



© Bartek Molga

Karolina Wigura, Dr.

Sociology, Journalism

Kultura Liberalna Foundation, University of
Warsaw

Born in 1980 in Warsaw
Studied Sociology, Philosophy, and Political Science at the University of Warsaw
and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich

PROJECT

Emotions in Politics

Emotions are an ever more important component of contemporary politics. This is partly due to the rise of illiberal politics where the use of emotion-based strategies is typical, and partly to a broader emotional turn in politics in general: a phenomenon that Pierre Hassner has called the "revenge of passions". Strategies based on fear, disgust, nostalgia, hope or love, are used by politicians all over Europe to mobilize people socially.

The number of studies of emotions has been growing rapidly since the 1970s. Some of these studies have been devoted to emotions in politics - the most important are the works by Jon Elster, Robert Solomon, Martha Nussbaum, and Ronald de Sousa. There are, however, no comparative studies of emotions-based strategies used in various countries in the European Union within a given framework and political context. Also, the humanities and mainstream comparative politics have been slow to explore the role of emotions in political competition among actors.

During my stay at the Wissenschaftskolleg I will focus on a project that fills these gaps 1) by providing a novel theoretical framework for understanding the importance of emotions in comparative politics and 2) by using this framework to analyse a few case studies, understood as speeches of leading politicians, involving the politics of emotions within four nation states in relation to the refugee crisis - Austria, Germany, Poland, and the UK. My research objectives are these: 1) to articulate a new theoretical framework for understanding the importance of emotions for politics; 2) to document, from a comparative European perspective, the extent to which emotion-based strategies shape the pursuit and exercise of power.

Recommended Reading

Wigura, Karolina. *Wynalazek nowoczesnego serca: Filozoficzne źródła współczesnego myślenia o emocjach*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2019.

- "Declarations of Forgiveness and Remorse in European Politics." *European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 22, 1 (2017): 16-30.

- "Alternative Historical Narrative: 'Polish Bishops' Appeal to their German Colleagues' of 18 November 1965." *East European Politics and Societies* 27, 3 (2012): 400-412.

Can Emotions Help Us Think about Politics? From the History of Ideas to Political Philosophy (and back)

What are emotions? Many authors would agree that they are a kind of states, thoughts, or judgments. They represent things we experience as good or evil and therefore see as objects of inclination or aversion. They exist in relation to both mind and body - thus we associate fear with trembling of the muscles, sadness with crying, and so on. As an important element of human nature, emotions influence the way we see and interpret the world.

While there is not much controversy about these rather general statements, difficulties grow as we go into more detail. There is no consensus, for example, about how many emotions there are and of what kind, or regarding their function. (Is it biological, moral, spiritual, or something else?) As a historian of ideas, I am particularly interested in questions about the philosophical sources of how we understand emotions today. For example, are the passions, as described by Plato or Aristotle, the same phenomena as what contemporary neurosciences call emotions?

Interest in past ways of understanding emotions does not have to always boil down to reconstructing them. The history of ideas, as the British intellectual historian Alan Ryan beautifully puts it, is conversing with the dead. Not only can we learn about their ideas, but also learn from them - if we are ready to listen, of course.

Reaching out to past ideas of emotions may be useful for those who are worried about the current state of politics. In recent years, a lot has been written and said about the collective emotions of the citizens in contemporary democratic societies - for example about their fear, frustration, anger, and other feelings, as a consequence of social exclusion, lack of influence on political processes, or polarization. Volumes have also been written about how politicians and new media manipulate citizens' feelings. The French political theoretician Pierre Hassner has diagnosed "the revenge of the passions" in today's politics; some other researchers have pointed out the "emotional state of higher necessity" or have ironically written about an "international contest in empathy".

We can also use philosophical concepts of emotions coming from Antiquity, Early Modernity, and so on, to build philosophical arguments about contemporary politics. To do this, we have to come back to the understanding of philosophy as the art of making the difficult human condition more acceptable. In my talk, I will present some examples of such argumentation, based on notions of the feelings of loss and empathy.

Wigura, Karolina (Berlin,2023)

Posttraumatische Souveränität : ein Essay über Ostmitteleuropa

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1841650986>

edition suhrkamp ; 2783

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1841650986>

Wigura, Karolina (Warsaw,2020)

The end of the liberal mind : Poland's new politics

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=174456907X>

Biblioteka Kultury Liberalnej ; 16

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=174456907X>

Wigura, Karolina (Warszawa,2019)

Wynalazek nowoczesnego serca : filozoficzne źródła współczesnego myślenia o emocjach

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1680797573>

Wigura, Karolina (Essex,2017)

Declarations of forgiveness and remorse in European politics

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1668479354>

Wigura, Karolina (Darmstadt,2016)

Die Radikalisierung der polnischen Debatte zur europäischen Flüchtlingskrise

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1685143121>

Wigura, Karolina (Berlin,2016)

Dämonologie : Polen vor vier verlorenen Jahren

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1668478447>

Wigura, Karolina (2015)

Pojednanie po Putinie

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=168640770X>

Wigura, Karolina (2015)

Syci Polacy patrzą na Ukrainę

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1686407513>

Wigura, Karolina (2015)

Helle und dunkle Solidarität - Polens Blick auf die Ukraine

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1680798642>

Wigura, Karolina (Göttingen,2015)

Gefährdete Nachbarschaften - Ukraine, Russland, Europäische Union

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=785743340>

Valerio ; 17 (2015)

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=785743340>