

# Disciplining the Disciplined? ‘Culture of Confession’ in Academic Discourse in Poland

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The article consists of two major parts: theoretical-methodological and empirical. It begins with introducing the theoretical background of Foucault’s confessing society concept. The concept explores the functional relationship between academic discourse and confession the aim of which is to acquire data, information and knowledge about the characteristics and states of the subjects. The second part of the paper presents the results of the analysis of ‘the practices of confession’ in the current academic discourse in Poland. The empirical material comprises texts published in the monthly periodical *Forum Akademickie*. The studies provided answers to four fundamental questions: Who confesses? What is the object of confession? What is the form of the confession? Who/what encourages the confession? In conclusion, the authors reflect on what kind of ‘truth’ about the university is produced by academic confessions. The study shows that academic discourse co-creates the ‘culture of confession’ in public statements about the Academics’ biographies, choices and career plans, by revealing the ‘secrets’ of scientific work. The mechanisms of the production of ‘the truth’ about university work in two areas: in the relation of scientists to society and in relations between the Academics.

**Keywords:** academic discourse, confession, Foucault, government by the truth, academic ethos

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, in European (including Polish) public debate there has been a certain explosion of discourse on the university, science and higher education. In our research we pose a question in the spirit of Foucault: what power relationships come to the fore in the modern discursivization of ‘the problem of the university’? Seeking an answer to this question, we turn to Foucault’s concept of a confessing society and we show the meaningfulness and accuracy of the category of confession and of ‘government by the truth’, in order to describe modern academic discourse. In the present study we assume that **confession** is a procedure of truth-making in which the author of the expression is at the same time its object.

The ‘will to knowledge’ described by Foucault as characteristic of Western societies has triggered rituals of confession (Foucault 1998), which can be identified in the academic space,

i.e. in a number of public statements. The term 'culture of confession' (Taylor 2010) is understood here as the discursive practices that express the strategy of 'verbalizing oneself' – talking about oneself, about one's activities, successes and failures, experiences and plans in public. The subject of our research is Academics' practices of confession, present in the public discourse. The empirical material consisted of texts published in the monthly journal *Forum Akademickie* (Academic Forum) in 2011–2014. *Forum Akademickie* is a nationwide, widely available, monthly journal of an informative and journalistic nature, presenting key issues in the academic environment. The analytical usability of articles published within the journal is related to their potential to characterize the phenomenon of 'the academic confession' from the point of view of various actors engaged in its production: professors (including professors-politicians), as well as novice researchers (PhD students and PhD holders). The selected period is particularly important due to the increased public debate around the reform of science and higher education in Poland introduced in 2011.

Before we present the main results, we would like to discuss our theoretical and methodological assumptions, as well as the categories of the analysis.

## THE THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE RESEARCH

### The category of confession in educational analyses

In Polish pedagogy we can see a selective interest in the research and concepts of Michel Foucault. To date, empirical research using Foucault's category of confession has not been undertaken in this field: it appears only in theoretical reflection (Ostrowicka 2014, 2015). At the same time, international studies have already made fruitful attempts to apply the Foucauldian concept of confessional society and confession in empirical studies to contemporary educational practice (e.g. Peters 2000; Besley 2005; Fejes, Dahlstedt 2013; Fejes, Nicoll 2015). Researchers identify and describe the contemporary practices of confession in several areas: reflection and reflective practice, deliberation and therapeutic intervention, lifelong guidance and 'medialized' parenting (see Williams 2007; Fejes, Dahlstedt 2013). Fejes and Nicoll (2015) draw attention to the development of confessional practices as necessary procedures to achieve effective education, learning and social development. These practices work through a specific form of self-control – disclosure of one's own thoughts and their susceptibility to correction. These different 'discursive regimes' always act in relation to the 'other' whose confessions one accepts and responds with a judgment (real or assumed). With regard to phenomena characteristic of higher education, researchers note that the practices of confession, associated with the introduction of the Bologna process, interact with other forms of national policies, including the policy of comparability and competitiveness in the European Higher Education Area (Olsson et al. 2015). The theoretical perspective we have taken here, on the one hand, allows for the description and analysis of academic discourse as part of a vaster 'culture of confession', characteristic of contemporary Western society; on the other hand, particularly interesting from the point of view of researchers of higher education, it allows us to identify what is distinctive and perhaps unique to academic confessions.

