

**WILLIAM JAMES AND JOSIAH ROYCE IN POLISH PHILOSOPHY:
AN UNEASY RECEPTION**

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Polish philosophy did not make use of the great opportunity it had at the beginning of the 20th century to absorb William James, Josiah Royce, and American Philosophy in general. The Polish-American contacts in philosophy that did take place at the time, although involving big names on both sides – and I am going to limit my presentation to the biggest, that is the most eminent and most influential Polish philosophical names as regards the present topic –, did not produce any intensive exchange of ideas or initiate any common large scale undertakings, and it is hardly possible to notice any influence of James and Royce as well as of American Pragmatism in general upon Polish thought. And it is not, at all, that the major texts were unknown to the Polish readers; in the case of James it was just the opposite, and his works were translated into Polish very soon after their original publication in America.

Thus, “Is Life Worth Living?” was translated in 1901 and “The Will to Believe” in 1901 both by W. Kosiakiewicz; “Habit” in 1901 by R. Radziwiłowicz; *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* in 1902 by I. Moszczeńska (the sixth edition was published in 1930); in 1911 there were translations of *A Pluralistic Universe* by W. Witwicki, *Pragmatism* by M. Kozłowski (the second edition in 1957), and *The Meaning of Truth* by W. Kosiakiewicz; *The Varieties of Religious Experience* was translated in 1918 by J. Hempel (the second edition in 1958 and the third in 2001). The scattered and indeed, rare attempts to promote Pragmatic ideas, and these having rather loose connection with specifically James’ version of Pragmatism – apart from quite numerous papers and short articles of an informative character¹ - that followed

¹ See: J. Kodisowa, “W. James i pragmatyzm” [Wm. James and Pragmatism], „Prawda” [„Truth”], 1910; R. Radziwiłowicz, “W. James”, “Sfinks” [“Sphinx”], 1910; W.

these translations, had only very limited success in Poland.²

There are different reasons for this lack of absorption of the philosophical calling from America. Firstly, the strong cultivation of the metaphysical tradition taken from Plato, Aristotle, and the Scholastics along with the classical concept of truth and the objective understanding of values that was predominant in the mainstream of Polish philosophy. Secondly, the traditional Catholic background of Poland and the very strong impact of this background upon Polish thought. Thirdly, the national and messianic rather than communal and practical dimension of social and political thought in Poland. Fourthly, the strong influence of German philosophy, especially Hegel and Kant. Fifthly, Polish thinkers at that time did not speak English as their second language (usually it was German) and did not think of America as a source of a philosophical inspiration unlike Germany, and also France. Sixthly, Poland, until 1918 was politically and economically under partition and the energy of the then intelligentsia was focused upon the preservation of the national culture as well as upon seeking the ways for cultural independence

Witwicki, “W. James, próba charakterystyki” [„Wm James, an Attempt of Characterization”, “Ruch Filozoficzny” [“Philosophical Movement”], 1911; W. Witwicki, „W. James jako psycholog” [„Wm James as a Psychologist”], „Przegląd Filozoficzny” [„Philosophical Review”], 1913; J. Hempel, „Doświadczenia religijne” [„Religious Experience”], „Krytyka” [„Critique”], 1912; S. J. Agatstein, „W. James jako psycholog i filozof religii” [Wm James as a Psychologist and a Philosopher of Religion”], „Kwartalnik Filozoficzny” [„Philosophical Quarterly”], 1938. See footnote 10 of the present work.

² Perhaps the most noticeable was, in reference, however, to F.C.S. Schiller’s “humanism” rather than to James, Kozłowski’s version of Pragmatism which he called: “Polish humanism”, and which he shortly promoted in the journal called “Myśli i życie [Thoughts and Life]” (1912-1913); also Stanisław Brzozowski’s “Religia i społeczeństwo [Religion and Society]”(1907) should be mentioned, where he referred to James’s idea of religious pluralism, and his *Idee* [Ideas], 1910, especially the chapter “Pragmatyzm i materializm dziejowy” [“Pragmatism and the Historical Materialism”], where he glorified work, action, as well as practicality, and linked these ideas with Pragmatism, without however, a special reference to James or any other representative of American Pragmatism.

rather than exploring unknown ideas from distant lands, although this happened too. Seventhly, even under partition, Poland still rejoiced a hundreds year old native philosophical tradition, present first of all at the universities in Cracow (founded in 1364), in Vilnius (1579), in Lvov (1661), and Warsaw (1816), and the cultivation of the heritage and the reference to the past masters prevailed, at least in philosophy, over the search for the new solutions. Generally, although not exclusively, the character of Polish philosophy has been pessimistic rather than optimistic, static rather than dynamic, spiritual rather than naturalistic, speculative rather than empirical, and, therefore, the reception of Pragmatism could not take place.

