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WHY POLISH PHILOSOPHY DOES NOT EXIST

1. The Scandal of “Continental Philosophy”

There are many hundreds of courses taught under the title “Continental Philosophy” (C.P.) each year in North-American universities. Such courses deal not with philosophy on the continent of Europe as a whole, however, but rather with a highly selective portion of Franco-German philosophy, centred above all around the person of Martin Heidegger. Around him is gathered a rotating crew of currently fashionable, primarily French thinkers, each successive generation of which claims itself the “end” of philosophy (or of “man,” or of “reason,” or “the subject,” or “identity” etc.) as we know it. A sort of competition then exists to produce ever wilder and more dadaistic claims along these lines, a competition that bears comparison, in more than one respect, with the competition among Hollywood film directors to outdo each other in producing ever more shocking or brutal or inhuman films.

The later Husserl, Heidegger’s teacher, is sometimes taken account of in courses of this “Continental Philosophy”; not, however, Husserl’s own teacher Brentano and not, for example, such important twentieth-century German philosophers as Ernst Cassirer or Nicolai Hartmann. French philosophers working in the tradition of Poincaré or Duhem or Bergson or Gilson are similarly ignored, as, of course, are Austrian or Scandinavian or Czech philosophers.

What, then, is the moment of unity of this “Continental Philosophy”? What is it that Heidegger and Derrida and Luce Irigaray have in common, which distinguishes them from phenomenologists such as Reinach or Scheler or the famous Daubert? The answer, it seems, is: *antipathy to science*, or more generally, antipathy to learning and to scholarly activity, to all the normal bourgeois purposes of the Western university (and we note in passing that, as far as phenomenology is concerned, it was Heidegger who was responsible for terminating that previously

healthy scientific line which had brought forth such masterpieces as Brentano's *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* and Husserl's *Logical Investigations*). This rejection of the values associated with normal scholarly activity is combined, further, at least in the case of those French thinkers accredited as "Continental Philosophers" – with a substitution of politics for science (where politics, too, is to be understood in a broad sense – a sense broad enough to include also the adolescent fringe). Philosophy thereby becomes transformed into a strange type of ideologically motivated social criticism.

This transformation is sometimes defended, especially by American apologists for "Continental Philosophy" such as Richard Rorty, by appeal to an argument along the following lines:

- i. All scientific activity is in any case an exercise of social power (here the work of Kuhn is often called in aid).
- ii. The putative distinctions between "knowledge" and "power" or between "descriptive" and "performative utterances" are therefore spurious – such distinctions must be "deconstructed" (in the manner of Foucault *et al.*).

Hence:

- iii. Philosophers should cast aside the pretension that they are seeking knowledge and should instead engage exclusively in the struggle to shift the relations of power in society (and here we note that it is above all radical feminist groupings who have gained most from the widespread acceptance, in North America, of different versions of this argument).

(The problems with the argument are, of course, legion. To mention just one obvious stumbling block: if this is indeed an "argument" in defense of what might best be described as a grab for power on the part of certain groups, then this can only be because there is, after all, a distinction between descriptive and performative utterances, for if its premises did not themselves have validity as descriptive truths, then the argument would lose all force as justification.)

That the discipline of philosophy has been subject – in certain circles – to a transformation of the sort described is at the same time masked by the use of new *styles of writing* which are designed to fool outsiders and to protect the circles of initiates from potentially damaging criticism. The most prominent mark of such styles of writing is the heavy use of pseudo-scientific jargonizing inspired by sociology and psychoanalysis. In addition, and especially in "post-modern" circles, they

are marked by the utilization of various tricks of irony and self-“quotation,” by means of which the authors of the new philosophy seek to distance themselves from the responsibility of making assertions which might be judged as true or false. Finally, however, the new writing style is often marked by the use of what can only be called pornographic devices. Consider the following characteristically pretentious passage, chosen at random from Derrida’s *Spurs*, in which the French Doctor Criminale undertakes to “deconstruct” the petit-bourgeois assumption according to which the two concepts of truth and castration would be somehow distinct:

The feminine distance abstracts truth from itself in a suspension of the relation with castration. This relation is suspended much as one might tauten or stretch a canvas, or a relation, which nevertheless remains – suspended – in indecision. In the εποχή. It is with castration that this relation is suspended, not with the truth of castration – in which the woman does [not¹] believe anyway – and not with the truth inasmuch as it might be castration. Nor is it the relation with truth-castration that is suspended, for that is precisely a man’s affair. That is the masculine concern, the concern of the male who has never come of age, who is never sufficiently sceptical or dissimulating. In such an affair the male, in his credulousness and naivety (which is always sexual, always pretending even at times to masterful expertise), castrates himself and from the secretion of his act fashions the snare of truth-castration. (Perhaps at this point one ought to interrogate – and “unboss” – the metaphorical fullblown sail of truth’s declamation, of the castration and phallogentrism, for example in Lacan’s discourse.) (Derrida 1978, pp. 59f)

