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THE POSSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYING THE PARADIGM OF COINCIDENCE IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

Explaining a political phenomenon is not to be viewed as a multi-variant function but rather a comprehensive research tool ensuring adequacy (in a broader context – chances of arriving at an explanation) at the expense of universality. The proposed coincidence paradigm provides possibilities of applying explanations seemingly contradictory from the substantive and methodological perspective. The concepts of “meta-activity” and “quasi-expert” are used for the sake of explaining the criteria ensuring development of a political science research tool composed of multiple elements. At the core of deliberations lies broadly-defined exemplification of the dispute between normative and empirical methodology.

Keywords: empirical methodology, coincidence, paradigm, critical rationalism, meta-activity

THE PHENOMENON OF the coincidence¹ of explanations, which can periodically take the form of a paradigm, is the research problem of this essay. The starting point of the study is to specify the coincidence of explanation model which is the reference point for Popper’s critical rationalism. The emphasis shall be put rather

¹ In using the concept of coincidence I follow A. Schopenhauer. He defined coincidence as simultaneous existence of events which are not semantically connected with each other. At the same time those events proceed parallelly to each other. The same event can be a link of totally different chains. It means that the destiny of a particular individual meets the destiny of a different individual. See A. Schopenhauer, *Ueber den Willen in der Natur*, Frankfurt am Main 1896.

on the somehow incidentally invoked plot of Popperian thought than on the competition among scientific theories². The main research question goes then as follows: “is it possible and to what extent useful to employ the coincidence paradigm in contemporary political science research”? To evaluate this particular theoretical position and to assess its degree of inclusion one has to answer this key research question. A hypothesis which shall be subject to verification assumes that explanation of a political phenomenon is rather an intricate research tool that guarantees adequacy (more generally pertaining to a possible explanation of what is at stake here) at the expense of universality than a multi-optional function. Universality is understood here as a drawback because it assumes that researchers should be independent of their overt as well as seemingly unconscious intentions. It is also burdened with a rudimentary defect of basic objectivism. In turn, the criterion of adequacy with regard to political science consists in one’s getting rid of the ambition to find universal, law-like generalizations. In accordance with Popper’s position such generalizations in social sciences are too rare to be the exclusive aim and a sole determinant of scientific inquiry³. Instead of the universalistic approach we can employ the alternative method which makes room for multiple empirical tests of a given explanation or theory. The explanation or theory regarded in this way is rather a paradigm than law-like, universal generalization and to that extent it cannot be ultimately refuted. According to Popper, no corroborated theory is immune to falsification but these are the particular research results, not the whole paradigm, that undergo the refutation. The scientific position which by definition fulfils the requirement of intersubjectivity or falsifiability exclusively becomes only one of the competitors in a scientific race for popularity and can be qualified as a part of what I call the category of *mainstream*. What is important in the context of conceptualization is to specify the meaning of the concept of coincidence⁴. Necessary component elements of this concept are as follows: 1) the coexistence of assertions; 2) the possibility of employing the entire knowledge available in the scientific circulation; 3) adequacy which replaces universality. To determine which kind of methodology should be chosen, it is not enough to put emphasis on assertions about a phenomenon instead of favouring

² K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London–New York 2005.

³ Ibidem, p. 29.

⁴ The term “coincidence” was considered by me in a different study where I was trying to establish some regulative framework for the definition of coincidence. See Ł. Młyńczyk, *Koincydencja jako alternatywa dla „krytycznego racjonalizmu Poppera”*, *Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne* 2010, vol. 26, p. 22–31.

observation and description. Nevertheless, explanation of the whole phenomenon is not a *sine qua non* condition because the examination of a particular element of the phenomenon in question does not automatically mean that we are making an individualistic fallacy. It is rather connected with the boundary conditions of empirically oriented political science. In this study I will treat the ongoing dispute between normative and empirical methodologists as typical of the model of coincidence. The explanatory power of this model is based on the usage of a paradigm defined below⁵. This paradigm can be placed in between normative and empirical methodology since it creates some additional quality in comparison to both of those methodological positions.