The first opportunity, at the very beginning of professional and classical philosophy in the United States, could have materialized from the close and cordial contact between William James and the eminent Polish philosopher and author of an influential work on Plato published in the English language, *The Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic* (1897), Wincenty Lutosławski (1863-1954). Their intellectual contacts started when Lutosławski gave lectures at some American universities (1893, and later 1907-1908³), and this led to a philosophical friendship between these two scholars. They corresponded to each other, and, moreover, James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, called Lutosławski his friend,⁴ and also wrote, in 1899, "Preface" to Lutosławski's *The World of the Souls* (1924), where James appreciated Lutosławski's width of intellectual horizon and the strength of his romantic engagement. However, due to different temperaments and personalities, as well as the incompatible aims they were aiming for, it was not possible for Lutosławski either to promote James or to introduce American

philosophy into Poland. As it seems to me, he was sensitive to the differences between them rather than to any common perspectives for the future. Thus, he wrote in his biography that James was "a living symbol of American spirit", "a decent man, extraordinarily intelligent and clever"; on the other hand, however, he did not like James' ignorance of the history of philosophy and, chiefly, James' inability to read Plato and Aristotle in Greek, about which Lutosławski commented this way: "This alone was enough to mark the difference between us". For James, Lutosławski continued, "each opinion aspired to self-assertion" whereas for Lutosławski "there was a golden thread linking the true thinkers of all peoples and epochs, making the unity of this *philosophia perennis*, which results from the work of many thinkers throughout the ages".⁵ In addition to this, Lutosławski, Platonist, metaphysician, spiritualist, and classicist that he was, felt the superiority of European tradition in philosophy, and channeled his own energy to activities that aimed at the creation of a Polish national system of messianic philosophy, looking for stimulation in Polish, Greek, and German thought.

Another occasion for making American-Polish, or rather Polish-American philosophical contact fruitful was the emergence of the world famous Polish school of logic and philosophy called the Lvov-Warsaw School, founded by Kazimierz Twardowski at the end of the 19th century. One of its biggest names – apart from Alfred Tarski and Stanisław Leśniewski – Jan Łukasiewicz (1878-1956), gave a speech about James' *Pragmatism* at a meeting of the Polish Philosophical Society in Lvov, in 1907. He called James' ideas fresh and animating, however, he claimed that logical strictness is not his strong side, and that the book should be read with criticism. In his opinion, for

³ His lectures at the Lowell Institute in Boston (October 21, 1907) and at University of California (March 9, 1908) constitute his book *The Polish Nation*, published in Paris in 1917.

⁴ See James, W. 1908. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York: Moffat, 1908, 281.

⁵ See Lutosławski, W. 2004. *Metafizyka [Metaphysics]*. (Manuscript completed in 1951). Edited by T. Mroz. Drozdowo: Muzeum Przyrody, 116 (footnote). At another place in the book (235), mentioning James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lutosławski wrote that "one can see it as the first in scientific literature strict proof of the efficiency of prayer".

Pragmatists the convictions are true when they facilitate easy and comfortable actions, and he was not alone in seeing Pragmatism this way.⁶ Interestingly and characteristically for Polish scholars, Pragmatism was not only associated with logical and philosophical carelessness, but also with moral relativism and, according to them, it narrowed down to the efficiency of practical activity, something sounding rather dangerous because of the lack of a stable moral direction of this practical activity while aiming at the target. Such an approach was also present in the most popular manual of logic, epistemology and methodology⁷ written by one of the leading Polish thinkers of all time, Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1886-1981), who also belonged to the Lvov-Warsaw School. By the way, it was Kotarbiński, who successfully promoted "Praxeology", the philosophical and ethical idea of efficient activity, but, strangely enough, he did not refer to Pragmatists as the possible supporters of his concept,⁸ although, at least in my opinion, it was possible and would have been a great link between Polish and American philosophy.⁹

