



# Philosophy as the Foundation of Knowledge Action & Ethos

editors

Janusz Kaczmarek, Ryszard Kleszcz



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WYDAWNICTWO  
UNIwersytetu  
ŁÓDZKIEGO

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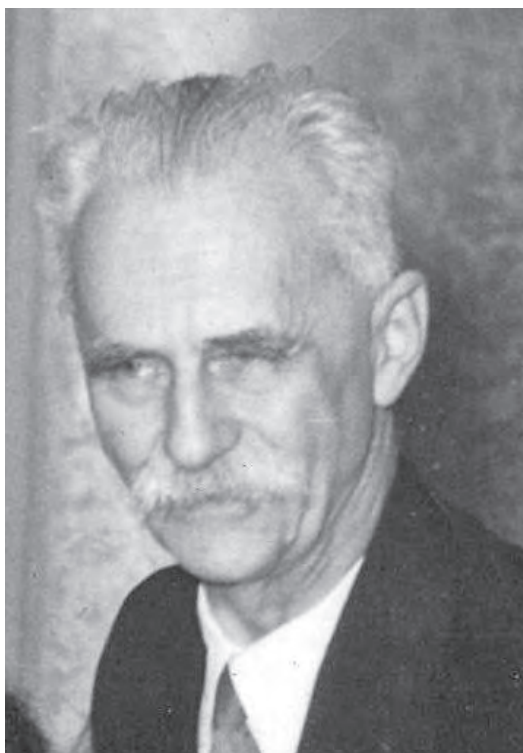
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# Tadeusz Kotarbiński

(March 31, 1886 – October 3, 1981)



Tadeusz Kotarbiński was born in Warsaw on March 31, 1886 into an artist family. He studied mathematics and physics in Cracow, and architecture in Darmstadt and Lvov (1907–1912). At Lvov University, Kotarbiński studied philosophy and classical philology under the guidance of Kazimierz Twardowski. He received his PhD in 1912 with his thesis titled “Utilitarianism in the ethics of Mill and Spencer”. After his university studies, Kotarbiński taught classics at a Warsaw high school. In 1919 he was appointed Temporary Professor of Philosophy (Full Professor in 1929) at the University of Warsaw. During World War II, he took part in underground teaching. After the war, he became the founder and first rector of the University of Łódź (1945–1949). In 1951, he returned to Warsaw where he lectured at the University. Kotarbiński was the president of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1957–1961). He also served as the president of the Polish Philosophical Society (1948–1978), and as vice president and president of Institut International de Philosophie (1957–1968).



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## INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the community of the University of Łódź celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. The Institute of Philosophy took advantage of this opportunity, and organized an international philosophical conference titled “University – Philosophy as the Foundation of Knowledge, Action and Ethos” on June 11–13. Numerous philosophers took part in the conference, philosophers from different universities and research institutes (inter alia Bergen, Dublin, Cracow, Lublin, Łódź, Nancy, Opole, Pittsburgh, Poznań and Warsaw). Conference participants discussed many fundamental problems concerning the life of the university and its research work. In particular, philosophical, ethical and praxeological questions of knowledge, action and ethos were often investigated. Of course, a notable part of the discussion was related to Tadeusz Kotarbiński’s theory of action, ontology and reism, methodology, and the ethics of the reliable guardian. Tadeusz Kotarbiński was Kazimierz Twardowski’s pupil, and one of the leading members of the Lvov–Warsaw School. After the Second World War, Kotarbiński taught at the University of Łódź and was the first rector of our university (1945–1949).

The present monograph, we hope, is a valuable outcome of the combined lectures and disputations. For our monograph, the editors chose 16 papers from the ones prepared for this work. The whole is divided into four parts: 1) Chapter I, dedicated to Kotarbiński the person, philosopher and teacher, 2) Chapter II, devoted to the theoretical problems of knowledge, 3) Chapter III, containing various questions about certain problems in ethics, religion and the theory of action and 4) Chapter IV, problems concerning the condition of contemporary humanities and social sciences.



