Edukacja Filozoficzna 78/2024
ISSN 0860-3839, eISSN 2956-8269
DOI: 10.14394/edufil.2024.0040

Władysław Tatarkiewicz (3 April 1886–4 April 1980), or, On the Hidden Philosophy

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> [W]hich aesthetics is more important: the one explicitly proclaimed, but only in theory, or the one applied in practice and guiding creativity?
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> W. Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics: Modern Aesthetics* (1967)

§ 34 Apollo in the Temple of the Muses

I was in the sixth grade at the time. On Monday, 27 May, I turned 16, and on Friday, 31 May 1935, I went – for the first time in my life – to the university to attend a lecture by Professor Władysław Tatarkiewicz.[1] Although I had made the decision to dedicate my life to Philosophy (with a capital "P") at the age of 13,

[1] While speaking at the jubilee ceremony in honour of Prof. Tatarkiewicz, I incorrectly stated the date of that lecture (the year 1936). It turned out that my memory failed me. Thanks to the preservation of my letters to my parents from the years 1934–1939, I can now provide that date, as well as many others, accurately. See A. Nowicki, *Garść wspomnień z lat 1935–1944 z okazji 90 rocznicy urodzi prof. dra Władysława Tatarkiewicza* [A Handful of Memories from the Years 1936–1944 on the Occasion of the 90th Birthday of Prof. Dr. Władysław Tatarkiewicz], "Studia Filozoficzne" 1976, no. 4 [125], pp. 243–246.
Władysław Tatarkiewicz was born on 3 April 1886, in Warsaw. He studied, among other places, in Zurich, Berlin, and Marburg (his recollections of studying at the University of Marburg were published in the Preface to W. Tatarkiewicz, *Układ pojęć w filozofii Arystotelesa* [The System of Concepts in Aristotle's Philosophy], Warszawa, 1978, pp. 5–14). From 1915 to 1919, he was the head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw, from 1919 to 1921, a professor of philosophy at Vilnius University, and from 1921 to 1923, a professor of aesthetics and modern art history at the University of Poznań. Finally, from 1923 to 1948 and again from 1956 to 1960, he was a professor of philosophy at the University of Warsaw. From 1923 to 1948, he was the editor-in-chief of "Przegląd Filozoficzny" [Philosophical Review], and from 1960 to 1963, the editor of "Estetyka" [Aesthetics].

before officially "enrolling" in philosophy, I preferred to see and hear for myself what a university lecture looked like and whether it would be what I had expected from the university.

The task of "smuggling" me into Tatarkiewicz's lecture was taken on by my companion from the socialist youth organization, a psychology student named Bożydar Saloni. I entered the Casimir Palace as if it were a church (at that time, and perhaps not only then, the university was a temple of Knowledge to me, a place more sacred than any other temple). At first, I felt very uncertain, like a passenger riding a train without a ticket; after all, I did not have a student ID. I was still a school student, with two full years of high school ahead of me before entering university. "With my heart on my sleeve," fearing they would discover my "illegal" presence at the lecture and remove me from the university, I did not hear the first sentences of the lecture. However, the hall was full, and no one paid any attention to me, and soon the swift current of the lecture on aesthetic experiences drew me into its pure waves. This happened not only because of the fascinating content but also, and above all, thanks to the extraordinary art of constructing and "performing" the lecture. After all, the point was to make the problem arise in the listeners' minds: why does a poetic work evoke aesthetic experiences in us? To achieve this, it was necessary, first and foremost, to summon Poetry itself into the hall, to shake the listeners, to evoke aesthetic experiences in them so that they would understand the phenomenon being analysed. And so, at a certain point in the lecture, the Professor began to recite from memory a poem by Julian Tuwim, which contained the following words:

> behold, a whirlwind of joy
> into pyramids grows out of the space

And then a "miracle" happened. The entire auditorium was truly filled with a "whirlwind of joy." From the "space" created by the lecture, "pyramids" indeed began to rise (those from Horace's poem about Poetry more enduring than bronze and higher than pyramids). An "experience" emerged, along with the problem of explaining its mysteries.

I then made three significant life decisions. The first was that I would "enroll" in philosophy. The second was that – like Professor Tatarkiewicz – I would strive throughout my life to combine a love for Philosophy with a love for Poetry, Painting, and Music. The third was that it would be precisely Professor Tatarkiewicz

whom I would ask to guide my first steps on my "path to Philosophy": my readings, my master's thesis, and my doctoral work.

I learned from Bożydar that Tatarkiewicz had a nickname in the student community: Apollo. Apparently, female students thought he was as beautiful as the Greek god. To me, Apollo was associated not with appearance but with the role of the Guide of the Muses.

Apollo in the temple of the muses, a personification of the union of Philosophy with Poetry, Painting, and Music – this is the image of Tatarkiewicz that I have carried with me since the spring of 1935.

§ 34 The Wonderful Colours of the Days of the Week

Two years passed, and finally, October 1937 arrived. I found myself "at home" at the University. My happiness seemed boundless.

One of the greatest attractions of the university, for me, was the freedom to choose professors, lectures, and seminars. With this wonderful right in hand, I thoroughly studied the printed copy of the catalogue of all the lectures and seminars available at all the faculties of the University of Warsaw for the academic year 1937–1938 and attended various lectures "on trial" to make sure I had made the right choices. Alas! There were far more interesting lectures and seminars than there were hours in a week. Several lectures I wanted to attend were scheduled on the same day and at the same time, and I could neither split myself into two nor three. Choosing a specific lecture meant giving up others that interested me, and sometimes this was a cruel decision. I was especially sorry about missing art history, classical philology, and German literature history.

Ultimately, my schedule for the first year at the university shaped up as follows: at the centre, philosophy, with a two-hour seminar and three hours of Tatarkiewicz's lectures, along with a two-hour proseminar with Kieszkowski and lectures by Kotarbiński; psychology was in second place, with three hours of lectures by Witwicki; third was Italian studies, with lectures by Stanghellini and classes with Verdiani – seven hours in total; fourth place went to the history of French literature, with several hours of lectures by Fabre (one on Voltaire, another on late 19th-century French poetry); fifth was Czapiński's study of the history of philosophy as the main subject, with two hours of lectures and two seminars;

in sixth place, three hours of English. In total, 27 hours a week. Naturally, I spent all my "free slots" in the library, and from various libraries, I would bring home up to 15 volumes at a time. Sundays were dedicated to Poetry and Music.

Each class gave the days of the week a distinct colour. The location of the lecture also mattered to me. Lectures held in university halls had one colour, those at the Department of Psychology another; a different colour still belonged to those at the Italian Cultural Institute, and yet another to those with Czapiński at the "Ateneum" Theatre. In a letter to my parents dated 26 October 1937, I wrote that I most "enjoy Stanghellini's lectures at the Institute; he speaks in a room with dim lighting, black curtains, and white marble columns. The listeners sit in armchairs. He speaks very softly, but every word of his melodic and rather declaimed speech is heard – this is exactly how the teaching of literature history should be."

Characterizing Tatarkiewicz's lectures in the same letter, I wrote: "For me, the entire lecture is alive – it gives me what I was looking for. The study of Beauty: how different eras have felt it, what they valued in Art, what goals they set for it. Furthermore, Tatarkiewicz lectures in a clear, transparent manner, dividing the material into sections, points, and subpoints – illustrating each definition with texts in various languages and drawings on the board. He makes note-taking easier by writing down foreign words, names, and book titles."

This joy of being at the university began to be disrupted by the actions of ONR (National Radical Camp) militias, which were directed not only against Jews but also against the entire progressive faculty and all leftist students – communists, socialists, agrarians, democrats, and the youth of working-class and peasant backgrounds. At rallies they organized, they spoke of an alleged "overproduction of intellectuals" in Poland, demanding the removal of all Jews, as well as the children of workers, peasants, and craftsmen, from university studies. Peasant children, they claimed, should work on the land, and the cobbler's son should stick to the cobbler's last. The ONR militias would disrupt lectures, throw teargas bombs that filled the halls with thick smoke, vandalize university facilities, and attack professors, and male and female students.