T. Kuhn holds that paradigm does not have to be reduced to a general set of shared rules and standard interpretations⁶. It means that there are no categories which could standardize scientific work since research in itself is based on *background knowledge* as well as on *silent knowledge*⁷. Hence, the concentration on finding a comprehensive-enough theory is here replaced by focusing on intersubjective verification of experience and actual knowledge. This approach generates an almost ideal situation for researchers. They do not have claims to the truth but at the same time conduct critical discussions which set a good example, indicating, in turn, that scientific circles should also be critical towards their positions. It is then justified to maintain that paradigm is not an unequivocal pattern (direction) while results obtained through exploitation of this paradigm are the effect of some observational similarities. So, one can call a theory intersubjective when this theory makes room for an alternative theoretical proposition, for some counter-theory. Although such alternative theory does not exclude different options and assertions, it is intuitively possible to claim that the main role in the contemporary science is played by the rule of primacy, that is, the rule of right reasons. A scientist in such understood scientific circulation not only examines the reality but also is its important component part which is pigeonholed in a particular way.

⁵ In a field of contemporary social science we can see the rejection of a postulate to be in accordance with a given school of thinking. This is the effect of an argumentation presented by the so called Chicago School. Scientific principles do not have a puritan form any longer. Scientific and methodological positions started to mingle with each other which is a reason why nowadays it is impossible to talk about pure methodology. I regard this situation as highly welcome. See S.D. Levitt, S.J. Dubner, *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*, New York 2009.

⁶ Th. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago–London 1996, p. 43.

⁷ See *ibidem*.

The reduction (stipulative definition) of the concept in question is necessary in order to eliminate some similar concepts. So, coincidence cannot be understood as convergence because the former does not establish points of intersection of explanations. Those explanations simply interpret the same phenomenon, but do not overlap. One should also eliminate the unity of place and the unity of time since the core of this paradigm is not the confrontation between explanations but an independent improvement of each of them separately in particular spheres. The articulation of the demand for verification of hypotheses does not cancel the object of reflection. It means that tentatively uncorroborated hypotheses still remain the immanent part of an explanation. For, by resigning from an attempt to reach a synthesis, one does not aim at universality but adequacy. The dynamics of political events is impossible to grasp by any complex explanation and evaluation, particularly when one renounces the method of analogy. Analogy is a component part of normative methodology since it presupposes fundamental rationality of the world of experience. This presupposition is subsequently imposed on each phenomenon which is intended to undergo the research. For this reason, it is rather the empirical methodology that provides an adequate explanation since in this case the assumption about fundamental rationality of the world of experience is not the commencing point of the research. What shall be demonstrated through this study is that the paradigm of coincidence is not peculiar to any of those two methodologies exclusively. Albeit the coincidence is rather oriented towards the empirical meta-knowledge, what is actually grist to the Polish political science mill is the fact that it is thoroughly permeated by normative statements at the expense of empirical ones. The postulate of isolating and underlining the practical feature of political science can be achieved by enlarging the participation of prognoses (but not speculations) and adequate explanations within political science⁸.

Ideological declarations, so widely commented by political scientists concerned with their branch of knowledge, are the reference point for an optimal way of conducting the research, which does not mean that this way provides universality. In turn, the very declaration of a particular political scientist which lacks references to beliefs or impressions – where those beliefs and impressions can be examined by psychology – is, first and foremost, a subjective component element of a particular theory and allows an epistemological counter-proposal or an explanation

⁸ See T. Klementewicz, *Rozumienie polityki, Zarys metodologii nauki o polityce*, Warszawa 2010, p. 139, 147; F. Halliday, *Bliski Wschód w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Władza, polityka i ideologia*, Kraków 2009, p. 23–24.

of a different aspect of a given problem. Even assuming that political science is value-free science, one has to remember that some particular set of values or points of view can be supported by science in itself (which will become an extrascientific category)⁹. Methodology and method become the highest values of science. Hence, considerations on cognitive process cause a method to take the form of ontology and stop being the essential characteristic of a theory exclusively¹⁰. Method emancipated in such a way is a hallmark of an empirical approach and it cannot be reproached for its fragmentariness. Nonetheless, it is good to remember that reproaching method for its fragmentariness does not undermine its validity ultimately. Using the paradigmatic approach one employs the category of adequacy, which contrasts with the requirement of falsification.

