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ON IZYDORA DAŃBSKA AND HER PHILOSOPHY

I Dańska's biography

Izydora Dańska was born in Rudna Wielka (Poland) on January 3, 1904. She studied philosophy in Lvov in 1922–1927. Kazimierz Twardowski and Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz were her main teachers. Dańska obtained PhD on the base of dissertation about Goblots theory of judgement (Twardowski served as the supervisor) in 1927. In 1927–1930 she worked as Twardowski assistant. In 1930 Dańska spent few months in Vienna where she attended classes of Moritz Schlick. She also visited France and Germany. After returning to Poland, she worked for the Institute of Psychotechnics in Lvov. During the War World II Dańska belonged to Home Army (AK) and taught in the clandestine education. Her habilitation took place in Warsaw in 1946 (on the base of the dissertation about irrationalism and scientific knowledge). Her academic career was stopped in 1950, due to political reasons. She worked for Gdańsk's City Library (later, the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Gdańsk) and occasionally taught logic in the Pedagogical College. Dańska received the title of professor in 1955 and became the professor of philosophy at Jagiellonian University in Krakow. She influenced many philosophers, among others E. Paczkowska–Łagowska, J. Perzanowski, W. Stróżewski, J. Tischner, A. Węgrzecki, A. Wroński and myself. In 1964, Dańska was dismissed from the university and administratively moved to the Polish Academy of Sciences without the right to teach students. However, she conducted the graduate seminar. It was my privilege to participate in its meetings. Dańska died in Kraków on June 18, 1983.

Izydora Dańska always preserved very high moral standards. When Twardowski resigned from his professorship in Lvov for personal reasons, she left the assistant position for solidarity with her teacher and professor. All people studied with her in the underground system of education stress that Dańska was extraordinary brave and modest. Although she was programmatically neutral toward politics, she always protested against limitations of academic freedom by state authorities. This was the main reason that she was twice dismissed from her academic duties. Dańska officially protested against repressing Polish professors in 1968. Ironically, some persons released at this time acted earlier against her and were partly responsible for her dismissing from academic duties. She was never decorated by any order with

exception of Home Army Cross. She was very proud of this fact. The inscription on Dąbska's grave in Rudna Wielka, her family place, says *Izydora Dąbska, a philosopher 1904–1983*. Zbigniew Herbert, her student and friend, dedicated his famous verse *The Power of Taste* to Dąbska. She was also elected to Institute Internationale de la Philosophie in Paris.

II Dąbska General Philosophical Position

Dąbska belonged to the Lvov–Warsaw School, established by Twardowski at the end of 19th century. She can be considered as a very typical member of this school. Dąbska adopted Twardowski's general metaphilosophical project requiring that philosophy should be clear, devoid of philosophical speculation and consisting of correctly justified statements. This program favored logic in the broad sense, including formal logic, semiotics and philosophy of science. In Poland, this last field was identified with methodology of science. Dąbska worked (see below) in these fields, but she did not limited philosophy to logic, even very widely understood. Dąbska was considerably interested in all domains of philosophy, although her main interests were concentrated in methodology, epistemology and philosophy of language. In general, Dąbska shared an analytical attitude in metaphilosophy. Although she did not believe in prospects of creating universal philosophical synthesis (an all-embracing system), on the other hand, she rejected any a priori attempt of cutting philosophical problems, for instance, as it was proposed by the Vienna Circle. In particular, Dąbska did not agree with emotivism in axiology and considered values (duties, norms, value-sentences) as objective and subjected to cognition. Thus, Dąbska can be considered as a typical representative of a moderate analytic position, consisting in a compromise between decriptivism as practiced by Oxonian ordinary language philosophy and reconstructionism proposed by logical empiricism.

Dąbska was a distinguished historian of philosophy. She contributed to the history of ancient (*Outline of Greek Philosophy*, 1935, *Two Studies about Plato*, 1972) and modern philosophy, particularly to the history of skepticism (*French Skepticism in XVI and XVII Century*, 1958) and semiotics (*Introduction to Greek Semiotics*, 1984). He also published papers about several philosophers and scientists, among others Hereclitus, Democritus, Horatius, Ptolemy, Abelard, Bursius, Pascal, Smiglecius, Leibniz, Condillac, Kant, Eddington, Meyerson, Bergson, Duhem, Ajdukiewicz, Twardowski, Frege, Russell, Brouwer, Wittgenstein, and the Vienna Circle. Dąbska also translated important classic works into Polish, for example, Teophrast's *Characters*, Sextus Empriricus, *Against Logicians*, Descartes' *Principia Philosophiae* and his *Meditations of First Philosophy* and Leibniz' *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*. She also very strongly stressed the role of the history of science for systematic methodology.