At both school and university, I was friends with Jewish colleagues. Anti-Semitism was always something foolish and shameful to me. I primarily saw ONR activists as foolish imitators of Hitler's racism, disgracing the nation's honour with their actions. It pained me that, once, the word "student" was synonymous with Philomath, democrat, or revolutionary, and now – when I am part of

the student community – the ONR militias want to make this word synonymous with thug, half-wit, and fascist. It doesn't matter as much that I was attacked by those militias a few times. Ultimately, I was their political opponent and tried to oppose them. What hurt me far more was that they could beat someone for their mere appearance, the sound of their name, their religion, or their origin. Above all, I despised them for their attacks on professors, the destruction of university premises, and the disruption of studies. After all, the university was for me a "sacred place," a temple of Knowledge – so the activities of the ONR militias were not only a manifestation of stupidity and political reactionism but also, and above all, something akin to sacrilege – a mindless and criminal assault on the highest sanctity.

I was also hurt by the fact that the Rector and the Senate were succumbing to the pressure of these thugs, introducing the shameful bench and religious stamp ghettos in student indexes – because I wanted to show respect to the entire academic body, and only a small part of the faculty had the courage to oppose the fascization of the university.

§ 35 Recorded Conversations

I always regarded my conversations with Tatarkiewicz as such significant events in my life that I would immediately describe them in great detail in letters to my parents. These "minutes" of our conversations, in my opinion, hold the value of a pedagogical document, showing in a concrete example how a professor can guide a student's first steps.

The first conversation took place on 7 October 1937. After his lecture, Tatarkiewicz held office hours at his office and accepted applications for his seminar. There was a long queue. From people leaving his office, I learned that he only accepted candidates from the third and fourth years of study, and only after they had passed their exams well. Nevertheless, I decided to try to apply, bolstering my courage with the ancient maxim, "Fortune favours the bold."

"I would like to enroll in the Kant seminar."

"Which year are you in?"

"The first."

Tatarkiewicz raised his eyebrows high, expressing disapproving surprise at my audacity.

"The first? And do you at least know German?"

"Enough to be able to read philosophical books."

I noticed disbelief in Tatarkiewicz's gaze.

"Philosophical books? For example, which ones have you read?"

"*Wille zur Macht*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and the rest of Nietzsche's works in Polish, *Die griechische und die römische Welt* by Hegel…"

"Even Hegel! And, for example, Kant's *Prolegomena*?"

"I presented a report on it in school during philosophy propaedeutics."

"Which school did you finish?"

"Staszic Gymnasium in Warsaw."

"Well, all right, but to understand Kant, you need to know logic. Did you study it in school?"

"A bit, but during the holidays, I studied Stanley Jevons."

"Very well, I will accept you. Your surname? First name? Are you attending my lectures at the university?"

"Yes."

"Then please come to the seminar on Wednesday. We will be reading the *Critique of Pure Reason*. My only problem is that the others enrolled do not know German, so we will probably have to read it in Polish."

Thus, the first day of classes at the university immediately brought me great success. I managed – in my first year – to become a student of the Professor whom I had admired for several years and "chosen" as my Teacher.

The second conversation took place on 8 February 1938.

"What are you working on right now?"

"I am studying Kant, and then I intend to study post-Kantian philosophy. I want to start with Schopenhauer."

"Hmm. Perhaps you should change your plan a bit. I do not recommend reading Hegel and Fichte right now. Schopenhauer, maybe a little later. […] How about we set aside post-Kantian philosophy for a while, and instead, you review some aspects of ancient philosophy? This will be useful for your exam. You do intend to prepare with more than just my book, don't you? It's better to have a broader perspective; I would even suggest you familiarize yourself directly with the surviving fragments. You will find them in Diels. It would also be worthwhile

to look into Windelband and Gomperz – this for the pre-Socratics, this for Plato, this for Aristotle. Have you read any other textbooks?"

"Uberweg, Lange."

"That's good as well. Now, it would be worthwhile to get acquainted with *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, and Natorp's interpretation. We have all these books here. Are you attending my lectures?"

"Yes, I have notes from all the lectures on the history of aesthetics."

"And aesthetic issues in literature probably interest you less?"

"Quite the opposite. In fact, I have a few comments on today's lecture. I think there is no poem that does not evoke images. If such a case occurs, it does not deserve the name of poetry […]. I even believe that not only a poem but every word carries an image with it. I have especially thought a lot about abstractions and believe that every abstraction corresponds to an image. For example, Liberty: the figure of a beautiful woman breaking her chains."

"That's an interesting theory. But, while we were talking just now, did you see Kant?"

"Oh, I see him very clearly, especially when reading his texts – so much so that he has even appeared in my dreams."

"Yes, that could happen. It is very interesting to me."

"May I ask what you will cover in the seminar next year, Professor?… I ask because our work this year on the *Critique of Pure Reason* felt like groping in the dark and guessing. If we knew beforehand, we could read the entire text over the summer and be better prepared for the seminar."

"You're right. In about a month, I will know, and I'll be sure to let you know. For now, read something from antiquity. It's good to think about a plan."

"I remember. Diels, Gomperz, Windelband."

"And don't overwork yourself with too many seminars. It's better to read a few good books."

I got up to leave. At the end of our conversation, Tatarkiewicz said:

"If you ever have the slightest doubt, please come to me, and we will discuss it."

On the margins of this conversation, four thoughts come to mind. First, it is evident that Tatarkiewicz skillfully orchestrated my encounter with ancient philosophy. I read all the books he recommended, and even more, as I also studied the complete works of Diogenes Laertius and the anthologies of the Socratics and post-Socratics by Nestle. I even began to learn Greek by meticulously copying

the Greek texts of those thoughts that particularly appealed to me. Second, it was during this reading, in mid-February 1938, that I became fascinated by the philosophy of Heraclitus, which would become the subject of my master's thesis a few years later. Third, even during the conversation with Tatarkiewicz, I knew I would not heed his advice to postpone my studies of post-Kantian philosophy. Not to mention the subsequent volumes of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, which no force could pull me away from, I also took up Max Stirner and Hans Vaihinger's extensive commentary on the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Fourth, and most importantly, even during this conversation – 40 years before *Portraits of Philosophers* – I expressed thoughts that would later become the foundation of that book; even then, I noticed that when reading the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I saw Kant and that every word carried an image with it.

The third conversation took place on 23 February 1938. It was very brief, but it brought me great joy. After a seminar where I spoke extensively about Leibniz, Kant, and Schopenhauer, suggesting that we find opposites for all the key terms of these three systems, Tatarkiewicz asked me to come to his office and said he had noticed my method of "reading ahead" of those texts that were yet to be covered. In this context, he proposed that at the next seminar, I should give a lecture, presenting the next 200 pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Could I take it on?

"Also, what a question! Now, this is something I really like! – I wrote in a letter to my parents. – I thanked him and got down to work. I'll show how to teach Kant in an engaging and captivating way! This is something Tatarkiewicz has never offered to anyone before. I will do everything to enchant the seminar […]. Reading the *Critique of Pure Reason* for the second time, I discover how much escaped my attention the first time […]. I am tired, but the passion for reading and writing is stronger than the fatigue. The most exhausting part is having to choose among so many fascinating books – I want to read them all at once."

It's no wonder that while working on preparing the lecture, I dreamed about Kant again, and since it was one of the most beautiful dreams of my life, I will allow myself to recount it.

I dreamed that the *Critique of Pure Reason* was the score of a powerful symphony, based on the contrast between a quiet, delicate minuet and the loud avalanche of a powerful mass of sound from the entire orchestra. The main character of the dream was Lady Metaphysics, with whom Kant was – as he himself said – madly in love. Metaphysics had the features of my music teacher, and her

leitmotif was entwined around the note "mi." On stage, there were tall towers of metaphysical systems, and Kant – dressed in a black velvet outfit with a white Enlightenment-era wig, complete with a braid and a black bow – was a mole digging underground tunnels beneath these towers, causing them to collapse. And suddenly… a lightning bolt revealed a breathtaking secret. Now I know why Kant called himself a mole! Just as the leitmotif of Metaphysics was built on the note "mi," Kant's leitmotif was built on the royal note "re," and from the equation Kant = kret (mole) or K + an + t = k + re + t, it followed that the hero of this dream, the note RE, actually had my initials: AN!