As it seems, the most popular promotion of William James was made by another member of the Lvov-Warsaw School, and the most eminent Polish historian of philosophy ever, Władysław Tatarkiewicz (1886-1980), who in his three volume *Historia filozofii [History of Philosophy]*,¹⁰ presented James' life, ideas, and the

context of his thought (Charles S. Peirce, F.C.S. Schiller, John Dewey, Italian Pragmatists). Since Tatarkiewicz's book, with over twenty editions, has been, up till now, the most popular manual of the history of philosophy in Poland, a book that is known to each and every student of philosophy in this country, and to very many liberal arts students too, James and American Pragmatism became known, at least in its basics, to many generations of readers. It should be added that Tatarkiewicz was especially skilful in his clear presentations of the ideas; one of the reasons must have been that he was also an aesthetician and historian of aesthetics (he is the author of the *History of Esthetics*¹¹ in three volumes, later translated into English) and the clarity and order of the presentations are as if natural in his writings. However, due to the character of his presentations, that is, an outline of James' thought to be directed at students rather than scholars, this could not be a source of inspiration as far as profound studies are concerned. It must be stressed, however, that Tatarkiewicz, in his presentation of James, did not criticize him for the things that other representatives of the School did, that is James' weakness in logic and his alleged moral relativism; rather James as an eminent representative of psychology and an original philosopher was presented and the main points of James' work – such as pragmatic method, pragmatic theory of truth, empiricism, pluralism, and philosophy of religion – were plainly and finely outlined.

It should be added that Tatarkiewicz was also responsible for introducing Royce to Poland, who was much less present, if at all, in Polish thought than James. An outline of his philosophy was presented in the above mentioned *History of Philosophy* by Tatarkiewicz, in the parts devoted to Anglo-Saxon Idealism, that is along with

⁶ See Łukasiewicz, J. 1998. *Logika i metafizyka [Logic and Metaphysics]*. Edited by J.J. Jadacki. Warszawa: WFiS UW, 389.

⁷ See Kotarbiński, T. 1931. *Elementy teorii poznania, logiki formalnej i metodologii nauk [Elements of Theory of Cognition, Formal Logic, and Methodology of Science]*. Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Ossolineum, 132-133.

⁸ Kotarbiński referred to Alfred Espinas („Les orgines de la technologie”, 1890) as being in the first place.

⁹ This might have been due to political reasons; Kotarbiński developed his ideas in the 1950s and 1960s, when Poland was behind the Iron Curtain and any sympathy with America's effectiveness was dangerous.

¹⁰ The first edition of *History of Philosophy's* third volume, where James (and Royce) was described, appeared in 1950, and the latest edition in 2005; the book provides ample bibliographical data; some of them were used in footnote 1 of the present work.

¹¹ Tatarkiewicz, W. 1999. *History of Aesthetics, 1970-1974*, edited by J. Harrell, C. Barrett, and D. Petsch. 3 vols., Bristol: Thoemmes Press. The Polish original version was published in the years 1960-1967.

R.W. Emerson, Th. H. Green, F. H. Bradley, and J. Ward.¹² According to Tatarkiewicz, Royce's *The World and the Individual* is the main work of American Idealism, Royce himself the main representative of idealism in America, and Royce's abstractive, transcendental, and absolutistic thought was presented in Royce's books with fantasy and humor, just as Socrates and Plato did in the past.

By the way, as regards Royce, I should imagine that, for example, his *Philosophy of Loyalty* could have been of some interest, I suspect, if translated into the Polish language at the beginning of the 20th century. It could have been even more stimulating for the then thinkers in Poland fighting for their political rights, cultural identity, spiritual freedom, and philosophical self-expression, and for the professional historians of philosophy this would have most surely been a fertile field for the studies over the relations and dependencies of Royce to Kant and Hegel. Thus, Royce might have had a bigger chance of being promoted than James, and the reason why he was not better known is that such philosophy was looked for in Germany at that time rather than in America, and one should regret that Royce has never been known and discussed in Poland, with the exceptions just indicated in the above.

