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LEADING METAPHILOSOPHICAL VALUES OF THE LVOV-WARSAW SCHOOL**

Abstract

The article explores the concept of scientific philosophy as understood by members of the Lvov-Warsaw School. The author argues that according to Twardowski and his students, philosophy should be done as an exact discipline which ought to be pursued in critical and collaborative spirit. Selected views on scientific philosophy are analyzed, including ideas of Ajdukiewicz, Zawirski, and Dąmbska. It is claimed that though the conception of scientific philosophy is beset with crucial and fundamental ambiguities, it was far more important for the Lvov-Warsaw School than the idea of analytic philosophy.

Keywords: Lvov-Warsaw School, scientific philosophy, analytic philosophy, Kazimierz Twardowski, Zygmunt Zawirski, Izydora Dąmbska

While dealing with the issue of leading metaphilosophical ideals or values in the Lvov-Warsaw School, one might reasonably argue as follows: the school under consideration is an important part of the analytic tradition in contemporary philosophy, so metaphilosophical values constitutive of that tradition are *mutatis mutandis* essential for the Lvov-Warsaw School. However, one should at the same time emphasize that in common with other like-minded philosophers in the first half of the twentieth century, members of the Lvov-Warsaw School did not explicitly refer to the idea of analytic philosophy in the description of their own metaphilosophy or methodology, or — to be

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** The first version of this article was presented during the panel discussion "The Values of the Lvov-Warsaw School in the Contemporary World," organized at the International Symposium "The World of Values in the Lvov-Warsaw School," Warsaw, October 21-23, 2021. In the article I draw to some extent upon my paper on varieties of scientific philosophy (Szubka 2022).

more accurate — they did it extremely rarely. They rather preferred to present themselves as pursuing scientific philosophy. In this terminological preference, they were following the founder of the Lvov-Warsaw School, Kazimierz Twardowski (1866-1938).

1. TWARDOWSKI'S KEY METAPHILOSOPHICAL IDEA

For Twardowski, scientific philosophy was above all "a philosophy that is exact, clear, and based upon scientific results" (van der Schaar 2016: 161). It was a philosophy pursued as a rigorous academic discipline, and not as a speculative metaphysical system taking the form of a world-view. Philosophy done in a clear and properly exact way was a necessary prerequisite for pursuing it as a critical and collaborative enterprise. For Twardowski, criticism and collaboration were important features of truly scientific philosophy. Philosophy, he insisted, should avoid any form of dogmatism, search for justification of all accepted, even tentatively, claims and theories, and endlessly reconsider evidence for them. Described in these general terms, Twardowski's program of scientific philosophy appears as consisting of large, sweeping, and rather uncontroversial statements that may be summarized as follows: *philosophy needs to be done as clearly and exactly as possible, as well as pursued in critical and collaborative spirit*. Nevertheless, one should not forget that, in the teaching and writings of Twardowski, this program was embedded in more substantial and controversial claims concerning the nature of philosophy, its evidential basis rooted in psychology, and its relation to metaphysics.

2. SOME DEVELOPMENTS AND APPLICATIONS OF THE IDEA OF SCIENTIFIC PHILOSOPHY

Presumably under that influence, students and followers of Twardowski made frequent use of the idea of scientific philosophy in various accounts and surveys of philosophical trends in the first half of the twentieth century. For instance, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (1890-1963) in his brief but comprehensive account of movements and currents of philosophy in the 1930s, after a concise description of phenomenology, existentialism, and life philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*), writes:

> *In conspicuous opposition to pursuing philosophy in such a style, a powerful current in contemporary philosophical thought has emerged that makes an effort to transfer requirements of exact scientific method onto the area of philosophical investigations.* It often gets leading ideas from *the achievements of exact sciences*, and makes the foundations of these sciences and their methods the subject-matter of its inquiries. Given the close ties of that current with exact sciences, it may be called *scientism* or *scientistic* philosophy. (Ajdukiewicz 1937/1985: 256)

Ajdukiewicz emphasizes that this is not a unified philosophical movement with a shared body of conceptions and theories, but rather a certain way of doing philosophy. Among its various proponents, he includes some members of the Lvov-Warsaw School — namely, in addition to himself, Jan Łukasiewicz, Stanisław Leśniewski, Alfred Tarski, Adolf Lindenbaum, and Zygmunt Zawirski.