Or consider this pudding of similar nonsense from Luce Irigaray:

Gynecology, dioptrics, are no longer by right a part of metaphysics – that supposedly unsexed anthropos-logos whose actual sex is admitted only by its omission and exclusion from consciousness, and by what is said in its margins. And what if the “I” only thought the thought of woman? The thought (as it were) of femaleness? And could send back this thought in its reflection only because the mother has been incorporated? The mother – that all-powerful mother denied and neglected in the self-sufficiency of the (self) thinking subject, her “body” henceforward specularized through and through. (Irigaray 1985, p. 183)

Or again:

¹ The ‘not’ is left out by the translator, to no apparent consequence.

Inside Plato's – or Socrates' – cave, an artificial wall curtain – reenactment, reprise, representation, of a hymen that has elsewhere been stealthily taken away, is never, ever crossed, opened, penetrated, pierced, or torn. (Irigaray 1985, p. 249)

As Ms. Irigaray explains:

Any hint, even, of theory, pulls me away from myself by pulling open – and sewing up – unnaturally the lips of that slit where I recognize myself, by touching myself there (almost) directly. (Irigaray 1985, p. 200)

(It is, incidentally, one not inconsiderable victory of radical feminism in the Anglosaxophone countries that the C.P.-obsession with sex, as revealed in passages such as the above, has been introduced into the pages of even the most technical scientific journals via the banishment of the unmarked personal pronoun and its replacement with a pervasive and senseless switching back and forth of gendered “she's” and “he's.”)

2. Philosophy in Poland

What, now, of the fate of philosophy in Poland? We note in passing how sad is the spectacle presented by the host of young students of philosophy in Poland currently devoting its energies to deconstructionist and to other non-serious and ultimately corrosive philosophical fashions. More important for our purposes, however, is the degree to which Poland's own philosophers have fared so badly as concerns their admission into the pantheon of “Continental Philosophers.” Why should this be so? Why, to put the question from the other side, should there be so close an association in Poland – at least since 1894 – between philosophy and logic, or between philosophy and science?² One can distinguish a series of answers to this question, which I shall group together under the following headings:

- (a) the role of socialism;
- (b) the disciplinary association between philosophy and mathematics;
- (c) the influence of Austrian philosophy in general and of Brentanian philosophy in particular;
- (d) the serendipitous role of Twardowski;
- (e) the role of Catholicism.

² What other country – to mention just one symptom of the association I have in mind – would publish an encyclopedia entitled *Philosophy and Science* (Cackowski, Kmita and Szaniawski, eds. 1987)?

3. Socialism and Scientific Philosophy

Much of what needs to be said about the Polish case can be derived, with suitable modifications, from considering the case of Austria. Consider, in this light, the following passage from the autobiography of A. J. Ayer, who in 1932 spent a protracted honeymoon of just over three months in Vienna before returning to Oxford to write *Language, Truth and Logic*:

The members of the Vienna Circle, with the notable exception of Otto Neurath, were not greatly interested in politics, but theirs was also a political movement. The war of ideas which they were waging against the Catholic church had its part in the perennial Viennese conflict between the socialistic and the clerical reaction. (Ayer 1977, p. 129)

A more explicit version of the same thesis put forward by Johannes Dvorak (also quoting Neurath):

In light of the fact that the bourgeoisie – especially in Central Europe – had discharged itself of all enlightenment traditions and paid homage rather to the cults of irrationalism, while the proletariat struggled for a rational formation of society, the hope certainly prevailed that “It is precisely the proletariat which will become the carrier of a science without metaphysics.” (Dvorak 1985, p. 142)

Not only Neurath and Dvorak but also other scholars working on the background of the Vienna Circle have defended a view according to which the flowering of scientific philosophy in Central Europe between the wars is to be regarded precisely as part of a wider struggle between left and right, between science and reaction.

I do not believe that we need spend too much time on this purported explanation as far as Poland – a land not of proletarians but of peasants and nobility – is concerned; but the reader is asked to hold her horses before rushing forward with objections to a political account of the rise of scientific philosophy in Poland along the lines suggested.