The fourth conversation took place on 11 May 1938. After reading my remarks on various interpretations of Kant, Tatarkiewicz "revealed himself to me as a man of a completely different temperament than Witwicki (who did not spare insults, filling the margins of my text with malicious comments). Tatarkiewicz spoke in compliments, but ones that at times aroused my suspicion. For example: – "I really like your way of taking notes" (and I thought he would be impressed by my text and accept it for publication! But he only noticed the "way of taking notes"!). You extracted from the book everything that could be extracted from something as chaotic as *Che cosa è la metafisica* by Carabellese. But – Tatarkiewicz continued – neither Carabellese nor Kulpa particularly interested me. Only Vaihinger, because I suspect you sympathize with Vaihinger, of course. But his approach is very one-sided. I would like you to think through his fictions. It's very simple for him, too simplified. You have the ability to reflect on whether Vaihinger's system is consistent. For Vaihinger, all concepts are fictions, but if everything is fiction, then nothing is fiction."

Then we talked about ancient philosophy. He asked what I had read.

"Diels, Diogenes Laertius, Gomperz, Windelband, Nestle, Zeller, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Meno*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*…"

"Enough. Leave Plato for next year, and for now, read another dozen or so books on pre-Platonic philosophy [he listed the titles]. And what about medieval philosophy?"

I said I was reading Gilson.

"That's a very good book but put it aside."

"I wanted to prepare for the exam."

"Oh, the exam is a fiction. I know that you study a lot and how you study. Don't let the exam bother you."

Of course, right after the conversation, I started studying the books he recommended. But while reading them, I could feel Schopenhauer and Nietzsche slipping away from me – and my heart was pulling me towards them. "I comfort myself with just one thought," I wrote in a letter to my parents dated 11 May 1938, "that I am following in Nietzsche's footsteps, who also started with ancient philosophy. In the history of social thought, only Plato is usually mentioned, yet in antiquity, there were many socialists, communists, anarchists, and individualists, opposing slavery, private property, and social inequality; they saw progress in discoveries and inventions that liberated people from forced labour. There were also many atheists and free-thinkers – a wealth of ideas known only to a few."

On 20 June 1938, I took the exam. I believed I was perfectly prepared because I had mastered an enormous amount of material and memorized everything that had caught my interest. I didn't even realize that I had skipped large sections of the textbook that "didn't speak to me." I even used this expression during the exam, which provoked Tatarkiewicz's indignation:

"The purpose of a history of philosophy textbook is not at all to 'speak' to you!"

I suffered a great defeat. I was expecting a Roman five with a plus (the highest grade), but I only got a four.

To lift my spirits, I went to Świętokrzyska Street and spent all my money, buying six books in English for what was then a large sum for me – seven złoty: the complete works of Longfellow in one beautifully bound volume, the poetry of Browning and Tennyson, Poe's *Grotesques*, and *Children of the Night* by Bulwer-Lytton. I looked with regret at the works of Byron and Shelley, the purchase of which was beyond my financial means.

§ 36 Cookies, Wine and an Article in "Philosophical Review"

Immersing myself in English poetry for several months (after being enchanted in previous years by Russian, Latin, German, French, and Young Poland poetry) soon proved very useful to me.

During the summer of 1938, I also neatly copied my notes from the lectures of Tatarkiewicz, Witwicki, Stanghellini, and Fabre, and I approached the scheduling of the 1938–1939 academic year in a systematic and thoroughly thought-

out manner. At the university, I decided to limit myself to my three professors: Tatarkiewicz, Witwicki, and Kotarbiński. I also intended to attend Zygmunt Łempicki's lectures because he taught Nietzsche's philosophy, but after the first lecture, I was discouraged by him, and even today, when I read his extremely valuable works from the two volumes of *Selected Writings*, I find it hard to believe that it's the same person: the author of beautiful, profound works on literary theory and the lecturer whose lecture irritated me. I would have attended Kieszkowski's lectures, but he went to England for a year. I gave up on Italian and French literature because I came to the conclusion that I benefited more from dedicating that time to reading in those languages. Of course, besides my three university professors, I also had Czapiński.

On my first meeting with Tatarkiewicz in the new academic year, I wrote to my parents in a letter dated 11 October 1938: "Tatarkiewicz's popularity has soared. Today, at the first lecture in a hall with 804 seats, it was overcrowded, with almost 900 people. Afterwards, these crowds went to sign up for the seminar. It would have been hopeless if they hadn't immediately turned away those who were not specializing in philosophy and if the former attendees hadn't been given priority in registration. He not only accepted me into the ethics seminar but also invited me to what is called a privatissimum, or private Friday meetings with master's degree holders. For these meetings – which are only for invited individuals – he didn't invite students from the first three years, and even those in their fourth year were required to submit their master's theses first and attend a few more of his lectures." A few days later, on 15 October 1938, I wrote: "Yesterday, there was a Tatarkiewicz privatissimum from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. The name refers to a 'harmonized group' of invitees. These will be philosophical discussions on happiness. Tatarkiewicz presented the plan for his book, and we subjected that plan to critique. I am extremely fond of both the atmosphere and the subject of the discussions." I also enjoyed the distinction. I was there – among doctoral and master's degree holders – the only student, and only a second-year one at that, except for Kasiński, a fourth-year student who had already completed his master's thesis on Szaniawski, and Father Aleksander Kisiel, who, like me, was a second-year student but had completed seminary training.

On 2 December 1938, the Friday privatissimum took place not at the University but in Tatarkiewicz's private apartment. In a letter to my parents dated 5 December 1938, I described my impressions as follows: "He lives at 25 Marszałkowska

Street – an old building with columns and angel heads, on the third floor, I presume. The apartment is decorated with splendour and opulence. The Baroque ceiling is very high – from it hang crystal chandeliers, sparkling with all the colours of the rainbow. On all the walls are carpets, tapestries, and paintings from the 18th and 19th centuries – a large Baroque library – all the books in gilded leather bindings. Around the Baroque table are 20 armchairs – on the table are vases in the style of Louis XIV, gilded from the inside – on the floor, carpets – on the windows, huge curtains […]. When everyone had gathered, Tatarkiewicz began to discuss our written works. He divided them into three groups. In the third group, which he discussed last, there was only one work, mine, which opposed all the others […]. After a discussion that proceeded like a Platonic banquet, there was a reception. Tea in a silver service, sandwiches, cakes – until eleven in the evening. Tatarkiewicz's dog was also there, an English terrier, rolling around on the carpet, sniffing everyone, and teasing the assistants."

It was a charming evening, a foretaste of what was to come in half a year. Distinguished by Tatarkiewicz, I was waiting for some great opportunity to appear, one that would allow me to fully demonstrate what I was capable of. Such an opportunity soon arose, and I was quick to notice and seize it. On Friday, 27 January 1939, Tatarkiewicz mentioned during a privatissimum that it would be good to study a chapter from a certain book in English at the next meeting. The author – William McDougall. The title of the book – *Social Psychology*.

That day, I returned home at eleven in the evening, but the very next day at eight in the morning, I found the book at the Institute of Psychology and began studying it. Within a few hours, I made extensive notes, and on Sunday, I wrote a paper discussing this work, adding a lengthy and vehement critique of my own. On Monday, I handed the text to Tatarkiewicz.

The days passed, filled to the brim with studies. Thursday, 9 February, arrived. Thirty-five people attended the meeting of the Philosophical Society, and Kasiński suggested that I take the chairmanship. It was a great honour for me. Before the meeting, there was much laughter because Miss Irena Krzemicka (later the wife of Tadeusz Kroński) decided to play a joke on me and made a bet with her friends that when she greeted me, I would immediately ask her: "What are you reading?"

Of course, she won the bet because, at that time, the main current of my life was filled with reading philosophical books, and I believed that this was the most important thing for all my colleagues as well.

As they were making fun of me, Krzemicka asked:

"Are you also, like all of us, enchanted by Tatarkiewicz?"

"And even if I were," I replied, "what difference does it make since Professor Tatarkiewicz is not enchanted by me at all?"

"He's not?" said Krzemicka. "Then why does he tell all of us about you? You'll find out for yourself tomorrow."

You can easily imagine that after such a conversation, I couldn't wait for the next day, trying to guess what surprise awaited me.

