



Dąbska's precisification of absolute truth through the concept of language

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Abstract

Izydora Dąbska has argued that since the concept of language is constructed within a language, the concept of truth cannot be exhausted by a choice between the different theories of truth, i.e., correspondence, coherence, or pragmatic. The aim of this paper is to show how Dąbska's distinction between the concept and property of truth gives rise to an absolute notion of truth. To achieve this aim, I begin with a brief history of the problem of truth in the Lvov–Warsaw School. Following this, I turn to a discussion of the women philosophers in the Lvov–Warsaw School, specifically Kokoszyńska and Dąbska, who offered novel analyses of the nature of truth. This section permits me to turn to Dąbska's concept of language and how that concept paves the way for a clear distinction between the concept and property of truth. Given that Dąbska's work does this, we see relatively immediately how an absolute notion of truth may arise from that distinction and how she carries on the tradition of defending truth against relativistic encroachment.

Keywords Truth · Izydora Dąbska · The concept of truth · Truth relativism

Introduction

From its founder Kazimierz Twardowski to his students and students of his students, members of the Lvov–Warsaw School (“LWS”) were keenly interested in the question of the nature of truth: “what is truth?”¹ In “On So-Called Relative Truths,” his

¹ Members of the Lvov–Warsaw School were also concerned with existence, reference, and rationality or what members called “logistic anti-irrationalism.” See Brożek (2017a), Jadacki (2017), Kleszcz (2017), Przelecki (1989). For this paper, I will use the name of the school “Lvov–Warsaw School.” Another name of the school is the “Lviv–Warsaw School.” The traditional form of the name “Lvov–Warsaw School” emerged during the period of Russian/Soviet occupation of Poland between 1795 and 1918, when all

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earliest contribution to the debate, Twardowski (1900/1999) dispelled the myth that truth was relativized to a context by showing that those who believed that truth is relative were compelled to endorse truth's relativity because they suffered from an illusion that the truth conditions for any given expression varied from one situation to another, rather than thinking that the statement itself may be underspecified to such an extent that not everything was explicitly stated in the statement. Thinking that the truth of a statement relied upon facts in an historical time period or was a mere cultural artifact tends to forget that expressions have a scope that extends across time or between cultures. Suppose that rain was falling at 2:20 pm in Hamilton, New Zealand on 12 January 2025. Nothing could make the expression, "It is raining," false when the scope of the statement is further specified to include where and when the statement applied. The truth of the statement, "It is raining," is absolute because it expresses the fact that it rained in Hamilton, New Zealand at 2:20 pm. His argument for the absolute theory of truth provided evidence that people's misimpressions about contingent matters should not persuade them to view truth as relative.

The aim of this paper is to show how Dąmbska's distinction between the concept and property of truth supports and furthers the absolute notion of truth that Twardowski argued for in his work. To achieve this aim, I begin with a brief history of the problem of truth in the LWS. Next, I turn to a discussion of the women philosophers in the LWS, specifically Kokoszyńska and Dąmbska, who offered novel analyses of the nature of truth. This section permits me to turn to Dąmbska's concept of language and how that concept paves the way for a clear distinction between the concept and property of truth. Given that Dąmbska's work does this and that she follows in Twardowski's footsteps, we see relatively immediately how an absolute notion of truth may arise from that distinction and how she carries on the tradition of defending truth against relativistic encroachment.

The orthodox story of truth in the Lvov–Warsaw School

According to the orthodox story about the School, LWS has been said to have begun with Twardowski's distinction between act, content, and object and to have ended with two developments: Tarski's semantic conception of truth and Łukasiewicz's many-valued logic.² Students of Twardowski carried on his legacy by exploring truth in a logically and semantically rigorous way, but they did so from different angles, sometimes the LWS member was practically oriented while at other times they approached the question of truth from a more theoretical position informed by mathematical logic.

Some students of Twardowski, such as Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Stanisław Leśniewski, and Jan Łukasiewicz, approached truth theoretically and logically. Kotarbiński's

Soviet cities were transliterated from Russian. Beginning in 1991, however, transliterating the city Lviv as Lvov is no longer appropriate. Despite this, scholars who work in the area refer to the school as: "The Lvov–Warsaw School." This paper concerns the time period between 1895 and 1939 so the use of Lvov is appropriate, and it follows the generally accepted term used for the school in the literature. I am grateful to an attentive reviewer who brought this issue to my attention.