4. Safety in Numbers

At the dawn of Polish independence in 1917, as part of a widespread campaign in favour of the conception of science as a laudable form of public service in the cause of the new Poland, the mathematician Zygmunt Janiszewski committed Polish mathematicians to a program designed to take advantage of the talents of the Polish mathematical community via systematic collaboration and concentration on specific

problems and topics of research (see Janiszewski 1917). Janiszewski's project, which proved to be of great success, is important for our present purposes for a number of distinct reasons:

- (i) The topics chosen, above all in the area of set theory, were such as to lead to the possibility of fruitful collaboration between mathematicians and philosophers working in the area of logic. The foundations for such collaboration were laid already in 1894 when Twardowski began to teach philosophy at the university of Lvov; at that time Twardowski advised his students to study the science of mathematics in addition to philosophy, and some of his brightest students subsequently fell under the influence of the mathematician Sierpiński, who taught in Lvov from 1910.
- (ii) Janiszewski was conscious of the comparative advantage possessed by smaller countries in those fields of scientific research not requiring significant expenditures on facilities and equipment. One can point, additionally, to a certain comparative advantage enjoyed by scholars in countries such as Poland in those fields – such as mathematics or music – where the issue of the native language of the scientist or artist is of secondary importance. (The achievements of Poland in the field of mathematics are matched, significantly, by similar achievements on the part of Hungary and Finland.) These comparative advantages of smaller nations on the world stage can be carried over also to other spheres, including philosophy, and especially to those areas of philosophy most remote from issues of politics and national culture.
- (iii) Mathematicians, and logicians and scientific philosophers, may also enjoy the advantages of relative personal and professional safety in turbulent political times, in a way which may not be possible for thinkers working in such fields as ethics or political theory or history. The relative superiority of work done in logic in Eastern as opposed to Western Germany is, I believe, to be explained in part in terms of this factor. On the other hand, however, given the role played by logical philosophers in the Solidarity movement and in the Polish underground university during the war, it is more difficult to gauge the significance of this factor in the case of Poland.

5. Polish Philosophy Is Austrian Philosophy

In his paper “Wittgenstein and Austrian Philosophy,” Rudolf Haller writes as follows:

I wish [. . .] to defend two theses: first, that in the last 100 years there has taken place an independent development of a specifically Austrian philosophy, opposed to the philosophical currents of the remainder of the German-speaking world; and secondly that this development can sustain a genetic model which permits us to affirm an intrinsic homogeneity of Austrian philosophy up to the Vienna Circle and its descendants. (Haller 1981, p. 92)

The grain of truth in this passage can be seen already if we consider the degree to which the writings of such exemplary Austrians as Bolzano, Mach, Meinong, Twardowski, Popper and Gustav Bergmann, exhibit radical differences of *style* as compared to German philosophers such as Hegel, Heidegger, or Habermas who are standardly associated with Germany (see Smith 1991a; Mulligan 1993). Most simply put: the former employ a sober scientific style and shun pretensions. There are also associated differences pertaining to the differential role of science and logic, as opposed to that of politics in the two traditions – differences which, as we shall see, serve to explain why it is (certain selected) German and not Austrian philosophers who have been taken up into the bosom of “Continental Philosophy” in North America. These are differences which are rooted deeply in history, and they do much to explain why Germany – in spite of the fact that it has brought forth such giants of mathematical logic as Frege, Hilbert and Gentzen – has taken so long to develop a community of analytic philosophers on its home territory and why not a few of those most centrally responsible for this development – above all Wolfgang Stegmüller – have hailed from Austria (or more precisely, in Stegmüller’s case, from the South Tyrol). I have sought elsewhere (see Smith 1994) to demonstrate the degree to which philosophy in Austria in the period from 1890 to the *Anschluss* was influenced by the thinking of Franz Brentano, and as the manifesto of the Vienna Circle points out, many of the characteristic concerns even of the logical positivist movement were foreshadowed in his writings:

As a Catholic priest Brentano had an understanding for scholasticism; he started directly from the scholastic logic and from Leibniz’s endeavours to reform logic, while leaving aside Kant and the idealist system-philosophers. Brentano and his students showed time and again their understanding of men like Bolzano and others who were working towards a rigorous new foundation of logic. (Neurath, Carnap and Hahn 1929, p. 302)

In support of this contention as to the importance of Brentano, it is remarkable to consider the fact that the most important centers of scientific philosophy in Continental Europe – Vienna, Prague, Graz, Berlin, Göttingen and Lvov – were precisely those cities in which Brentano’s most distinguished students had held chairs in philosophy from the 1890s onwards.

Brentano was not only sympathetic to the idea of a rigorously scientific method in philosophy; he also shared with the British empiricists and with the Vienna positivists an anti-metaphysical orientation, manifesting an especially forceful antipathy to the “mystical paraphilosophy” of the German idealists and stressing in all his work the unity of scientific method. Brentano’s writings involve the use of methods of language analysis similar in some respects to those developed later by philosophers in England.