The situation described above creates the tripartite predicament in which a political scientist always finds himself. This predicament consists of involvement, conditioning, and escape from ideology. Max Weber¹¹ points to the problem of social conditioning which is connected with the fact that a scientist possesses cultural, moral, or political convictions which cannot be separated from the scientific part of his attitude during the process of research. Nevertheless, Weber postulates that at the stage of publication of research results social sciences should be value-free¹². In the case of coincidence a scientist is not freed from his normative habits. Nonetheless, examining the new aspect of a political phenomenon, the scientist widens an interpretative possibility, particularly in the sphere (connected with the empirical object of research) which cannot undergo the rigor of verification. Thus paradigm can be understood as a logical consequence of the presence of the whole set of explanations which, in turn, need a fundamental frame of reference¹³. During the process of research one cannot achieve objective confidence with regard to research results. Because of this situation, one has to rely on inter-subjective evaluation. The sphere of politics can be diagnosed by checking the variables which on the given cognitive stage are crucial for the empirical status of

⁹ *Nauka a świat wartości. Rozmowa z Grzegorzem Białkowskim*, [in:] W. Osiatyński, *Zrozumieć świat. Rozmowy z uczonymi 25 lat później*, Warszawa 2009, p. 67.

¹⁰ See *ibidem*, p. 71.

¹¹ See M. Weber, *Sens „uwolnienia od wartościowania w socjologii i ekonomii*, [in:] *Problemy socjologii wiedzy*, ed. A. Chmielnicki and others, Warszawa 1985.

¹² C.G. Christians, *Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research*, [in:] *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, London 2005, p. 142.

¹³ See E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, Belmont 2007, p. 31.

a problem and its conceptualization¹⁴. However, it is impossible to determine the objective framework within which a given theory is valid. Hence, the requirement of fundamental objectivity in research can be treated only as a postulate or variance. An objective level of requirements is here different than real possibilities of employing a given theory in the process of explanation. Professional literature presents the position according to which “all paradigms must confront seven basic, critical issues. These issues involve axiology (ethics and values), accommodation and commensurability (can paradigms be fitted into one another?), action (what the researcher does in the world), control (who initiates inquiry, who asks questions), foundations of truth (foundationalism vs. anti – and nonfoundationalism), validity (traditional positivist models vs. poststructural-constructionist criteria), and voice, reflexivity, and postmodern representation (single – vs. ultivoiced)”¹⁵.

A paradigm is opposed to objectively understood efficacy and accuracy of research results because it is impossible in social science to refute or accept a paradigm as a whole. Thus a paradigm cannot be used as a reliable proof in research. Methodological fundamentalism assumes that there is only one right solution of a given problem and that any other solutions could be at most its derivatives. The intention of such methodology is to reduce all solutions to already checked models. This trend is visible in the Ulrich Beck’s theory of power and counter-power¹⁶: “Methodological nationalism presupposes that the nation-state, as the source of legitimacy for supranational norms and organizations, is constant and absolute. The possibility that a global order might be self-legitimizing – be it on the basis of pragmatism, rational philosophy or legal positivism – is ruled out from the start”¹⁷. The dynamics of political changes shows that the presence of alternative sources of political legitimacy is an expected function of changes in a state of research, that is, a function of necessity of equally dynamic interaction between the researcher and the object of research. A simple subsumption of an observation guarantees even bigger conflict between the essence of a phenomenon and expected results. In the actual fact, one knows even less because definitional sphere of the employed explicit theory is changing whereas putting a given problem in a domain of a concrete theory is an arbitrary decision. Only at this stage, the process of intersubjective testing of a theory begins. As Popper says: “the words

¹⁴ Ch.F. Nachmias, D. Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, New York 2004, p. 70.

¹⁵ N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, *Paradigms and Perspective in Contention*, [in:] *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, London 2005, p. 184.