And so came the evening of Friday, 10 February 1939. The privatissimum began with an exceptionally dull paper about some Kruger. Everyone was bored, including Tatarkiewicz. Since I had notes from Kruger's book, I spoke up and made several remarks. However, all of this was just the backdrop for what was most important. After the discussion about Kruger ended, Tatarkiewicz reminded everyone that they were supposed to read a chapter from McDougall's book, but only one person completed the task and brought a written paper – and that, just a few days after the previous privatissimum. He then asked me to read my paper and instructed the other participants to pay attention to my critique of McDougall's reflections on happiness. And finally, the surprise, the reward for completing the task: after the privatissimum, Tatarkiewicz invited me to his office for a conversation and offered me the opportunity to collaborate with "Philosophical Review"! To start, I was to read the entire book by McDougall and write a review – in the form of an obituary, since the philosopher had passed away on 28 November 1938.

However, this cup of happiness was tinged with a drop of bitterness, because at the end of the conversation – during which such an honourable proposal was made – Tatarkiewicz said:

"You must see that I am favouring you and making exceptions for you, but that comes with obligations. Surely, you understand that it is your elementary duty to attend my lectures. I understand that one could spend that time more pleasantly and much more usefully, but I want you to attend my lectures."

This was a blow straight to my heart. If I had stopped attending Tatarkiewicz's lectures, there must have been a very serious reason. However, I couldn't tell Tatarkiewicz about it. The reason was that I had been accepted into Witwicki's psychology seminar, which took place at the same time as Tatarkiewicz's lecture. I was overwhelmed with despair: How would I tell Witwicki about this?

In any case, the proposal to write for "Philosophical Review" was such an incredible opportunity for an early start – especially for me, a second-year student – that I decided to do everything possible to make the most of it. I therefore read not only *An Introduction to Social Psychology* but also *An Outline of Psychology*, *Modern Materialism and Emergent Evolution*, *Autobiography*, *The Psychology of Groups*, and posthumous memoirs from "The Psychological Review." In successive letters to my parents, I described each stage of the work. Finding time wasn't easy, as lectures and seminars, along with mandatory shifts at the Philosophical Seminar and the Institute of Psychology, occupied 25 hours a week, to which I had to add 4 hours of Czapiński's classes and meetings of the Philosophical Society. Besides working on McDougall, I was simultaneously preparing several other papers: one on the hedonism of the Cyrenaics for Tatarkiewicz's ethics seminar, another on Berkeley for Kotarbiński's proseminar, and a third on Marx for Czapiński (based on Cornu's book). Besides that, I delivered papers at the Philosophical Circle and attended meetings of the Polish Philosophical Society. I had only started learning English in the fall of 1937, but after 16 months, I reached the point where I could read up to 150 pages of McDougall's text in a single Sunday. I could have read more, but from time to time, I paused my reading to reflect on the emerging issues, take notes, and write down my comments.

On 20 February 1939, I informed my parents that I had finished reading McDougall's works. Besides the five of his works that I read in full, I skimmed through several others. I then began writing. "I think carefully about every sentence I write because this is, after all, the first philosophical work that will appear under my name, so every word must be well-founded." In order to properly evaluate McDougall's views on the relationship between thought, emotion, and will, I "devoured" dozens of psychological works by other authors.

With all this workload, I experienced many successes during this time. One of them was my presentation on the Cyrenaics at the ethics seminar – I based it on Diogenes Laertius, but I also utilized chapters from all the available German, French, and English philosophy history textbooks available in the seminar's library. I had the most important texts in the original Greek. I also achieved great success at the privatissimum that took place on 24 February 1939. As usual, Tatarkiewicz reviewed our written works, asking for the best ones to be read aloud. First, he had the work read by Michał Wasilewski, M.A., then by Tadeusz Kroński, M.A., followed by Mrs. Bystrzanowska, M.A., and then by Mieczysław Milbrandt, M.A. I was

overcome with despondency. But after these four papers, Tatarkiewicz explained that he had saved the "deepest and closest to him" – meaning mine – for last.

Finally, in a letter to my parents dated 6 March 1939, I wrote that I "worked on McDougall for half of Friday, all of Saturday, all of Sunday (from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.), and half of Monday," to discuss what I had gleaned from McDougall's books – totaling over 2,000 pages – in a short article, the form of which was intended to imitate a chapter from Tatarkiewicz's *Historia filozofii* [History of Philosophy] textbook. On Monday, I handed the text to Tatarkiewicz – after neatly rewriting it, it came to 11 foolscap pages. Tatarkiewicz was surprised; he thought the task was too difficult and that I wouldn't manage it. I was worried about whether my handwriting was legible.

"But I can read your writing perfectly well," Tatarkiewicz said. (These were times when manuscripts, not typescripts, were submitted to the printer.)

What I did was an abuse of the professor's kindness. I was supposed to write a short obituary and a review of one book, but instead, I brought in a discussion of McDougall's entire philosophy and psychology, spanning a dozen or so pages. As a result, Tatarkiewicz suggested that I give a presentation on McDougall at the Philosophical Circle. I did so on 16 March 1939. Many people attended because I gave it an intriguing title: *Hormic Psychology*.

On 12 May, I spent the day "from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. in the city. First Witwicki's lecture, then Tatarkiewicz's lecture, then Greek with Witwicki, then I worked on psychological tasks, followed by three hours of classes with Kotarbiński, and finally, to end the day, the Philosophical Circle," once again with my presentation on philosophical issues in psychology. "I spoke about the concept of the soul in primitive humans, in religious beliefs, and concluded with a discussion of the concept of the soul in Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer, Freud, Jung, James, and McDougall, summarizing it all with my own assertion that one organic body corresponds not to one soul, but to many souls, many conflicting tendencies, many subjects, and our ethical task is to harmonize them […]; the discussion lasted a very long time, then it moved to the street," and seven people walked with me – engaged in lively discussion – from Krakowskie Przedmieście to Żoliborz.

Since 7 March, I had been impatiently waiting for the proofs. March, April, and May passed – everyone was talking about the war. It seemed it would break out before my article was published. Finally, the day arrived – 7 June 1939 – which, thanks to Tatarkiewicz, became one of the happiest days of my life.

The privatissimum was to be held for the second time at the Professor's apartment. It was scheduled to last from seven to nine in the evening, and at nine – marking the end of the academic year – the most beautiful philosophy students (Mrozowska, Swinarska, Krzeszewska, Cieślińska) were to come for wine, cakes, and coffee. Before the privatissimum, I handed Tatarkiewicz a note with Greek quotes from *Alcibiades*, confirming what the professor had deduced from other dialogues of Plato. He said he didn't expect to find in this little-known dialogue what was missing in the more famous ones, and thus had not read it. But he had accurately arrived at the same ideas through reasoning. Then he handed me the proofs of my article on McDougall, saying: "Well, you must feel happy. I remember how, many years ago, it brought me immense joy when my first article was published in 'Philosophical Review.' But I was not, like you, in my second year; I already had a doctorate, and it wasn't an article, but a review, and it wasn't printed in Garamond but in Petit."[1]

A detailed account of this gathering would take up a lot of space. There were group discussions about happiness, Aristotle, Dostoevsky, Pushkin and Russian anarchists, liberalism, fascism, socialism, biology, metaphysics, religion, education, and normative ethics. There was also plenty of mockery. For example, the secretary of the editorial board of "Philosophical Review," Dr Bolesław Sobociński, mocked – with his usual lisp – the "strange top hat" of Miss Krystyna Swinarska, and Tadeusz Kroński, M.A., made fun of my three names (since, in addition to my two given names, Andrzej and Rusław, I had adopted a third: Fryderyk, in honour of Nietzsche and Chopin) and the fact that I was the only one who came to this formal gathering without a tie. And when I was discussing *The Demons* with Dr Siwecki and Dr Mosdorf, listing the three reasons why, in my opinion, Shatov slapped Stavrogin and asked Mosdorf if he knew Garshin's short stories, Miss Swinarska interrupted our conversation, saying to Mosdorf: "Just admit you haven't read Garshin. There's no shame in it because Mr. Nowicki has read more books not only than you and Professor Tatarkiewicz but more than everyone gathered here combined."

[1] Unfortunately, today I understand that such an early success means nothing. What good is it that I published my first academic work as a second-year student – several years earlier than Tatarkiewicz did – when I lost "in the subsequent competitions"? I earned my doctorate at the age of 29 (Tatarkiewicz did it at 23, six years earlier), I started giving lectures at 33 (Tatarkiewicz at 29, four years earlier), and I became a full professor at 57 (Tatarkiewicz at 41 – beating me by sixteen years!).

