

## To Professor Kazimierz Twardowski on the 70th Anniversary of His Birth\*

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Each one of us has had teachers, but only a few among them were such that their personality left an indelible mark of profound experiences in our memory. Perhaps there are even some who passed through all schools a long time ago, and for whom the phrase “true teacher” remained an empty sound because they had not encountered anyone deserving of that title. A good teacher is not easily found, although instinctively sought after and longed for during the younger years. Therefore, encountering one on the path of life is quite a significant fortune.

Today, I speak as one of those fortunate individuals who found a “good teacher” in the person of Professor Kazimierz Twardowski. It is not easy, even for those among his students who are “professional” psychologists, when they analyse their memories, to realize exactly the psychological peculiarity of educational contact with a good, Great teacher. Attempt at realization hits certain fragments, snippets that are difficult to piece together, but each of them in itself carries the significance of a profound experience.

Here I recall that for us, attending Professor Twardowski’s seminars as part of our university education, he sometimes seemed like a clairvoyant regarding our thoughts. Countless times have we awkwardly, in clumsy words, while discussing during seminars or when writing papers, tried to arduously develop our thoughts, having a feeling that they were so vaguely expressed that no one could grasp them properly. Moreover, we felt that the idea that was budding within us was not entirely clear to ourselves. And then it was he who unmistakably and perfectly penetrated our intentions. He always managed to discern what we wanted to say and formulated it in a clear and simple manner at the same time. Only then did

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\* S. Baley, *Prof. Kazimierzowi Twardowskiemu w 70-letnią rocznicę urodzin*, “Polskie Archiwum Psychologii” 1936/1937, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 66–67.

our thoughts become clear before our eyes. And when we sometimes tried to argue with him, attempting to oppose his views with ours, the first thing he did was not to fight our arguments, but make us aware of their value, whereby in our eyes their importance and persuasive power grew even more. The Professor presented objections and counterarguments only later, cautiously, without any special pressure, so that we felt as if it was not him who was speaking to us at that time, but the truth itself speaking through his mouth, which demands illumination of everything from all sides and consideration of all possible arguments for and against.

And thanks to Him, we had moments of joyful mental exertion. He knew how to intensify our thought so that it moved spontaneously along a straightforward path, always leading to some, even if minor, positive result that richly rewarded our arduous efforts. We made strange discoveries then. We became convinced of how just a simple summary of the theory and views of a researcher is a really difficult thing, but at the same time fascinating since the summary has to capture the essential content in an unclouded and concise manner. Under his wise guidance, we matured to understand that a single, clearly formulated and rich in content sentence can possess greater value than a long, murky treatise. Our “logical conscience” grew within us and became firmly entrenched forever.

In connection with the current jubilee, the celebrant’s merits as a philosophy professor have already been highlighted. In this publication, dedicated to issues of applied psychology, what concerns us most is the fact that he is also a professor of psychology. Reflections on abstract philosophical issues did not prevent him from appreciating the importance of experimental psychology. It is thanks to him that, within the walls of the Jan Kazimierz University, the Psychological Department emerged “out of nothing.” A cramped room in the basement and a few sheets of paper for recording observations – this was essentially all that the “experimental” department had when it first started. However, slowly, year after year, in a consistent and planned manner, its resources increased, and the number of students working there grew. Today, it is already a beautiful, large, well-equipped, and well-located department, which has trained a number of researchers currently occupying psychology chairs at universities in Poland.

But while Professor Twardowski perfectly understood the significance of experiments in psychology as a certain strict method of research, on the other hand, he constantly instilled in us, his students, an awareness that all psychological re-

search will only be valuable if it starts with clear mental assumptions, and ends with the proper interpretation of findings. Precision and accuracy are obligatory for a psychologist when conducting research, reporting it to others and drawing conclusions. Any vagueness, any superficiality is an offense against the principles of psychology as a science. When starting research, one must first and foremost understand clearly the purpose and the means to be applied. At the same time, one cannot ignore what others have already accomplished in this field. One must respect the efforts of others and conscientiously give an account of what one has accepted from them as established. And when you finally obtain results in your research, you have to be very cautious in drawing conclusions and not assert that it's one iota more than the research actually shows. These are the principles that Professor Twardowski persistently and consistently introduced to his students, so that they became lasting habits.

And one more thing. Anyone who has read even one of Professor Twardowski's beautiful treatises knows that it is difficult to find an author who would write in a clearer and more understandable manner. Abstruseness and heaviness of thought are as alien to all of Professor Twardowski's writings as they were to his university lectures. But this clarity of thought and transparent way of presentation never made his treatises, which were devoted to scientific issues, "popular" in the negative sense of the word. Professor Twardowski has always very firmly defended the prestige of psychology as an exact science. All concepts it uses and all the arguments it presents should be clear, but at the same time very precise. Psychology, precisely because its language is broadly shared with the language of everyday life and because it addresses a range of issues accessible and important to the "layman," is constantly in danger of running aground into shallow phrases, naïve generalizations, and empty rhetoric. This danger threatened psychology in Poland no less, and perhaps even more, than in other countries. Professor Twardowski was the one who steadfastly stood guard over psychology as true knowledge, knowledge that wants to be understandable to everyone, but not at the expense of precision. And if today this view has become almost universally solidified, if psychologists in Poland have the ambition to develop psychology as a true science, this is yet another merit of Professor Twardowski.

These are a few thoughts that I wanted to express now on the occasion of the tribute paid by the Polish science to Professor Twardowski on his 70th birthday. As an expression of our appreciation for him, let it be assured that "Polskie Archi-

wum Psychologii” [Polish Archives of Psychology], which is the organ of applied psychology, appreciates the value of the ideas that he has always advocated and will strive to embody them within its work.