

Alicja Chybińska

Semantical Issues in Maria Kokoszyńska's Letters to Kazimierz Twardowski

Keywords: *absoluteness of truth, Congress for the Unity of Science, M. Kokoszyńska-Lutman, Lvov-Warsaw School, relativity of truth, semantics, A. Tarski, K. Twardowski, Vienna Circle*

1. The letters, reprinted below, were written by Maria Kokoszyńska-Lutman to Kazimierz Twardowski (and more broadly to the society of philosophers in Lwów), reporting on Kokoszyńska's stay in Vienna and Paris on a scholarship between November 1935 and September 1936. It is extremely interesting a source material: the letters report on the atmosphere that prevailed in the 1930s among Viennese and Parisian philosophers; they illustrate relations at the Lvov-Warsaw School (in particular the teacher–student relationship between Twardowski and Kokoszyńska); and they reveal Kokoszyńska's scholarly interests (mainly in semantics). They also show an interesting feminist approach: Kokoszyńska was an independent woman and scholar. This feature is reflected in her correspondence.

Maria Kokoszyńska (married name: Lutman; she also used a double name: Kokoszyńska-Lutman) was born on 6 December 1905 in Bóbrka near Lwów, and died on 30 June 1981 in Wrocław. She was one of the most outstanding female representatives of the Lvov-Warsaw School (a great Polish school of philosophy and an important branch of analytic philosophy, founded in Lwów in 1895; hereinafter: LWS). In 1923, Kokoszyńska began her studies in philosophy at the University of Lwów under the guidance of Kazimierz Twardowski and Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz. She received her doctoral degree in 1928, on the basis of a thesis written under Twardowski's supervision (*Nazwy ogólne*

i wieloznaczne [General and Ambiguous Names]). In 1930, after Twardowski retired, she became an assistant at the First Chair of Philosophy, which, at the time, was headed by Ajdukiewicz. During her studies, she went to Cambridge, where she came into contact with Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others.

In 1932, Kokoszyńska married the lawyer and journalist Roman Lutman (1897–1973). In 1934, she received a postdoctoral scholarship to travel abroad. She first went to Vienna, where she attended meetings of the Vienna Circle (hereinafter: VC) and made the acquaintance of Moritz Schlick and Karl Menger, among others. From Vienna, she travelled to Paris, where she attended the First International Congress for the Unity of Science; there she got to know Rudolf Carnap better, among others. She also attended three further Congresses for the Unity of Science, which took place in Copenhagen, Paris, and Cambridge.

After coming back to Poland, Kokoszyńska lived in Katowice but kept in touch with her colleagues in Lwów and Warsaw. She spent the years of WWII in Lwów, working in a tax office, possibly also taking part in secret teaching.

In 1947, Kokoszyńska obtained her habilitation at the University of Poznań on the basis of her thesis *W sprawie względności i bezwzględności prawdy* [On Relativity and Absoluteness of Truth]. She became a full professor in 1951 and from 1950 to 1976 she headed the Department of Logic and Methodology of Science at the University of Wrocław. She was also dean of the Faculty of Philosophy from 1951 to 1954 and pro-rector of the University of Wrocław from 1955 to 1958. She played an important role in the organisation of logical studies and research in Wrocław. She died in Wrocław on 30 June 1981. A list of Kokoszyńska's works was compiled by Jan Zygmunt (2004).

2. The letters give an account of Kokoszyńska's journey to Vienna and then to Paris. Trips on foreign scholarships were a common practice for Twardowski's students and Vienna was a frequent direction of departure. This was a natural choice, since Twardowski studied philosophy there under Franz Brentano. Despite having moved to Lwów, he liked to follow what was happening in his home city. Members of the LWS also often visited Paris (in the 1930s, e.g., Izydora Dąmbska went there).