Coming back to James, another occasion for the promotion of his thought and Pragmatism in general was Florian Znaniecki (1882-1958), Polish philosopher and sociologist, who lectured at the University of Chicago (1915-1919), Columbia (1932, 1939), Urbana (1940-1958), and even became the President of the American Sociological Association (1953-1954). His works, out of which the most influential was written in collaboration

with W.I. Thomas, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918-1920) and his idea of "humanistic coefficient" belong to his great contribution to modern thought. Znaniecki, in his early works mentioned James and was sympathetic to the spirit of Pragmatism, especially as regards voluntarism, anti-dogmatism, and anti-fundamentalism in philosophy, along with the conviction about the huge role a social background and a historic context in shaping values and ideas, about the humanistic coloring of all objects perceived, and about the meaning of actual experience "here" and "now". However, he referred more to Wilhelm Dilthey, Henri Bergson, the Neo-Kantians, and Polish tradition rather than to James. Despite the fact, then, that he was interested in Pragmatism, and his own thought shared similar traits, it would be very risky to claim that he was influenced by James.

Perhaps the last big chance, at least theoretically, to initiate the contact between Polish and American thought in the first half of the 20th century was the emergence of a grand scale format Polish philosopher and aesthetician Roman Ingarden (1893-1970), mostly recognized and appreciated for his *The Literary Work of Art*¹³ (published originally in the German language, in 1931). Especially his deep interest in the problem of the theory of cognition could have been a very good area of discussion with the epistemological ideas proposed by William James, and, indeed, Ingarden referred to James' idea of pragmatism, in the light of the problem of the objectivity/subjectivity of the perception of the objects external to the mind. However, Ingarden was a phenomenologist (he was one of the most skilful disciples of Edmund Husserl) and strongly criticized the newly emerged concepts of, as he called it, psychologistic and (psycho-) physiologistic character to

¹² As regards the presentation of Royce's thought in Poland, Tatarkiewicz was followed only by Leszek Koczanowicz who, in his book, *Jednostka – działanie – społeczeństwo. Koncepcje jaźni w filozofii amerykańskiego pragmatyzmu [Individual – Activity – Society. The Concepts of the Self in American Pragmatism]*, 1994, devoted one chapter to Royce's idea of the Self as a process of interpretation.

¹³ See Ingarden, R. 1973. *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic and Theory of Literature. With an Appendix on the Functions of Language in the Theatre*, translated and with an introduction by George G. Grabowicz, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

explain the epistemological issues. Moreover, he mostly referred to the thinkers and ideas of the Continental thought, especially the philosophical traditions in the German and French speaking countries, and viewed James' idea of Pragmatism – referring by the way, to the French translation of *The Meaning of Truth* – as a part of a broader and stronger tendency in the late 19th and early 20th centuries thought, that is one co-shaped by E. Mach, R. Avenarius, H. Bergson, and F.C.S. Schiller. He called this tendency generally: “pragmatic” or “pragmatistic” (without any reference to Peirce whatsoever), seemingly having seen James' main contribution to it by giving the name to the whole tendency,¹⁴ as if he ignored the specificity of the movement initiated by (Peirce and) James in America. Nor was American Pragmatism promoted by one of the most eminent of Ingarden's disciples and followers of his thought, whose professional career developed in the United States, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, the founder and the President of the World Phenomenology Institute as well as the editor of “*Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*”. Her excellent work, however, has been focused primarily on phenomenology and her numerous books, authored and edited, are accessible mainly in the English language, being, therefore, hardly any source of the promotion of James and Royce in Poland, although, let it be added, they have been a very good source for the promotion of Ingarden's thought in the English speaking countries.

The Communism era in Poland, that began after WWII, was the time when America was seen by the political authorities ideologically and politically as an enemy to the countries within the Soviet camp, and the officially (I mean by the political government) expected approach to American philosophy was to be either informative and sketchy or confrontational and ideologically biased. In such unfavorable conditions, the most significant

presentation of James into Polish philosophy was made by the most eminent as well as the most unbiased promoter of American Pragmatism and of American philosophy in general in Poland, Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz. She is the authoress of books (in Polish) on Peirce (1965), on American Pragmatism (1970), on American philosophy (1975), on Peirce's semiotics (1994), and on James (1973, 2001).¹⁵ Her fruitful work started in the late 1960s, and has continued up to the present day, and the excellent translations of the basic texts of James (as well as of Peirce's), included in her book on him, till now, have been a major source of reference for many students and scholars, who have had no access to the original texts of these philosophers.

