

REVIEWS

„The contribution of polish science and technology to world heritage”. Edited by Irena Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, Committee of History of Science and Technology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Jesuit University of Philosophy and Education “Ignatianum”. Publishing House Wydawnictwo WAM, Cracow-Warsaw, 2010, ss. 410.

Naming all Polish Nobel Prize winners is a simple and effortless task. However, specifying our world-famous engineers, biologists or geologists would definitely require a longer process of thinking, strictly dependent on how far a given branch of knowledge is from our area of interest. To remedy this “dissonance of competences”, one would need to consult a thorough publication written in a scientific language, and yet retaining a more accessible form. The above compendium may constitute such a “golden mean”.

What we are dealing with here is a publication of an extraordinary book, whose predecessor, *Wkład Polaków do kultury świata* (“Poles’ Contribution to the World Culture”, collective work edited by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, Piotr Taras, and Jan Turowski, Lublin 1976), was published more than 30 years ago²⁶.

„A group of researches affiliated with the Polish Academy of Sciences, Polish universities and other leading institutions of higher education, representing various fields of knowledge, embarked upon an ambitious and extremely demanding enterprise. They decided to prepare and publish in the years 2007-2010 a book entitled The Contribution of Polish Science and Technology to World Heritage, which – as it appears in two versions: English and Polish – is targeted at both domestic and foreign readers.” (p. 9)

This book is, therefore, a collective work of Committee of History of Science and Technology at Polish Academy of Sciences and Jesuit University of Philosophy and Education “Ignatianum”.

Written by the most prominent representatives of particular branches of science, the publication may become a useful source of information for both a high-school student, a university tutor and a regular reader, interested in so called “popular science”.

Prof. dr hab. Irena Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, the editor of the book, wanted the book to comply with the following criteria:

²⁶ Our southern neighbours published a similar book in English called “The Czechoslovak Contribution to World Culture” (ed. Miloslav Rechcigl, Jr.) as early as 1965.

- each chapter related to a different branch of science was to be written in a way that is understandable to a reader who's not an expert in a particular field;
- the amount of information included in the book is optimal; there are no blatant simplifications or redundant references;
- having found a compromise between megalomania and some complexes, many omissions and false fact related to Poles' contribution to science were verified;
- the decision concerning the achievements and the content of each of the chapters was left entirely for their authors to be made.

Apart from the editor's note and an introduction by prof. dr hab. Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, the book contains lots of information related to Polish contribution to the world science and technology in areas such as: astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural history, medicine, the earth sciences, cartography and mechanical sciences. Moreover, in the field of philosophical, historical and social sciences a number of subdivisions were distinguished, such as philosophy, sociology, theology, law, pedagogy, archaeology, historiography, linguistics and archival science.

As this review is mainly addressed to a humanist-oriented reader, I'll take a liberty of enumerating the full titles of papers which constitute the fourth — and last — chapter of the book:

- “Contribution of Polish Theological Thinking to World Heritage” by ks. bp. prof. dr hab. Andrzej Franciszek Dziuba
- “Polish Contribution to World Philosophy” by ks. prof. zw. dr hab. Roman Darowski SJ
- „Polish Sociology and its Place in the World Science” by prof. dr hab. Włodzimierz Winclawski
- “The Contribution of Polish Jurisprudence to the World's Heritage” by prof. dr hab. Stanisław Salmonowicz
- “The Polish contribution to the Sciences of Education” by prof. dr hab. Kalina Bartnicka and prof. dr hab. Julian Dybiec
- „The Contribution of Polish Historiography to World Heritage” by prof. zw. dr hab. Edward Alfred Mierzwa
- “The UNESCO World Heritage List and the Polish Contribution to World Heritage” by dr Hanna Krajewska, the index compiled by dr Stanisław Cieślak SJ

Philosophers' attention will certainly be attracted by professor Roman Darowski's SJ essay entitled “Polish Contribution to World Philosophy”, in which the author decided to face the challenge of reviewing the most significant achievements of Polish philosophy, particularly those that influenced philosophical thinking all over the world.

His main criteria were as follows: the novelty and originality of ideas, the impact which a given philosopher had on people of that time, the existence of Polish-language foreign publications, as well as those published in Poland, but written in a foreign language (i.e. translations), referring to certain authors and their works, long-lasting educational activity at influential institutions, especially abroad, the extent to which a given work was popular abroad, especially those which seemed to take a big step forward at that time, even if there were hardly known outside Poland (p. 255).