III Dąbska works in logic

Although Dąbska knew contemporary logic quite well, she did not contribute to technical logical problems. Semiotics (philosophy of language) and methodology of science belonged to her favorite fields. Dąbska

analyzed the following semiotic problems: (a) conditional propositions (*Semantics of Conditional Propositions*, 1938, in Polish), (b) empty names (*Empty Names*, 1948), (c) individual names (*The Philosophy of Proper Names*, 1949, in Polish), (d) the relation of logic and grammar (*Some Concepts of Grammar in the Light of Logic*, 1964, in Polish), (e) functions of silence (*Sur les fonctions sémiotiques du silence*, 1970). The last topic was connected with Dąmbska's war experience. Silence, usually neglected in normal circumstances, has a special significance in the conspiracy conditions, not only ethical but also semiotic. Dąmbska pointed out that the silent part of communicates in special circumstances possesses a special meaning, often richer than the explicit part. Dąmbska's pioneering analysis of silence was closely related to her remarks about anonymous people, also suggested by her conspiracy experience. Topics covered by other mentioned semiotic papers include various kinds of conditional propositions, the distinction between contextual and context-free proper names, the suggestion that there are singular and general void names or the role of logic in grammar demonstrated by an analysis of parts of speech, exclamations and syncategorematic expressions.

The first methodological works of Dąmbska concerned the concept of scientific law (*On the Laws in Science*, 1933, in Polish). According to Dąmbska every science formulates laws. Thus, law-intended activity characterizes every scientific activity. On the other hand, it would be improper to maintain laws fall under the same pattern in all fields. Clearly, this situation generates a variety of questions. Consequently, Dąmbska offers an analysis several issues: laws in mathematics, laws in empirical science, laws in the humanities or laws and causality. She also tried to define scientific law in a general manner, although, due to the variety of laws, there is no hope to single one property to characterize the law-likeness. The following formula was proposed by Dąmbska as the first attempt (more exactly this proposal is modeled by physics): A sentence S of a language L is a scientific law if and only if (a) S is a general conditional statement referring to a stable succession of events, (b) no temporal co-ordinates occur in S , (c) the scope of S is an open class, (d) S is an element of a scientific theory. An interesting point is that scientific laws fulfil their roles (explanation, prediction) not solely, but as elements of theoretical systems. The conditions (a)–(e) display a version of the regularity theory, one of the main theories of scientific laws.

The conditions imposed on the concept of scientific law do not contain any reference to causality. On the other hand, Dąmbska defended the view that scientific laws are ontologically rooted in causal relations. There is no conflict between the regularity theory of scientific laws and admitting causality on the ontological level. Dąmbska perfectly understood that the traditional account of causality based on the idea of real (natural) necessity should be corrected. In order to achieve a coherence between this account of scientific laws and new physics (in particular, quantum mechanics), she proposed a weakening of the concept of causality by admitting probabilistic predictability. On this occasion, Dąmbska very strongly criticized Heisenberg for a very imprecise formulation of the principle of causality. She pointed out that the conditional *if we exactly know the present state of the world, we can calculate the future*

cannot be considered as an adequate version of the principle in question. Dąbbska also considered the problem of truth of scientific laws. Since she accepted the classical and absolute concept of truth, she did not agree to reduce truth to its knowledge. In fact, a sharp division between both constituted for Dąbbska a *condition sine qua non* for a proper philosophy of science and epistemology.

The classification of reasoning was extensively studied in Poland. The reason for this interest was related to the view, very popular in the Lvov–Warsaw School, that performing inferences constitutes the central activity in doing science. The most popular account was elaborated by Jan Łukasiewicz and Tadeusz Czeżowski and distinguished deduction and induction as the fundamental kinds of reasoning. Whereas the latter proceeds from logical consequences to their logical antecedents, the former starts from logical antecedents and looks for their logical consequents (it is sufficient to neglect here further levels, like proofs, explanations, etc., let me just note that induction is a kind of reduction in this scheme). Thus, the logical element identified with entailment is present in every reasoning. In the case of deduction, inference proceeds accordingly to the direction of entailment, but the converse relation holds in the case of reduction. Yet entailment connects parts of reasoning directly or indirectly, although deduction is certain, but reduction fallible. This fact can be regarded as a sign of logicism in analysis of science as practiced in Polish analytical philosophy.