The thesis of an internally coherent tradition of Austrian philosophy is not, however, without its problems. Thus, while it seems that the works of Brentano, like those of Meinong and Husserl, were mentioned in discussions of the Vienna Circle, in the case of Brentano, at least, these writings were discussed primarily because Brentanian ethics was chosen by Schlick as a special object of scorn. Schlick himself was of course a German, as also were the three thinkers – Carnap, Reichenbach and Hempel – who are held by many to have made the most important contributions to philosophy of the logical positivist sort.

6. The Serendipitous Role of Twardowski

“Austrian Philosophy” is, in any event, by no means as unified a phenomenon as some might like to believe. Perhaps, though, we can maintain a parallel thesis in regard to Poland, where the role of Brentanian ideas is more easy to gauge in light of the singular dominance, in the history of philosophy in Poland, of one man: Kazimierz Twardowski. The influence of Twardowski on modern philosophy in Poland is all-pervasive. Twardowski instilled in his students a passion for clarity and rigour and seriousness. He taught them to regard philosophy as a collaborative effort, a matter of disciplined discussion and argument, and he encouraged them to train themselves thoroughly in at least one extra-philosophical discipline and to work together with scientists from other fields, both inside Poland and internationally. This led above all, as we have seen, to collaborations with mathematicians, so that the Lvov school of philosophy would

gradually evolve into the Warsaw school of logic, as Polish scientific philosophers availed themselves of the new techniques of formal philosophy developed by Frege and Russell.³ Twardowski taught his students, too, to respect and to pursue serious research in the history of philosophy, an aspect of the tradition of philosophy on Polish territory which is illustrated in such disparate works as Łukasiewicz's groundbreaking monograph on the law of non-contradiction in Aristotle and Tatarkiewicz's highly influential multi-volume histories of philosophy and aesthetics.

In 1895, at the age of 29, Twardowski was appointed professor of philosophy in Lvov, still at that time an Austrian town. This meant that, like the Jagellonian University in Cracow, its university enjoyed a rather liberal and tolerant atmosphere. Thus Poles were allowed to study and to be taught by their own lecturers and professors, where "in the other parts of partitioned Poland they were engaged in a most savage struggle for national and economic survival" (Jordan 1945, p. 39). Twardowski taught at the university of Lvov until 1930 and continued to hold seminars until his death in 1938. His success in establishing a modern tradition of exact and rigorous philosophy in Poland can be seen in the fact that more than 30 of his Ph.D. students acquired professorships, and by the inter-war period his students held chairs in philosophy departments in all Polish universities with the single exception of the Catholic University in Lublin.⁴ As Tarski expressed it in a letter to Neurath of 1930: "almost all the researchers, who pursue the philosophy of exact sciences in Poland, are indirectly or directly the disciples of Twardowski" (Tarski 1992, p. 20).

It has been suggested that Twardowski's teaching was in some sense philosophically neutral, that the unity of his school was rooted in a common training in methods and habits of work, rather than in the handing down of any shared doctrines. Jordan, for example, asserts that the members of Twardowski's school were not linked by any "common body of philosophical assumptions and beliefs." Twardowski led his students, rather, "to undertake painstaking analysis of specific problems which were rich in conceptual and terminological distinctions, and

³ Woleński (1989) is now the standard history of the Lvov-Warsaw School. On Twardowski's teaching see Skolimowski (1967, p. 26f), who refers to Twardowski's "Spartan drill." On Twardowski's intellectual development see Dąbska (1978) and Twardowski (1991).

⁴ On Twardowski's influence, see, again, Woleński (1989, Ch. 1, part 2), and also Skolimowski (1967, ch. II).

directed rather to the clarification than to the solution of the problems involved” (Jordan 1963, pp. 7f).

While Twardowski held no truck with the system-building “philosophical” philosophies of the past, his work was nonetheless marked by a certain *metaphysical* attitude, which reveals itself in the work of those philosophers who came under his influence. This applies even to those – like Twardowski’s son-in-law Ajdukiewicz, also in other respects a noted Austrophile (see Giedymin 1982) – who were at certain times attracted by the positivism or reductionism of the Vienna Circle (see, e.g., Ajdukiewicz 1978, p. 348; Küng 1989). It applies to Łukasiewicz, to Kotarbiński, and to philosophers such as Drewnowski and Zawirski, who developed a conception of metaphysics as a hypothetical-deductive science to which the axiomatic method should be applied.⁵

The metaphysics to which Twardowski subscribed is that of Brentano (see Twardowski 1991),⁶ and Twardowski’s influence upon the *content* of modern philosophy in Poland can accordingly best be understood in terms of certain Brentanian ideas and attitudes which Twardowski conveyed to his Polish disciples. This influence reveals itself, more precisely, in the fact that modern philosophy in Poland is marked, on the one hand, by an attitude of metaphysical realism and, on the other hand, by a concern with the notion of truth as correspondence, both of which Twardowski had inherited – with some Bolzanian admixtures – from the early Brentano. Thus while Meinong’s theory of objects is a more widely known example of a generalized ontology built up on the basis of descriptive psychological analyses of the different kinds of mental acts, it was in fact Twardowski, of all the Brentanians, who was the first to develop a generalized ontology in this sense. As Ingarden puts it, Twardowski’s *Content and Object* (1894) is, “so far as I know, the first consistently constructed theory of objects manifesting a certain theoretical unity since the times of scholasticism and of the ‘ontology’ of Christian Wolff” (Ingarden 1938, p. 258, quoted in Schnelle 1982, p. 99).

