

Leszek Nowak (1943-2009)

Leszek Nowak was born on the 7th of January 1943 in Więckowice, a town in the South-Eastern part of Poland. He graduated in law (1965) from Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, and in philosophy from Warsaw University (1966). He wrote his doctoral thesis on the theory of law, entitled *Problems of the Meaning and Validity of Legal Norms and the Semiotic Function of Language* (1967) under the supervision of Zygmunt Ziemiński. In 1970 he gained a habilitation degree on the basis of his work *The Methodological Foundations of Karl Marx's Capital*. He became a professor without chair in 1976 and a professor with chair in 1990.

In the years 1965-1970 he worked at the Department of Law and from 1970 until his death on the 20th of October 2009 in the Institute of Philosophy of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. During the martial law period he was imprisoned (1982), and in 1984 he was dismissed from university for his involvement in the Solidarność movement, only to be reinstated in 1989. Leszek Nowak was also a visiting professor at several western universities, such as Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and University of Catania (Italy), among others. He was the founder (in 1975) and the editor-in-chief of the book series *Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Science and the Humanities*.

Leszek Nowak authored three original theories of great significance: the idealization theory of science, non-Marxian historical materialism, and unitarian metaphysics. He is the author of over 600 publications, including 28 books. Towards the end of the 1960s and in the 70s, he engaged himself in philosophy of science, aiming to reconstruct the methodological structure of Marx's *Capital* by applying the tools of modern analytical philosophy. According to Nowak's interpretation, a scientific theory is neither a generalization of facts nor a hypothetical-deductive system. The building of a theory begins with a drastic deformation of the investigated reality. In the next stage this simple picture of the world is modified and concretized through the introduction of secondary factors which approximate the complexity of the world. Nowak developed this idea of scientific method into a multi-model theory of science (*The Structure of Idealization*, 1980).

Leszek Nowak's next important theory was non-Marxian historical materialism, which was a radicalization of Marx's view on social reality. According to Nowak (*Property and Power*, 1983, and *Power and Civil Society*, 1991), class divisions emerged spontaneously in politics, economy, and culture. The conflicts between owners and direct producers, rulers and citizens, and priests and the indoctrinated occur according to their own internal mechanisms, and hence they are irreducible to economic contradictions, which lose their central significance within Nowak's theory.

The third great theory - which Nowak started elaborating in the 1990s -

was a unitarian metaphysics built on the assumption of the negativity of existence. The central thesis of his metaphysics is that to exist is to have a certain lack. The basic components of the metaphysical structure (worlds) are attributes which can adopt positive, negative and neutral values. This view, developed by Nowak in the three-volumed *Being and Thought* (available only in Polish), is still waiting for its reception in the English-speaking philosophical world.

Krzysztof Brzechczyn