is peace and balance among them, this type of regime is most difficult to overthrow, because the powerful and wealthy have the means to counter the pressure of the people, while their cooperation prevents the emergence of a tyrant³². However the revolt stirred up by the people, will completely change the form of the government, giving it traits of democracy, while democracy, as already have been indicated above, may gradually turn into ochlocracy. The Polybian circle is closed.

Conclusions

As it was presented, in ancient theories, the changes do not have to occur only in a violent, revolutionary way. There are some that happen

²⁹ Plato, *Republic*, VIII, 548 B–C. Critically Aristotle, *Politics*, V, 10.4.

³⁰ Plato, *Republic*, VIII, 552.

³¹ David E. Hahm, op. cit., p. 30.

³² Donald Kagan, op. cit., p. 225.

gradually, by acceptance of the new rules, which, nonetheless, lead to the end of a certain political system³³. The rise to power of the supporters of a new type of policy may be slow and consistent with the applicable rules. Only then, when they occupy all important positions, they may change current practices or applicable laws. Greek philosophers compile the revolution and evolution. The first one, understood as some kind of a violent upheaval, is definitely more common and easier to notice. The second one, of a more peaceful nature, is less frequent. Within one type of constitution, defined by the number of people in power, the changes are more often of evolutionary nature: they take form of a gradual transition from the good system into the bad. Those differ in the manner of exercising power – respecting the principles of justice, rights and the consent of the citizens – as well as in its goals: the benefit of the community or the self-interest of the rulers. Evolutionary changes are caused by increasing negligence of the ideal form of the given type and by abandoning the public good for the benefit of the rulers. They can be observed especially in the theories of Aristotle and Polybius, however there are basically none in Plato, who describes more radical changes: almost never within a single type of constitution, but between different systems. However, even in his theory, there is a slight element of evolution, since the “good” democracy is not changed by force into the “bad” one, but rather slowly deteriorates into it. On the other hand, the revolutionary, violent character, combined with a total change of the system – whether it is in accordance with the established, cyclical order, as in Polybius’ theory, or more or less arbitrary, as described by Aristotle – applies to the changes that lead to the abandonment of the bad system: tyranny, oligarchy or ochlocracy (an unlawful democracy). The revolutionary phenomenon appears in the moments of accumulation of various problems in the state, of both internal (governance, justice, the distribution of wealth, social issues) and external nature (mainly threats from another *polis*).

The cause of the revolution will always lay in a sense of inequality³⁴, but not only from the part of the governed, who believe that, despite

³³ Jan Szczepański, *Reformy, rewolucje, transformacje*, Warszawa 1999, p. 39.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, III, 2.12.

theoretical freedom and equality in the country, they occupy worse position, but also from the privileged, who assume that, in spite of their superiority, they are not sufficiently appreciated. Oligarchies are the most susceptible to revolutions, since the small group strictly differentiates itself from the rest of the society and bases its rule on economic imbalances. In contrary, aristocracies are most stable, because the best citizens can govern justly. Abnormalities in the functioning of the state induce the growth of revolutionary sentiment. Not preserving the equilibrium leads to destabilization, and this is the worst that can happen to *polis*. Achieving dominance by one of the social groups, whether it would be represented by a council (aristocrats), assembly (the people), or a political leader, can lead to the growth of ambitions of those holding the office, whereas the political system must instead be based on the consent of the governed. That it is difficult to achieve, while deep social divisions are being introduced³⁵. Apart from that, philosophers, especially Aristotle, consider also other causes of revolution: issues of cultural differences, geographical location, or *poleis*' internal divisions.

This confirms the thesis posed at the very beginning. First, already for the ancient philosophers, the revolution could only be caused by excessive accumulation of negative elements in the country, which had to arouse the aversion of the ruled. Secondly, the “bad” forms of constitutions are called so not only because they primarily serve the interests of those in power, but also because they lead to conflicts with citizens, encouraging them to fight for their rights. Thus, they cannot guarantee the desired stability. Preserving a positive relationship between the authorities and subjects, obtaining their consent, acting in accordance with the law, was meant to prevent potential revolts. Otherwise, the authorities risked the outbreak of the revolutionary opposition, overthrow and total change. Thus, in addition to a gradual and peaceful evolution, the revolution is also a necessary mode of political transformation. Only in the extremely pessimistic theory of Plato, it cannot improve the situation of the state, but for both: Aristotle and Polybius, it serves to change the situation for better and allows conducting the search of the ideal system.

³⁵ Donald Kagan, op. cit., p. 227.

Despite the fact that those theories were created over two thousand years ago, the ideas presented in them are in many ways still valid. Maybe today's systematics and typology of constitutions are not as clear as they were in antiquity, and some elements from our systems of values differ, but the general rule can still be applied. Major dissatisfaction with the government generally considered to be bad, results in a more violent reaction of the people and the change of the system. More subtle changes and slow degeneration are not so explicit. They do not provoke such objections and so can slowly proceed. However, those two forms of changes, revolutionary and evolutionary, left a visible imprint on the thought of ancient thinkers, their vision of state, philosophy, and through them on our European culture and political thought.

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(R)EWOLUCJA – KONCEPCJA ZMIAN POLITYCZNYCH W STAROŻYTNEJ GRECJI

W artykule przedstawiono ewolucję i rewolucję jako istotne czynniki determinujące zmiany ustrojowe w filozofii greckiej. Zawarto w nim analizę terminologii, wybranych teorii politycznych, a także różnorodności zachodzących zmian i niemożności ich uniknięcia. Artykuł ma na celu pomóc ustalić, jakie są ustrojowe źródła rewolucji oraz odpowiedzieć na pytanie, czy rewolucja i ewolucja były niezbędnym elementem zmian ustrojowych według starożytnych i czy teorie te mogą być nadal uważane za aktualne.

Słowa kluczowe: Arystoteles, Platon, Polibiusz, rewolucja, filozofia.

(R)EVOLUTION – THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN ANCIENT GREECE

This paper presents the evolution and revolution as important factors of the constitutional changes in Greek philosophy. It contains an analysis of the terminology, selected political theories, as well as the necessity and diversity of changes. It is meant to establish the systemic sources of revolution and answer the question whether the revolution and evolution factors were essential for constitutional changes according to the ancients and can those theories still be considered as valid.

Keywords: Aristotle, Plato, Polybius, revolution, philosophy.