# CHAPTER I

## **Kotarbiński as a Rector, Teacher and Person**



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## THE UNIVERSITY'S 70<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

The University's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary is the second 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrated by the City of Łódź. The first celebration took place in 1936, when Kazimierz Twardowski, founder of the Lvov–Warsaw School, turned 70 on 2 October. It was then that Tadeusz Kotarbiński – who later became the rector of the University of Łódź – published an article about his mentor in issue 21(138) of the *Pion* journal. The article was connected with Kazimierz Twardowski receiving the City of Łódź Prize for his scientific work.<sup>1</sup> The coincidence of these two anniversaries provokes reflection.

In his laudation of the man who wrote *On the Dignity of the University*, Tadeusz Kotarbiński wrote about Twardowski's research and about how he organized the work of the philosopher community – in other words he wrote about what he had learnt from his mentor. After all, it was precisely that heritage which he had built on when he taught what he called “small” philosophy at the University of Warsaw before World War II and when he headed the University of Łódź in the first years after the war.

What, then, was the “core of Prof. Twardowski's academic production” [*op. cit.*, 89]? In terms of research method, it was a theory of representation (i.e. ideas and notions). Twardowski's pioneering role was based on indicating that “the professional role of philosophers involves, as an important part, giving the meaning of words ... a definite and distinct shape” [*op. cit.*, 893]. This is especially important when studying the correctness of theorems and justifications. It was also a critique of a “dilettante epistemology” related to the relativism of regarding a sentence as true or false depending on who utters it (“subjective fantasizing”). Another of his achievements was formulating rational and refined opinions on the subject, method and tasks of psychology, or, more precisely, the philosophy of psychology, especially of thinking. The fourth part of Twardowski's output was concerned with ethics. Twardowski found

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<sup>1</sup> KOTARBIŃSKI T. [1958], “Kazimierz Twardowski”, [in:] *Wybór pism*, vol. II, *Myśli o myśleniu*, PWN, Warszawa, pp. 891–899.

– Kotarbiński writes – “our domestic philosophy to be in a suspicious condition” and made it so “that among the intelligentsia of Lvov ... philosophy at the university gained the reputation of something like daily bread” [*op. cit.*, 896]. “Above all, this was an excellent introductory course for anyone who was to teach anyone anything in future” [*op. cit.*, 897]. It was philosophizing without “any kind of ‘-ism’, no prophesying, no extravagance of inspired individuality ..., nor any pretending to be a genius” [*ibid.*].

To the question of what inclined Twardowski, a graduate of the University of Vienna, a student of Franz Brentano, to adopt such a programme of activity, Tadeusz Kotarbiński offers this reply:

Finding fallow land in Poland, overgrown with weeds, he rolled up his sleeves and began tearing out the weeds and planting nourishing vegetables. This great, wise and incredibly hard-working teacher made it his mission to teach ne’er-do-well Poles how to work just like Germans can work. In the area, of course, which was available to him. It was mainly a question of character. Twardowski was deeply hurt by the Poles’ reputation: Die Polen sind ja so unzuverlässig! Unreliable! It’s hard to depend on us! What’s worse, the criticism hit the nail on the head ... So this Man, devoted to Poland but brought up in German solidity, undertook a certain, so to speak, *Kulturkampf* at home... And began eradicating short-lived zeal, tardiness, unreliability in deals, disorderliness, the pursuit of what is currently the most engrossing thing; he made people get down to hard work, respect organizational relations, practise various skills, write detailed papers, offer objective summaries... Oh how grateful they are today, his students of old, to their beloved Mentor for all this! With what great faith they pass those elements that he instilled in them on to their own students! [*op. cit.*, 897].

Nine years passed after these words were written, difficult years dominated by the tragedy of war and the hecatomb of Warsaw, until in 1945 Twardowski’s student arrived to create such a university in Łódź that would have the proper dignity. How did he do it? He made good use of Twardowski’s programme and his own experience supported by the framework of his consistently developing philosophy of practicality.<sup>2</sup> Allow me to remind you what I have written about this.<sup>3</sup>

Tadeusz Kotarbiński treated action as a skill of which the analysis and the critique of its notions and methods required studying the language reflecting that skill. One could say with certain emphasis that Kotarbiński raised *action* to the rank of how philosophy analyses and critiques scientific notions and methods. Focusing on action, Kotarbiński brought science – exact science, to be precise – down from Olympus and into workshops and laboratories where scientific

<sup>2</sup> GASPARI W. [1993], *A Philosophy of Practicality: A Treatise on the Philosophy of Tadeusz Kotarbiński*, Societas Philosophica Fennica, Helsinki.