²See Tait (1999), Kotarbiński (1967), Jordan (1967). For a contrasting view where the LWS is said to have extended beyond the work of Tarski and Łukasiewicz, see Brożek (2022).

interest in the ontology of time led him to propose a definition of truth that showed truth is eternal (a statement, p , is true at time t_0 and at every time later than t_0 , such as $t_1, t_2, t_3, \dots, t_n$) but not sempiternal (a statement, p , is true at t_0 but not any earlier than t_0 , such as p is true at $t_{-1}, t_{-2}, t_{-3} \dots t_{0-n}$).³ Consider a statement like “Christopher Columbus crosses the ocean blue in 1492” where the verb “crosses” has been detemporalized. According to Kotarbiński, the statement was not true before Columbus crossed the Atlantic, but it became true at a specific time, namely in late 1492, and will be true at every time subsequent to the treacherous transoceanic voyage.⁴

Leśniewski, on the other hand, opposed Kotarbiński's view of truth because he believed it was too permissive allowing some statements to be neither true nor false. To adopt such a position, one must give up the law of bivalence, which is something that Leśniewski refused to do because of his strict adherence to classical two-valued logic. Leśniewski argued that a tensed statement has a definite interpretation where it is either true or false, thus preserving the law of bivalence (See Leśniewski 1913a/1992a,b).

In light of discussions over the absoluteness of truth, Jan Łukasiewicz grew concerned about whether a proposition's being eternally true meant that a proposition was true at a time before it had been made true by a turn of events, especially propositions made true by human action. If a proposition was true before an event had taken place, then the event's taking place did not make it true. If a person may only be held morally accountable for actions under their voluntary control, then the truth of a statement would not arise from one's voluntary control since there would have been no way for the person to have acted otherwise. For example, if the truth of “Jack-the-Ripper murdered Catherine Eddows” was true at a time before the murder took place in September 1888, then the murder of Catherine Eddows could not have been avoided. This means that Jack-the-Ripper need not be held morally responsible for the action. It was Łukasiewicz's concern for moral responsibility that motivated him to reconsider whether truth and falsity exhaust all possible truth values. Łukasiewicz contended there are more than two truth-values. Łukasiewicz (1970) argued for a third-truth value (*indeterminate*) where a sentence was neither true nor false, which was partly due to reconciling his devout Catholicism and belief in God's omniscience with his view that the people should be held morally accountable for actions they performed freely.⁵

³There are a variety of ways to define eternal and sempiternal, and, for purposes of this paper, I must set aside a discussion over the distinction between the two. For purposes of this brief introduction, I ask the reader to adopt Kotarbiński and Leśniewski's definition of the two contentious terms (Kotarbiński 1968).

⁴In contrast to Kotarbiński, Putnam argued in his short work *Philosophy of Logic* that because the verb “crosses” is atemporal the statement is as true in 400 BC and 1491 AD as it is in 1493 AD and 2025 AD (See Putnam 1971). One question that we may have for Kotarbiński and Putnam is whether the statement has a truth-value *as the journey is unfolding*. Since Columbus did not reach his destination instantaneously, there would have been a time of the *crossing* where Columbus had not yet reached the “New World” but was in the middle of the crossing. Since the crossing has not yet been completed, it is difficult to say that “It is true that Christopher Columbus crosses the ocean blue in 1492” since the crossing is underway without having yet been completed.

⁵I would like to thank Anna Brożek and Dariusz Łukasiewicz for conversations concerning the influence that Łukasiewicz's Catholicism had upon his views in logic and what led him to consider the introduction

Perhaps one of the most significant members of the school was Leśniewski's lone student: Alfred Tarski. Co-supervised by Łukasiewicz and Leśniewski, Tarski was an intellectual grandson of Twardowski. Tarski's seminal 1933 work *Pojęcie prawdy w językach nauk dedukcyjnych* (The Concept of Truth in Formalised Languages) represented a watershed moment in the history of analytic philosophy because his formally correct and materially adequate semantic conception of truth forever changed the intellectual landscape for those who theorized about truth (Tarski 1933, 1935, 1956). Tarski accomplishes regimentation of the truth-concept by specifying the structure of the languages for which truth is defined and by specifying a formal criterion of material adequacy (i.e., of whether the formally defined concept tracks the ordinary use of truth) in terms of whether all instances of the equivalence

$$X \text{ is true-in-} L \text{ if, and only if } p \quad [T]$$

follow from the proposed definition. Tarski's formal criterion of material adequacy permits the analysis of sentences into subsentential constituents, and it dissolves correspondence relations into appropriate semantic components: names refer to or denote objects and predicates, and apply to or are satisfied by objects. 'X' is the name or description of a sentence in L, an object language, and *p* is a translation of the object language sentence into meta-language. Call the equivalence, i.e., [T], 'Convention-T.' Convention-T imposes a condition on defined truth predicates that Tarski often talks about grasping the intuition behind the "classical," "old notion," or "Aristotelian conception" of truth (cp. Tarski 1944, pp. 342f). Any theory of truth, according to Tarski, must entail, for any sentence *X* in a given language, a sentence of the form [T].

The orthodox interpretation of Tarski's semantic conception of truth has it that Convention-T is the material adequacy condition. Convention-T only applies to formal languages because there is no systematic way of deciding whether a given sentence of natural language is well formed and natural languages are capable of describing semantic characteristics of their own elements. Since, for natural language, the latter permits semantic paradoxes, like the liar, to arise and the former allows ambiguity, formality remains a part of material adequacy.

