

Education in the Lvov-Warsaw School: Insights from Personal Recollections. Introduction to the Archival Compilation of Reminiscences

Krzysztof Nowicki
(University of Warsaw)

The archival texts of reminiscences collected in this volume document the teaching activities of two prominent members of the Lvov-Warsaw School (LWS) – Kazimierz Twardowski and Izydora Dąmbska. Translations¹ of these texts provide international access to unique firsthand accounts written by their pupils and students, offering valuable insights into the teaching service of the coryphaei of the LWS, their attitudes towards students, and their guiding ideals. However, it should not escape our attention that these texts were written under very different circumstances. Some were composed while their subjects were still alive, others immediately after their deaths, and still others many years later. Moreover, the perspectives of the writers vary: some accounts were written before, and others after, World War II – a conflict that not only wrought intellectual devastation but also led to the establishment of a communist system in Poland, which was often hostile to independent critical thought. All this, combined with the unique temperaments of the memoirists, means that even when they discuss similar subjects, they present markedly different perspectives on the activities of these two great philosophers.

Most of the collected memoirs concern Kazimierz Twardowski. This focus can be explained by two considerations. Firstly, it was Twardowski's activity that led

¹ The translations of these texts were prepared by the author of this introduction. The goal was to preserve the original tone and style while ensuring accessibility for an international scholarly audience.

to the formation of the LWS and its distinctive ethos, uniquely reflected in its approach to teaching. Secondly, although there were many eminent teachers in the School, it may be convincingly argued that Twardowski was the most outstanding among them. In his text, Zygmunt Łempicki even describes Twardowski as a “didactic genius,” a characterization hardly in excess given the nearly 50 doctorates he supervised.

The volume also includes two texts on Izydora Dąmbska, Twardowski’s student. These contributions vividly illustrate how she embodied the philosophical ideals inherited from her teacher, both in her approach to teaching and in her unwavering dedication to pedagogical service – first in the face of the German occupation, and later in response to the rigid constraints of the communist regime. Her natural intellectual inclinations further sharpened the existential significance of responsible and rigorous philosophizing, which she expressed in the maxim: *Non est necesse vivere, necesse est philosophari* (“It is not necessary to live, it is necessary to philosophize”).

What is particularly interesting about the presented reminiscences is that they convey a unique image of the model philosopher – researcher, activist, and educator. Even if these texts, given the context they were written in, may contain an admixture of idealization regarding the figures described, it is nevertheless significant that all the authors attribute to them a similar set of characteristics. This noteworthy agreement indicates that the authors shared a common set of values, values representative of the LWS. In short, these values can be encapsulated in the slogan: “scientific philosophy as a way of life.” From these reminiscences, Twardowski and Dąmbska emerge as philosophers who not only embody those virtues but also transmit this model of philosophizing to their students – both through the content of their teaching and by their personal example.

This system of values includes those often associated with the LWS: a characteristic care for clarity and precision in both speech and thought, a rigorous demand for adequate justification of proclaimed beliefs, and, above all, an uncompromising, methodical pursuit of truth. Such traits have led many scholars to regard the LWS as a distinct Polish strand of analytic philosophy, and they are richly evidenced in all reminiscences.

One can cite, for example, a passage from Dąmbska’s text in which she speaks of Twardowski in the following way:²

² All citations in this introduction refer to the texts published in this volume.

Putting forward the postulate of the scientific practice of philosophy, Twardowski fought for clarity and precision of philosophical statements and their proper justification. (I. Dąmbaska, *Kazimierz Twardowski: Masters of Our Time*)

One can also quote Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, who says the following about Twardowski's teaching style:

Twardowski's didactic work focused precisely on freeing oneself from haziness, to see through a transparent current whether the essence of the matter is depth or shallowness, and to instil in listeners the need for clear thinking and a disdain for platitudes disguised as profundity. (K. Ajdukiewicz, *Extra-Scientific Activity of Kazimierz Twardowski*)

In Dąmbaska's case, one can recall Krystyna Stamirowska's words about the course of Dąmbaska's seminars:

The aim was to reach the true meaning, to grasp the essential thought of the author; the evening meetings were a shared search for truth, not a display of erudition or rhetoric. This is how we learned to read and understand philosophical texts; this is how certain needs and habits were formed, which, I believe, remained equally important also for those of us who later moved away from philosophy. (K. Stamirowska, *The Essence of Teaching*)

This last remark also illuminates another crucial aspect of the LWS's educational ethos. It was a school of clear and exact thinking that extended far beyond academia. The members of the School applied critical thinking skills to both theoretical discussions and matters of everyday life. And this is exactly what they passed on to their students. As a result, those educated by Twardowski's School members were not only prepared for a potential academic career, but were also well equipped to handle all sorts of socially significant tasks.

