

## Kazimierz Twardowski (1866–1938)\*

Zygmunt Zawirski

The ranks of pre-war professors at Lesser Poland universities are gradually beginning to thin out, and it should not be forgotten that the posts they held were exceptionally important, considering that Lvov and Cracow had the only Polish higher education institutions before the war. The deceased was one of the most outstanding figures among those people who are now leaving the historical stage, not only as a professor of philosophy, but also as one of the organizers and creators of our contemporary philosophical culture and an educator of many philosophers of the new generation. He was born in Vienna, received both his secondary and higher education there, and habilitated as an assistant professor of philosophy in 1894. But after only a year of activity as an assistant professor, he was appointed as a professor of philosophy at the University of Lvov, where for 35 years, from 1895 to 1930, he developed his incredibly lively activity. From the first years of his activity, he exerted a fascinating influence on his surroundings. A tall, robust man, with a majestic posture, as a professor, he astonished everyone with the exceptional clarity of his lectures, and as an educator and organizer of philosophical studies, he impressed everyone with his unrelenting rigorism, decisiveness and consistency in action.

In his philosophical publications, the same clarity and simplicity of style strike as in his delivered lectures; the number of these publications is small, they could all be contained in one volume. However, their value should not be judged by the quantity. Neither in his books, nor in his lectures did he impose any system, nor did he try to create one. He only cared about the clarity and precision of the method, about instilling minds with correct thinking, which is indispensable not only in scientific work, but also in practical life. His works concern issues on the border of psychology, logic and epistemology. Such works include *Wyobrażenia*

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\* Z. Zawirski, *Kazimierz Twardowski (1866–1938)*, "Biblioteczka Czasu" 1938, Vol. 6, pp. 3–6.

*i pojęcia* [Images and Concepts], *O czynnościach i wytworach* [Actions and Products], as well as his habilitation thesis, printed still in Vienna, *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen* [On the Content and Object of Presentations]. He was an opponent of all relativism, both philosophical and physical. Dedicated to the fight against relativism in philosophy is his work *O tak zwanych prawdach względnych* [On So-Called Relative Truths], which was translated into German.

His stiff and seemingly cold demeanour, however, attracted listeners. People standing by could not always understand it; they would sometimes ask in surprise how his listeners, young philosophers, could feel comfortable dealing with such a cold, strict professor. But the youth, working under the guidance of their professor in seminars, soon found out that the professor desired their good, that the professor loved the youth and devoted more time to them than anyone else could. When reading the classics of philosophy at seminar meetings, the professor demanded from each listener to provide him with a logical summary of a given chapter several days before the session, and all these summaries, the number of which sometimes amounted to 40 or more, he meticulously read and monitored, devoting to it every week several hours of hard work. I do not know a professor who burdens himself with as much work.

The professor, however, was not always cold and stern and liked to have fun with youth. Sometimes, however, he was unpleasant. And more than one older listener, even valued by the professor, received sometimes a cool attitude and reception. But it was known that the professor was demanding primarily of himself; consistency and compliance with his principles, he demanded from himself, so all the more from others; his own daughter, who, as a university student, found herself at the seminar under the guidance of her father, did not always feel comfortable.

The severity and rigour of the professor had something of German systematicity. His mother was, by the way, German; the late deceased received upbringing in a German environment, but interestingly, he did not like German philosophy. He did not admire Kant or post-Kantians. When during the doctoral rigorosum, I stated that I had chosen Kant as a philosopher to elaborate, he was almost surprised and could not help remarking that the contrast between the critique of practical reason and the critique of pure reason in Kant resembles the doctrine of double truth in medieval philosophy. He valued French and English philosophers much more highly, especially the latter, for their clear and accessible way of writing. It is not a coincidence that he dedicated his doctoral thesis to Descartes and his criterion of truth as clear and distinct knowledge.

He was the founder of the Polish Philosophical Society, which was established in Lvov on the anniversary of Kant's death (1904), the founder of the journal "Ruch Filozoficzny" [Philosophical Movement] in 1911, and also the chief editor of the "Studia Philosophica" yearbooks, two volumes of which have already been published. No one was as familiar with university life matters as he was; he served twice as dean and three times as rector, during the most difficult war years, 1914–1917. The treatises *O patriotyzmie* [On Patriotism] and *O dostojęństwie Uniwersytetu* [On the Dignity of the University] indicate how keenly he was interested in the matters of the reborn homeland and matters of collective life, because he understood philosophy as the *magistra vitae*. He provided advice to everyone, even on matters far from science and philosophy. An interesting example of this I once saw in the premises of the Philosophical Seminar. Once Highlanders from Poronin, where he often spent vacations, came to him asking for advice on their problems, certainly not philosophical ones. They deliberately travelled from Poronin to Lvov for this purpose! The extent to which wide circles felt grateful for his work for the good of society is finally evidenced by the fact that the industrial city of Łódź awarded him a scientific prize a few years ago. Until the last moments of his life, despite a long-term illness, he was interested in the progress of scientific-philosophical work, and, as far as he could, actively participated in it. He felt happy with the fruits of his labour, although physical suffering increasingly troubled him and disturbed this happiness.

In religious matters, he distinguished the essence of religiosity common to all religions from their unimportant details. He believed in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, as evidenced by the translation of Fechner's work *Das Büchlein vom Leben nach dem Tode* [English: The Little Book of Life after Death; Polish: Książeczka o życiu po śmierci] executed under his direction. However, he rejected freedom of will and was a resolute determinist. Lectures on this topic, delivered during one of the summer semesters, were among the best-prepared ones I have ever heard. When, after passing the colloquium in this course, as one of the advanced students, I talked to the professor about this topic and asked how determinism could be reconciled with a religious view of the world, he replied: "To thoughts of hell, you must of course bid farewell, and the relationship of human souls to God must be understood somewhat differently, than is typically done in religious beliefs..." He was also an advocate of building ethics independently of religious beliefs.