### Confession as an analytical category

Confession as an analytical category in the research of academic discourse leads to the focusing of analysis on selected aspects of discourse, that is, on the author, subject and form of a statement, and on the encouragement to speak, i.e. on who/what (what instance) demands confession.

Referring to Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, we understand the concept of confession as an act of revealing one's own convictions and feelings, leading to getting to know oneself and to the formation of self-knowledge. This act comprises all procedures that are used to induce the subject to speak the truth that has a reflexive effect on the confessing subject (Foucault 1995).

Foucault described how the modern human has become a confessional subject. In the lectures he gave at the Collège de France in 1979–1980, the issue of confession was included in the framework of research on government. The concept of government was used by Foucault with a broad focus, encompassing the techniques and procedures of managing the behaviour of oneself and others – not just governing at the state level, but also the governing of children, the house, the 'government of souls,' the government of oneself (Foucault 2009, 2014). In the case of research on the practice of confession, we are dealing here with a particular form of government, 'government by the truth' or 'the regime of truth.' Foucault is interested in the relations between 'this ritual of manifestation of the truth and the exercise of power' (Foucault 2014: 6). As he puts it:

'...what is involved is a set of verbal or non-verbal procedures by which one brings to light – and this may just as well be the sovereign's individual consciousness as the knowledge (savoir) of his counsellors or as public manifestation – something that is asserted or rather laid down as true...' (Foucault 2014: 6).

Foucault calls 'a **regime of truth**' 'that which constrains individuals to a certain number of truth acts, <...> that which defines, determines the form of these acts and establishes their conditions of effectuation and specific effects' (Foucault 2014: 93). A regime of truth 'determines the obligations of individuals with regard to procedures of manifestation of truth' (Foucault 2014: 93). This association of the term 'regime' with acts of disclosing the truth aims at emphasizing the rule of obligation and of necessity, connoted by the concept of regime. What becomes significant is, therefore, one's obligation to subject oneself to certain procedures and institutions of power (Foucault 2014). Consequently, Foucault also proposes transferring the concept of regime to the grounds of epistemology and truth in order to show the issue of commitment to the truth in certain acts of confession. The aim of the present study, which is focused on the problem of the 'regimes of truth,' is, therefore, seeking answers to questions about how the truth is being revealed, to whom and what is its subject. The variety of possible answers results from the diversity of types that regimes of truth may have. But what is common and definitive for the existence of the regime is the commitment mentioned before, which makes acts of truth become both a tool and the effect of government – governing oneself and others by 'the truth' (Ostrowicka 2015).

Foucault, studying medieval Christianity and Hellenistic culture, finds rituals of the production of truth, which developed and transferred to social and institutional relations present in the modern judiciary, medicine, pedagogy and family. Nikolas Rose's (1990) and Chloë Taylor's (2010) works show these diverse forms of modern practices of confession. The concepts of confession and 'regime of truth' sensitize researchers of social phenomena to the issue of the discursive production of knowledge in relations to 'the other.' The 'other' does not have to be identical with the psychophysical entity – it is any form of audience. While in the practices of confession it comes, essentially, to self-presentation, then talking about oneself has a social dimension – it is an expression of surrendering to the 'regime of truth.' The constitutive argument to Foucault's philosophy, about the omnipresence of power relations, is given a concrete expression by a description of certain discursive practices. By studying the practices of confession we discover the 'regime' of governing oneself and others by the truth. In a confession according to the Christian tradition, the subject of a statement is 'secrets,' mysteries and personal experience. In turn,

in its Hellenic variety, a confession is more often seen as a form of reporting on what I have done and explaining why this is the case and not otherwise, or how it could have been done better.

### Problems and the method

The confessions of academics in the public space provoke deeper thought on the consequences of popularising this form of 'acts of truth' for producing knowledge about academia and the relationship between universities and their social environment. Therefore, for the purpose of this research we have chosen *Forum Akademickie* a nationwide monthly journal of an informative and populist character, in a specialist subject area devoted to higher education and science. Systematic reading of articles allowed for the emergence of the following four research questions:

- 1) Who is the one confessing?
- 2) What is the object of the confession?
- 3) What is the form of the confession?
- 4) Who/what encourages one to confess?