In some cases, a direct interest in Brentano and his school was inherited from Twardowski by his students. This is especially true of Ingarden; but it holds also of Leśniewski, and Łukasiewicz was subject to

⁵ See e.g. Jordan (1945, p. 38). A similar conception is represented in the work of contemporary Polish philosophers such as J. Perzanowski and many others.

⁶ As Łuszczewska-Rohmanowa puts it, “Twardowski saw as his exclusive task the realization of the ideas of Brentano on Polish soil, ideas with which he himself in a way grew up and which he held to be indubitably correct” (Łuszczewska-Rohmanowa 1967, p. 155, as quoted in Schnelle 1982, p. 90).

the influence of Brentano's ideas, too. He studied not only with Twardowski but also with Stumpf in Berlin and with Meinong in Graz, and among his earliest papers are a number of short reviews of works by Husserl, Höfler, Stumpf and Meinong.

It would be wrong to suggest that specifically Brentanian doctrines were taken over whole by Twardowski's students. Yet the implicit or explicit concern with metaphysics, and especially with realistic metaphysics and with truth as correspondence, is a constantly recurring feature of their work. Investigations in the ontology of truth, or of those relations between sentences and objects which are constitutive of truth, have been quite peculiarly prominent features of Polish philosophical writings from Twardowski to the present day, and they have coloured especially the Polish reception of the philosophy of Wittgenstein.⁷ Even the early work of Tarski can illuminatingly be viewed in this light, though Tarski did not himself study with Twardowski (see Tarski 1956, p. 155, n. 2; Woleński and Simons 1989).

At all events, though, it cannot be denied that an interest in the philosophy of truth has been a highly conspicuous moment of modern philosophy in Poland. The idea of realism, on the other hand, may initially be thought to have played a less prominent role. On closer inspection, however, we see that the realist attitude which Twardowski promulgated has in fact been taken for granted by Polish philosophers as something almost universally shared. Realism, even Aristotelian realism, is an unquestioned presupposition of Leśniewski's work and of that of his principal successors. It governs the work of Ingarden, dictating even the latter's interest in the phenomena of aesthetics.⁸ It has been of repeated concern to Ajdukiewicz, and it has coloured also the work on epistemology of Kotarbiński and his pupils (see Jordan 1945). And in each case, Twardowski has played a role in determining both the terminology and the thinking of the philosophers in question.

7. Scientific Philosophy and Catholicism

Can we, then, accept an explanation of the rise and entrenchment of scientific philosophy in Poland in terms of the uniquely powerful influence of Twardowski? Before we move to answer this question, let us

⁷ From a wide selection of more recent works one might mention: Borkowski (1985), Perzanowski (1985), Suszko (1968), and Wolniewicz (1985).

⁸ See the Preface to his (1931); see also Ingarden's critical writings on Husserl's idealism, above all in his (1929).

consider one further factor, which turns on the fact that Poland, like Austria, is a Catholic country. For some have offered religious explanations as to why scientific philosophy should have taken root in these countries – but not in (Protestant, Northern) Germany. Here again we may turn to Neurath, who writes as follows:

Catholics accept a compact body of dogma and place it at the beginning of their reflections, [thus] they are sometimes able to devote themselves to systematic logical analysis, unburdened by any metaphysical details. [. . .] Once someone in the Catholic camp begins to have doubts about a dogma, he can free himself with particular ease from the whole set of dogmas and is then left a very effective logical instrument in his possession. Not so in the Lutheran camp, where [. . .] many philosophers and scholars from all disciplines, while avoiding a commitment to a clear body of dogma, have retained half-metaphysical or quarter-metaphysical turns of speech, the last remnants of a theology which has not yet been completely superseded [. . .]. This may explain why the linguistic analysis of unified science prevailed least in countries where the Lutheran faith had dealt the hardest blows to the Catholic Church, despite the fact that technology and the sciences that go along with it are highly developed in these countries. (Neurath [1933] 1987, p. 277)

Hence, Neurath claims, the “revolt against the metaphysical tradition is succeeding outside Lutheran countries in Calvinistic as well as in Catholic ones” and he notes with pride that there are in Austria “no such metaphysical autocrats as Heidegger, Rickert or others” (Neurath [1933] 1987).