No wonder that when the gathering ended, after midnight, I walked this pleasant colleague home. It was a warm night, the sky full of stars, and we walked along Marszałkowska Street, Jerusalem Avenue, Nowy Świat, and Krakowskie Przedmieście. I asked her, as usual, "What are you reading?," and she told me about her work on Descartes. She lived with a friend – probably on Krakowskie Przedmieście – in a small attic room, where it was very cold in winter and very hot in May and June. So, in winter, to warm up a bit, she read books about Africa, and in June, when she was reading Descartes in her swimsuit, her friend would sprinkle her with cold water.

In the first half of 1939, two other significant events occurred. One was the second exam with Tatarkiewicz. This time, it was on the history of modern philosophy. I remember only one amusing episode from that exam. Among the many questions asked, there was one about Voltaire that I couldn't answer. Tatarkiewicz became irritated:

"Why don't you know this? Everyone knows that."

I then said that I could talk at length about Voltaire because I had read several of his works in the original and had attended Fabre's lectures on the philosopher systematically throughout the previous year. I also remembered his birth year: 1694.

"And how did you remember that date?"

"It's very simple. Just subtract 75 years from my birth year (1919), and you get Friedrich Nietzsche's birth year (1844). Subtract another 75 years, and you get Napoleon's birth year (1769), and subtract another 75 years, and you get Voltaire's birth year…"

Had Tatarkiewicz allowed me to continue, I would have added that subtracting 75 years from Voltaire's birth year gives us Vanini's death year – 1619. Similarly, if he had asked me about Spinoza or Schopenhauer, I would have replied that Schopenhauer was born in 1788, exactly 111 years after Spinoza's death (1677). In this way, I memorized hundreds of dates. Needless to say, this method of preparing for the exam did not win Tatarkiewicz's approval. Nevertheless, I received an A.

The second event – of far more significant consequences – was the "fascinating series of lectures by Tatarkiewicz on worldviews," which I mentioned in a letter to my parents dated 30 April 1939. I sat – in the vast auditorium for 800 people – as usual in the front row, next to my friend Mrozowska. Each lecture was dedicated to a specific worldview, and it happened that I was most deeply shaken by two

lectures that were relatively close to each other: one on Saint Augustine and the other on the worldview of Giordano Bruno. Perhaps Professor Tatarkiewicz felt a closer affinity for Saint Augustine, but he poured a great deal of heart and fire into both lectures. Even if there were printed transcripts of these lectures, the text alone would have been merely a shadow of the living word, which sounded like wonderful music and evoked magnificent images. In the lecture on Saint Augustine, the infinite abyss between God's boundless perfection and the boundless misery, smallness, sinfulness, and vanity of man – who finds himself in a tragic situation because the goal of his life is to do everything to deserve grace, and this goal is unattainable, as human efforts are of no consequence, and God grants grace "gratis" to whom He wills – was portrayed in all its astounding horror. How starkly this grim and cruel worldview contrasted with the joyful, Renaissance vision of Matter smiling upon man, giving birth to an infinite variety of forms and infinitely many worlds in the infinite Universe – a polycentric vision where every being is something "divine" and where there is no God outside the bounds of infinite Nature.

I cannot answer how other listeners perceived these lectures. In any case, for me, these two lectures made me a lifelong opponent of Saint Augustine and drove me into the arms of Giordano Bruno. It was probably then, during Tatarkiewicz's lecture in April or May 1939, that I made the profound decision to dedicate the best years of my life to studying the philosophy of Giordano Bruno.

Between 1937 and 1939, I accrued many debts of gratitude to Tatarkiewicz. Ignoring the regulations of the academic programme, the Professor accepted me into his seminar for higher-year students, and through him, even as a first-year student, I was introduced to the labyrinth of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the following year, I had the honour of participating in an exclusive privatissimum. I was able to appreciate this distinction, as from our first conversation (during a break between lectures in October 1937), the Professor recognized that he was dealing with a "revolutionary" dreaming of a global "Revolution." With admirable tolerance, he treated my presentations at seminars, believing that a diversity of perspectives invigorates and enriches academic discussions.

At the end of the summer of 1939, the postman delivered a copy of "Philosophical Review" with my article – printed right next to Roman Ingarden's essay on Husserl. I read it again and was most pleased that I had woven in several of my most favoured "personal" themes while discussing McDougall's views, for in-

stance: "The content of the concept 'horme' corresponds to the Freudian 'libido,' Bergson's 'élan vital,' Schopenhauer's 'Wille zum Leben,' and Nietzsche's 'Wille zur Macht.'"[2] Additionally, the "being" in Marxist sociology defining consciousness corresponds to McDougall's understanding of "horme."[3] "It is difficult to discuss and subject to psychological analysis phenomena that are sacred to many. One can easily become hated by objectively analysing race, nation, state, or religion. The psychology of groups has more of a journalistic than scientific character. What is decisive here is not logical arguments, but 'beliefs' whose source is an alogical 'horme.' However, for a philosopher free from prejudices, both bold scientific analysis and the general ideals of Freedom, Progress, Humanity, and Brotherhood of nations should be amiable."[4]

Of course, the "philosopher free from prejudices" referred to in the text was myself. Had the article not been signed with my name, anyone who knew me would have immediately guessed my authorship from the neo-Romantic exaltation of values that I wrote about using capital letters as if they were proper names. For my comrades in the Polish Socialist Party, the greatest value of this article was, as they said, "the red paint," which they noticed in the reference to Marx on page 185 and the clearly anti-fascist conclusion.

The publication of "Philosophical Review" did not bring me as much joy as receiving the proofs for correction from Tatarkiewicz. At that time, I was with my parents, and there was neither the need nor the opportunity to express my joy in writing. I think this is one of the most characteristic features of my "way of experiencing life." It is important to me not only to have experiences but also, and above all, to have the opportunity to "record" them, to preserve them in written text. Only then do they attain, for me, their full existence.

After receiving "Philosophical Review" – probably in the last days of August 1939 – I prepared a preliminary list of people to whom I intended to give author's reprints with dedications. I remember that one of the first names on this list was Czapiński's. On 14 August 1939, I dreamt that I was handing a reprint to Drzewiecki. But these reprints never arrived. Apparently, one of the first German bombs dropped on Warsaw destroyed the warehouse of the printing house on Miodowa Street, where the authorial reprints intended for dispatch were stored.

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2 A. Nowicki, *William McDougall*, p. 179.

3 Ibid., p. 185.

4 Ibid., p. 186.

§ 37 On Heraclitus and Heroism

Thus, in the last days of August 1939, my heart was filled with boundless gratitude towards Professor Tatarkiewicz – and also towards William McDougall – thanks to whom I had already ascended to Olympus in 1939.

As an expression of gratitude to McDougall, I drew his likeness – in 1939 – and carefully preserved this drawing until today. I consider this drawing to be the pinnacle of my unfortunately rather modest drawing skills.

The nightmarish five-year period of Nazi occupation had begun. On 14 November 1939, I travelled to Warsaw and arrived at Professor Tatarkiewicz's apartment. He received me as warmly as ever and agreed to allow me to work simultaneously on my master's thesis and my doctoral dissertation (the master's thesis on Heraclitus and the doctoral dissertation on the concept of heroism). He opened his beautiful library to me, allowing me to take any books I desired to read, as well as those he thought I should read. I left with a full folder of valuable books. And this was always the case whenever I visited Warsaw. I remember that Professor Tatarkiewicz gave me to read two volumes of *The Principles of Psychology* by William James, some *Foundations* by A.F. Shand, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* by Max Scheler, *Die Kategorienlehre* by A. Trendelenburg, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins* by N. Hartmann, and many others. I read all these books "cover to cover," taking numerous notes and writing my own observations in many notebooks.

Between 1942 and 1944, while hiding in Warsaw under a false name, I attended lectures, seminars, and conversation classes led by Tatarkiewicz. Once, I missed several sessions, partly due to concerns about whether my presence might endanger the underground university. At that time, Professor Tatarkiewicz found me at my apartment at Forteczna Street 13 and urged me to return to the seminar. It is known that the Hitlerite occupiers imposed cruel penalties on secret university "classes": the gallows, execution, or concentration camps. I admired Professor Tatarkiewicz's courage in conducting the classes and guiding our work.