The whole study conducted by us had, therefore, an emergent character, resulting from the inductive procedure of qualitative research. The selection of texts for analysis took place in two phases: external and internal (see Flick 2007). The phase of the external selection of sources was deliberate, and ended with the selection of 333 articles published on the pages of *Forum Akademickie* in the years 2011–2014, and thematically related to the issue of the reform of academic research and higher education in Poland. In this phase, the procedure of including articles for analysis was subordinated to two criteria: the time criterion and the object criterion, i.e. regarding the object of a statement considered in the examined text.

The time criterion is related to the necessity of seeing changes, while expressing at the same time the need to adapt the Polish higher education sector to the requirements of the Bologna process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Their direct manifestation is the Act of 18 March 2011 amending the Law on Higher Education, the law on scientific degrees and academic titles, as well as on degrees and titles in art. Its announcement has intensified the current debate about the university and its ultimately desired shape. The object criterion resulted from a broader research plan implemented as part of the project entitled 'Governmentality of the University – the Discursive Image of Contemporary Higher Education Reform in Poland'. Its introduction to these analyses significantly ordered the thematic differentiation of the texts published in *Forum Akademickie* in the period under discussion.

The phase of the internal selection of sources was of a theoretical nature, which ultimately resulted in the fact that 'the sample becomes, by definition, representative of the phenomenon of interest' (Patton 1990: 177). Criteria for the selection of texts for the reconstruction of the academic procedure of confession came from the assumptions of the theory adopted in the present study. According to Foucault's (2014) suggestion, the reconstruction of confession, which is a form of a reflective act of truth, becomes possible when the object of confession is at the same time the performer, witness and subject of this act.

For this reason, the final stage of the analyses covered 63 academic articles, in which 1) the author of a statement made himself or herself the object of interest, reconstructing what he or she has experienced, his or her emotions and situations from his or her own point of view, and in which 2) the grammatical structure of the author in the text was always in the first person singular.

A detailed coding and analysis were performed using the qualitative data analysis programme *Atlas.ti*. In the next section, we present the main results of our analyses, reconstructing academic confessions.

## RESULTS OF THE ANALYSES

The structure of this part of the article is subordinated to the logic of the conducted analyses. Seeking an answer to the question 'Who is the one confessing?', we reconstructed three internally diverse subjects: young researchers<sup>1</sup>, professors, and professors-politicians. The analysis of their statements revealed differences in respect of the object and form of confession, as well as the instances that had launched the 'discourses of truth' of these three, and not other subjects, e.g. academics located in the academic hierarchy between 'young researchers' and 'professors'.

### Confessions of 'young scientists'

Confessions of 'young scientists' in *Forum Akademickie* were found in three groups: winners of a competition for young scholars, Junior teachers who wrote for assistance to more expert colleagues, and participants in the Top 500 Innovators program.

**The Winners** of a competition organized by the publisher of *Forum Akademickie*, entitled 'Complicated and Simple. Young Scholars About Their Research'. Its formula is cyclical. Reviewers expect texts with a straightforward representation of their own or other people's research, in which the authors of the works have participated.

Probably for this reason the issues externalized in confessions within this framework are relatively homogeneous, referring to a widely understood course of the research conducted by those confessing. Their authors make special efforts to present both the very niche and more complex questions such as: 'determining the place and form of the nationwide and variant cemetery' (Długozima, 2014), 'monitoring microinjuries in an eighteenth-century cabinet exposed in a gallery of arts and crafts at the National Museum in Cracow' (Strojecki, 2014) or tardigrades' survival skills – in a way that can be understood by non-specialists. Substantive, although simplified descriptions of one's own research assumptions go hand in hand in this group with an entire collection of individually woven experiences and emotions.

Another focus for this group of contemplations is the nature of a young scientist's work. According to the formal rules of the contest, participation is limited to researchers who have not attained the age of 35. Reflections shared in this regard take a dynamic character, showing young researchers in action. Internships pursued abroad are a starting point to make changes in the home institution, acquired research resources allow one to create one's own research team, and the beginnings (surprising in their form) of an academic career are woven, unnoticed, in its current course.

