

Obituaries

Leszek Kołakowski (1927-2009)

Leszek Kołakowski is born on 23 October 1927 in Radom. During the war years he is able to continue his schooling through private tuition and passes his school-leaving exams in Łódź in 1945. That same year he begins his studies in philosophy at the University of Łódź, and, starting in 1950, continues them in Warsaw. In 1953 he receives his “Candidate of Sciences”¹ degree, and begins to work as Reader at the Faculty of Philosophy of *University of Warsaw* the following year. In 1959 he takes the chair of History of Contemporary Philosophy (after the passing of Tadeusz Kroński in 1958). He is appointed *professor extraordinarius* in 1964. Kołakowski is an active member of the Communist Party from 1945 until his expulsion in 1966. His initial enthusiasm for the communist cause is eventually transformed into a critical stance regarding the real life application of Stalinist methods, making him one of the main proponents of the so-called “revisionism.” In March of 1968 he is removed from his university position, and as a consequence he leaves Poland in the autumn of that year. He goes to Canada, then to California, finally settling in Oxford, where he becomes a Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College in 1970. From 1981 on he divides his time between Oxford and Chicago, where he lectures at the Institute for Social Research. He dies 17 July 2009 at Oxford.

Kołakowski received a number of awards and distinctions over his lifetime, including the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade (Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels) in 1977 and the John W. Kluge Prize in the Human Sciences in 2003.

The focus of Kołakowski’s philosophical research was the history of ideas. He began with Marxism – first as an enthusiastic supporter, then as a revisionist, and finally as the author of a fundamental work critically analyzing the philosophical evolution of the Marxist doctrine, from Marx to Leninism and the Frankfurt School. In the opinion of many researchers Kołakowski’s study is both the most fundamental and the most expert critique of Marxist ideology.

His next field of study was the philosophical and religious thought of the

* The first post-graduate scientific degree, corresponding to a PhD., first introduced in the Soviet Union in 1934 and awarded in Poland between 1951-1958.

17th century. He wrote books on Spinoza and Pascal, as well as on those strands of Christianity to be found outside the church structure, thus surveying the relationship between religious consciousness and institutional bonds.

Gradually, his attention was drawn by more contemporary philosophical currents: he published volumes on positivism, Bergson, and Husserl. These were not only historical analyses, however. What Kołakowski was interested in was the search for different sources of certainty of knowledge. *The Presence of Myth* and *Metaphysical horror* are among his most important treatises. Kołakowski sees scientific cognition as an extension of the human effort to control the natural environment, to subdue it and make it livable. Yet this kind of cognition does not answer the fundamental existential questions people ask themselves, questions which are indeed justified. The answers are provided by myth – not myth as defined by specialists in religious studies, but rather myth understood as affirmation of values such as truth, goodness, and so on.

This is the type of discourse that organizes Kołakowski's thinking about religion. Proofs formulated in the language of rationality cannot lead to the acknowledgement of God, because at the end of that line of reasoning it is not the God believers pray to that will be revealed. Religious cognition follows different rules than those required by the language of rational or scientific deliberations, nonetheless it does have its own rules of authentication.

Yet Kołakowski does not join the chorus prophesying the end of religion; for him it still is the living tissue of culture, which, while changing, is still crucial to the survival of culture through the crises that continue to strike. Taking such views did not mean that Kołakowski became a participant in one of the religious traditions, although he did hold in high esteem both Christianity (that remaining closest to its evangelical roots) and Buddhism, especially that transmitted through the oldest texts of Gautama's teachings.

More important works

(1964). *Der Mensch ohne Alternative. Von der Möglichkeit und Ummöglichkeit Marxist zu sein*. München: Piper.

(1969). *Chrétens sans Eglise: La Conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Gallimard.

(1971). *Die Philosophie des Positivismus*. München: Piper. (1978). *Main currents of Marxism. It's rise, growth and dissolution*. New York: Oxford.

(1982). *Religion. If there is no God...*, New York: Oxford University Press.