When several years later, just after the Second World War, the abovementioned Zygmunt Zawirski (1882-1948), a notable student of Twardowski, gave a lecture in Cracow on contemporary philosophical movements, subsequently published as a separate booklet (Zawirski 1947), he distinguished and discussed four of them: scientific philosophy, dialectical materialism (Marxism), Catholic philosophy, and phenomenology. Zawirski stated that the project of scientific philosophy was clearly and explicitly formulated by Łukasiewicz in 1927. Its gist may be put as follows:

> The point is that philosophical problems should be solved by the scientific method, and at the same time the highest possible precision and scientific exactness are required — namely, such to which we are accustomed by contemporary symbolic logic, also called mathematical logic or logistics. (Zawirski 1947: 3)

Łukasiewicz himself advertised this project in grandiose words:

> Thus it arises, like in the times of Kant, the need of philosophical reform. However, not a reform in the name of some elusive "criticism" and in the spirit of unscientific "theory of knowledge," but a reform in the name of science and in the spirit of mathematical logic. The future scientific philosophy must begin its edifice from the very beginning, from foundations. To begin from foundations means to undertake in the first place a review of philosophical problems, and select among them only those questions which may be intelligibly formulated, and reject all others. (Łukasiewicz 1928: 4; 1996: 159)

Zawirski noticed that the idea of scientific philosophy gained currency among positivistic philosophers in the nineteenth century, but it was then often burdened with subjectivist and idealistic tendencies. These unfortunate leanings were shaken off by the new positivism of the twentieth century, initiated by the Vienna Circle (Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath), and known as neo-positivism or logical positivism. Neo-positivists and proponents of scientific philosophy from the Lvov-Warsaw School shared the belief in the utmost importance of the new symbolic logic as a means for making philosophy

more precise and fruitful. However, philosophers from Lviv and Warsaw were not ready to follow Carnap and his colleagues in turning philosophy into the formal logic of science and banning from its province any substantial and material talk about the way the world is. For the same reason they did not think that all problems and conceptions of traditional metaphysics are unscientific and in principle cannot be rationally and rigorously discussed. The elaboration of these points allowed Zawirski to draw the following conclusion:

> To recapitulate the outcome of our considerations, we can say that Polish scientific philosophy stands firm on the realist grounds, in opposition to the old German positivism, which was rather vague on this point; that similarly to neo-positivism it tries to obtain the highest possible sum of benefits and lessons for recent philosophy from mathematical logic; that it is not as afraid of questions of traditional philosophy as the Vienna Circle neo-positivism, and it does not approve "the formal mode of speech," in which it sees some kind of escape from reality. (Zawirski 1947: 9)

While responding to a survey concerning the practiced conception of philosophy, Izydora Dąmbska (1904-1983), a prominent female member of the Lvov-Warsaw School, made the following statement a few years before her death:

> Now, philosophy that I pursue does not belong to any substantially specified philosophical movement. Coming from the Lvov philosophical school of Kazimierz Twardowski, I endeavor, in accordance with its requirement of doing philosophy scientifically, to make things precise and, if possible, to resolve certain philosophical problems in such a way as to — without any assumptions accepted in advance — give the initial cognitive intuitions the clearest discursive expression, accessible for analysis, justification, and formal criticism. This methodological point of view, I take it, makes my way of doing philosophy, albeit not its substance, akin to the so-called analytic philosophy. (Dąmbska 1977: 1335)

However, at the same time, she insisted that analytic philosophy did not reduce to one of its incarnations or versions known as linguistic philosophy, since by confining the subject-matter of philosophy to language it had to struggle with some immanent difficulties deriving from the fact that the full account of language functions "seems to be possible only when various non-linguistic epistemological and axiological questions are settled" (Dąmbska 1977: 1335). Thus, one may say that Dąmbska was ready to describe herself as an analytic philosopher in a wide and inclusive sense of the term.

CONCLUSION: FUNDAMENTAL AMBIGUITIES

It has been perceptively pointed out that the idea of scientific philosophy is beset with crucial and fundamental ambiguities. On the one hand, it can mean philosophy that is clear, rigorous, and conforms to the general pattern of scientific investigations. Also, it is often philosophy "that is intimately engaged with the very deepest results of the best available science of its time." (Friedman 2004: 94) On the other hand, "it can mean a philosophy that emulates the sciences, insofar as it aims for cumulative consensus and stable 'results' comparable to the results of the sciences themselves" (Friedman 2004: 94; Szubka 2022: 20). I think that members of the Lvov-Warsaw School in their own metaphilosophical pronouncements and approaches often trade on this ambiguity, which in a slightly different manifestation has been spotted and aptly described in terms of the distinction between scientific philosophy and scientistic philosophy (Haack 2021). For the most part, they were advocates of reasonable and sensible scientific philosophy. But from time to time, often with prophetic ardor, they propagated a vision of implausible scientistic philosophy powerful enough to resolve philosophical problems once and for all (Łukasiewicz was especially prone to do it). Of course, one should be aware that embracing scientific philosophy in the former sense does not amount to very much as far as particular methodological recommendations are concerned. For instance, as has been convincingly argued by Colin McGinn (2015), there is no obstacle to pursuing philosophy in a fairly traditional way as engaged mainly in *a priori* conceptual analysis, and to claiming that this is a legitimate scientific enterprise in a very broad sense.

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