¹⁶ U. Beck, *Power in the Global Age: a New Global Political Economy*, Cambridge 2005.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

'objective' and 'subjective' are philosophical terms (...) I hold that scientific theories are never fully justifiable or verifiable, but that they are nevertheless testable (...) the *objectivity* of scientific statements lies in the fact that they can be *inter-subjectively tested*¹⁸. The objectivity and accuracy of scientific theory requires logical inference as well as empirical proof. The imparting of information within scientific circles justifies a given scientific theory but must take into consideration two important concessions. The first is connected with objective obstacles to conduct an empirical proof. The second is bound up with the logical structure of science – to empirically corroborate a given theory (to conduct an empirical proof) does not mean to ultimately verify it; such justification of a theory can be considered only in terms of statistics; to put it in Popper's words, a theory is corroborated as long as there is no empirical instances testifying against this theory. "The model of examining theories by the trial and error method does not allow for verification since no theory can be considered as ultimately verified. There were theories people believed in for thousands of years but they occurred to be false"¹⁹. Popper himself holds that only such a theoretical system can be regarded as scientific that is falsifiable by experience²⁰. "I shall not require of a scientific system that it shall be capable of being singled out, once and for all, in a positive sense; but I shall require that its logical form shall be such that it can be singled out, by means of empirical tests, in a negative sense: *it must be possible for an empirical system to be refuted by experience*"²¹. The essence of paradigm does not consist in rejecting the experience as a device for testing a theory. It is rather a model with particular criteria of adequacy²². A paradigm in social sciences is a model which only points to some special vantage point from which one interprets the reality. It is impossible to reject a given paradigm once and for all. In political science one can talk about

¹⁸ K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op.cit., p. 22–23.

¹⁹ K. von Beyme, *Współczesne teorie polityczne*, Warszawa 2005, p. 65.

²⁰ K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op.cit., p. 18.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² See I. Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes*, „Philosophical Papers Volume 1”, Cambridge 1980; Th. Kuhn, *The Road Since Structure: Philosophical Essays, 1970–1993*, Chicago 2000. I deliberately refer to the discussion among Imre Lakatos, Thomas Kuhn and Karl R. Popper. First, one cannot replace the concept of “refutation” with concept of “modification” as in the case of Lakatos. Since the coincidence of explanations is an essential ingredient of theory, given explanation does not have a decisive status. Hence, this explanation does not undergo the modification but means only that one underlines an important aspect of problem. Second, according to Kuhn's rules the paradigm of coincidence has got the heuristic element which is crucial for its cognitive value. At the same time the paradigm of coincidence enables one to employ such explanations of a phenomenon which are representative for it.

empirical corroboration of a paradigm as far as the results achieved due to employing this paradigm are probable. If there exists a certain recurrence in respect of employing a given paradigm and the resultant conclusion, political science research only serves to indicate that the paradigm in question proves useful in a particular context, and if its usefulness is discarded – it nonetheless functions in scientific circulation²³. The foregoing is visible in the cause and effect relation. “Regularity of co-existence or direct sequence of facts cannot be deemed as tantamount to ontological causality since nothing beyond this regularity, which might be called a causal relation, can be observed”²⁴. The frequently invoked paradigm of the clash of civilisations proposed by S.P. Huntington²⁵ has been subject to repeated refutation when treated literally; however, when viewed in the context of significance and scope of political conflict – refutation loses its potency. Universal generalizations in scientific inquiry are most welcome, yet within the ambit of political science and numerous other sciences it is impossible to prove that they always stem from observance of a certain regularity of facts. Observing the causes of the analysed political phenomenon by isolating factual regularities constitutes a merely transitory and fragmentary stage, as one should also account for the causative power exerted by the key participants of the system subject to research.²⁶ The position of a researcher is frequently the outcome of a historical process of which the said researcher is part. The above is all the more pertinent within the framework of political science which precludes separation of the researcher from direct or indirect influence on the historical cycle. The researcher seeking arguments in favour of adopted assumptions may resort to creation or purposeful explication of the latter. The process requires gradual transition from purely scientific to quasi-scientific (expert) positions²⁷, which, in turn, leads to isolation of the function, or

²³ See B. Krauz-Mozer, *Teorie polityki*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 121–124.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

²⁵ See S.P. Huntington, *Zderzenie cywilizacji i nowy kształt ładu światowego*, Warszawa 1997.