I especially remember three types of activities. First, we continued the privatissimum related to the book *O szczęściu* [Analysis of Happiness; literally: On Happiness] that Professor Tatarkiewicz was writing. In this book, each participant of these meetings will probably find some part of their own presence. Second, we worked on the *Słownik filozoficzny* [Philosophical Dictionary], to which

I contributed entries on terms such as "nature" and "categories" (especially the work on the concept of categories had significant importance for my later academic work, laying the foundation for the so-called "method of central categories," which I applied in works such as *Centralne kategorie filozofii Giordana Bruna* [Central Categories in the Philosophy of Giordano Bruno] and *Centralne kategorie filozofii Vaniniego* [Central Categories in the Philosophy of Vanini]. Third, Tatarkiewicz proposed that, in response to the occupier's repressions and his attempt to destroy Polish culture, we should undertake a collective project to reconstruct the history of philosophy in Poland. Unfortunately, I did not take on any topic at that time, for two reasons. First, I wanted to write about a Polish atheist but did not remember Kazimierz Łyszczyński (1634–1689), whose figure I had encountered by chance in October 1934 but only began working on in 1957. Second, I wanted to complete my master's thesis on Heraclitus.

Working on Heraclitus was a source of great joy for me. Primarily, I was fascinated by the depth and ambiguity of his thoughts. They were a pliable material that – as I believed then – could be interpreted in any way, showcasing my own creativity. Second, I was enchanted by the written and audible form of Greek words, which, during my work on Heraclitus, created an atmosphere of a sunny world akin to some Eutopia, a complete contrast to the nightmarish reality of the occupation. Third, all the performed activities were pleasant and almost "festive": reading books, finding interesting information, making notes, organizing collected materials, interpreting texts, noting my own thoughts, and even typing up the work cleanly. One might add to this that in contrast to the work on McDougall, which had to be accompanied by exhausting haste to meet the set deadline, I worked slowly on Heraclitus, without setting any deadlines, and enjoyed every task. I became so familiar with the material that I could recite all Heraclitus's aphorisms in Greek from memory. Heraclitus became a thinker who "dwelled in me" permanently. Meeting this thinker was a great fortune, and I felt immense gratitude to Tatarkiewicz for bringing Heraclitus into my life forever. I find it hard to imagine any other topic for a master's thesis. I am happy that Tatarkiewicz directed my interests toward the pre-Socratics. There could not have been a better way to start my career as a historian of philosophy than with a master's thesis on Heraclitus.

Finally, the memorable day arrived when (in September 1943, I think) I completed the final handwritten copy of my thesis (naturally, in blue and red ink; this

time, Polish words were in blue, while Greek words danced in red letters on each page; I also remember that the final sections were written in verse, and in a few places, there were even musical notes – to clarify the difference between vertical and horizontal connections) and after binding it by hand, I took it to Professor Tatarkiewicz's apartment. Tatarkiewicz reviewed my work with great understanding; he pointed out that it was rather unusual to write a philosophy thesis in verse in the 20th century and that one should adhere to the distinctions between such "genres" of writing as political manifesto, lyrical poem, and master's thesis, especially since the thesis was to be reviewed by Professor Tadeusz Kotarbiński. Nevertheless, he accepted the thesis, and when I completed all my exams in October 1943, he informed me that I had become a Master of Philosophy.

The master's thesis on Heraclitus became one of the elements constituting my personality due to one thought contained in it, which at the time might have seemed like a minor remark of little significance but, after 15 years, turned out to be the seed of one of the most important matters of my life. By a twist of fate, only fragments of the notes from that work survived to this day in the form of two scraps of paper on which – in 1942 – that most important idea of the thesis was noted. I will quote it, preserving the peculiar spelling:

> HERAKLITIANA
>
> ATHANATOI THNETOI (N-62). In this sentence, JÓZEF DIETZGEN saw the germ of the euhemeristic philosophy of religion. For EUHEMER, the "immortal" (athanatoi) gods were "mortals" (thnetoi) who had been apotheosized for their heroism. This pre-Euhemerism is one more reason why Heraclitus's philosophy was felt to be godless (hos asebe – Scholia to *Theaetetus* ad 181 B).

From this thought emerged – 15 years later – in 1957, the title of the journal I founded, the religious studies review "EUHEMER." By the time I am writing these words, 112 issues have been published, with a total volume exceeding 14,000 pages over 22 years. Just as Euhemer's theory had its roots in Heraclitus's thought, my Euhemerism began to take shape in 1942 during my work on Heraclitus.

Memorable, dreadful October of 1943 in Warsaw! The intensification of Nazi terror, round-ups, executions. This dark night was brightened by the joy of obtaining my "underground master's degree." And two and a half years later, the war was over, I was in Naples, and with emotion, I viewed the bronze bust of

Heraclitus in the museum. A few days later, I managed to buy several good photographic reproductions of that bust from Alinari, and I sent one of them – with expressions of gratitude – to Tatarkiewicz in Warsaw.[5]

Upon returning from Italy in mid-1947, I began the final editing of my doctoral thesis. Over the course of eight years, I wrote perhaps four different versions of the thesis, presenting its fragments at various wartime meetings and gatherings. By the end of 1947, I had passed my doctoral exams and defended my thesis, with the ceremonial promotion taking place at the University of Warsaw on 18 February 1948. That same year, a summary of the thesis was published in "Philosophical Review" titled *Co to są bohaterskie czyny i czy zawsze należy je spełniać?* [What Are Heroic Deeds and Should They Always Be Performed?].

In the doctoral thesis – as in the master's thesis – what was most important was, of course, the joy of the performed activities: reading, collecting materials, thinking, and writing. Writing both of these works was a greater happiness for me than the final outcomes. Naturally, I was pleased with the title of Master, and then Doctor, and also with the publication of the summary of the doctoral thesis in "Philosophical Review." However, the joy of the article about McDougall was immeasurably greater. An article published by a second-year student was truly a great success, after which one could expect a most splendid doctoral thesis. Unfortunately, it did not take the form that would make me proud. I like some of the ideas contained in that work, but I would have preferred to have something more fundamental in my academic career. Such a foundation, of which I was and still am proud, was only achieved with the habilitation thesis on the philosophy of Giordano Bruno in 1962.

From this dissatisfaction with the forms of the master's and doctoral theses arose a desire to replace the foundations with others, more substantial. I dream of some great expanse of free time that will suddenly – in a few decades – appear before me, so I can rewrite the "master's thesis" on Heraclitus, after reading thousands of books and articles written worldwide on him. I would like to relive

[5] Unfortunately, the publisher of *History of Philosophy* identified the reproduction as a bust of Democritus (see W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii* [History of Philosophy], 6th ed., Warszawa 1968, after p. 64). In my works, I have several times reproduced this photo as a portrait of Heraclitus (see A. Nowicki, *Heraclitus*, "Głos Wolnych" 1948, No. 28 [41] (25 July) – a large reproduction on the title page; A. Nowicki, *Wypisy z historii krytyki religii* [Excerpts from the History of Criticism of Religion], Warszawa 1962, p. 30). Also, on an anniversary postage stamp issued in Romania, this bust was recognized as a bust of Heraclitus.

the hours spent working on Heraclitus and heroism once more, to complete the same tasks a second time, but differently, using the knowledge and tools I have developed over the years.

§ 38 The Struggle for Vanini

I value the kindness I received from Tatarkiewicz even more because – as I only notice today – I was quite a "difficult" student. Tatarkiewicz had many problems with me because, as a young man, I was very aggressive, did not acknowledge any authorities, ignored the guidance given to me, and often disagreed with the Professor, even going so far as to launch violent attacks on his views and books. Against Tatarkiewicz's book *Analysis of Happiness*, I wrote a scathing poem in mid-1944 (developing Nietzsche's idea: what matters is not happiness, but the work; happiness is "a slowly descending to the firehouse – an unnecessary old-fashioned junk – covered with jangling trash"; one should not strive for happiness but for creating perfect works; instead of caring about one's own happiness, one should jump "into the black ocean – to explore the universe to the bottom"), and I sent this poem to the Professor. It was an unfair poem because Tatarkiewicz neither cared about his own happiness (but about supra-personal matters, such as the development of philosophy and Polish culture, as well as the academic growth of his students), nor claimed that one should strive for happiness, and as for "exploring the universe," he did a great deal to equip us with philosophical tools useful for undertaking that task.

