

## Posudek školitele

### **Maciej Ruczaj, “The Liturgy of Revolution: Political Theology of Patrick Pearse between Catholicism and Modernism” (Doctoral Dissertation)**

Maciej Ruczaj completed all course work in the doctoral programme with distinction and passed the final exam with an excellent result. In the course of his studies, he presented interim results of his research at a number of international conferences and was the recipient of a competitive Charles University research grant. Moreover, the quality of his work has been attested by the publication of early versions of some of the material included in the dissertation: this occurred not only in three edited volumes which resulted from graduate students’ conferences, but also in the leading scholarly periodicals *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2013) and *Études Irlandaises* (2014).

Mr Ruczaj’s dissertation is dedicated to the controversial figure of Patrick Pearse who has for a long time divided scholarly opinion in Ireland and whose ideas have rarely been considered without reference – explicit or implicit – to the way they have impacted the subsequent ideology of militant Catholic nationalism, particularly in Northern Ireland during the so-called Troubles. Ruczaj follows in the steps of the few recent scholars (Declan Kiberd, W.J. Mc Cormack, Róisín Ní Ghairbhí) to have placed Pearse’s thought in the context of the intellectual climate of pre-World War I Europe in an attempt to discard the label of a bloodthirsty fanatic that has so often been attached to Pearse by his opponents. Ruczaj’s engagement in this context is particularly with Polish Romanticism, exemplified by the national messianism of Adam Mickiewicz, and contemporary political philosophy, in particular the contentious ideas of Carl Schmitt. While these links have been noted by earlier commentators, no in-depth treatment of these relations has been offered as yet.

The specific focus of the dissertation consists in an examination of the way Pearse has appropriated concepts and images from Catholic theology and liturgy for his brand of Irish nationalism. The candidate adopts for the purpose Nikodem Tomaszewski’s notion of *translatio sacrii*, and convincingly presents Pearse’s ideology as organically developing in the short stories, poems, essays and dramas from cultural to physical-force nationalism, endeavouring to explain away the apparent paradoxes within and among the individual texts. Moreover, Ruczaj’s argument is concluded by an extended consideration of Pearse’s ultimate rhetoric of blood sacrifice and of the project of the Easter Rising against Catholicism and its ethics. His vindication of Pearse in this sense consists in the perception of the latter’s political theology (to use Schmitt’s term) as one that regards Ireland as a microcosm subordinated to the Catholic universe.

Simultaneously, Pearse is viewed by Ruczaj as a prominent instance of a “primordial modernist” (Roger Griffin’s term) searching for transcendence in the deficient modern world of secularism, commerce and bourgeois values in a way similar to modernist artists across Europe.

Ruczaj’s work is characterised by intellectual profundity supported by an exemplary scope of research that ranges across a variety of disciplines, from literary studies, historiography and

biography up to political theory and theology. The argument is carefully laid out in the individual chapters on the whole; however, several passages have fallen victim to the complexity of ideas that are being elucidated and as a result, they read less easily. Moreover, the Introduction to the dissertation would benefit from more careful copy editing, which would eradicate unnecessary repetition and ultimately outline the structure of the subsequent argument in a more lucid fashion. On the whole, another round of editing would have been expedient, as the numerous minor formal errors in referencing (including the source of translations) and the minor stylistic and typographical errors are rather jarring in the submitted manuscript.

Notwithstanding such formal deficiencies, the dissertation features numerous sections in which the candidate presents the results of what is truly first-rate scholarship. These include, in particular: the minute outline of the genesis of the myth of Patrick Pearse as a devout Catholic (Chapter 1); the historical survey of theories of nationalism in relation to religion (Chapter 2); the close reading of Pearse's final essays focused on the *translatio sacrii* (Chapter 4); outlining the interrelatedness of Pearse's concept of the Rising with the decisionism of Carl Schmitt on the one hand, and the concept of charismatic authority presented by Max Weber on the other, both as products of the same *Zeitgeist* (Chapter 5); and last but not least, the use of the theory of the liturgical sign from Catholic theology in order to bring out the Eucharistic symbolism in Pearse's final plays and essays (Chapter 7). It is particularly in Chapters 4, 5 and 7 that Mr Ruczaj's work provides pioneering insights that contribute to a more complex understanding of Pearse's writing and activism in the context both of European thought of the day and of Catholicism.

It is in the nature of the supervisor's work to ask challenging question over subsequent drafts of the dissertation, and after these have been answered, it is up to the external reviewers to raise queries. As regards Maciej Ruczaj's dissertation, there is thus perhaps only the following issue that I would like to be addressed at the defence: the candidate has decided to use the term "modernism" in his essay both in the context of literature and the arts and of politics. The approach is vindicated by reference to the recent work of Roger Griffin, which indeed forms the basis of Ruczaj's argument concerning "modernism" and its revolt against "Modernity". My question would be: is there really enough evidence to support Griffin's assertion of the influence of modernism in the arts on "modernist" politics, or should one perhaps continue evading the equation mark between aesthetic and political modernism, as most scholars in the humanities have done?

As apparent from my remarks above, I certainly regard Mr Ruczaj's work as deserving to be turned into a monograph and brought to the attention of the international scholarly community.

I recommend the dissertation for defence. / Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Praha, 12 April 2015

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