²⁶ T. Klementewicz, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

²⁷ See Z.J. Pietraś, *Decydowanie polityczne*, Warszawa-Kraków 2000, pp. 91–97. Pietraś touches upon the issue of determining the degree of experts’ participation in the decision-making process. He upholds the division into involved experts, independent experts and advisers. Having regard to the rigors of scientific research, the only category ascribed to that area is the category of independent experts on account of their active involvement in politics. However, the foregoing entails a reservation that the independent status does not stem directly from the category of permanent or periodic participation. Neither is recognition of professional qualifications a sufficient element in this regard. Accurate identification, therefore, pertains to a situation in which an expert does not transgress the role of a researcher on the advisory plane. The state is a conscious move or it materialises in the course of developing expert opinions. By creating a political decision, the researcher also becomes part of

rather shape and form, of the social reality examined, where the behaviour of people is determined in the light of meta-activity²⁸. The role of an expert/researcher in the sphere of politics is therefore reflected in the function of exerting an impact on the object of research, observed with the use of standard research methods, but also indicates the degree of entanglement on the part of the expert/researcher. Still, the degree of entanglement is mitigated by research activity. It is worthy of emphasis at this point that the issue in question does not constitute a classic reflection of constructivist methodology underpinnings which pertain to the reality-shaping ability attributed to a researcher who, in effect, by own experience induces scientific circles to question the process of establishing order to which one is subject²⁹. The dictate of pure form may once more be discarded since the demand to construct is not the ultimate goal of the researcher; conversely, the emphasis is rather placed on somewhat methodological pragmatism as it does not limit analysis exclusively to manifest or overt behaviour³⁰. Following this line of reasoning, meta-activity is encompassed by constructivism, yet to a limited extent. For although initially unexposed by the questions formulated by the expert/researcher, meta-activity ensues from secondary observation when actions become identified and cognized.

In any research devoted to social perception of the world of politics it is imperative to take account of the influence exerted on the society as repercussion of the linear impact of decisions and/or political circles. The structure under scrutiny is therefore the medium and the reflection of political influence. Hence, the functions of explaining and undergoing explanation cannot be ascribed permanently within the framework of a single research study. Another possible state consists in certain intentionality of research findings owing to the placement of *explanandum* within a dynamic political environment. Robert Dahl and Bruce Stinebrickner³¹ advance a thesis of discerning “[...] the impact of a person or

the investigated system. Following the line of reasoning suggested by Pietraś, the referenced phenomenon may be observed in the functioning of think tanks. Taking the foregoing into account, it is difficult to identify the moment when the researcher “transgresses” the role originally assigned.

²⁸ See J. Staniszkis *Życie umysłowe i uczuciowe, z Jadwigą Staniszkis rozmawia Cezary Michalski*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 139–141. Obviously, prof. J. Staniszkis does not make a direct reference to the issue of “meta-activity”; nevertheless, her comments on participation in the negotiations at the Gdańsk Shipyard in 1980 may be deemed as an excellent empirical illustration of the issue raised in the article.

²⁹ K. Charmaz, *Teoria ugruntowana*, Warszawa 2009, p. 240.

³⁰ See *ibidem*, p. 236.

³¹ R.A. Dahl, B. Stinebrickner, *Współczesna analiza polityczna*, Warszawa 2007, p. 31.

a group exerted on actions or action-related tendencies of another person or group” as a focal point of contemporary political analysis. Influence wielded on nature and self-development is not enough, which induces us to control the behaviour of other people³². By making an assumption that emancipating subjects of political life from the influence of the system we must acknowledge the feedback scheme in the research³³. The resonance which can occur between decision-makers and addressees of political decisions should be particularized for research purposes so as to always include the role of the researcher – even in situations when the researcher acts in the capacity of the expert. The aforesaid meta-activity of the explored environment shall be perceived as a seemingly non-existent; nevertheless, by applying methodologies it is possible to identify the following phases of political behaviour: primary activity (approval or disapproval) and meta-activity. The latter state may be illustrated on the basis of *Jourdain’s* discovery of own phenomenon. The researcher can isolate functions performed instinctively by the object of research in a manner initially uncognized³⁴. The difficulty with identifying the meta-active phase stems from the fact that it is not a direct classification of action to the norms postulated in the research. Political environment, with reproduction identified as one of its characteristics, may be determined by the presence of the researcher so certain functions ascribed to the subjects of the said environment must be viewed in terms of subsumption and self-fulfilling prophecy or self-destroying prophecy. Political researchers can reduce observations in such a manner that would enable classification of particular behaviour demonstrated by the subject to the assumed interpretative code. Nevertheless, one should seek to clearly differentiate apparent behaviour from induced behaviour. Contemporary political analysis must take due account of the influence factor as an essential element of a political system. Hence, it is possible to introduce the coincidence paradigm. If the presence of the researcher/expert leads to the situation in which the system elements are joined up at some additional point, it is then justifiable to analyse the fragment of reality non-existent or uncognized prior to the research. Inclination on the part of political scientists to assess examples of influence should not be treated as a factor diminishing the result of exploration³⁵. Usefulness is justified by

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ibidem, p. 239.