(1988). *Metaphysical Horror*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

(1989). *The Presence of Myth*, Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

Jan A. Kłoczowski OP

Leszek Nowak (1943-2009)

Leszek Nowak was born on the 7th of January 1943 in Więckowice, a town in the South-Eastern part of Poland. He graduated in law (1965) from Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, and in philosophy from Warsaw University (1966). He wrote his doctoral thesis on the theory of law, entitled *Problems of the Meaning and Validity of Legal Norms and the Semiotic Function of Language* (1967) under the supervision of Zygmunt Ziemiński. In 1970 he gained a habilitation degree on the basis of his work *The Methodological Foundations of Karl Marx's Capital*. He became a professor without chair in 1976 and a professor with chair in 1990.

In the years 1965-1970 he worked at the Department of Law and from 1970 until his death on the 20th of October 2009 in the Institute of Philosophy of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. During the martial law period he was imprisoned (1982), and in 1984 he was dismissed from university for his involvement in the Solidarność movement, only to be reinstated in 1989. Leszek Nowak was also a visiting professor at several western universities, such as Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and University of Catania (Italy), among others. He was the founder (in 1975) and the editor-in-chief of the book series *Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Science and the Humanities*.

Leszek Nowak authored three original theories of great significance: the idealization theory of science, non-Marxian historical materialism, and unitarian metaphysics. He is the author of over 600 publications, including 28 books. Towards the end of the 1960s and in the 70s, he engaged himself in philosophy of science, aiming to reconstruct the methodological structure of Marx's *Capital* by applying the tools of modern analytical philosophy. According to Nowak's interpretation, a scientific theory is neither a generalization of facts nor a hypothetical-deductive system. The building of a theory begins with a drastic deformation of the investigated reality. In the next stage this simple picture of the world is modified and concretized through the introduction of secondary factors which approximate the complexity of the world. Nowak developed this idea of scientific method into a multi-model theory of science (*The Structure of Idealization*, 1980).

Leszek Nowak's next important theory was non-Marxian historical materialism, which was a radicalization of Marx's view on social reality. According to Nowak (*Property and Power*, 1983, and *Power and Civil Society*, 1991), class divisions emerged spontaneously in politics, economy, and culture. The conflicts between owners and direct producers, rulers and citizens, and priests and the indoctrinated occur according to their own internal mechanisms, and hence they are irreducible to economic contradictions, which lose their central significance within Nowak's theory.

The third great theory - which Nowak started elaborating in the 1990s -

was a unitarian metaphysics built on the assumption of the negativity of existence. The central thesis of his metaphysics is that to exist is to have a certain lack. The basic components of the metaphysical structure (worlds) are attributes which can adopt positive, negative and neutral values. This view, developed by Nowak in the three-volumed *Being and Thought* (available only in Polish), is still waiting for its reception in the English-speaking philosophical world.

Krzysztof Brzechczyn

Jerzy Waclaw Perzanowski (1943-2009)

Professor Jerzy Perzanowski was born on April 23rd, 1943 in Aix-les-Bains, France and died on May 17th, 2009 in Bydgoszcz, Poland. Professor Perzanowski studied mathematics and philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. He was professor of philosophy, logic and cognitive sciences at the Institute of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland. For some time he was professor of logic at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland, and recently at the Holy Cross Academy in Kielce, as well as the Jesuit University of Philosophy and Education "Ignatianum" in Krakow. He was either a visiting professor or research fellow at Cambridge University, Pembroke College, Cambridge, UK; Universität Salzburg, Salzburg, Austria; Universidade Federal da Paraíba, João Pessoa, PB, Brasil; and at the Internationale Akademie für Philosophie im Fürstentum Liechtenstein.

An outstanding philosopher and logician, and a very good teacher, he continued the traditions of the Polish Lvov-Warsaw school of logic and philosophy. As a philosopher he explored the fundamental problems of classical and modern metaphysics using contemporary logic to solve them. He was particularly interested in Leibniz and Wittgenstein. In recent years he became interested in cognitive sciences and set up a long-term program of research together with a BA studies program in cognitive science.

He was a member of numerous Polish and foreign philosophical and logical societies and the editorial boards of many periodicals: Polish Philosophical Society, Polish Society of Logic and Philosophy of Science, Polish Society of Cognitive Science, Association for Symbolic Logic, American Metaphysical Society, Society for Advancement of American Philosophy, European Society for Analytic Philosophy, Gessellschaft für Analytische Philosophie, Society for Exact Philosophy, Philosophia Scientifica, Gessellschaft zur Förderung wissenschaftlicher Philosophie e. V., Association for the Foundations of Science, and *Reports on Mathematical Logic, Logic and Logical Philosophy, Studia Logica, Axiomathes* and *Metaphysica*.