8. A Copernican Shift

Neurath is certainly onto something when he points to differential features of the history of Germany and Austria/Poland in this way. There are a number of severe problems with his specific thesis, however. Thus Heidegger himself was steeped rather in Catholic than in Lutheran metaphysics as a young man; and there are many Catholic countries, in other respects comparable to Poland, where logical empiricism and analytic philosophy have failed to take substantial root, just as there are Lutheran countries (Finland is here the most striking example), and of course countries of Anglican-Episcopalian filiation – not mentioned at all by Neurath – which have served as veritable bastions of the analytic tradition.

Similar objections can be raised even more forcefully against our first (political) class of explanations of the rise of scientific philosophy in

Central Europe (“scientific philosophy is the philosophy of the workers’ movement”). Not only is it the case that socialist movements in France or Spain or Italy, otherwise comparable to those in Poland and Austria, gave rise to no comparable movements in philosophy, but it is also the case that many of the most important thinkers associated with the Vienna circle and with the rise of scientific philosophy in Poland treated socialism with disdain (see Smith 1996).

What, then, of explanations of the rise of scientific philosophy in Poland which stress the role of Austria in general and of Brentano and Twardowski in particular? Here again there are problems, not least as a result of the fact that the available explanations do little to explain why the ideas of Brentano and Twardowski were able to plant such firm and lasting roots precisely on Polish soil, where the contemporary influence of Brentanism in Austria itself, and in other parts of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, is almost vanishingly weak. These problems become all the greater when one reflects on the tremendous difficulties faced by philosophers in Poland in keeping alive their philosophical traditions through the course of this country.

It may, indeed, be possible to adjust and amend the offered explanations in order successfully to confront this and the remaining difficulties and thus to provide a reasonable explanation of the rise of scientific philosophy in Poland. I would like, however, to look at the matter from another, quite different perspective, and to raise instead the question: why did scientific philosophy *not* take root in, say, Bulgaria or Tadjikistan? The answer to these questions is I hope rather clear: scientific philosophy, or in other words a philosophy that respects the values of clarity, precision, seriousness, rigour and technical competence, is the product of an advanced intellectual culture and of the Western university. But why, then, did scientific philosophy to such a marked degree *fail to take root in Germany?*

Recall, again, Neurath’s explanation of the metaphysical character of German philosophy in terms of the historical experience of the German people. We had occasion to reject this explanation when formulated in religious terms. What happens, however, if we recast the account in terms of the history of the Germans in the more narrow political sense? This manifests, from our present (certainly, radically over-simplified) point of view certain peculiar features as contrasted to the political history of the English or the Austrians. For philosophy has played a role in the history of the German state that is quite unique. Just as England has its National Theatre, and America has its Constitution and its Declaration of Independence, so Germany has its *National Philosophy*: Kant, Fichte,

Hegel, Schlegel, etc. are national monuments of the German people, whose memory is held sacred not least because they were so closely involved in creating that unified national consciousness which made possible Germany itself as a unified nation state. Philosophical thinkers were made to play a role in the history of Germany that is analogous to the role of Mickiewicz in the history of Poland, of Homer in the history of Greece, or of Shakespeare in the history of the English. From this point of view, it is no accident that the most impressive German contributions to philosophical scholarship have consisted precisely in great critical editions of the classical German idealist philosophers. (For a consideration of the role of these editions in German culture, see Smith 1992.)

The size and power of Germany in the twentieth century has furthermore ensured that the Germans have been able to keep alive their national philosophical tradition and to protect it in a way that would have been impossible for the smaller nations of Central and Eastern Europe. Certainly outside influences have occasionally been absorbed into the large central mass of post-Kantian German philosophising. Elements of the thinking of Searle, for example, have been absorbed into the work of Habermas and Apel; but they have thereby been transformed into something that is, from the perspective of the analytic tradition in which Searle's thinking has its origins, scarcely recognisable.

Attempts were made in the nineteenth century, in part under the inspiration of Fichte and the German model, to found a ("Messianistic") national philosophy in Poland also: as the "Christ among the Nations" Poland has a quite special mission in the history of European Christianity. (Compare, in this respect, the work of such figures as Cieszkowski, Trentowski, Hoene-Wroński; as discussed in Kuderowicz 1988.) Such attempts proved to be of little lasting influence, however, and were, in fact already in the 1870s overwhelmed by the more forward-looking so-called "positivists" in Warsaw, who accused the nationalistic philosophers of being too naively idealistic in their goals and of thereby promoting national tragedies. The positivists advocated instead the virtues of "small" or "organic" work, which consisted not least in the promotion of science among the people in the spirit of Mill, Comte and Spencer (see Jadacki 1994).