³⁴ The issue is perfectly illustrated in the findings of research concerning the so-called “dead structure” by prof. Jadwiga Staniszkis, See Idem, *Poland’s Self-Limiting Revolution*, Princeton 1984; *Ontologia socjalizmu*, Warszawa 1989; *Postkomunizm. Próba opisu*, Gdańsk 2005.

³⁵ 35 See R.A. Dahl, B. Stinebrickner, op.cit., pp. 30–32.

the possibility of providing effective explanations which are fragmentary by definition. From the perspective of intersubjective assessment coincidence of explanations may be deemed as somewhat contradictory; yet, the choice of scientific methodology underlying the judgement is free and individualised. Whilst assessing the stance taken by the researcher one cannot disregard the important fact that the researcher is a proponent of a particular normative order, which may at times lead to discarding of those causes which the researcher considers less significant (useful) in respect of the case subject to analysis. It should be noted, though, that at the stage of selecting the methodological framework it is impossible to determine with great accuracy the ultimate scope of its explanatory power in respect of the explored area. In principle, the postulated paradigm is to enable exploration of meta-activity of the environment so the role of the researcher may be to initiate influence with a view to discovering the causes of behaviour wrongly assumed to be apparent. Such activities have been recognised within the framework of critical rationalism and subjective rationalism³⁶. T. Klementewicz ascribes certain duality to the structure of social reality³⁷. “All causative factors invoked in explanations of historical facts and processes operate only through people. Only when they become elements of human activity can they affect the course of events. [...] A political scientist is to reconstruct the motivational structure underlying actions by assuming (subjective) rationality on the part of the agent³⁸. Motivations ascribed to actions observed within political environment are the offshoot of the impact exerted on it. Differentiation between scientific and expert function does not necessarily have to be so rigid. An inclination to seek states ideal from the methodological point of view is difficult for political scientists to overcome. The model-based reasoning presented by T. Klementewicz may be regarded as an attempt at determining the indeterminate, giving voice to idiographic theories – as distinguished by Weber³⁹. Finding a new and original form is also contingent on the place and time of the scientific estimation. C. Schmitt held that in order to accurately determine the essence of the conflict one should existentially participate in it⁴⁰. The above-mentioned statement refers to the category of *politicality* developed

³⁶ See T. Klementewicz, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

⁴⁰ C. Schmitt, *Teologia polityczna i inne pisma*, Kraków 2000, p. 199. “The proper manner and understanding of a conflict and thus co-decision and judgment are possible exclusively through existential participation”.

by him, but the same may as well apply to empirical methodology. Despite the fulfilment of the condition of participation, rarely do we deal with the said existential participation. This state verifies *ex ante* assessments not because we are at the heart of events but due to the very fact of becoming the medium of those events which we process within the framework of meta-activity.

The paradigm category is inevitably linked with the concept of *mainstream* consisting in establishment of certain communities of scientists who, within the framework of the discipline they represent, possess appropriate methodological and meta-theoretical tools to which they are subordinate from institutional and psychological point of view⁴¹. Political science is particularly burdened with the risk of game related to methodological fundamentalism⁴² – understood as a situation when political practice is reaffirmed in political theory and an adequate implication consists in a simple function of omnipotence of power. The theoretical debate may possibly continue to oscillate around the “subjective vs. objective” dichotomy. The former concept is favoured by proponents of culturally and semantically distinctive approach, whereas the latter aims at explanation formulated on the basis of institutional issues, periodically falling under the dominance of proponents of statism or active minorities (*political correctness; patchwork of minorities*)⁴³. Indirectly, *mainstream* compels to conduct such a verification of standpoints that would place the adopted stance (paradigm) firmly within the *limes* of the propagators of pure scientific form. Science, therefore, possesses a certain declarative flaw as from the outset one is obliged to “find one’s way”. The fundamental difference between scientists is first and foremost based on a methodological criterion. However, the difference does not need to be tantamount to substantive negation. The above stems from the ingrained tendency to become dependent on the principles hailed by the scientific school we happen to represent. Coincidence paradigm questions all scientific usurpations, both with respect to subject matter and methodology. The aforesaid possibility of transgressing social creations confirms us in the conviction that unconscious role-shifting may also take place. It is possible at this point to give credence to the hypothesis that the dispute between normativists and empiricists will sooner or later boil down to valuation, which also belongs to the mainstream issue. Coincidence will not be

⁴¹ K. von Beyme, op.cit., p. 33.