<sup>3</sup> GASPARI W. [2006], “Wielkość małej filozofii”, [in:] R. Banajski, W. Gasparski and A. Lewicka-Strzałecka, [eds], *Myśl Tadeusza Kotarbińskiego i jej współczesna recepcja*, Polska Akademia Nauk i Towarzystwo Naukowe Prakseologii, Warszawa, pp. 13–19.

research, *ergo* actions, are performed. This consideration, first and foremost, forms the foundation of Tadeusz Kotarbiński's philosophical system. In order to answer the question of what system we are speaking of, we need to consider the following. Firstly, the works of Tadeusz Kotarbiński should be treated as a whole, i.e. as a philosophical system. Secondly, Kotarbiński's method of building this system consisted in analysing the language of the disciplines whose methodological criticism he performed. Thirdly, Kotarbiński's philosophy should be understood in the same way that he understood philosophy and demanded it should be understood, i.e. as the science of science. Fourthly and finally, science, or scientific disciplines to be more precise, should be understood in the way adopted by Kotarbiński, i.e. as a separate field deserving to be the subject of intellectual university teaching. The atomic level of Tadeusz Kotarbiński's philosophical system is a universe of behaviours of a subject creatively changing the encountered reality, this subject being "a body living, awake and aware" and the reality being "a tangle of interdependent and changing things", as Kotarbiński put it.<sup>4</sup> This universe is the world of the practical activity of humans as acting subjects. Tadeusz Kotarbiński's philosophical system is the effect of reflecting on this world, so it is exactly a *philosophy of practicality*.<sup>5</sup>

Kotarbiński ended his article about Kazimierz Twardowski with the words: "And we can guess how touched the Professor will be that the thanks come from Łódź itself! The city from the very heart of the Congress Kingdom thanks a citizen of Lvov, a city of practical people thanks a coryphaeus of philosophical culture. In this is contained a symbolism of extensive and deep relations so dear to our Mentor's heart..." [*op. cit.*, 899].

The obvious thing to do today, on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Łódź, is to offer similar words about Tadeusz Kotarbiński, its first rector:

We can guess that Łódź of all places is certainly grateful to him! A city from the very heart of Poland thanks a native of Warsaw from the Lvov–Warsaw school, a city of practical people thanks a philosopher of practicality, a coryphaeus of philosophical culture and courage in action, i.e. efficacy in achieving worthy goals. In this is contained a symbolism of extensive and deep relations so dear to our Mentor's heart.

Please accept my respect and wishes for a rewarding debate.

<sup>4</sup> KOTARBIŃSKI T. [1993], *Ontologia, teoria poznania i metodologia nauk, Dzieła wszystkie*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, pp. 175–176.

<sup>5</sup> GASPARSKI W. [1991], "Filozofia Tadeusza Kotarbińskiego filozofią praktyczności", [in:] W. Gasparski, A. Strzalecki, [eds], *Logika, praktyka, etyka: Przesłania filozofii Tadeusza Kotarbińskiego*, Towarzystwo Naukowe Prakseologii, Warszawa, p. 31.



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**PROFESSOR TADEUSZ KOTARBIŃSKI AND PHILOSOPHY  
AT THE TIME OF HIS TERM OFFICE AS RECTOR  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ŁÓDŹ  
IN A FORMER STUDENT'S REMINISCENCES**

*Youth is the best time in every human's life. At the same time, it is a period of certain inferiority and a search for personal patterns as well as authorities of moral conduct and social behaviour; it is a period of searching for wise life-guides who can stir our dormant talents and direct them to the right scientific interests.*

The period of World War II and the time of the German or Soviet occupation prevented young Poles from regular personal and educational development. At that time, they either fought in the guerrillas or were forced to work for the Nazis.