Above all, however, I attacked Tatarkiewicz – without sparing words – for a certain gap in his three-volume *History of Philosophy*. How could one – I exclaimed and wrote, consumed with righteous indignation – not even mention the name of Vanini, the greatest and most brilliant thinker of the 17th century? Not only was he burned at the stake for atheism, but does he still need to be erased by silence after so many centuries? I will not forgive the Professor "until the end of the world," shouting loudly that the history of philosophy without Vanini is not a true history of philosophy, but a distorted image of it!

Therefore, I decided, contrary to and to spite the Professor, to do everything possible to introduce Vanini into Polish culture, to the pages of all academic journals, and using all means: lectures, talks, exhibitions, books and scientific papers,

as well as a novel (*Ostatnia noc Vaniniego* [The Last Night of Vanini]), painting (paintings and drawings by my students and friends), and music (dreaming of encouraging some prominent Polish composer to write a Vaninian work).

I must admit, however, that in response to my attacks, Tatarkiewicz offered a certain noble and wise argument. At a public discussion in Nieborów (May 1965), Tatarkiewicz – whom I had criticized for omitting Vanini – said that I should actually be grateful to him because if he had written about everything in his *History of Philosophy*, then there would be nothing left for me and other historians of philosophy to do. By leaving such gaps and empty spaces, he left us extensive areas to explore, providing a free space for our scientific and research activities. It was a response worthy of Vanini.

Eventually, joy came to me. In Tatarkiewicz's lectures and the works he published, the name Vanini began to appear. In his beautiful book *O doskonałości* [On Perfection], published in 1976, Vanini's name appears in six paragraphs. Tatarkiewicz recalls his paradoxical concept of perfection, which contrasts with Aristotle's view. According to Vanini – writes Tatarkiewicz – "true perfection lies in constant improvement, continual completion, enrichment, and the emergence of new things, properties, and values. If the world were so perfect that it left no room for new things, it would not possess the greatest perfection,"[6] which consists of movement, life, and development. Similarly, "the perfection of a work of art lies in forcing the recipient to activity, to complete the work with the effort of reason and imagination."[7]

Although Tatarkiewicz recalled only one idea from the rich diversity of Vanini's thoughts, it is undoubtedly the deepest idea, which presents Vanini well to the readers of Tatarkiewicz's books.[8] I was also fortunate that the copy of this book given to me by the Professor contained a wonderful dedication:

> To Andrzej Nowicki, without whom this little book would not exist.
>
> April 1976 W.T.

[6] W. Tatarkiewicz, *O doskonałości* [On Perfection], Warszawa 1976, p. 16.

[7] Ibid., p. 17.

[8] See A. Nowicki, *Vanini i paradoks Empedoklesa* [Vanini and the Paradox of Empedocles], "Euhemer" 1970, No. 1 [75], pp. 103–112.

§ 38 Tatarkiewicz as a Personal Model of Teacher

My meeting with Tatarkiewicz was not a matter of chance. If I decided to become a historian of philosophy, studying under Tatarkiewicz – the most distinguished among Polish historians of philosophy – was a logical consequence of that decision.

Of course, there were many circumstances that could have prevented this meeting. For instance, in May 1935, I could have been expelled from school with a "wolf ticket."[9] More active political activities could have ended in imprisonment. If my parents' financial situation had worsened in 1937, I would have had to abandon my dream of studying and take up a wage-earning job after finishing school (as one of my closest friends did). Had the war broken out two years earlier, it is uncertain whether and when I would have found myself at the university.

It might also have happened that although I had completed two years of university studies before the war, I would not have become Tatarkiewicz's student if I had lacked the courage to sign up for his seminar in my first year, or if Tatarkiewicz had rigidly adhered to the study regulations and had responded to my request: "Please come back in two years, after completing two years of study and passing all the exams."

Thus, the circumstances of the meeting can be precisely defined: first, I had been moving in this direction for five years; second, it happened happily without obstacles that could have thwarted the meeting; third, at the decisive moment, I gathered the courage to ask Tatarkiewicz – as an exception – to agree to accept me as his student; and fourth and most importantly, Tatarkiewicz agreed to become my Teacher.

Why did I care so much about becoming Tatarkiewicz's student? What did I expect from him as my teacher?

I certainly did not mean for him to "replace" direct contact with the texts of philosophers with his lectures and textbooks. For two reasons: first, because I did not want to accept anything "on faith," and even before starting my university studies, I knew that knowledge of philosophers should not be drawn from commentaries, textbooks, or lectures but should be gained through independent work on their texts; second, because even during my school years, I had discovered the "delight of intellectual engagement" with the works of great thinkers (such as

[9] A term referring to expulsion and being barred from further education.

Lucretius, Helvétius, Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche) and I was not interested in seeking easier ways to familiarize myself with their thoughts, which would deprive me of that pleasure. Nor was my intention to find, amidst the stormy sea of various philosophical systems, the calm haven of a single philosophy by which I could judge all other philosophical systems. I did not feel the need for an Authority from whom I could confidently adopt "true views," protecting me from the multitude of potentially threatening "errors." The multitude of different philosophical views did not unsettle me, nor did it deter me from philosophy; on the contrary, it was the greatest attraction of the field.

So what did I need a teacher for? I needed a guide to learn what one does with philosophical texts. How should they be studied? How does one distinguish what is essential from what is less important? What questions should be asked about the text being read? How to take notes? How to gather and organize materials? How to present acquired knowledge clearly, transparently, and systematically?

Both the first lecture I listened to in 1935, when I was still a sixth-grade student, and the *History of Philosophy* textbook I read at the beginning of 1937, when I was an eighth-grade student, as well as my participation in seminars during my first and second years as a student, convinced me that Tatarkiewicz possessed not only immense knowledge but was precisely the kind of teacher I needed.

And then, throughout my life, I admired his extraordinary ability to organize philosophical material, isolate problems and subproblems, distinguish what is essential from what is less important, divide selected material into chapters, paragraphs, points, and subpoints, and integrate all of this into a coherent whole. Among the great philosophers, only Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas had such skills, and among historians of philosophy, Kuno Fischer, Eduard Zeller, and Carl Prantl.

I realized that Tatarkiewicz was not only able to organize material well and clearly present what he, in an exemplary manner, had arranged but also that he could teach his students to do the same if they followed his guidance. However, learning this requires many years, and in the meantime, the outbreak of war interrupted my normal studies after two years. If only I could have worked under his guidance for not two years, but ten! How excellent my preparation for the profession of a historian of philosophy would have been then!

Let us try to enumerate more precisely, in the following points, what characterized Tatarkiewicz's work as my teacher and educator during my studies:

1. Identifying problems and the ability to present them to students in such a way that the student, fascinated by such a problem, begins to feel an inner need to investigate it.
2. Clearly defining the goal of each task before starting; understanding why it is being done and what it is supposed to achieve.
3. Checking whether the task we are undertaking has already been accomplished by someone else, earlier and better, to avoid undertaking socially unnecessary work; in other words, taking on a specific task only when
   – no one has studied this problem before us,
   – although others have studied this problem before us, they did so poorly and it needs to be corrected,
   – although the problem was studied, it was done on different material, and discovering new material requires verifying the results,
   – although the problem was studied, it was done using different methods, and there is an opportunity to investigate the problem using a new method.
4. Skillfully selecting conceptual tools and constantly improving them by more accurate definitions and making necessary conceptual distinctions.
5. When analysing a specific philosophical text, extracting the terms contained within it and determining the meaning in which they were used.
6. To adequately grasp the meaning of the statement being examined, identifying against whom and against what it is directed.
7. When organizing philosophical views, applying the method I called the "Tatarkiewicz Square"; this method consists of each view – as a certain elementary unit – always consisting of two principal elements, which along with their opposites give four possible combinations. This encourages viewing each view in the context of three other complementary views. From this, it follows that any problem can be broken down into such fundamental subproblems, each of which will have four different solutions.

The utility of the "Tatarkiewicz Square" can be illustrated with an example. Consider a discussion on the following issue: What determines a student's personality – innate factors or the influence of teachers? Several people have voiced their opinions on this matter, and now it is necessary to summarize them. It turns out that the most transparent way to organize the viewpoints expressed during the discussion is to place them into four squares: one square for view-

points emphasizing the decisive role of innate factors (A.nonB), a second square for viewpoints emphasizing the decisive role of teachers (nonA.B), a third square for viewpoints recognizing the significant role of both innate factors and the influence of teachers (A.B), and a fourth square for all other viewpoints highlighting the role of some other factors (nonA.nonB).