During her stay in Vienna, Kokoszyńska had the opportunity to establish contacts with members of the VC, which was in line with her scientific interests. The VC aroused considerable interest in the Lwów milieu: issues in the area of scientific philosophy were discussed, and questions of combating metaphysics were involved. Kokoszyńska took an active part in these discussions.

Kokoszyńska was interested in logic in its broadest sense, in particular logical semiotics and the methodology of science. She achieved significant results by studying, among other things, the relation between science and metaphysics and between induction and deduction; she conducted thorough

analyses of the notion of truth and alethic relativism, the notion of analyticity and syntheticity, and the notion of the unity of science. Knowing both circles very well, she was a kind of link between the LWS and the VC. Moreover, like Anna Brożek put it: “Kokoszyńska may be called «an ambassador of the Vienna Circle in Poland» and – maybe to a greater degree – an «ambassador of the Lvov-Warsaw School in Vienna» (or, speaking more broadly, in Western Europe)” (Brożek 2017, p. 19). Mieszko Tałasiewicz, in turn, wrote: “Kokoszyńska became one of the leading polemicists of the Lvov-Warsaw School engaged in the debate with logical positivism. She reviewed books and articles of Moritz Schlick and Carnap, Neurath, Hempel etc., kept track of the controversies among them and with the evolution of their standpoint” (Tałasiewicz 2001, p. 130).

Kokoszyńska's analyses of the ideas which appeared in the works of Schlick, Carnap, and Neurath are good testimonies of differences between the VC and the LWS. She was not the only one to take up this issue – the LWS and the VC were among the leading formations of the European philosophical world in the first half of the 20th century, and members of these groups not only knew of each others, but also commented vigorously on each other's work. Personal meetings occurred as well. This was fostered by the presence of both certain similarities in the views and methodological approaches of the members of the two formations – as well as fundamental differences.

The common feature of the LWS members was a methodological attitude. Some aspects of it, like using logical tools and respect for the results of empirical sciences, were also present in the philosophy of the VC. No radical theses, eagerly welcomed in Vienna, especially in the late 1920s and early 1930s, were accepted in Poland. Ajdukiewicz wrote: “There are in Poland no absolute adherents of the Vienna Circle. I do not know any Polish philosopher who would have assimilated the material theses of the Vienna Circle. The affinity between some Polish philosophers and the Vienna Circle consists in the similarity of the fundamental methodological attitude and the affinity of the problems analysed” (Ajdukiewicz 1935, p. 151). Jan Łukasiewicz agreed with him: “Professor Ajdukiewicz was right, writing about logistic antiirrationalism in Poland; he wrote that he did not know any Polish philosopher who would accept the material theses of the Vienna Circle as his own. We are, it seems, too sober to do so” (Łukasiewicz 1936, p. 233).

Among differences between the LWS and VC was the attitude towards language, physicalism and the status of metaphysics.

3. Kokoszyńska arrived in Vienna on 21 September 1934.

She participated in courses conducted by Moritz Schlick, e.g. in lectures on logic and the theory of cognition. According to her testimony, the problems discussed there included the following: whether intuitive cognition exists and

what it consists of, the meaning of sentences, and the “pseudo-problems” (apparent problems, *Scheinprobleme*). Schlick’s seminars were devoted to the question of whether colours conceived as psychical phenomena can be assigned a localisation in objective space, and if not, why. Kokoszyńska regularly received invitations to meetings of the VC – there she met Friedrich Weismann, Egon Brunswik, Karl Menger and Karl Buhler; she also attended psychological colloquia organised by Brunswik and Buhler. The latter made a rather unpleasant impression on her: “*His lecture, which I attended, on the theory of mind, is very elementary – maybe that contributed to this impression”¹.

Schlick’s scientific attitude was generally appreciated by Kokoszyńska, who – as befits a representative of the LWS – was an advocate of clarity and accuracy. She reported on the tendency towards clarity in Schlick’s environment as follows: “*Schlick read various quotations from Husserl and his disciples and made fun of them a bit, especially their method of finding beautiful-sounding terms that explain nothing”.