Basing on more generally described features of Polish philosophy as such, the author concludes by claiming that “(...) the level of Polish philosophy – as elsewhere – has been and is varied, is justified. Taking into consideration its finest achievements, it is not inferior to Western philosophy.” (p. 282). Referring to the “philosophical movement” in Poland and basing on statistical data responsible for the “institutional” image of Polish philosophy, Darowski deliberately brings up the question that was asked by the authors of “Informator filozofii polskiej” (Kraków 2004): “(...)one could say that from an institutional perspective and from a publishing perspective, we have what we need. Do we have what we need from an intellectual perspective?” (p. 283).

The title of Darowski’s essay’s last chapter, “How to improve the condition of Polish philosophy”, seems to answer the very question. According to the author, the solution depends on the implementation of the following six ideas:

- giving priority to *philosophy*; by limiting studies of the history of philosophy, thereby promoting authentic philosophy;
- improving the quality of the practice of philosophy;
- ensuring proper philosophical education, taking care of the philosophical movement in Poland; hence the proposal to teach the propaedeutics of philosophy at the high school level;
- publishing to a wider degree in congressional languages (individually and institutionally) and ensuring an international exchange of publications; 10 Polish periodicals already appear in foreign languages, mainly in English;
- studying and appreciating Polish philosophy;
- compiling the publication *History of Polish Philosophy* in order to popularize a better knowledge of Polish philosophy abroad. (p. 283)

It’s a pity that the author fails to comment on each of these factors: while all would applaud to the idea of improving the quality of philosophy, the means of implementing this postulate might be understood in a variety of ways.

Undoubtedly, if Darowski wanted to reach some form of completeness (if such a thing exists, when one takes into consideration the nature of this type of publication) in his 31-page article, the essay should be supplemented or expanded. Still, given the limits imposed on the authors appearing in the book, the essay constitutes a coherent work. Darowski himself explains that the article is just a starting point to a much bigger publication, perhaps a book. Various comments

and remarks from the circles of Polish philosophers will certainly inspire the author to face this difficult task again.

It must be noted that once such books are published, they are immediately accused of “omission” or “insufficient exposure”. Naturally, one may be critical of the fact that some authors were only mentioned, and others were presented in an insufficient way, let alone totally omitted. Such remarks would probably be avoided if we dealt with a multi-volume compendium, but the question is: would such a publication be accessible to a wide range of readers? Even in such delicate a matter as Polish scientific achievements, one must take into consideration the culturally-predefined reader’s needs. Nevertheless, the book covers all Polish achievements, developments and inventions that deserve to be called “the outcome of the genius of human mind”, no matter what personal opinions one might have. One thing is for sure — the publication is not too bulky and thus cannot scare the reader off, and yet it’s devoid of any simplifications — a matter which was taken care of by a number of reviewers.

What also seems worth mentioning is the fact that the book lacks a number of ideas — a problem which could easily be overcome by publishing a supplement or a separate volume — related to such significant branches of knowledge as psychology, medicine, political science, archeology or architecture. Moreover, the order of the chapters may be somewhat questionable. For instance, the chapter called “Man and Society” is the last one on the book, which might strike one as odd, since it is the man who is the “source” of all scientific activity, no matter what form it takes. What also seems like a good idea is an index of concepts and a table of contents at the beginning of the book.

This very edition should become our emissary and ambassador. It’s not about our national egocentrism or megalomania. It’s about highlighting all those achievements which — even by worldwide standards — fully deserve a place in the scientific hall of fame.

RAFAL KUPCZAK

Wilhelm Vossenkuhl, *Die Möglichkeit des Guten. Ethik im 21. Jahrhundert*, München: Verlag C.H. Beck 2006, 472 pp.

Das Charakteristische am menschlichen Dasein ist, dass es sich im Verlaufe seines Existierens unterschiedlich entfalten kann, mithin zu einer Person mit vielfältig ausgebildeten qualitativen Merkmalen. Diese Merkmale entscheiden üblich über die theoretische und praktische Effizienz von Person. Bei genauerem Hinsehen fällt auf, dass der in diesem Kontext relevante Begriff der „Unterschiedlichkeit“ in dem der „Möglichkeit“ fundiert ist. Begründen lässt sich diese Konstellation schon durch das Faktum, dass sich menschliches Dasein nur dann unterschiedlich entfalten kann, wenn es dazu entsprechende Möglichkeiten schlechthin gibt. Da die gleiche Argumentationslinie – von den methodischen Kriterien her – auch für