Among the various methods of organizing material used by Tatarkiewicz, this one particularly stayed with me because Tatarkiewicz clearly derived pleasure from seeing all four possible positions emerge during seminar discussions. This was, in fact, the theoretical foundation of his tolerance. He tolerated differences in philosophical viewpoints at his seminars because he saw the benefit of viewing each philosophical problem from four different perspectives. In this way, Tatarkiewicz's seminars became a great school of methodological pluralism for me during my university years, which powerfully influenced my habilitation work on the philosophy of Giordano Bruno (1962), *Filozofia włoskiego Odrodzenia* [Philosophy of the Italian Renaissance] (1967), and also in my last work on Bruno (1979).

I did not adopt Tatarkiewicz's "views." They were foreign to me, and I did not want to adopt them. In this respect, I regarded my Professor as a "negative pole," useful precisely because of the contrast for clarifying my own position. Even today, after 40 years, it is quite difficult (with one single exception, which will be mentioned in the next paragraph) to point to the adoption of any specific view held by Tatarkiewicz. Also, in terms of practising the history of philosophy, it is easy to see that I try to emulate Tatarkiewicz in what I consider an unsurpassed model in terms of skill in organization and clarity of exposition, while simultaneously always striving to approach the history of philosophy somewhat differently, not only by entering different areas but also by employing different methods.

The most lasting influence exerted by Tatarkiewicz – of course, after about 25 years – was on my attitude as a historian of philosophy and academic teacher, one who delights in the diversity of human minds[10] and, therefore, strives to be

[10] Explaining – in August 1970 – why he became a historian of philosophy, Tatarkiewicz wrote that one of the reasons was "a fondness for the multitude, diversity, and variety of human minds, aspirations, and outcomes." W. Tatarkiewicz, *Droga do filozofii* [The Road to Philosophy], Warszawa 1971, p. 9.

I did not know Kazimierz Twardowski personally and never had much sympathy for his views. However, if my teachers, Władysław Witwicki and Tadeusz Kotarbiński, regarded him with such great reverence and considered him an excellent teacher, it was likely because – as Kotarbiński says – "he valued individuality and knew how to adapt the tasks he set to the distinct interests

tolerant not out of indifference to the subjects of dispute or from "respect for others' views," but from a deep conviction that the objective diversity and multidimensionality of the world can only be adequately grasped by approaching it from multiple perspectives. This pluralistic stance is by no means contradictory to the principle of materialist partisanship and atheistic principledness that I uphold but is related to the very essence of the dialectical method, which distinguishes comprehensive materialism from all forms of idealism and one-sided materialism.

§ 38 Searching for the "Hidden Philosophy"

Regarding the claim that I did not adopt Tatarkiewicz's views, I mentioned in parentheses that this statement is true "with one single exception." There is indeed a particular thought that I undoubtedly owe to Tatarkiewicz and which I cherish as a treasure taken precisely from him. And even if it truly concerns only "one single thought," it is as profound and rich as that "one single thought" (*ein einziger Gedanke*) to which Schopenhauer once reduced the entire content of several thousand pages of his philosophical works.

The thought in question is this: aesthetics, that is, a certain philosophy of art, is not only found in philosophical texts that explicitly discuss views on beauty and art but is also implicitly present in works of art, meaning in poetic, pictorial, musical creations, as well as in sculpture and architecture and practice, that is, in the creative activities of the artist.[11]

A great task for historians of 20th-century Polish philosophy is to thoroughly study all of Tatarkiewicz's works from this single perspective and precisely determine: a) the actual scope and all branches of this one thought, b) the moment it first appears in Tatarkiewicz's work and the subsequent stages in which it undergoes significant modifications, c) the possible sources of this thought's emergence and any potential precursors of Tatarkiewicz in this field, d) the consequences to

of young people, enjoying the diversity of minds and their creations, as long as they were jointly subjected to the objective rigors of rationality" (T. Kotarbiński, *Nauczyciele sztuki nauczania* [Teachers of the Art of Teaching], speech from 5 May 1956, in: *Sprawność i błąd* [Efficiency and Error], Warszawa 1970, p. 19). I believe these words can be repeated to describe Tatarkiewicz as a teacher.

[11] See especially W. Tatarkiewicz, *Estetyka nowożytna* [Modern Aesthetics], Wrocław 1967, pp. 7 and 8.

which this thought leads. I have assigned this task to one of my students – let us see if and how she manages to fulfil it.

At this point, I would like to add a conclusion to the characterization of Tatarkiewicz as my teacher. As a student, I owe the most to his skill in presenting me with increasingly challenging tasks. This was clearly evident from discussions about exams. He continually suggested new readings, encouraging me to use not just one, but many different textbooks and not only textbooks but also, and most importantly, the original texts in their original languages. He also presented increasingly difficult tasks at seminars. There were times when, while preparing a paper and presenting its outline at the beginning, Tatarkiewicz would "turn" the outline upside down, demanding that I present the same material in a different order on the spot. In February 1938, when I was a first-year student, he proposed that I give a lecture at the seminar on Kant's categories. A brilliant didactic idea was to initiate a privatissimum and involve us in working on the book he was writing at that time. This allowed us to learn not only about "finished products" but also about the process of creating a philosophical book. I am most grateful to Tatarkiewicz for suggesting that I write an article for "Philosophical Review." This was infinitely more important than an exam testing memorization of a textbook; it was about developing the skill of contributing to the field by starting collaboration with a serious philosophical journal. Later, involving us in collaboration on the *Philosophical Dictionary* was also an excellent didactic idea.

In addition to tasks related to writing my master's and doctoral theses, Tatarkiewicz assigned me many other challenging tasks. In 1947, he encouraged me to write – for "Philosophical Review" – a note on contemporary Italian philosophy. This was the initial seed of the book on this subject that I published 30 years later. In the same year, 1947, he encouraged me to write a book titled *Początki filozofii greckiej* [The Beginnings of Greek Philosophy], which he accepted, submitted to the printer, and which after his proofreading – due to reasons beyond the Professor's control – was "scattered," as someone overzealously saw a threat to the construction of socialism in Poland in my information about Heraclitus and Empedocles.

Many fascinating tasks arose for me in connection with Tatarkiewicz's textbook, whose fragments aroused my objections, and the gaps I noticed (such as the previously mentioned lack of a chapter on Vanini) spurred the energy needed to venture into "empty fields" left for my research activity.

In 1961, Tatarkiewicz prompted me to tackle the issue of aesthetics in the works of Giordano Bruno,[12] and a few years later, thinking of Tatarkiewicz, I delved into the problem of aesthetics in Vanini.[13]

The most important and challenging task was not directly set before me by Tatarkiewicz but emerged from reflections on his *Historia estetyki* [History of Aesthetics]. If – I thought to myself – Tatarkiewicz was not satisfied with analysing philosophical treatises where aesthetics is laid out "on the surface," but was searching for hidden aesthetics in works of art and in the process of creating these works by artists, then for historians of philosophy, there are distant horizons of unexplored areas, as the same could and certainly does apply to many other fields of philosophy, particularly axiology, philosophy of man, and philosophy of culture. It follows that to investigate these histories, I should also move beyond the analysis of philosophical texts, entering the realms of poetry, painting, music, and the vast area of transformative actions in the world to uncover philosophy hidden in works of art and in practice – poetic, pictorial, compositional, sociopolitical, and scientific.

Reflections on Tatarkiewicz's role as a teacher and educator confirm the truth that the best teacher is the one who challenges us to undertake great, difficult, and significant tasks.

[12] A. Nowicki, *Problematyka estetyczna w dziełach Giordana Bruna* [Aesthetic Issues in the Works of Giordano Bruno], "Estetyka" 1962, Vol. 3, pp. 219–234. The fact that Tatarkiewicz later cited this work of mine several times brought me great joy.

[13] A. Nowicki, *Uwagi Vaniniego o pięknie i niezwykłości* [Vanini's Remarks on Beauty and Rarity], "Studia Estetyczne" 1967, Vol. 4 (a volume dedicated to Tatarkiewicz on the occasion of his 80th birthday), pp. 39–44.