⁴² See E.R. House, *Ewaluacja jakościowa i zmiana polityki społecznej*, [in:] *Metody badań jakościowych*, ed. N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, vol. 2, Warszawa 2009, p. 616.

⁴³ K. von Beyme, op.cit., 24–26.

confined to either alternative as these cannot be assigned universal accuracy criteria. Still, through the presented paradigm one can indicate certain reluctance inherent in both standpoints observed in their treatment of methodological fundamentalism. The frequently referenced adequacy criterion ensures comfort of the researcher who is no longer hostage to rigid principles. Moreover, it allows maintaining all psychological conditionings of the researcher at the same time precluding the possibility of their dominating the research findings.

Only after accounting for the above-referenced conditions is it possible to examine [...] *the geography of paradigm shifts*⁴⁴. An alternative to paradigm rotation so defined or certain eclecticism of science consists in adopting the coincidence paradigm. It is a quite common presumption that few significant universal generalizations exist within the ambit of social sciences – hence the inclination to rely on probabilistic explanations⁴⁵. Probability means a statistical result of reasoning and, consequently, the issue of legitimisation of the result and recognition of its significance remains debatable. The relation between the researcher, also acting in the capacity of the initiator/instigator of behaviour, and the object of research constitutes an additional resonance triggering the necessity to regulate a fragment of the system itself. Now, therefore, the paradigm which gives rise to different explanations of a phenomenon or a problem may be perceived not only as a cognitive element but also the one necessitating adjustment of the system to changing conditions previously unforeseen or wrongly deemed insignificant. Let us follow this line of reasoning by focusing on a particular example. If we consider the events of the early 2011 in Northern Africa as a kind of phenomenon, we limit the political assessment to elements of the social issues of interest to us pertaining directly to the citizens of our country. Basing the analysis on historical generalizations we can either invoke interpretations remote to our system (the revolution in Iran) or quite close when “the Revolutions of 1989” are assumed as the interpretation key⁴⁶. Each of the above-referenced models is of different value not so much in respect of their possible usefulness but rather the impact exerted by a given interpretation on political practice. Pursuant to the principles of Popperism, the explanations employed cannot be refuted in their entirety. The error which could be ascribed on the interpretative plane pertaining to the events in Northern Africa

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Ch. F. Nachmias, D. Nachmias, op.cit., pp. 24–25.

⁴⁶ See J. Gray, *Nieliberalna demokracja arabska*; Ch. Kupchan, *Niedemokratyczne kapitalizmy i nieliberalne demokracje*; M. Leonard, *Unia Globalna – rozmowy*, ”Europa Miesięcznik Idei” 2011, No 7, pp. 6–18.

does not consist in poor adequacy of assumptions but solely on rigorous analogy. Fragmentariness of research does not mean a detailed search for identical features. Indicating the elements which fall outside the ambit of the adopted assumption does not verify coincidence but only depreciates those elements. Verifying the adopted hypotheses we should bear in mind that claims about non-existence of several factors are by definition a methodological error of ecologism.

Coincidence of explanations does not stir up competition between proponents of paradigms but allows for feedback between the provider of interpretation rules and political institutions. Owing to that, there is a chance of overcoming resistance on the part of methodological fundamentalists stemming from their conviction that the process is actually reverse. The possibilities of applying the referenced paradigm in contemporary political science research fall within the criteria emphasised in the contents of the present study. In addition, it serves as a verification method applied in respect of processes which have already entered the dynamic phase but in respect of which nomothetic solution is yet to be discovered. Furthermore, coincidence of explanations meets the idiographic requirement of novelty and phenomenon. What can be achieved by employing the paradigm is a somewhat intermediary state between usefulness of a theory and its falsifiability.