It should also be remembered that Professor Perzanowski was a great patriot. He was very active in the Solidarity movement in 1980-1981, both at the Jagiellonian University and in the Krakow region, and also in its underground activities after the imposition of martial law in 1981.

More important works:

(1987). *Essays on Philosophy and Logic*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Krakow;

- (1971). The deduction theorems for the system **T** of Feys - von Wright, *Prace z Logiki*, 6 (together with Andrzej Wroński);
- (1971). A linguistic criterion of structural incompleteness, *Bulletin of the Section of Logic*, 1;
- (1973). The first list of the deduction theorems characteristic for several modal calculi formalized after the manner of Lemmon, *Bulletin of the Section of Logic*, *ibid.*;
- (1973). The deduction theorems for the modal propositional calculi formalised after the manner of Lemmon, *Reports on Mathematical Logic*, 1;
- (1973). A linguistic criterion of structural incompleteness, *Reports on Mathematical Logic*, 1;
- (1973). The development of Cantor's definition of the set. In S. J. Surma (Ed.), *Studies in the History of Mathematical Logic*, Ossoli neum;
- (1975). On homogenous fragments of normal propositional logics, *Bulletin of the Section of Logic*, 4;
- (1975). On M-fragments and L-fragments of normal modal propositional logics, *Reports on Mathematical Logic*, 5, 63 – 72;
- (1988). Elements of Monadologic (Abstract). In *Leibniz - Tradition und Aktualität, V. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress, Hannover, 14 - 19 November 1988, Vorträge*, Hannover;
- (1990). Towards Post-Tractatus Ontology. In J. Brandl, & R. Haller (Eds.), *Wittgenstein - Towards A Re-evaluation. Proceedings of the 14th International Wittgenstein Symposium, 13th -20th August 1989, Kirchberg am Wechsel*, Wien: Verlag Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky;
- (1990). Ontologies and Ontologics. In E. Żarnecka-Biały (Ed.), *Logic Counts*, Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer Academic Publishers;
- (1999). Combination Semantics for Intensional Logics. I Makings and Their Use in Making Combination Semantics, *Logique et Analyse*, 165/66;
- (1999). Preface to *Parainconsistency, Parts I - III*, *Logic and Logical Philosophy*, 7;
- (2004). Towards Combination Metaphysics, *Reports on Mathematical Logic*, 38;
- (2007). In Praise of Philosophy. In A. Klawiter, T. A. F. Kuipers, K. Łastowski, K. Paprzycka, & P. Przybysz (Eds.), *The Courage of Doing Philosophy: Essays Dedicated to Leszek Nowak*, Amsterdam / New York, NY: Rodopi;
- (2007). Modal Logics of Truth and Falsity. I Conceptual and Logical Framework and Logics of Matrix Approach of Boole. In Th. Müller, A. Newen (Eds.), *Logik, Begriffe, Prinzipien des Handelns*, mentis, Paderborn.

Barbara Skarga (1919-2009)

Born in Warsaw on 25 October 1919, died in Olsztyn on 18 October 2009. She commenced her philosophical studies in Vilnius in 1937 at the Stephan Batory University. After its liquidation by the Lithuanians in 1939 she continued studying underground, attending seminars conducted by H. Elzenberg, T. Czeżowski and others, while also actively engaging herself in the underground activities of the Polish Home Army. Arrested in 1944, she was sentenced by the Soviet occupational authorities and spent over 10 years in the gulags and in exile in Kazakhstan (She described the experience in her memoirs *After the Liberation 1944-1953*, see also her interview *There Will Be No Other End of the World*).

After returning to Poland in 1957 she graduated in philosophy and in just four years got her doctorate with the thesis *The Birth of Polish Positivism* prepared under the guidance of prof. Nina Assorodobraj. She defended her post-doctoral thesis *Orthodoxy and Revision in French Positivism* in 1967.