The 'identity of a young researcher', outlined within this competition, was very clearly set in the academic context. The extremely colourful and intriguing world of exciting science is contrasted with the routine and prose of an ordinary university life. Teaching responsibilities are seen to take time away from scientific work, the overwhelming machinery of academic bureaucracy undermines the foundations of both elementary trust and smooth cooperation, while the necessity to return to one's native scientific environment from scholarships or internships abroad stimulates rather pessimistic reflections. The bright sides are, therefore, intertwined with the dark ones, and the recurring theme of the responses analysed answers the question: 'In the name of what do I bear it?' (Michalczyk, in Mateja 2014).

**Junior teachers** were invited to a discussion proposed by the editors of *FA*, on the topic 'What do Researchers Unnecessarily Lose Time Over?'. In their letters, they reveal their fears,

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Science Funding ACT of 30 April 2010, a young researcher is a research and development worker under 35 years of age until the date of research financial aid application.

concerns and difficulties in working with students in a relatively short series of articles (lasting from 07-08.2013 to 01.2014), which, according to the editors' intentions, were supposed to 'become a means of support in teaching'. 'Young teachers' direct short letters to an expert writing for the journal, with only a few sentences, in the hope of finding a solution to the dilemma they are experiencing.

**The participants** in the *Top 500 Innovators* program, organized by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, in which participants spent nine weeks taking part in a series of training courses and internships related to cooperation with the economic sector and research management. Reflections presented by them focus, therefore, on the description of their stay at Stanford University.

These three groups of confessing young researchers consisted of metrically young people, who are, however, at various stages of their academic career. This can be seen especially in relation to doctoral students and those with a doctoral degree. In the latter case, the term 'young scientist' is associated with project management and research team management, with having many years of international experience in their field of interest, and thus having an established position among other representatives of the scientific community. In their case, the term 'young' certainly does not go hand in hand with being 'novice scientists', taking their first tentative steps in the field of science.

Taking into consideration analysis of their statements, it can be seen that the confessions of young scientists touch upon issues 'from the lower level of the academic hierarchy' (Katunin 2011). They focus around such issues as:

- The characteristics of research methods and the experiences gained through research;
- The bright and dark sides of working as a scientist, examined from the perspective of scientific and educational work, and the specifics of the Polish scientific community.

A specific feature of their confession is the rationing of the voice they have been granted. Both the subject matter and the form of these considerations were subject to top-down control and limitation. In the case of the **winners of the contest** speech control was associated with the need of statement adaptation to the requirements of the announced competition, while in the group of **junior teachers** they were subordinated to the convention invented by the editors of the Our Expert Advises section, whereas the reports of **visits to Stanford University** were presented in the form of an interview.

It is worth noting that guidance and a formula for encouraging sharing one's own teaching difficulties was directed only at this group of Academics.

## Confessions of professors

In professors' confessions three distinctive characteristics can be identified:

- 1) Creating complex narratives (with a protagonist/protagonists, a plot, a specific time and place of events, a climax and a punchline);
- 2) Reflexivity and emotionality of expression, associated with the narrative form;
- 3) Numerous argumentation strategies, referring to religious and political world views.

The foci of the stories are various personal trials and tribulations described in the context of the state of Polish science, the transformations of the university and the conditions of academic work. Within the latter issue, in the confessions of the professors, one can hear a more or less exposed idea that 'it is not work – it's a privilege' (Nawotka, in Mateja 2013b). This perspective of talking about one's own professional experiences, precisely from a perspective of one's privileged position, intersects with narratives aimed at justifying and evaluating the specific choices in one's life. Quite often we are dealing here with a critical self-diagnosis:

'Personally, I have a sense of total failure in this regard, despite my great effort and commitment. I was guided solely by the fact that knowledge has to be transmitted to younger generations and that one should act there, where the greatest negligence is, that is, in regional science and social sciences. It was not my intention to "fix" the state of Polish science' (Schneider 2013).

The stories about one's own academic career are reflective confessions about one's emotions, character traits and world view:

'Saying that my feet buckled under me because of terror does not reflect the panic that I fell into at that time <...>. I would add that I am rather shy, almost withdrawn, and in addition bewildered with the world <...>' (Rakowska-Boguta, in Mateja 2013a).

An extremely interesting aspect of professors' statements is the justification for speaking and for a public confession. Sometimes it is the so-called 'fate' which acts as the imperative to confession, for example: 'I do not feel so good that fate has forced me to write such a text, but the desire and enthusiasm for work were stronger' (Penczak 2011). In many cases, the confession as a statement in one's own name, in the 'I' narrative, becomes a strategy of legitimizing the statement. For example:

'I will discuss this issue, referring to my own experiences and leading a narrative in the first person because I want to emphasize the subjectivity of my judgment <...>. This results from my own experiences and thoughts' (Tadeusiewicz 2014).

