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Religious pluralism and Kazimierz Twardowski's metaphilosophy

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The aim of the paper is to generally present the place and role of religion and religious beliefs in the philosophy of the Lvov-Warsaw School. The article has two parts. In the first (section 2), I present in brief the philosophical activity and the main achievements of Kazimierz Twardowski, the founder of the School, and his disciples from the Lvov-Warsaw School. In particular, I take into account Twardowski's teachings on religion and worldview. In the second part (section 3), I consider the questions whether and to what extent Twardowski's views are relevant and applicable to the current debate about religious diversity. Finally, I point to three different approaches to the religious diversity, as suggested by Twardowski and his students. The first might be called pragmatic skepticism; it relies on *partial* (external) suspension of religious beliefs. External suspension of religious beliefs is compatible with internal believing in religious truths. The second might be named substitutional program; it consists in the replacement of traditional religions by *one* new secular religion called the scientific worldview, or logical rationalism. The third approach is a Christianity-rooted religious rationalism which might be called *logical scholasticism* (as in the Cracow Circle) depending on demonstration that Christian Revelation is compatible with modern logic, science, and our basic moral intuitions.

Keywords: The Lvov-Warsaw School, religion, logic, science, rationalism

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Introduction

The aim of the paper is to present in general and synthetically the place and role of religion and religious beliefs in the philosophy of the Lvov-Warsaw School. The article has two parts. In the first part, I will present in brief the activity and main achievements of Kazimierz Twardowski and his disciples from the Lvov-Warsaw School. In particular, I will take into account his teachings on religion and

worldview. In the second part, I will consider the questions whether and to what extent Twardowski's views are relevant and applicable to the current debate about religious diversity.

Kazimierz Twardowski and the Lvov-Warsaw School

Kazimierz Twardowski was the founder of the Lvov-Warsaw School. He was born in Vienna in 1866 and died in 1938 in Lvov (Lwów). In Vienna, he was a student of Franz Brentano and Robert Zimmermann. Zimmermann supervised his doctoral dissertation *Idee und Perception* and was himself a pupil of Bernard Bolzano, one of the greatest philosophers and logicians of the nineteenth century. In 1895, at the age of 29, Twardowski arrived in Lvov in Galicia (then a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) where he became professor of philosophy at the Lvov University. The main goal of Twardowski's activity in Lvov was developing and modernizing Polish philosophy, making it intellectually attractive, so that it might contribute to the European philosophy [Brożek, 2014, 2017]. For over 40 years of his academic activity he gathered around himself a number of very talented young philosophers and logicians. It was a multi-national and multi-cultural group of people; among Twardowski's students, there were Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. Significantly, there was an exceptionally high number of women among his students, because Twardowski strongly promoted the idea of women's free access to higher education at universities. After Poland regained independence in 1918, the philosophical movement initiated by Twardowski in Lvov spread to other universities in Poland, to such places as Warsaw, Vilnius, Poznan and Cracow. This was possible thanks to Twardowski's numerous pupils. In the twenties of the twenty century, Twardowski and his circle started to be called 'Twardowski's School' or Twardowskians (*twardowszczycy*). It was only at the beginning of the fifties that the name "the Lvov-Warsaw School" was coined by the Marxists [Schaff, 1952].

The World War II ended the seminal activity of the School. During the war, many Jewish members of the School were killed in German Nazi camps. Also, some school members left Poland before the war (Tarski) or managed to escape during the war (Jan Łukasiewicz), a few survived the Nazi camps and returned after their liberation (Janina Kotarbińska born Dina Sztajnberg), some were killed in fight against Germans (Fr. Jan Salamucha)¹. Several School members continued their activity in post-war Poland, but Marxists (communists) considered Twardowski's School to be one of the greatest ideological foes and many school members

¹ Jan Salamucha was a Catholic priest; in 1939, he was deported to the Nazi concentration camps, first to Sachsenhausen, then to Dachau. He was freed after the intervention of Henrich Scholz, the German historian of logic. Salamucha was assassinated during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 by the troops of the Russian National Army of Liberation who were fighting on the German side [Pouivet, 2009, p. 237; Woleński, 2013, p. 6]. Józef Maria Bocheński and Bolesław Sobociński lived outside Poland after the war; Bocheński was active at the university of Fribourg in Switzerland, and Sobociński was Professor of logic at Notre Dame University, USA. Jan Drewnowski was the only member of the Cracow Circle who remained in Poland after the war, but his academic activity was restricted [Woleński, 2013, 12].

were persecuted, deprived of teaching jobs and isolated from students, for instance it happened to Izydora Dąmbska – one of the closest Twardowski's disciple.