Since 1967 she has been working at the History of Contemporary Philosophy Unit of IFiS at The Polish Academy of Sciences, staying in close contact with the circle of the so-called “Warsaw School of History of Ideas” (L. Kolakowski, B. Baczeko, A. Walicki, J. Szacki, A. Sikora, K. Pomian, Z. Ogonowski, L. Szczucki), which has exerted a meaningful influence both on her philosophical interests and her work method, as well as on her friendships, which she has remained faithful to till the end of her life. She got her associate professor degree in 1975 and the full professor title in 1988. Skarga performed numerous functions during the difficult years: from 1981 till 1984 she was the President of the Philosophical Sciences Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences; she was also a founding member of the underground Scientific Courses Society, which later transformed into the Society for the Dissemination and Support of Sciences; and a correspondent member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences. In the years 1993-2006 she was the editor-in-chief of the *Etyka* magazine. In 1995 she was awarded with the Order of the White Eagle and became the President of its Chapter. She resigned from that post in 2005 in protest against the Polish President-Elect’s statement that was an affront to the dignity of the Order’s Chapter. In 2000 she was awarded with the honorary doctorate from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. She was also the laureate of many scientific and literary awards.

We can identify at least three subject ranges describing chronologically the development of her interests. The first is history of philosophy. Skarga was interested in it both as an analyst of specific philosophical positions and as a researcher of ideas and cultural-intellectual formations. Polish philosophy interested her, but first and foremost she was drawn to French

philosophy. In 1971 she published a book *Philosophy in Poland. A Dictionary of Writers* where she described the ideological profiles of personages important for Polish culture.

Later she became immersed in French culture. She started with research on French Positivism and wrote a book on A. Comte - the creator of that movement. She also analysed the works of C. Bernard and E. Renan (two subsequent books in the "Thoughts and People" series) and moved on to examine all kinds of French spiritualism originating with Maine de Biran, as well as eclecticism, neocriticism and finally, the philosophy of Henri Bergson. She summed up all that work in her book *Problems of the Intellect. Between Comte and Bergson*, as well as in an anthology of French philosophical texts of the 19th c.

Within her first range of interests, Barbara Skarga successfully moved from the study of ideas and philosophical profiles to a deepened and original research on "intellectual formations," their structure, as well as the changeability and continuity of the "episteme."

The second and perhaps most important focus of Skarga's philosophical work was metaphysics. She tried to work out her own metaphysical standpoint because, as she stated, "metaphysics draws me the most." Following the great philosophers such as Aristotle, Leibniz, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida or Levinas (to whose popularity in Poland she has contributed greatly), she posed fundamental questions concerning existence, the world, time, evil, finiteness, identity and transcendence. She did not present the ideas of others; rather, she posed questions, conducted critical dialogues, analysed possible answers and searched for her own. Derrida, Heidegger or Levinas frequently served as her guides, but even more frequently as her fellow travellers on a road that was her own. Still, it was not a road leading to a strictly limited goal. Skarga did not build her own system, remaining faithful to Socrates, about whom H. Arendt had said, "he always stood in the wind of ideas." He stimulated others to think, but did not let his thinking be limited by a system.

Skarga, in a Husserlian way, always tried to reach to the springs of knowledge, i.e., to the direct experience without any textual intermediary. She escaped from the "metaphysics of presence", sticking to "the traces of being", without blurring it in linguistic constructs as the post-modernists do. She also searched for the borders constituting the meaning of such categories as: "self", being, loneliness, finiteness, or knowledge. Her thought is dialectical and critical, but at the same time animated by an inner conviction (growing stronger and stronger over the years) about the existence of permanent values, both in metaphysics and in culture. Philosophy, or rather philosophising, should serve to reveal and revitalise them. The following books testify to these struggles: *Identity and Difference. Metaphysical Essays*, Kraków, 1997, 2nd ed. 2009; *We Need*

Not Fear about Philosophy, Warsaw, 1999; *Trace and Presence* Warsaw 2002; *The Metaphysical Quintet*, Kraków 2005; *The Metaphysical Tercet*, Kraków, 2009.