However, she also took a critical approach to the claims she heard, e.g.: “*The sentence «There is an afterlife» also has meaning, according to Schlick. It will be verified if I begin – after death – to feel, think, perceive, etc. This is very different from the interpretations given in Lwów for the concept of meaning among the Viennese”; “*I have the impression that the mixing of statements with statements about those statements – that is, of language with meta-language – flourishes here on a large scale”.

Kokoszyńska reported on her impressions of her stay in Vienna in letters addressed to Twardowski, with a request to pass on the information to the entire Lwów community. She had a well-developed ability to summarise the content she encountered (while in Paris, she made summaries from the “Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale” [Journal of Metaphysics and Morality] and sent them to Lwów).

She was also a great observer. This is what she wrote about her Viennese colleagues:

- Schlick: “*He speaks rather casually and without excitement, but he speaks clearly and has a sense of humour. All his comportment is characterised by social adeptness and discretion”.
- Menger: “*Is young, handsome, very polite, outgoing, always terribly busy, in a hurry, immersed in brilliant creativity. At least – it would seem – that he would like to make that last impression”.
- Kurt Gödel: “*Quiet, small, with a slightly ironic, barely perceptible smile, extremely quiet, moving in the shadows. Everyone turns towards him wherever he appears. Menger, in his colloquiums (as far as I can judge),

¹ Quotations starting with “*” come from Kokoszyńska letters published in this volume.

is constantly looking at him intently, as if trying to guess what he is thinking and saying. And he does not say much, but I think he understands a hundred times better and faster than everyone else”.

The stay in Vienna proved fruitful not only in terms of attending lectures and philosophical meetings: “*In Vienna, I wrote a small essay on the absolute concept of truth (in light of Carnap’s and Tarski’s works) and I am finishing that one here”.

4. In May 1935, she left for Paris.

Her initial impressions of the capital of France were not encouraging – she wrote: “*Coming from the Viennese milieu, which is very lively in terms of philosophy, I found myself here almost in academic solitude, because not only have almost all lectures come to an end here (I still managed to attend a few lectures and seminars), but I have also failed to find circles in which there would be lively philosophical interests and mutual exchange of ideas. Aside from conversations with MM. Koyré, Laland, Gilson, Vigneaux, and Cavaillès [...] I cannot record any gains in terms of personal contact with philosophy here”. And then: “*I will talk with M. [Claude] Chevalley [...] but his article [...] has already managed to fill me with horror. It is a completely different way of working than that to which I am accustomed”.

The main purpose of the trip to Paris was to attend the Congress for the Unity of Science. During this stay, Kokoszyńska also made some research: “*I am thinking of working on the semantic concepts in Ockham, but I do not know yet whether and what will come of it”; “*I am thinking a bit about general names and a bit about the issue of interpretation of geometry – but at the moment that is for later”; “*In the near future I intend to write a critical study of Carnap’s *Logische Syntax*”.

The Paris Congress was a momentous event for the community of philosophers and logicians. Participants included Bertrand Russell, whom Kokoszyńska had the opportunity to meet personally (“*He made an extremely appealing impression on me: not only a [very] intelligent man, but also one with great virtues of heart and character; moreover, everyone liked his speech, which was full of reverence for Frege. I even met him personally during the congress and we exchanged a few kind words”). Kokoszyńska was generally satisfied with her participation in the Congress, although she complained about the organisation of the event.

The Congress was attended by a large group of Polish philosophers. Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz also took part, which pleased Kokoszyńska very much.