In addition to many complex forms of narratives, the professors confess during interviews, in which journalists guide the conversation, as if demanding the confession. The need for justification of speaking in such a case is nullified by the social position granted to the interlocutor.

It is worth noting that the professors' confessions are a combination of a specific purport and rhetoric of 'a person with experience'. The confessions are built on the canvas of reflections on the trajectory of events and the (assumed) causes of one's life decisions. The figure of a scientist 'of flesh and blood' is made visible, and like any other person he/she 'experiences' – feeling diverse emotions and dilemmas. With such a 'real' professor it is easier for the reader to feel empathetic and to understand wider, depersonalized 'problems' of academia.

### Confessions of professors-politicians

In the case of politicians, the necessity to specify the 'author of the confession' is seen as a particularly challenging task. The 'acts of truth' occurring in this group were made from the position of their maker and their object at the same time.

The set of procedures aimed at producing the 'truth about oneself' has a complicated character and refers to:

1) The characteristics of a complex network of relations existing between: the Government, state agencies operating in the field of science and higher education, and universities/research institutes. The voice of those confessing has been embedded in a heterogeneous context of their professional functioning, where the logic of their argument is placed in the network of stand-points and positions occurring in the area of science and higher education;

2) Locating the process of self-reflection in the disciplining bonds of the culture of audit, imposing on the confession a form subordinated to standardized procedures and to the norms determined by experts;

3) The use of several strategies of self-representation (whose characteristics are developed below).

Hybrid identities of the authors of confessions are the result of a peculiar marriage of science and politics in Poland, while the dynamics of changes occurring in that context has been subordinated to the convention of the currently realized or once exercised professional role:

'For three years after vacating the office of Deputy Minister I did not feel boredom or lack of satisfaction, I dealt with scientific activities, I was engaged in social activities mobilizing various groups to cooperation, including those at the international level, but I wanted to use the experience that I had, with the hope that it would be useful in my current position' (Kurzydłowski, in Świć 2011).

The mosaic of functions exercised by decision-makers helps to mask the author as a person: it invalidates the existing boundaries between the traditionally fully defined role of a researcher, manager and administrator of a given state agency and of a politician. It is not rare that the confessing subject 'has been through a lot of different experiences when it comes to exercising the functions related to managing science' (Kurzydłowski, in Świć 2011). The inability to unequivocally answer the question 'Who is actually speaking here and from what position?' is, however, not accidental. The blurring of the author's figure indicated above is a response to the method of governing science and higher education, reported in the confessions. Its basic characteristic has been externalized through the perspective of

1) Practising social consultations:

'The previous term in office was a time of a very intensive work on the reform of science and higher education, the work which involved not only the management and staff of the Ministry, but also the entire scientific community. Let us remember that work on the concept of reform and the public consultations lasted for more than three years' (Kudrycka, in Rybicka 2011);

1) Using the metaphor of 'transfer into the hands of scholars':

'I think it was a very good thing that the decisions on the principles of allocating funds for science were entrusted again in the hands of scientists' (Karoński 2011);

2) Highlighting the autonomy of the academic community:

'In 2011, we expanded the autonomy of the university, introducing program autonomy, which is also emphasized by rectors themselves' (Kudrycka, in Kieraciński 2013).

In this particular case, 'the presentation of truth-telling as the enunciation, formulation, or manifestation of the truth is authorized by a power that is always prior to or anyway external to the person who is speaking' (Foucault 2014: 48): 'What we are going to do for improvement has to be discussed with the scientific and economic community. We have to ask entrepreneurs and scientists what mechanisms they need and then see if these are feasible, even for legal or financial reasons' (Kurzydłowski, in Świć 2011).

That one of the basic strategies of self-presentation used by the authors of confessions is the tendency to place oneself in the role of an expert. The basic prerogative to undertake professional activities by those confessing derives its justification from a generalized concept of the common good.

This type of mission requires from those confessing quite an unusual capital with the following pillars:

1) Interdisciplinarily formed knowledge,

2) Individually generated resources basing on diverse skills and qualifications,

3) Professional experience, drawn both from the local and from international bodies related to higher education.