In its best, inter-war period, in the years 1920–1939, Twardowski's School counted about one hundred philosophers. Twardowski's main idea was that philosophy should be treated as a science and psychology should be the basis of philosophy and other sciences. This was clearly Brentano's idea, which was totally accepted by Twardowski.

But some of his pupils came to the conclusion that the best tool for making philosophy in a rigorous way can be provided not by psychology but rather by mathematical logic (Jan Łukasiewicz), to which the members of Twardowski's school contributed enormously.

Let us name the most eminent representatives of the Lvov-Warsaw School: Jan Łukasiewicz (1878–1956), Stanisław Leśniewski (1886–1939), Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (1890–1963), Tadeusz Czeżowski (1889–1981), Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1886–1981), Alfred Tarski (born Teitelbaum 1901–1983), Janina Hossiason-Lindenbaum (1901–1942), Janina Kotarbińska (1901–1997), Fr. Józef M. Bocheński (1902–1995). The most important achievements of the School are:

- 5) Twardowski's distinction between content and object of presentation;
- 6) Jan Łukasiewicz's many valued logic;
- 7) Leśniewski's and Ajdukiewicz's categorical grammar;
- 8) Kotarbiński's reism;
- 9) Ajdukiewicz's radical conventionalism;
- 10) Analytic Thomism of the Cracow Circle²;
- 11) Łukasiewicz's works on the history of logic³;
- 12) Alfred Tarski's semantic theory of truth⁵.

² Analytic Thomism was a view formulated and defended by the Cracow Circle. The Cracow Circle had four prominent members: Jan Salamucha, Józef Maria Bocheński OP, Jan Drewnowski and Bolesław Sobociński. The Circle formed during the Third Polish Philosophical Congress in Cracow in September 1936, but the group had to end their activity rather soon, in 1939, when the Second World War started. The main meta-philosophical ideas of the Cracow Circle were applying modern mathematical logic to the analysis of Thomas Aquinas' philosophy and modernizing the scholastic tradition. The idea of applying the tools provided by mathematical logic to the Thomist doctrine was very original at the time; the Cracow Circle may be regarded as the first school of analytic Thomism and analytic philosophy of religion [cf. Pouivet, 2011, p. 2]. It was a new and bold idea because, in the 1930's, the European philosophy was dominated by three movements which were hostile either to logic or to metaphysics, namely, logical positivism (the Vienna Circle), phenomenology and neo-scholasticism (neo-Thomism). Logical positivism used logic but was against metaphysics and regarded metaphysical propositions as meaningless. Phenomenology was friendly to metaphysics but rather reluctant, or neutral at best, to mathematical logic. Neo-scholasticism, as represented by Jacques Maritain, held the view that traditional logic (Aristotle's syllogistic) is entirely sufficient for doing philosophy [cf. Woleński, 2013, 12]. Therefore, it is not surprising that when the program of the Cracow Circle became known, it was criticized by Polish Catholic intellectuals and clergy. Furthermore, those who strongly opposed the idea of modernizing Thomism with the help of mathematical logic accused members of the Circle of atheism (it is worth remembering that many eminent logicians of the time, such as Bertrand Russell, Stanisław Leśniewski and Tadeusz Kotarbiński, were declared atheists). Kotarbiński's atheism is discussed in [Łukasiewicz, 2016a].

³ Jan Woleński's monograph (1989) offers the classic exposition of the Lvov-Warsaw School and its achievements.

It is also worth mentioning that some School members worked on metaethics and ethics (Tadeusz Czeżowski), aesthetics (Władysław Tatarkiewicz), and the history of ancient philosophy (Izydora Dąmbska).

Twardowski's School was an exceptional phenomenon in the history of science because it originated in a rather hostile, or unfriendly, environment. At the beginning of the twentieth century – before 1918 – Poland was not an independent country, so Twardowski's School, when it started, did not enjoy any official support from the state or its institutions. Nor was it supported by the general intellectual atmosphere of the time; throughout the nineteenth century, Polish philosophy and culture was dominated by the ideas of Hegel, Kant, or naïve positivism and romanticism.

Most of Twardowski's students were Polish and Roman Catholics; however, the School was, as it has been said above, notably multi-national and multi-cultural: Łukasiewicz's father was Ukrainian, Alfred Tarski – one of the most eminent logicians in the history of logic and a student of Łukasiewicz and Leśniewski – was a Jew, Stefan Baley, Stefan Ołęksiuk and Miron Zarycki – other members of the School – were Ukrainians.

The Problem of Religion in the Lvov-Warsaw School

Now, we would like to address the problem of the role of religion, religious dialogue and communication in the Lvov-Warsaw School. As already mentioned, this School was multi-national and multi-religious; however, its program was not concerned with philosophy of religion, nor was it involved in a defense of any religion (with the notable exception of the Cracow Circle).

