

BOBRZYŃSKI, Michał—historian, historiosopher, and politician, b. November 30, 1849 in Kraków, d. July 3 1935 in Poznań.

He began to study in 1867 at Jagiellonian University and obtained a doctorate in 1872. In 1875 he went to Germany where he studied the history of German law under R. Sohm and others. After returning to Poland he held the chair of Polish and German law at Jagiellonian University (1876–1885) and obtained sequential scientific degrees: extraordinary professor (1877) and ordinary professor (1879). From 1878 to 1890 he was director of the Archive of Municipal and Land Acts in Kraków. From 1893 to 1901 he lectured at the University of Lwów. He worked with many scientific associations: in 1878 he became a corresponding member, and in 1883 an active member of the Academy of Applied Knowledge, in 1880 an honorary member of the Society of Friends of the Sciences in Poznań, and in 1920 of the Scientific Society in Lwów. With J. Szujski and W. Kalinka he established the so-called Kraków historical school.

He performed many political functions and was active in the social life of the Austro-Hungarian empire and Galicia. He was a member of the city council in Kraków (1881–1890) and for several years (1885–1919) a delegate to the National Galician Parliament [Sejm], a member of the Austrian State Council, and vice-president of the National School Council (1881–1901). Because of Bobrzyński's efforts the network of popular Polish schools in Galicia grew considerably. He raised the level of education for Polish youth, especially the middle and professional level, and he improved that state of school textbooks published. In 1908, after J. Potocki was killed, he was named regent of Galicia. In the performance of his office he tried to diminish Polish-Ukrainian conflicts. He contributed in bringing popular delegates into the Polish Circle. In 1913 he resigned from the post of regent in connection with an intensifying political campaign against him for a too conciliatory position toward the Ukrainian population in east Galicia—among those who criticized him for this were the people focussed around National Democracy. The popularists and socialist accused him at the time of a pro-Austrian attitude and overlooking the interests of peasants and workers in internal politics. As a leader and ideologist of the conservative party of “stanczyks” he supported loyalty of Poles to Vienna and their collaboration with Austrians and Hungarians. During the First World War he supported J. Pilsudski's Polish legions and the Major National Committee. In 1916 and 1917 he was Austrian minister for Galicia. After abandoning the conception based on collaboration with Austria in the work of restoring Poland's independence he retired from political action. At first he lived in Kraków and in 1919 he moved permanently to Wielkopolska.

Bobrzyński's works include the following: *O ustawodawstwie nieszawskim Kazimierza Jagiellończyka* [On the Nieszawa legislation of Kazimierz Jagiellonian] (Kr 1873); *Dzieje Polski w zarysie* [History of Poland in outline] (Wwa 1879, Wwa 1977¹⁰); *Prawo propinacji w dawnej Polsce* [The law of taverns in old Poland] (Kr 1888); *Szkice i studia historyczne* (I–II, Kr 1922).

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AND METHODOLOGY OF THE HISTORICAL SCIENCES. Bobrzyński believed in studying the past under all aspects and considering various research methods. In one of his first works, *Kilka słów o najnowszym ruchu na polu naszego dziejopisarstwa* [A few words on the latest movement in the field of our writing of history] (1877) he supported the application in the historical sciences of auxiliary sciences and those that nourish history. He appreciated the role of sociology and law in these studies; the sciences, especially the exact sciences, are able to verify or ascertain the falsehood of selected historical sources. He was opposed to Joachim Lelewel's historiosophical conception and objected to its imprecision, the result of an excess of ideological thought and the subordination of its premises to a “passionate revolutionary-democratic doctrine”.

According to Bobrzyński, history has many various tasks that go beyond the description of historical facts. History describes the character of a nation, its aspirations and possibilities for development. It shows the laws to govern its history. Therefore one who investigates history should

seek to discover the laws and principles that govern human reality, especially social associations, states, and nations. One cannot concentrate exclusively on gathering and organizing historical facts, but one must also properly interpret them. In history it is necessary to present hypotheses whereby it is possible to discover and creatively interpret the laws of history. However, these should be based on what the sources provide, should constitute a defined whole, should consider the findings of the particular sciences, and should not be in contradiction to them. This is connected with the chief task of every scholar, especially the historian, the quest for truth. Bobrzyński was a positivist by conviction and state that the general laws of the development of societies depend on many factors and laws of a sociological and legal nature, among which the struggle for existence plays an essential role. He criticized the political role of the clergy in history and disparaged the kind of historiography that has high regard for the role of religion, especially Catholicism, in the history of Poland. He was also opposed to messianic conceptions of the history of the Polish nation and state.

Bobrzyński supported the synthetic research and description of history. Monographic works concerning particular facts and questions are valuable to the extent that they are based on solid source material and can serve in the construction of syntheses and generalizations concerning the whole of the history of the nation and state. In his work *Dzieje Polski w zarysie* [History of Poland in outline] he divided the history of Poland into three periods: patriarchal, patrimonial, and legal. In the “patriarchal” period, a group of Slavic peoples from the lands between the Oder River and the Vistula River became a nation and started the existence of the state organism. The ruler was the father of the peoples associated with him by consanguinity and had unlimited power, influence as a teacher, and authority among his subjects. This period in the history of the Polish nation lasted to the mid-thirteenth century. After this was the “patrimonial” period, which lasted to the end of the fifteenth century. The nation then became free from under the patriarchal power of the princes and began to build the foundations of the Polish state. The middle class, with the influx of German colonists, was divided into two parts: Polish and German. The clergy was a distinct state. The role of the ruler was to harmonize the development and collaboration of the states and to defend the external frontiers. Toward the end of the fifteenth century the so-called legal period of history began in which society began to empower the state authority. Conditions also demanded increased spending to maintain the army and the state administration—Poland waged many wars for influence in the Baltic basin. Poland also adopted many elements of western culture. In politics, the nobles also began to manifest centrifugal and anarchic tendencies.

In his description of the history of the Polish state over recent centuries, Bobrzyński came to the conclusion that the cause of its collapse toward the end of the eighteenth century was a moral crisis in the classes that had influence on the internal politics of the Republic. This caused a fracture in the state’s internal structures and the distortion of the democratic institutions of the time. The moral crisis also contributed to the collapse of cities and the loss of equilibrium between the magnate class, the nobility, the peasantry, the middle class, and the government. Social equilibrium, according to Bobrzyński, is a condition for the efficient functioning of the state and it makes possible collaboration between the particular social classes, and allows their rivalry without undermining the existence of the state. The preservation of such equilibrium is possible due to the moral power of the nation and a strong ruling authority. Bobrzyński was an opponent of republicanism and said that attempts to replace the monarchy with a republic became a cause of lack of respect for the law and misfortune throughout the state.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY. Bobrzyński was an opponent of political tolerance conceived as freedom of action for the nobility against the interests of the whole and the state’s integrity. He also criticized the Polish clergy for trying to gain privileges and wealth at the cost of the state’s authority, which caused social antagonisms to increase. He thought that non-Catholics play a positive role in the state insofar as they try to increase its power and integrity. Religious and moral factors have a certain significance in social life, but the most important thing for the Polish nation is that the political

authority that stands at its head should be strong and should be able to perform its functions in an absolute manner, even at the cost of rights and respect for the freedom of individuals.

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