Her third area of interest originated in impatience. In an ideal world Skarga would not stop philosophizing, but in the world such as it is (and it is a mediocre world at best) she had to intervene, and at times play the unwanted role of a “signpost.” Therefore, especially in recent years, she devoted many texts to questions of axiology, morals and civic duties (see *Man Is Not a Beautiful Animal*, Kraków, 2007). In all her texts from this field we may find perfect semantic/phenomenological analyses of such values as fidelity, righteousness, trust, community, patriotism and authority. In all these texts one can sense the care for ethical and political standards of conduct. Skarga’s journalistic activity is a perfect example of practical philosophy. Her works about ethics and civic duties have frequently been engaged in every day life, but have never been moralistic in character, in spite of the fact that she, of all people, did have the right to speak in such a tone.

Throughout her entire life Skarga was involved in very intense didactic activity; she was and remains an inspiration and an authority figure for many generations of philosophers. She had many friends, as she valued friendship more than anything. She loved Bach, Mozart, Paris and the Masurian pine forests.

Works:

- (1964). *The Birth of Polish Positivism (1831-1864)*, Warsaw;
- (1966). *Comte*, Warsaw, 2nd. revised ed., Warsaw, 1977 (“Thoughts and People” series);
- (1967). *Orthodoxy and Revision in French Positivism*, Warsaw;
- (1969). *Renan*, Warsaw, 2nd ed. Warsaw, 2002 (“Thoughts and People” series);
- (1970). *Claude Bernard*, Warsaw, 1970 (“Thoughts and People” series);
- (1972). *From the History of Positivist Philosophy in Poland. Continuity and Change* (collective work, edited with Anna Hochfeld), Wrocław;
- (1973). *Comte August: Treatise on the Spirit of Positive Philosophy* (and *Treatise about the Whole of Positivism*. Prep. (and trans. in part), with introduction and notes by Barbara Skarga, Warsaw (“Classics of Philosophy Library”);
- (1975). *Problems of the Intellect. Between Comte and Bergson*, Warsaw;
- (1978). *Polish Philosophical and Social Thought* (collective work under Barbara Skarga’s scientific supervision), 2nd vol., Warsaw 1975, 3rd vol. Warsaw 1977;

- (1978). *French Philosophy of the 19th c.* Selection, introduction, notes and commentary by Barbara Skarga, Warsaw;
- (1978). *On the Treshold of The Present Time. From the History of Antipositivist Doctrines* (collective work under Barbara Skarga's supervision), Warsaw;
- (1980). *700 Years of Polish Thought*, vol. 6; *Philosophy and Social Thought in the Years 1865-1895*, part 1-2; Selected, edited, with introduction and notes by Anna Hochfeld and Barbara Skarga, Warsaw;
- (1982). *Time and Duration. Studies on Bergson*, Warsaw;
- (1985). *After the Liberation (1944-1955)*, under the pseudonym Wiktoria Kraśniewska, Paryż 1985, 2nd revised edition (under her own name) Poznań 1990, 3rd edition, Warsaw 2000, French transl: *Une absurde craute: temoinage d'une femme au Gulag (1944-1955)*, tr. By M. Laurent, Paris 2000;
- (1987). *The Past and Interpretations. From the Workshop of a Historian of Philosophy*, Warsaw;
- (1989). *Limits of Historicity*, Warsaw, 2nd edition Warsaw 2005, French tr.: *Les limites d l'historicite; continuite et transformations de la pensee*, trans. by M. Kowalska, preface by F. Chirpaz, Paris 1997;
- (1994-1997). *Guide Through Philosophical Literature of 20th. c.*, collected work under Barbara Skarga's scientific supervision with cooperation by H. Florynska-Lalewicz and S. Borzym), 5 vol., Warsaw;
- (1997). *Identity and Difference. Metaphysical Essays*, Kraków, 2nd ed. 2009;
- (1999). *We Need Not Fear About Philosophy*, Warsaw;
- (2002). *Trace and Presence*, Warsaw;
- (2005). *The Metaphysical Quintet*, Kraków;
- (2007). *Man Is Not a Beautiful Animal*, Kraków;
- (2007). *There Will Be No Other End of the World*, conversations with K. Janowska and K. Mucharski, Kraków;
- (2009). *The Metaphysical Tercet*, Kraków.

Magdalena Środa