This elegant classification is unfortunately not complete, because analogy, a very important case of reasoning in science and ordinary life, is neither deduction nor reduction. Dąbbska decided to fill this gap (*Two Studies in the Theory of Scientific Knowledge*, 1962, in Polish). Since she agreed that analogy is reducible neither to deduction nor to reduction, another approach had to be proposed. According to Dąbbska the nature of analogy can be explained to the concept of homomorphism between structures. Generally speaking, analogy holds between sets with a definite structure. Let X and Y be sets in question. Analogy between X and Y holds if and only if there is a homomorphic mapping H between the structure of X and the structure of Y . Usually one of this sets is given. Assume that X is our starting point. If we define H operating from X to Y , we can make comparative statements about properties of objects belonging to Y on the base of recognizing properties of objects belonging to the starting set X . This idea generalizes a more traditional approach to analogy based on the concept of proportional relation between analogical items. Although defining analogy by homomorphism was mainly intended to catch the analogy of proportionality, it can be also used in describing attributive analogical relation. Historically speaking, Dąbbska's account of analogy fits traditional, ancient and medieval attempts to define this concept. On systematic part, this approach is sufficiently comprehensive in order to investigate the place of analogy in various cases of scientific and ordinary thinking. In particular, analogy defined as a homomorphic relation between structured sets of objects very well explains several problems pertaining to processes of selecting and formulating problems, building concrete and abstract models are constructed and looking for working hypotheses. Dąbbska

observes that analogy is very weak as a effective method of justifying statements and has no significant use in justificatory procedures. On the other, hand analogy is indispensable in heuristic activities.

IV Epistemology in Dąmbska's works

Contributions to epistemology are perhaps the most important and interesting part in Dąmbska's philosophy. It seems that she followed Ajdukiewicz's view about the primacy of theory of knowledge in the entire philosophical enterprise. Clearly, Dąmbska's works in semiotics and philosophy of sciences are strongly rooted in epistemology. The same concerns her studies in the history of philosophy. Although Dąmbska's interests in the history of philosophy were very wide and covered, for instance, the problems of dreams and happiness in ancient philosophy, analysis of the history epistemological problems prevailed in her works about the philosophical past. When Dąmbska discussed systematic semiotic or methodological problems, she always tried to show their connection with epistemology. Her work on the intersubjectivity of sense data (*Is Intersubjective Similarity of Sense–Data and Indispensable Assumption of Natural Science?*, 1937, in Polish) is an instructive demonstration in this respect. The title of the paper in question sufficiently formulates the question. There is a temptation to answer *Yes*. However, Dąmbska after a very detailed analysis shows three things. Firstly, no premise of scientific reasoning contains the assumption of intersubjective similarity of sense–data. Secondly, it is easy to show that natural science does not formulate sentences about sense qualities, but employs statements about quantitative relations between properties or, at least, tries to replace the former by the latter. The third observation is related to the standard view that if the content of sensory experience is not intersubjective, it is also not communicable. Dąmbska observes that this objection can be met either by conventionalism or a biological theory of observational statements.

Dąmbska work *Irrationalism and Scientific Knowledge* (in Polish) appeared in 1937. I remind that it was the base of her habilitation procedure in 1946. This work is perhaps the most comprehensive study in the Lvov–Warsaw School about irrationalism. The problem was serious for Twardowski and his students, because so–called anti–irrational attitude was one of the most fundamental and characteristic in the entire Lvov–Warsaw School. Dąmbska considered two problems: (a) what is irrationalism?, (b) is irrationalism legitimate in science? She distinguished four kinds of irrationalism: logical (asserting contradictory statements), epistemological (accepting knowledge which is not intersubjectively testable or communicable), metaphysical (reality is incomprehensible) and psychological (inclination to irrational attitudes, for example, prejudices). Correspondingly, we have four of rationalism. A very interesting fragment of Dąmbska's analysis concerns the relation between empiricism, rationalism in the traditional sense (Plato, Descartes) and irrationalism. She shows that radical rationalism very frequently becomes epistemological irrationalism. As far as the matter concerns the legitimacy of irrationalism in science, Dąmbska verdict is decisively negative: this attitude has no place in science. Of course, Dąmbska does not deny that irrationalism

appears in science, for example, when we use models and analogies. However, the descriptive thesis that irrationalism is present in science does not imply that it should be tolerated in scientific activities. Dąmbska is fully conscious that fighting against irrationalism is an intellectual duty even if we are conscious that we cannot be fully successful in this respect. Irrationalism has strong psychological sources and always appears when people are looking for answers to undecidable questions. And because such questions are important for life, irrational answers have to be formulated. Dąmbska quotes attempts to derive the freedom of will from physics as a typical example. Yet our intellectual duty consists in use of our mental powers in order to minimize irrational elements in our thinking and considering them as subjective confessions which are subjected to faith, but not scientific knowledge. Dąmbska's reported views about rationalism and irrationalism are a perfect example of general anti-irrational metaphilosophy in the Lvov–Warsaw School.