Now there is, of course, no important national philosophy in Britain or Austria, either: the imperial, multinational tradition seems for such purposes to be both too broad and too loose. There is also, and correspondingly, no particular concern for the purity or authenticity of the *language* of philosophy in England or Austria, for such issues there

do not go hand in hand with issues of national-cultural integrity. And that Poland, as the mother of many nationalities, is to be seen as being allied to England and Austria in this respect manifests itself further in the fact that the Polish intellectuals, too – from Twardowski, born in Vienna in 1866, to Leśniewski, born in Petersburg in 1886 – have often been multinational in their aspirations and have thus not shunned the use of Western languages in their work.

How different is the case of Germany (and, by extension, France). The works of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Heidegger are master texts of the German people, and like all such master texts, be they the master texts of a religion, a sect, a people or a culture, they manifest that type of density and obscurity which goes hand in hand with the tendency to spawn a commentary literature, with all that this implies by way of association with the commentary literatures on, for example, Aristotle, the Bible, or the writings of Marx and Engels (see Smith 1991b). German philosophers have in fact for centuries been schooled systematically in the habits of a philosophical culture in which the most important textual models are associated with a need for commentaries and with what one might call a hermeneutic intransigence. They grow up further in a philosophical culture which is sealed off by firm disciplinary boundaries from the empirical sciences and which places a high value not on consistency and clarity, but rather on “depth” and “authenticity.” Teamwork and the exercise of mutual criticism and persistent argument, international collaboration, and indeed the search for any sort of “truth” in philosophy, are from this perspective simply out of place (see Puntel 1991). Philosophy, rather, is seen as something that should come directly from the heart, as a direct expression of the author’s soul or “spirit.” Consider, in this context, the mind-deadeningly repetitive stream-of-consciousness rantings of Derrida who shows how, in this as in so much else, French philosophy (or more precisely, that part of French philosophy that has been approved as part of “Continental Philosophy”), has become little more than a parody of its German model (the result of applying to German philosophy a Nietzschean sceptical rejection of the very idea of seriousness).

In the wider world, of course, it is not classical German idealism, with its national, textual and historical associations, but rather empirical, or at least scientifically oriented, philosophy that has come to constitute the contemporary mainstream. The latter is, for reasons not altogether accidental, a philosophy which values logic, argument and technical competence more highly than those literary, ideological and historical qualities which are at a premium in certain philosophical circles in

Germany and France. Moreover, it seems likely to be the case that (whether for good or ill), as the discipline of philosophy becomes ever more a creature of the modern university, it will come to be marked to an increasing degree by the factor of professionalization, so that respect for technical competence and for the scientific method and the rejection of hagiography and the use of a mystificatory style will come increasingly to characterize the discipline of philosophy as a whole. The most prominent Polish philosophers have, when seen from this perspective, been speaking prose all along without knowing it.

9. Why Polish Philosophy Does Not Exist

If, now, we return to our question as to how we are to explain the rise of scientific philosophy in Poland, then we can see that this question in fact needs no answer. In Poland, exactly as in Austria, and Scandinavia, and exactly as in England and the rest of the Anglosaxophone world, the rise of scientific philosophy is an inevitable concomitant of the simple process of modernization. Just as the term ‘Austrian Philosophy’ is a misnomer to the degree that it suggests that there is a corresponding national or regional or ethnic philosophy, or a special Austrian *way of doing philosophy* that is unavailable to those born (say) outside the borders of the former Habsburg Empire; and just as the term ‘women’s philosophy’ is a misnomer to the extent that it suggests that there is a special way of doing philosophy that is available only to those of feminine gender, so also the term ‘Polish philosophy’ is a misnomer – and for just the same reasons. For Polish philosophy is philosophy *per se*, it is part and parcel of the mainstream of world philosophy – simply because, in contrast to French or German philosophy, it meets international standards of training, rigour, professionalism and specialization.

10. The Law of Conservation of Spread

Why, then, is “Continental Philosophy” so popular in certain circles? Why do young philosophers in Poland in such large numbers choose to read – or rather buy – the newly made translations of the ghastly works of Derrida and his ilk? Why, more generally, should intelligent people come to hold that it is *not* necessary, in doing philosophy, to meet the normal standards of clarity and precision? Why, indeed, should some have found it attractive to reject the very goal of clarity in philosophy,

and to praise, instead, the putative virtues of obscurity and depth? To answer these questions I should like, appealing to an analogy with the physicist's law of conservation of matter, to advance a law of conservation of the various branches of intellectual concern which have traditionally, in the West, been grouped together under the heading "philosophy." If one or other of these branches is in one way or another suppressed, or so I want to suggest, then it will somehow find a way to force itself through in some new and unexpected territory, or in some new and bastardized form. (If Marxist philosophy, broadly conceived, is no longer able to be taken seriously in the fields of economics or political theory, then it will rise again in the field of, say, "comparative literature" or "critical legal theory" or in the *transzendente Sprachpragmatik* of Habermas and Apel.)