Equipped with a special kind of capital and a network of international contacts, the confessing politicians reduce their actions to a few functions (see Shore, Wright 1999):

1) Constructing a new form of operative expertise, defining standards and classifications in the field of higher education:

'My focus is primarily on the legislative process related to the amendment of laws on higher education' (Chafasińska-Macukow 2011).

2) Advising on the development of institutional procedures by:

‘giving opinions on strategic documents and drafts of standard descriptions of education, analysing the available data showing the situation of graduates in the labour market, presenting at conferences and promoting good practices, e.g. in the media’ (Banaszak 2013).

3) Creating personnel who will assess compliance with the previously established standards and procedures:

‘Under the new law, there will be an Ethics Committee established at the Academy of Sciences (PAN), which will check compliance with the principles of scientific integrity in our entire scientific community, and therefore also at universities and research institutes’ (Kleiber, in Świć 2011).

4) Taking a caring role, in so far as their expertise is available to those wishing to engage in the process of self-improvement:

‘We really care for high ethical standards. We have created a rigorous code, which excludes Board members and their PhD students, as well as all the experts in the given contest and their PhD students from applying for the grant <...>. We also publish all documents, minutes of meetings and resolutions of the Board, on our website. We want to work transparently, while maintaining the highest standards’ (Karoński 2011).

The self-creation of the confessing authors is subjected to the procedure of ‘disciplining the disciplined’. Their behaviour is subject to standardized procedures and independent evaluations. Aiming to ‘work transparently, while maintaining the highest standards’ (Karoński 2011), they establish a number of codes or committees guarding the integrity of both themselves and the entire academic community.

The logic of considerations undertaken by politicians is subordinated to the statement, according to which ‘nowadays, each implemented change should be justified’ (Kudrycka, in Kieraciński 2012). The primary justification for the direction of changes being implemented is the positively assessed state of science in European countries or an unspecified crisis.

For this reason, politicians’ confessions seem to be thoroughly thought-out and consistent. The language of the argumentation conducted in this framework is substantive, but devoid of the characteristics of professional jargon. Decision-makers using this language have a belief in the validity of their judgments. This is evidenced both by the radical formula of their statements, and by the positive self-evaluation of their own activities:

‘After five years as a Minister of Science and Higher Education I think I can say without false modesty that I have fulfilled all the commitments towards students (e.g. a higher discount on communication fares, agreements with universities) and scientists (more money for grants)’ (Kudrycka, in Kieraciński 2012).

Confession takes here a Hellenistic form, although the degree of compliance with its restrained formula depends on the position of the statement’s author. In the group of confessing politicians a division can be noticed into those ‘appointing to/dismissing from a post’ and those ‘appointed/dismissed’:

‘14 December 2012. A year has passed since I was appointed by the Minister of Science and Higher Education, Prof. Barbara Kudrycka, to the post of the Ombudsman of Higher Education Graduates’ (Banaszak 2013).

‘On 1 September 2009, Mr Prime Minister appointed me to the position of the Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. On 30 September this year, Mr Prime Minister accepted my resignation. It is time to share with you what had been achieved during these thirteen months, what could have been done better, and what still remains to be

done. It is impossible to discuss everything, so I chose the most significant topics, which I was working on' (Szwed 2011).

While the confessions of those 'appointed to/dismissed from a post' were subordinated to a form of detailed report on the tasks carried out in the course of their given function, in the group of those 'appointing to/dismissing from a post' sometimes sporadic information about their experienced emotions and personal experiences can be found:

'I must admit that this is one of the happiest days in my work as a Minister of Science. We have managed to achieve something that was so much needed for all the people of science' (Kudrycka 2013).

'I perceive the nomination for the second term in the government as a proof of trust and appreciation for the work that we all have done as a team at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Personally, I also appreciate the award of the "Pro-student authority in the public life", which I have received from students' (Kudrycka in Rybicka 2011).

The process of self-reflection undertaken here has been located in the bonds of the culture of audit, and their voice shown here does not require any additional validation. It becomes important by the sole fact of its existence.