The picture, however, would remain incomplete if one were to stop at this point. For what emerges from these texts is not only the image of a philosopher who is guided by clear and precise thinking, but also one who sets high moral standards for themselves and those around them. This is a person distinguished by conscientiousness, courage, and justice. These virtues were instilled in their students not only through the content of their teaching but, perhaps even more, through the way they lived their lives. One should, however, emphasize that this

high moral standard is not merely a manifestation of internalized moral rigorism. It rather flows from a sense of responsibility and a sincere concern for others, especially those over whom they had direct influence.

In Twardowski's case, this moral dimension is recognized by Dąmbska in the following words:

According to Twardowski, practising philosophy is not just about solving certain theoretical problems. It is also a path of deepening and improving moral character, a path to internal independence and self-mastery. To be a philosopher is not only to realize certain intellectual values but also moral ones. (I. Dąmbska, *Kazimierz Twardowski: Masters of Our Time*)

This model of philosophizing is also what Twardowski passed on to his students, as is pointed out by Tadeusz Czeżowski:

He educated, which means he shaped characters, instilling in his students ethical principles and dispositions of will. Ethical principles – faith in the existence of absolute values of truth and goodness as goals of selfless pursuit; dispositions of will – dutifulness, conscientiousness, thoroughness, reliability. (T. Czeżowski, *Kazimierz Twardowski as a Teacher*)

In a similar vein, Maria Oberc comments on Dąmbska:

I think she taught us much more than grammar and who wrote what. Then, and even today, I sometimes think: if I did this or that, what would she have said about it? I believe she taught us, above all, to distinguish good from evil, baseness from honesty, and not just to distinguish – but to persistently, stubbornly, defend the most valuable virtues inherent within a person – even at the cost of one's own life. (M. Oberc, *Professor Dr Izydora Dąmbska in Secret Teaching*)

But even this is not enough for a complete picture. The portraits that emerge from the memoirs are not merely of intellectual ascetics, fenced off from the world by the gates of the university, who only educate their students and then send them into the world. Rather, they depict people who use their acquired intellectual dispositions to actively shape their social and cultural environment, regardless of how difficult the external circumstances may be. In Twardowski's case, this refers to his organizational activities at all levels of education, popular-

izing science, as well as giving advice to people who were not directly connected with the university.

This is how Irena Pannenkowa writes about him:

Endowed with an inexhaustible sense of initiative and extraordinary organizational skills, he continually established new cultural and educational institutions or revived old ones. (I. Pannenkowa, *Kazimierz Twardowski of Blessed Memory: Philosopher and – “Happy Man”*)

She is echoed by Ajdukiewicz, who writes:

[H]is outstanding organizational talent earned him exceptional authority, both within the university and with the state authorities, who had a decisive voice in many university matters. (K. Ajdukiewicz, *Extra-Scientific Activity of Kazimierz Twardowski*)

Władysław Witwicki is similarly outspoken, drawing attention to Twardowski's extraordinary thoroughness in carrying out his duties:

As one of the founders and long-time patron of a girls' high school, he was concerned not only with the general direction and spirit of the studies at the institution but also knew about every detail in its life and did not overlook any, even if that detail did not align with the general approach. The same applied to his management of Lvov University, where he served as rector for three years. Then, for the first time since time immemorial, the queues of listeners in front of the ticket offices during registration disappeared. The same was true in the case of the Society of Teachers of Higher Schools, of which he was chairman for several years and which he elevated like no one before him. (W. Witwicki, *Kazimierz Twardowski*)

In Dąmbska's case, it is the organization of secret teaching during World War II, even despite the grave danger. As Oberc attests:

She was the first in Lvov to decide to organize secret teaching [...]. When in July 1941, the delegate Wycech came from Warsaw to Lvov to organize secret teaching, Ms Iza provided him with a complete roster of 20 study groups (each consisting of 4–6 people) at the secondary education level, already operating at full capacity. (M. Oberc, *Professor Dr Izydora Dąmbska in Secret Teaching*)

Unfortunately, the post-war reality significantly restricted Dąbska's non-scientific activities. Her past as a soldier in the Home Army, as well as her uncompromising belief in the necessity of freedom in scientific research, made her an inconvenient figure for the communist authorities. As a result, she became a target of ideological attacks, which also significantly – though not entirely – limited her influence on younger generations of philosophers.

The qualities listed here form an important part of the ideal image of the philosopher as embodied by Dąbska and Twardowski in their lives. While this is certainly not an exhaustive characterization, it offers insight into what they conveyed to their students through their teaching. This image, however, is not only a historical curiosity – or even a source of inspiration – but above all, I believe, a task for all those who wish to nurture the memory of the LWS. For, as the memoirs make clear, one teaches not only by what one says, but above all by how one lives. There is, therefore, no greater tribute to honour the tradition of the School than to strive to realize this model in one's life and teaching, even if one may never be considered a "didactic genius."