One of the biggest events in Paris was Alfred Tarski’s speech on the problem of truth. The concept of truth was one of the issues that were vigorously debated at the LWS. The problem of absolutism and relativism was dealt

with by Twardowski himself; naturally, similar issues were also taken up by his students (it is worth noting, e.g., the discussion on the eternity of truth, in which Stanisław Leśniewski and Tadeusz Kotarbiński, among others, participated). The problem of antinomies (semantic notions are often entangled in antinomies, e.g. the antinomy of the liar), related to the problem of truth, was also dealt with. Tarski's work *Pojęcie prawdy w językach nauk dedukcyjnych* [The Concept of Truth in the Languages of the Deductive Sciences], published in Polish in 1933, turned out to be a breakthrough (certain themes from this work were discussed in the early 1930s in Lwów).

Polish logicians and philosophers noticed the importance of the solutions proposed by Tarski early; a decision was quickly taken to translate Tarski's work into German. The translation was done by Leopold Blaustein (1905–1942/1944, a Polish philosopher and psychologist, a pupil of Twardowski). Kokoszyńska was also involved in the translation process: among other things, she proofread this work, expanding it with remarks, and acted as an intermediary between Tarski and Karl Popper, who also consulted the translation. She wrote about this process (from Paris): “*I have here a few pages of the proof of his work on truth, which, after being reviewed by Popper, I corrected at Tarski's request and am sending it with this letter to you at the same time; in a few places I had some doubts, which I marked with a question mark on the left margin of the relevant pages”.

5. Kokoszyńska understood immediately that the results of Tarski's research were important for semantics. She had an excellent grasp of the subject, which is evidenced by her dissertation, written while she was still in Vienna, *Über den absoluten Wahrheitsbegriff und einige andere semantische Begriffe* [On the Concept of Absolute Truth and Certain Other Semantic Notions]. In the summer 1935, she gave her manuscript to Tarski who in turn shared it with Carnap. On the 19th of July, Carnap wrote to Kokoszyńska:

Dear Ms. Doctor! Mr. Tarski gave me in Vienna your manuscript “On the Concept of Absolute Truth...”, and I read it with great interest. It would be very appropriate if you could present this essay, or its main ideas, at the Paris Congress. Then it could be published in the proceedings of the congress publication. If not, I will willingly publish it in “Erkenntnis”.

In the next part of the letter, Carnap confesses that he agrees with Kokoszyńska about the importance of Tarski's results. He also adds some comments, mostly of terminological character. Finally Kokoszyńska decided to present another related topic at the Paris Congress, and the essay on absolute truth and other semantic concepts was published in “Erkenntnis” (1936).

In this paper, Kokoszyńska observed that the notion of absolute truth and other semantic notions are treated as “suspected” and “metaphysical” (that is, unscientific). Consequently, efforts are made to remove these concepts or

replace them with some other, and problems of the relation between expressions of a language and objects in the world are sometimes referred to as "pseudo-problems". This can be seen in the works of, e.g., Carl Hempel or Rudolf Carnap. Kokoszyńska agreed that some of these criticisms were accurate and provided an argument for the thesis that truth cannot be defined either in object language or in the language of syntax. However, Kokoszyńska was convinced that it was possible to talk about the concept of truth in a meaningful – and at the same time scientific – way. This is what Tarski had shown in his article on the notion of truth in the languages of the deductive sciences. In her text, Kokoszyńska attempted to complement Tarski's article by raising some philosophical comments related to semantics and the concept of truth. In the conclusion, she states: "Once the existence of the semantics of scientific languages was established, the doubts about the concept of truth and similar concepts are untenable, as long as these concepts concern formalized languages" (Kokoszyńska 1936, p. 165).

In the context of the Lvov-Warsaw School, one may consider Kokoszyńska's paper as a voice in the discussion about truth which was initiated by Twardowski in 1900. In his *On So-Called Relative Truths* (1900), Twardowski states that every true judgement is true everywhere and always; shortly: absolutely true. Twardowski's absolutism was accepted by almost all his students although they were aware that the concept of truth is "endangered" by anomalies. Tarski's solutions which neutralize the liar's antinomy were particularly willingly welcomed in the School since they eliminated the obstacles to a philosophical consideration of the truth and thus strengthened "absolutist" intuitions. Anyway, Kokoszyńska's use of the term "absolute truth" in the title of her German paper 1936b (also in the Polish paper on a similar subject, published in "Przegląd Filozoficzny" [1936a]) could be regarded as a direct reference to Twardowski's paper and lectures.