Something like this, I suggest, has been the fate of many of the classical philosophical concerns now customarily dealt with by those pleased to call themselves "Continental Philosophers," many of whom are grouped together in American universities in departments of comparative literature, of film studies, of "woman studies," and so forth. For the best philosophical minds in the Anglo-Saxon world – and in Poland – have in recent decades turned primarily to logic and to the related branches of our discipline. To put it plainly: really existing logical or scientific philosophy, philosophy as concretely practiced in alliance with logic and science, has been overly narrow in the scope of the problems with which it has deigned to concern itself and has been too often associated with metaphysical standpoints (of nominalism, inscriptionalism, reism, eliminativist materialism, and so on) on the basis of which it is difficult, to say the least, to do justice to what we might call the phenomenological aspects of human existence. Those who have sought answers to the broader philosophical questions have thus fallen into the arms of those "Continental Philosophers" whose knavish tricks have been described above. Part of the blame for the excesses of the "Continental Philosophers" is, accordingly, to be laid at the door of Ryle and Quine and Carnap, who have played something like the same role, in the turning away from a unified adequatist metaphysics in our own day, as was played by Galileo (or the Galileo of Husserl's *Crisis*) in an earlier period. (It is not for nothing that Quine, together with Heidegger and Derrida, is one of the heroes of Richard Rorty.) The problems of narrowness of scope and of metaphysical reductionism in philosophy were, perhaps, of lesser significance in Poland – where Ingarden, above all, kept alive the flame of Grand Metaphysics, but even in Poland there were some influential members of the Lvov-Warsaw School who have

muddied the waters by being less than wholly clear as to whether they were or were not engaged in “metaphysics.”

11. What Is to Be Done?

How, now, should those – the contemporary heirs of Russell and Łukasiewicz – be they in Cracow or Canberra, in Pittsburgh or Poznań – who believe in truth in philosophy, react to these developments? Should they simply ignore “Continental Philosophy” and the text- and commentary-based traditions of philosophizing in Germany and France from out of which it grew? Can they justifiably embrace the hope that they will all simply go away? Or is it not much rather the case that a fashion economy, when once established, manifests a quite remarkable resilience? Should they, as is now all too customary, allow the inhabitants of the C.P.-ghetto of Heideggerians, Derridians and Irigarrians to perform their antics undisturbed, whether in the spirit of pluralistic tolerance or in that of scornful disdain? To react in this fashion would, I believe, be a great mistake. This is not because I believe that the proper reaction to the cynicisms, relativisms and irrationalisms which predominate in so many corners of our “postmodern” world would be to form a new “movement” charged with agitation on behalf of the scientific conception of philosophy. For as Schlick, however dimly, saw, the formation of a movement of “scientific philosophy” – to be ranked alongside “women’s philosophy,” “Australian regional philosophy,” and the like – can only contribute to the widespread confusion of supposing that there are *different sorts of truth* (see Smith 1996): scientific truth, women’s truth, aboriginal truth, proletarian truth, aryan truth, Tadjik truth, German truth, Jewish truth, and so on.

Rather, we should orient ourselves more steadfastly around the idea that it is the proper business of philosophy to search for truth (for truth *simpliciter*), including truth in the various fields of the history of philosophy. This must imply also a search for truth even in relation to those byways of philosophical history and of philosophical concern that do not fit well into the customary and rather narrow picture of philosophical history which has been favoured by analytic philosophers hitherto. It must imply, indeed, a search for truth in the history of German and even of French philosophy in all its breadth. We should shine light, if one will, upon the dark places of our discipline and seek out the monsters that are breeding in its mists.

It would be one incidental benefit of the study of the history of philosophy along these lines that it would help to make clear to philosophers and others that in former times, too, which is to say in previous dark ages of philosophical development, generations of philosophers have repeatedly been wont to declare themselves as constituting the “end,” or the “death,” of philosophy as we know it and have thereby engaged in competition with their predecessors in the wildness of the antics with which they have set out to support such claims. On the other hand, however, it will become clear also to the student of this catholic history of philosophy that such dark periods in philosophical history were in each case succeeded by new and healthier phases, in which truth and reason were once more, and with renewed vigour, given their due.⁹

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⁹ I am grateful to Jacek Jadacki, Anna Kanik, Jerzy Perzanowski, Artur Rojszczak, Jan Woleński and to my esteemed translator, all of whom provided valuable help and inspiration during the preparation of this paper. Research for this publication was supported by a grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board, with funds provided by the US Department of State (Title VIII) and the National Endowment for the Humanities. None of these organizations is responsible for the views expressed.

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