With this ideal in mind, let us now turn to a brief review of the recollections that bring these qualities to life. Since much of the specific information is repeated, I will mention only what is unique to the perspective offered by each text.

Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (*Extra-Scientific Activity of Kazimierz Twardowski*) focuses mainly on Twardowski's non-scientific activities. He describes Twardowski's organizational achievements, which include, among others, founding and directing the Polish Philosophical Society, founding and editing the journal "Ruch Filozoficzny" [Philosophical Movement], and his involvement in the Society of Teachers of Secondary and Higher Schools. In addition, Ajdukiewicz mentions Twardowski's role in popularizing science and founding the Common University Lectures, as well as his central role at the Jan Kazimierz University – just to name a few of the things Ajdukiewicz recalls.

Stefan Baley (*To Professor Kazimierz Twardowski on the 70th Anniversary of His Birth*), in turn, mentions Twardowski's role in the formation of scientific psychology in Lvov. He emphasizes both his role in teaching psychology in a strict and precise way and his role in establishing the Psychological Department at the Jan Kazimierz University. He also draws attention to Twardowski's particular gift for reading what the students wanted to say, making him appear almost clairvoyant in their eyes.

In his text (*Kazimierz Twardowski as a Teacher*), **Tadeusz Czeżowski** describes Twardowski's influence on philosophy in Poland, especially his role in giving Polish philosophy a kind of unity. Moreover, he lists the components that made up his teaching activity: the ideal of philosophical education, the teaching method, and its implementation. This portrait of the teacher concludes by pointing out that Twardowski valued the teaching vocation above all else.

In a similar vein, **Izydora Dąmbska** (*Kazimierz Twardowski: Masters of Our Time*) underscores Twardowski's contribution to the formation of a scientific style of philosophizing in Poland. She points out that this style was expressed through common methodological postulates rather than through any specific views. Furthermore, just like Czeżowski, she accentuates the ethical dimension of Twardowski's philosophizing, which brings to mind the figure of Socrates, and draws attention to the origins of his efforts – namely, his love of two ideals: objective truth and moral goodness.

In describing Twardowski, **Zygmunt Łempicki** (*In Memory of Kazimierz Twardowski*) talks about the deep respect Twardowski had for the individuality of his students and how he taught them responsibility for their words. Moreover, he highlights Twardowski's contribution to the development of Polish spiritual culture and his exemplary civic virtues. A unique element of Łempicki's text is his colourful description of Twardowski's appearance.

Irena Pannenkowa (*Kazimierz Twardowski of Blessed Memory: Philosopher and – “Happy Man”*) recalls Twardowski as an organizer of cultural and educational life in Lvov. She points out that, although Twardowski was initially sceptical of female students, over time he changed his attitude and even proudly referred to her as his first female doctor. Pannenkowa particularly remembered Twardowski's words from their last meeting, in which he described himself as a happy man.

In his reminiscences, **Władysław Witwicki** (*Kazimierz Twardowski*) draws out the cultural context in which Twardowski had to work. In particular, he points out that Twardowski's intelligible and clear style stood in stark contrast with the popular thought trends of the time, attracting whole crowds to him. Witwicki notes that, despite his rigorous attitude, Twardowski was sensitive to the emotional value and weight of words, and he mentions Twardowski's deep passion for music.

Similar remarks are also found in the text by **Zygmunt Zawirski** (*Kazimierz Twardowski [1866–1938]*), who further emphasizes that Twardowski's cold and stark demeanour contrasted with his warm devotion to his students. In particular, however, he draws our attention to the fact that Twardowski was an authority not only on academic matters, but also on ordinary human affairs. He recalls a number of stories in which people not normally associated with the university sought his advice.

In her reminiscences, **Maria Oberc** (*Professor Dr Izydora Dąmbska in Secret Teaching*) describes Dąmbska's involvement in underground teaching during World War II. She attributes this commitment to Dąmbska's belief in the fundamental importance of education – something worth pursuing and providing despite the risks. She also recalls Dąmbska's individualized approach to students, and how she treated them as equals.

The last text, by **Krystyna Stamirowska** (*The Essence of Teaching*), presents Dąmbska's philosophical attitude and her method of teaching at the university. In particular, Stamirowska discusses her seminars, which were distinguished by a unique atmosphere of engaging with something extraordinary. These seminars not only taught students how to read texts, but also how to understand them thoroughly. She also describes Dąmbska's uncompromising moral character, the way she taught by example, and how her authority endures in her students long after her death.

Perhaps the most fitting way to conclude this brief introduction – while also encouraging the reading of the recollections gathered here – is by recalling the words of Twardowski to his students, as mentioned in Dąmbska's text. These words can be considered both his pedagogical testament and a testimony to his deep devotion to his students:

I tried to instil in your souls what is the best part of my own soul: sincere love for work, ardent love of truth and earnest striving for justice. (I. Dąmbska, *Kazimierz Twardowski: Masters of Our Time*)