Dąmbska was particularly interested in conventionalism, historically as well as systematically (*On Conventions and Conventionalism*, 1975, in Polish). In fact, she was one of the best world experts in conventionalism as a historical phenomenon and devoted many works to leading conventionalists, like Poincaré, Le Roy, Duhem, Eddington or Ajdukiewicz. The last philosopher very strongly influenced Dąmbska's sympathetic interests in conventionalism. On the systematic axis, Dąmbska was fully convinced that conventions are indispensable in science. She intended to give justice to Poincaré's famous dictum *Conventions yes, arbitrary not*. The paper about conventionalism and relativism (English transl., this journal pp. 9–15) is perhaps particularly symptomatic. Dąmbska examines in this work the question whether conventionalism implies relativism as far as the matter concerns our understanding of truth. The problem was important in the Lvov–Warsaw School, because most representatives of this school rejected relativism. Twardowski himself became Polish classic in this respect. In fact, typical interpretations of conventionalism point out that relativism belongs to its consequences. Dąmbska did not agree with such reading of conventionalism. She argues that conventionalism concerns solvability (decidability) of problems, not truth of sentences. Hence, conventionalism, even radical in Ajdukiewicz's version, cannot imply relativism. Consequently, conventionalism is consistent with absolutism about truth as well as with relativism. Personally, I think that Dąmbska's defence of conventionalism against the objection that this view favors arbitrary solutions of problems is the best in the entire world literature.

Dąmbska summarized her epistemological views in a monograph *On Tools and Objects of Knowledge. The Theory of Instrumental Knowledge. On Linguistic Philosophy* (1967, in Polish). This book develops the idea of cognitive operators. They are a sub-class of technical means of action. In particular, Dąmbska, assuming epistemological realism, provides an analysis of so-called objectual operators. They are devices of subjects but directed to objects. Language and models are the most important objectual cognitive operators. Clearly, the traditional category of intentionality, very popular in the Lvov–Warsaw School, is behind Dąmbska's considerations. One can see a

new interpretation of this important concept consisting in a new approach to instrumentalism. Usually, instrumentalism (for example, verificationism or operationalism) are understood as kinds of antirealism. Dąmbska changes this view and shows that it is possible to develop a realistic approach to instruments of action and cognitive operators. In the second part of the monograph, Dąmbska examines linguistic philosophy in a broad historical context, including Leibniz and Condillac. Although she highly evaluates language oriented philosophy, she also sees its limitations. The mentioned realist perspective motivates Dąmbska's view that philosophy cannot be reduced to an analysis of language.

Bibliographical information

Unfortunately there is no selection of Dąmbska's papers in foreign languages. Many of her important papers are collected in *Znaki i myśli. Wybór pism z semiotyki, teorii nauki i historii filozofii* [*Signs and Thoughts. Selected Papers in Semiotics, Theory of Science and History of Philosophy*], PWN, Warszawa 1975. The bibliography about Dąmbska includes is included in: *Ruch Filozoficzny* 36, 2–4/1978, *Ruch Filozoficzny* 41, 4/1984 (these issues contain papers delivered at two conferences about Dąmbska's philosophy), I. A. Bober, *Filozofia kultury Izydory Dąmbskiej* [*The Philosophy of Culture of Izydora Dąmbska*], Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna im. Jana Kochanowskiego, Kielce 1992, J. Perzanowski, *Izydora Dąmbska 1904–1983*, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 2001 (this volume also collects remembering some other persons), *Rozum – Serce – Smak* [*Reason – Heart – Taste*], Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2009. The fullest Dąmbska bibliography is given in Bober's book. One can also consult *Studia z teorii poznania i filozofii wartości* [*Studies in Theory of Knowledge and Philosophy of Value*], Ossolineum, Wrocław 1978; this volume is dedicated to Izydora Dąmbska.