Some meaning in the process of promotion and presentation of James and Royce in Poland should be ascribed to the authors of books on philosophy that were translated into the Polish language mainly for academic circles, and two names should be mentioned as being in the first rank. B. A. G. Fuller's *History of Philosophy* (1955 third edition), whose second volume, that included James and Royce, was translated in 1967 and published with up to ten thousand copies being printed,¹⁶ and Frederick Coplestone's *A History of Philosophy* (1966), volume 8 that included Royce and James, was translated in 1989 and published with twenty thousand copies being issued.¹⁷

As we can see, William James was relatively well known to those Polish readers who were interested in American philosophy, and, simultaneously, he was rejected; his thought did not inspire the minds of Polish scholars and if they mentioned him and Pragmatism at all, it was because they wanted to criticize its main theses from the

¹⁴ See Ingarden, R. 1971. *U podstaw teorii poznania [At the Ground of the Theory of Cognition]*, Warszawa: PWN, 143.

¹⁵ Buczyńska-Garewicz, H. 1973/2001. *James*. Warszawa: PIW.

¹⁶ Fuller, B. A. G. 1967. *Historia filozofii [History of Philosophy]*, tom II. Translated by Cz. Znamierowski. Warszawa: PWN.

¹⁷ Copleston, F. 1989. *Historia filozofii [History of Philosophy]*, volume VIII. Translated by B. Chwedeńczuk, Warszawa: PAX.

point of view of the objectivity in epistemology, ontology, and axiology. Pragmatism, at least James' version of Pragmatism, was not adaptable to the intellectual conditions of the Polish philosophers both in the time of the thrive of Polish philosophy before World War II and during its subsistence in the era of Communism.

Indeed, it is nowadays – after the collapse of Communism and the opening of the borders, both physical and mental, to the external world along with a huge rearrangement of the social and intellectual life – that enthusiasm and wide scale interest in American thought, including Pragmatism have taken place, although I am not sure whether this enthusiasm and interest ultimately refers to Pragmatists or rather to Americans and America, that is, to her vitality, her might, and her attractiveness. Anyway, a host of translators, commentators, and researchers study and promote James as well as Pragmatism, and James' works are translated and/or old translated ones re-edited. Thus, *Pragmatism* has two new translations: 1998¹⁸ and 2004,¹⁹ *The Will to Believe* translated afresh in 1996,²⁰ *The Meaning of Truth* in 2000,²¹ and *Some Problems of Philosophy* in 2004²²; the translation of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* was re-edited in 2001,²³ and the translation of *A Pluralistic Universe* re-edited in 2007.²⁴

These translations are accompanied by some studies over James and American Pragmatism in general.²⁵

It must be admitted, however, that the growing interest in American philosophy has not, at least as yet, produced any sort of Polish Pragmatism nor any serious centers for the research of James' thought, not to mention Royce's. It is hoped that something like this might happen within the next few years. This hope is not unjustified; for example, it is at the Institute of Philosophy of Opole University, Poland, that the 1st International Conference on Josiah Royce is to be held in June 2008, as a fourth conference of a series of annual conferences under the general title: *American and European Values*²⁶; within this series a conference on William James is to be held in 2010.

¹⁸ James, W. 1998-*Pragmatyzm. Nowe imię paru starych stylów myślenia*, translated by M. Szczubińska, Warszawa: KR.

¹⁹ James, W. 2004. *Pragmatyzm. Nowa nazwa kilku starych metod myślenia. Popularne wykłady z filozofii*, translated by M. Filipczuk, Kraków: Zielona Sowa.

²⁰ James, W. 1996. *Prawo do wiary*, edited and translated by A. Grobler, Kraków: Znak.

²¹ James, W. 2000. *Znaczenie prawdy. Ciąg dalszy Pragmatyzmu*, translated by M. Szczubińska, Warszawa: KR.

²² James, W. 2004. *Z wybranych problemów filozofii. Początek wprowadzenia do filozofii*, translated by M. Filipczuk, Kraków: Zielona Sowa.

²³ James, W. 2001. *Doświadczenia religijne*. Translated by J. Hempel, Kraków: Nomos.

²⁴ James, W. 2007. *Filozofia wszechświata. Wykłady o filozofii współczesnej z Manchester College*. Translated by W. Witwicki, Kraków: Zielona Sowa.

²⁵ As regards the philosophy of William James, some papers by Piotr Gutowski seem to be worth of mentioning as well as a chapter of Leszek Koczanowicz's book (see footnote 12) devoted to James' concept of the Self.

²⁶ The first conference, held in 2005, was devoted to the problem of Philosophical Rapprochement in the context of American and European Values; the second, in 2006, was devoted to George Santayana, and the third, held in 2007, to Charles S. Peirce's Normative Thought.