In June 1945, I received the so-called small secondary school diploma or certificate of completion of the 4<sup>th</sup> form (in accordance with the prewar rules) in Nicolaus Copernicus high school in Łódź (there I had the good fortune to start my secondary school education in 1939). I passed the regular secondary school-leaving exams at the science-oriented adult secondary school that was located in the same building. Adult secondary school was an absolute necessity for me then. Both in junior high school and in secondary school I had excellent teachers, partly later university lecturers, such as Lucjan Cieřlik – physicist (Łódź University of Technology), and Władysław Terlikowski – mathematician (Łódź University of Technology). When I recollect that school period, even today I am amazed at their ability to convey in a very short time the immensity of knowledge to educationally late young people. It is simply hard to believe, but we were really good and comprehensively prepared for higher education. Admission to some colleges and universities depended on successfully passed entrance examinations, and often – on political support. I got to Łódź University of Technology with no problem at all, but I decided to study the humanities at the University of Łódź for two vital reasons. Firstly, my mother was seriously

ailing, so I had to help her with her daily problems (studying the humanities would make it easier for me) and secondly, general knowledge and especially the study of the structure of thinking seemed more attractive to me, and it was philosophy that – to a large extent – could meet my expectations.

In the academic year of 1946/47, just when I started my university education, Professor Tadeusz Kotarbiński, a known and recognized philosopher, was the first rector of the University of Lodz. In that year I did not have an opportunity to come into contact with him, but I clearly felt the effects of his managing of the new (founded after the war) University. Professor Kotarbiński was a supporter of a liberal university, that is, one where people with different views – either idealistic or quite opposite ones – were free to conduct scientific activities. It was important that the suggested theories were clearly presented and properly substantiated. During the first year of my studies, thanks to such a policy of managing the University, I had the good fortune to listen to lectures by such celebrities as Janina Kamińska (previously named Dina Sztajnberg, and a year later – Kotarbińska as Tadeusz Kotarbiński's wife), who would deliver lectures in logic in an exceptionally interesting way. In the academic year 1947/48, I was able to participate in the introductory seminar in logic held by Professor Janina Kotarbińska and listen to her talk on *Methodology of Humanities*.

In a lecture titled *The Architectonics of Being*, Professor Benedict Bornstein presented his original ontological idea. He also had a lecture – with reference to Immanuel Kant – on *A priori Synthetic Judgements*. In the academic year 1947/48, Professor Bornstein gave a lecture titled *Introduction to Philosophy* and a seminar *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Kant). I clearly remember his tall, noble figure. Unfortunately, he died soon afterwards, in 1948.

It was impossible to forget exciting lectures in psychology delivered by Professor Albert Dryjski. The Professor always quoted interesting psychological problems and then strived to solve them employing different kinds of methods. In the academic year 1947/48, during his four-hour lectures, Professor Dryjski discussed and visually presented endless topics. His textbook was read like a novel. In addition to the lecture we had the opportunity to participate in two-hour psychology classes or in a seminar.

Professor Wiktor Wąsik also conducted his lectures in a very vivid way. I admired his erudition. He often changed the subject of his discourses. He discussed medieval and positivist philosophy (1947/48), Old Polish views on education as well as idealism of the 19th century (1948/49), and philosophy of the Enlightenment (1949/50). Professor Wąsik also held a seminar in the history of philosophy and he was the examiner during my exam in the history of philosophy. Dr. Stanisław Czajkowski (1904–1961) was an assistant professor in the Department of the History of Philosophy run by Professor Wąsik.

Dr. Czajkowski – educated at French universities – was an expert on Descartes’s philosophy. He had a very cheerful disposition which could be observed in his lectures. He always delivered them with great passion, commitment and a nice smile on his face.

Professor Mieczysław Wallis had his lectures on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the building in Lindley’a Street. I remember that figure very well. He was a “walking,” and, one can say, a “talking aesthete”. He had a two-hour lecture on *The science of art* and a one-hour lecture on *The history of aesthetics*. I have to point out that all the lecturers of that time, and Professor Mieczysław Wallis in particular, knew how to take good care of the beauty of Polish language. It was important to the post-war students who were for more than 5 years of occupation deprived of a native speech pattern.