Was the long-lasting activity and cooperation of many people coming from different nations and rooted in different religious traditions possible because they were engaged in a fruitful and successful interreligious dialogue? Rather not; actually, there was no dialogue on religious matters. The main idea held by the founder of the School, Twardowski, and his pupils Łukasiewicz and Ajdukiewicz was to put religion aside (“into brackets”). The reason for that step was that members of the Lvov-Warsaw School were perfectly aware of many differences between them, and therefore, they *decided not to deal with* any religious (and political) matters at all. Otherwise, as they believed, there could have happened conflicts and disagreements disrupting scientific work. It must be admitted that this pragmatic strategy proved successful. Stanisław Leśniewski, for example, was an anti-Semite, but he cooperated intensively with Alfred Tarski – simply because he valued Tarski's competence in logics and considered it equal to his own and *vice versa* [Feferman, 2004]. Thus, in everyday practice, a religious dialogue within the School was rather avoided.

However, the School did develop a theoretical approach to religious issues. Twardowski himself had two different doctrines about how to cope with religion and religious diversity. The first comes from the early period of his activity and consists in rationalizing of religion. This rationalizing depends on clarification of religious concepts first and arguing for the truth of select religious beliefs. Argumentation for the truth of religious beliefs must be based on purely philosophical and logical tools, it cannot appeal to religious revelation or trust in religious authority. According to this approach, religious diversity is not a big problem because

philosophy is in a position to provide *one* truth about the existence of God, the divine nature, immortality of the human soul, etc. [Twardowski, 1895]. Later, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Twardowski changed his views and came to the conclusion that religious beliefs cannot be proved by logical arguments, and therefore, a philosopher should not hold religious beliefs officially – as a philosopher working at a university. One is allowed to believe, but only as a private person. Religious beliefs should be a private matter, not a public one. Twardowski's view about the necessity of separating religion from philosophy and science dominated the official position of his School regarding religious beliefs.

On the other hand, Twardowski was aware that many existential and moral problems that religion is concerned with are important for humans, and philosophy should not put them aside. Therefore, he insisted on developing a scientific worldview. As argued by him, historical religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) have completed their primary mission in history which consisted in preserving and delivering the best achievements of ancient science and philosophy (Plato and Aristotle) to modernity [Twardowski, 1910]. Twardowski was convinced that a scientific worldview will replace historical religions in the future. There are three pillars of this worldview: logic, ethics, and natural science. All members of Twardowski's School believed in logic. It was a belief that those who are educated and well trained in logic, will not hold unjustified, false or irrational beliefs.

It was Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz who coined the term “logical anti-irrationalism” to cover the essential ideas about religion and the worldview, which were held in the Lvov-Warsaw School [Ajdukiewicz, 1988]. Later on, that label was replaced by “logical rationalism”. Logical rationalism was meant to be a negative, that is, a defensive strategy, not an offensive one. The aim was not to fight religion or other ideological systems but rather to defend the society against irrational, unjustified beliefs. It is ethics, not logics, which is able to provide a positive program for human action and life.

Thus, according to Twardowski and most of his pupils, there is no point in conducting interreligious dialogue because there are too big differences between traditional religions and such a dialogue can lead to new conflicts, disagreements and misunderstandings rather than to any form of consensus. Therefore, philosophy should not be engaged in a defense of any religion. But there are existential and moral problems, such as the meaning of life and value of human actions, and it is philosophy which is obliged to search for answers to such moral and existential questions. Philosophical work will result in developing a scientific worldview based on logic, ethics and natural sciences. That scientific worldview should not be imposed upon anyone by force, but it should be available to whoever is dissatisfied with the worldviews based on traditional religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam or others.)

A scientific worldview meant by Twardowski and his followers includes four main theses:

- 1) Logic is the best tool to eliminate false beliefs.
- 2) Axiology independent from religion provides universal knowledge about the highest values and principles of moral action.
- 3) Natural sciences tell us that

- (i) the natural world accessible in natural experience is the only reality and there is no other world beyond that world.
- (ii) there is only one way to explain everything that happens in the natural world, namely, by natural science.
- 4) Discovering and searching for universal values such as truth, beauty and goodness makes human life meaningful and worthy of living [Łukasiewicz, 2016].

This worldview is nothing new in the history of Western thought, because it is very similar to the ancient Aristotelian doctrine of good life, contemplation and happiness. I think that Polish logical rationalism and the project of scientific worldview including axiology can be compared with certain contemporary views, such as agatheism or search for a second order religion [Salamon, 2015]. By a second order religion I mean a new global religion based on science, free from conflicts or controversial moral bans or prescriptions.