### The truth of the academic ethos? – Discussion

The study clearly shows that public confession, observed by researchers in other domains, is also present at the university. Academic discourse co-creates the 'culture of confession' in public statements by Academics about their biographies, their choices and career plans, by revealing the 'secrets' of scientific work. In public discourse this 'other', for whom the confession is made, has a collective and virtual character and is not necessarily only from academic community. In conclusion, we would like to reflect on the consequences and the kind of 'truth' about the university produced by academic confessions.

The forms and content of confessions are specific acts of truth of the academic ethos. It may be noted that in academic discourse mechanisms for the production of 'the truth' work in at least two areas: in the relation of scientists to society and in relations between the Academics.

The first field is delineated in the relation of scientists to society. Thanks to a public confession, the distance between the university, commonly perceived as 'an ivory tower', and 'an ordinary man from the street' is reduced. A professor who speaks openly about his/her world view, about personal life conditions and the consequences of his/her decisions turns out to be a reliable person, who, like everyone else, experiences problems and dilemmas. Concern and/or satisfaction with the described changes expressed in the confessions appear to be a free and independent voice from inside academia. Moreover, a sincere emotional confession becomes, in this case, an implementation of 'truth' as the traditional academic value. In this context, what comes to mind is the rule of parrhesia, described by Foucault (2005), understood as both an ethical attitude (*ethos*) and a technical procedure (*techné*). Parrhesia is an ethical position required from the subject, expressed in free and sincere speech: 'It is the openness which makes us speak, which makes us say what has to be said, what we want to say, what we think ought to be said because it is necessary, useful, and true' (Foucault 2005: 366). The parrhesiastes cannot remain silent. However, the imperative of speaking, present in parrhesia, is inherently related to a specific *lexis* and technique of speaking the truth, because, as Foucault points out, *techné* stripped of the ethical layer becomes an 'artificial, fake' discourse, calculated to cause rhetorical and pathetic effects. Moreover, parrhesia as a specific act of truth defines the position of the speaker against the subject receiving 'the discourse of truth' – the position of a teacher and guide (see Foucault

2005). From this perspective, in some of the confessions analysed one can find this special relationship in the space of the discourse, which provides a scaffolding for building a community not only within universities, but also in relation to their surroundings. However, parrhesia requires equality before the right to tell the truth, and therefore has significant political implications, linked to the risk of proclaiming the truth. In the analysed discourse, this risk is externally limited to the confessions of 'young scientists' who have to confess in a strictly defined form and on the subject.

Whereas the fact that university is internally divided is witnessed by the second field of the production of the ethos of academic truth – the relations between the Academics.

The confession helps to defend the truth about the hierarchical University being deprived of unity. In the practices of confession presented in *Forum Akademickie*, a clear hierarchy within academia is preserved – the young are urged to confess in a unified form and within a specific subject area, while the professors are invited to free, formally unrestricted narratives. Confessions of the latter group provide the truth that scientific work is a privilege, but a privilege that requires many sacrifices, because the road to success in science is difficult and bumpy. Thus, they strengthen and legitimize their own position, as those who have fruitfully traversed the road and can be a model for younger generations. It should be stressed here once again that the scrutinized practices of confession are part of the logic of the distribution of 'good practices'. Not only the professors' expressions, but also the confessions of 'young scientists' construct the truth about an academic career built on the ethos of difficult and complicated, but rewarding scientific work. Stories of their successes in science legitimize investments in youth and a whole range of grant programs that fund the research of young scientists, that is, those under 35 years of age. The above-mentioned hierarchy in academia is, therefore, not so clear – next to the structure based on scientific degrees what comes to the fore with increasing strength is the 'truth' based on the categorization of age and the belief in the potential of youth.

Public confession, although new to university, is still a voice coming from its interior. This does not, however, mean a questioning of the *ethos* of science but its restitution with the help of new mechanisms and categories. Mechanisms coming from the 'culture of confession' establish the relation with 'the other' in the centre of the discourse, the 'other', in front of whom the confession is being made and who demands this confession. As a result, the practices of confession reveal commitments to specific procedures of producing the truth, as well as the norms and criteria of validity of knowledge coming from outside academia. The academic ethos 'regime of truth' appears like a hybrid made of Academia's interior and exterior.

## FUNDING

This work was supported by the National Science Centre in Poland (Grant No. 2014/14/E/HS6/00671).

Received 23 September 2017

Accepted 8 November 2018

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## **Akademio dyskursu tvarka (pagal M. Foucault) Lenkijos moksle**