6. Kokoszyńska's letters to Twardowski are not only a source of knowledge about her scientific trip and the scientific environments she explored but also reflect some interesting aspects of her personality. Among others, the correspondence proves that she was a mature scholar, an astute observer, and an independent woman.

Her maturity is revealed in her reports from the lectures and seminars she attended. Kokoszyńska has the capacity to accurately summarize the content of these meetings, and provide a thorough criticism of this content. Her acumen is visible in the way she characterizes her colleagues. In just a few sentences, Kokoszyńska could provide an insightful picture of the intellect and character of the people she met.

In principle, all female members of the LWS had interesting lives and noteworthy achievements in the fields of philosophy or logic. Kokoszyńska

is the best example of this. She devoted herself to her scientific career, which yielded excellent results, while at the same time, she took care of her independence: “*I am fundamentally opposed to the idea of a wife taking money from her husband for her needs, especially if she wants to maintain complete independence in her life decisions, as is the case with me”.

References

- Ajdukiewicz K. (1935), *Der logistische Antiirrationalismus in Polen*, “Erkenntnis” 5, pp. 151–164.
- Brożek A. (2017), *Maria Kokoszyńska: Between the Lvov-Warsaw School and the Vienna Circle*, “Journal for the History of Analytic Philosophy” 5 (2), pp. 19–36.
- Kokoszyńska M. (1936a), *W sprawie względności i bezwzględności prawdy* [On Relativity and Absoluteness of Truth], “Przegląd Filozoficzny” 39, pp. 424–425.
- Kokoszyńska M. (1936b), *Über den absoluten Wahrheitsbegriff und einige andere semantische Begriffe*, “Erkenntnis” 6, pp. 143–165.
- Łukasiewicz J. (1936), *Logistyka a filozofia* [Logistic and Philosophy], “Przegląd Filozoficzny” 39, pp. 115–131.
- Tałasiewicz M. (2001), *Maria Kokoszyńska-Lutmanowa: Methodology, Semantics, Truth*, in: W. Krajewski (ed.), *Polish Philosophers of Science and Nature in the 20th Century*, Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, pp. 129–133.
- Twardowski K. ([1900] 1999a), *On So-Called Relative Truths*, in: K. Twardowski, *On Actions, Products and Other Topics in Philosophy*, Amsterdam–Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, pp. 147–169.
- Zygmunt J. (2004), *Bibliografia prac naukowych Marii Kokoszyńskiej-Lutmanowej* [Bibliography of the Scientific Works of Maria Kokoszyńska-Lutman], “Filozofia Nauki” 12 (2), pp. 155–166.

Alicja Chybińska

Semantical Issues in Maria Kokoszyńska's Letters to Kazimierz Twardowski

Keywords: *absoluteness of truth, Congress for the Unity of Science, M. Kokoszyńska-Lutman, Lvov-Warsaw School, relativity of truth, semantics, A. Tarski, K. Twardowski, Vienna Circle*

Maria Kokoszyńska-Lutman, the outstanding female member of the Lvov-Warsaw School, played an important role in the rise of the modern version of semantics. She very early noticed the importance of Alfred Tarski's results for the established tradition of Lvov-Warsaw investigations on truth, including Twardowski's refutation of relativism. She contributed to the common recognition of these results, among others in Vienna and during the Congress for the Unity of Science in Paris in 1935. In the paper, I examine some Kokoszyńska's semantical views. They are supplemented by the translation of Kokoszyńska's letters to Kazimierz Twardowski written from Vienna and Paris.