The question is whether we should promote logical rationalism and the scientific worldview, that is, the second order religion, or strive for making first order religions more rational? Or, perhaps, we should do something else, namely, we ought to suspend our beliefs?

To answer these questions, let us have a closer look at the claims of logical rationalism, as advocated by Twardowski's School.

I think the claim that axiology is a source of moral knowledge which is independent from religion is a mistake similar to the belief that there are theory independent empirical data. Almost all Polish rationalists from Twardowski's School believed in morality which was to a significant extent a Christian morality, simply because almost all were brought up in Christian families and/or Christian milieu.

The claim that logic is the best tool to eliminate false beliefs has limited validity. It applies to logic itself, but outside logic, this tool need not work. Stanislaw Leśniewski, for example, who was one of the greatest logicians – he was a genius in logics, one could say – held irrational anti-Semitic prejudices, very much like the German logician, Gottlob Frege. Thus, the point is that brilliant skills in logic do not prevent one from holding irrational beliefs.

The claim that the natural world is the only reality and that scientific explanations are the only rational explanations possible results from confusing of methodological naturalism and ontological (metaphysical) naturalism. There is a logical gap between methodological and ontological naturalism [Plantinga, 2011].

Also, the claim that human life is meaningful and worthy of living if spent on searching for and discovering universal and objective values, such as truth, beauty and goodness, triggers the following question: how is it possible that there are objective, mind- and culture-independent, *eternal* values? Logical rationalists can say, at best, that there are basic axiological facts, that is, brute facts, whose obtaining has no explanation.

Thus, the point is that logical rationalism might be regarded as not *rational* enough because there are crucial questions left without satisfactory answers. Therefore, we are left with three other solutions to the religious diversity problem. The first is skepticism, the second religious pluralism, and the third one rationalizing of the first order religions.

Religious skepticism claiming that humans should refrain from holding religious beliefs is futile and not rational enough. It is futile because many, or most, people need to believe in something/someone and it is not rational enough because there are certain good reasons to believe in God [Walls, Dougherty, 2018].

Religious pluralism holding that all religions have the same epistemic value and are true is not the contradiction of religious exclusivism, but it is one more case of it [Inwagen, 2005]. As Roger Pouivet said: “Pluralism (inclusivism) also defends the idea that a group has the truth, those who defend pluralism” [Pouivet, 2019, p. 96].

Therefore, one should resort to the remaining option, that is, rationalization of religions of the first order. This rationalization should be conceived of as a task for religious Christians, Jews and Muslims alike. However, it appears that only Christians have ever been seriously interested in that project.

Concluding remarks

To recapitulate, there are three different approaches to the religious diversity suggested by Twardowski and his pupils. The first might be called “pragmatic skepticism” relying on *partial* (external) suspension of religious beliefs. External suspension of religion is compatible with internal believing in religious truths. The second might be named “substitutional program”. Substitution program consisted in the replacement of traditional religions by *one* new secular religion called the scientific worldview or logical rationalism⁴. The third one is Christian religious rationalism which might be called *logical scholasticism* (as in the Cracow Circle) depending on demonstration that Christian Revelation is compatible with logic, science, and our basic moral intuitions⁵. And, there is, apart from these three standpoints, a fourth – contemporary – approach, called *religious scepticism* advocating *total* suspension of religious beliefs. However, this solution was not recommended by Twardowski’s School – and rightly so. As R. Pouivet has argued (2019), this approach is logically incoherent, psychologically improbable and, I would add, socially inadequate, or arrogant. Religious skepticism is socially arrogant because, following that approach, *I* should stop believing in my religion only because of the *mere fact* that there are *other people* who disagree with me, and *they* are expected to stop believing in their religion because of the *mere fact* that *I* disagree with them. Such extreme non-asertiveness cannot be a viable philosophical and religious project.

⁴ The weakness of logical rationalism is that it is not rational *enough*; in practice, it amounts to atheism or agnosticism and, one may say, it is yet another religion on the market *competing with* other traditional views, which will not disappear simply because there is a new “scientific religion”. Thus, the problem of pluralism is not solved but amplified by multiplications of religions.

⁵ This appears to be the best solution but of course it must be stressed that divine Revelation by nature is beyond human capacity of understanding and therefore in case of a conflict between Revelation and logic or science, a believer can be confused. The reason of a possible confusion is that the same and one God is the source of Revelation and the creator of the world of science. The possible philosophical answer could be as follows: humans are not able to understand everything, and hence, conflicts in questions, might be viewed not as contradictions in God’s nature but as limits of human grasp. The problem of “conflicts” between religion and science is beyond the scope of this paper. I tried to address the problem of divine action in the world of science in [Łukasiewicz, 2018].

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