The lectures delivered by Professor Sergiusz Hessen were also of a great interest to students, as he presented pedagogical theories in a very stylish way. I remember his three-hour lecture titled *The History of Ancient Philosophy with Emphasis on Pedagogical Doctrines*. Professor Hessen was a versatile scholar, a specialist in the theory of education, but also in the philosophy of culture and law. Professor Hessen’s activity at the University of Łódź was a continuation of the classes at the branch of the Free Polish University in Łódź. The same can be said about Professor Wąsik and Professor Bornstein as well.

The University authorities suggested that philosophy students, and especially logic and methodology of science students, should hear a lecture in science. I chose mathematics and Professor Stanisław Mazur’s lecture on *Differential and Integral Calculus* and *Higher Algebra*. Professor Mazur did not work at the University of Lodz for a long time. He was a great mathematician but of the Lvov School, yet it was politics that attracted him more. He came to participate in high-level authorities of the state.

Ethical thought was represented at that time by Professor Maria Ossowska. In the academic year 1948/49, she had a lecture titled *Personal Patterns in European Antiquity*. Klemens Szaniawski, later professor of the University of Warsaw and its rector, was one of her collaborators.

I got to know Professor Tadeusz Kotarbiński’s teaching and scientific activity only in the later period of my studies. In the academic year 1949/50, the Professor had a monographic lecture entitled *Science Classification* and a philosophical seminar. I attended that seminar also in the following year, before my graduation. I was fascinated by the way he conducted the meetings. Among other things, we discussed texts from the textbook by Tadeusz Czeżowski, professor of the University of Torun, who had been a philosopher at the University of Vilnius (Czeżowski and Kotarbiński met by chance in 1912 at a philosophical introductory seminar in Lvov. They sat next to each other and

so it started.). After reading a passage we made a thorough linguistic, semantic and factual analysis of it. It was a great school of searching the meaning hidden in words, a school of thinking analysis and of learning how to define concepts properly and express yourself precisely. A nice thing about the seminar was also its enchanting, almost family atmosphere. The Professor treated his students very seriously. He always encouraged them to participate in discussions.

The Professor could appreciate his students and many of them won a large dose of his trust. Let me give an example. Tadeusz and Janina Kotarbiński (the Professor got married to Janina Kamińska) lived near the rector's office, in a building at 3 Uniwersytecka Street, on the second floor. Their flat was on the south side. The offices on the west side were for a seminar room and a library. There was also the Professor and his wife's small study. During one summer vacation it came about that there was no one to give the seminar, though there were close associates such as Marian Przełęcki and Leszek Kołakowski who were outstanding scholars a little bit later. I offered to perform the duty and my offer was accepted. I got the key to the seminar room, access to the library and to the professor's personal desk.

The way of managing the University did not match the then Communist authorities' politics, which was ideologically based on Marxism-Leninism. It inevitably led to an ideological attack on the Professor – performed largely by a then popular sociologist, Professor Józef Chałasiński – in extensive articles published in the journal “Myśl Filozoficzna”. Up until 1949 (when Kotarbiński's term of office as rector was about to end), ideologically awkward professors were dismissed. Professor Dryjski was offered a Russian language course. He died shortly after that (1956), probably from worry. Professor Wąsik retired on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1950. Born in 1883 he found his place first at the Catholic University of Lublin (1952/53–1955/56), and then, until his death in 1963, he was head of the Department of the History of Philosophy at the Theological Academy in Warsaw, which was founded after the Theological Faculty at the University of Warsaw had been liquidated. Professor Bornstein died in 1948.

I wrote my master's thesis (*The Principle of the Economy of Thinking According to Ernst Mach*) under Professor Janina Kotarbińska's supervision. The subject was suggested by Professor Kotarbińska. The principle of the economy of thinking belonged to the philosophical movement of the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was formulated by an Austrian philosopher, Ernst Mach, and, independently of him, by a German-Swiss philosopher, Richard Avenarius, and was known as empirical criticism or empirio-criticism. Ernst Mach (1838–1916) was an Austrian physicist. From 1864 he was professor of physics in Graz, and from 1867 in Prague. He was also keenly interested in philosophy, and from 1895 to 1901 he worked as professor of philosophy at the University of Vienna. Empirical criticism was also known as machism.