While Convention-T applies to formal languages, there has to be a means of extending it to natural language. Tarski recognizes the difficulties faced by attempts to clarify concepts using only the resources of ordinary language because "like other words from our everyday language, [true] is certainly not unambiguous" (Tarski 1944, p. 342). The urge toward formalization is the urge toward imposing discipline upon our concepts. The extension of Tarski's concept of truth is given by the axioms derived from the T-schema: "*snow is white*" is true, if and only if *snow is white*. The T-schema is used to give an inductive definition of truth that lies at the heart of any realization of Tarski's semantic conception. For any instantiation of the T-schema, Tarski must have realized that it would not suffice for a general definition of truth because the instance could only cover whatever the schema's content is. For example, we could imagine an innumerable number of T-schema sentences:

of a third alternate truth-value. For detailed work on Łukasiewicz's Catholicism and its effect on his views in mathematical logic, see Rybaříková (2024). For a contemporary of Łukasiewicz's perspective on the influence that Catholicism had on his thought, see Kokoszyńska's (1938) brief summary.

"Grass is green" is true if and only if grass is green.

"Karol Nawrocki is President of Poland" is true if and only if Karol Nawrocki is President of Poland.

"Golf was created by Scots" is true if and only if golf was created by Scots.

No matter how many sentences we imagine using the T-schema, it seems insufficient to generalize from these examples to a formal rendering of a theory of truth. So, Tarski must have devised the semantic conception of truth, using the two formal conditions: formal correctness and material adequacy, in order to generalize over all instances of the T-schema.

The T-schema does represent a partial definition of truth, and it is something that should be accessible in natural language since the T-schema is expressed in natural language. The T-schema, then, should be something accessible to ordinary persons since they are at least minimally competent in the use of natural language. Its open accessibility seemingly requires us to consider whether ordinary persons believe the schema to be intuitively accessible.

Other members of LWS, and even professionals outside academic philosophy in Poland, engaged in debates over truth's nature.⁶ This may be attributed to the high esteem that members of the school gave to the problem of truth. Peter Simons and Jan Woleński (1989) have testified that Poles had "passionate philosophical interest" in truth, and that over time the theories of truth that Poles produced in their writing became more exact and based on mathematical logic and sophisticated uses of logic (p. 428). In a little book called *Problems of Philosophy*, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz began an introductory philosophy text with an exploration of the classical problem of truth. He believed that the classical definition of truth is vague and that a precise formulation would require addressing the question of honesty and truthfulness (Misiek 2006, pp. 445–446). Elsewhere, Edward Poznański and Aleksander Wundheiler (1934, 2017) adopted a conception of truth that combined coherence theory with consensus to account for the truths of physics (cf. Kijania-Placek 1998, 2009).

Maria Kokoszyńska and Izydora Dańska on the nature of truth

Despite the fact that the short list above mentions only male members, the LWS was one of the most, if not the most, gender diverse schools of philosophy in the western canon (cp. Brożek Unpublished ms.; Pakszys 1998; Simons 2014; Sznajder 2024).^{7,8} Among the first members of the Lvov–Warsaw School and students

⁶Amongst the members of the school who have articles and treatises on the nature of truth we may include Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, Tadeusz Czeżowski, Zygmunt Zawirski, and Ludwik Fleck who has also written on the nature of facts and truth.

⁷I have excluded the philosophical schools of thought in East and South Asia, as well as in Africa. Recent works in the history of philosophy have identified women philosophers working in the early modern period that appear to have had as much, if not more, influence upon western thinking than their male counterparts (see Boecker 2023; LoLordo 2022).

⁸This fact was overlooked by analytical philosophers who were keeping score of influential thinkers making significant impacts across Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Nowhere else is this omission more pronounced than in Ernst Nagel's landmark work on the early analytic period (see Nagel 1936a,b).

of Twardowski or students of students of Twardowski were female, including Maria Kokoszyńska-Lutmanowa, Izydora Dąmbska, Janina Kotarbińska, Maria Ossowska, Janina Hosiasson-Lindenbaum, and many others.⁹

Following in Twardowski's footsteps, Maria Kokoszyńska, for example, wrote two treatises opposing the relativity of truth, which are available in English.¹⁰ In one paper, "What Means the 'Relativity of Truth'?" (1948), Kokoszyńska offers an extended discussion and formalization in mathematical logic of Twardowski's argument opposing truth relativism. In a second paper, "A Refutation of Relativism of Truth" (1951), she argues for an absolute theory of truth, akin to that of Twardowski's but she uses the formal semantic apparatus that was provided by Tarski's (1933) theory.

While not widely celebrated, or even appreciated, in analytic circles in Great Britain and the United States, Kokoszyńska's work was well known to members of the Vienna Circle, especially Otto Neurath, Arne Næss, and Rudolf Carnap (see Carnap 1963; Frost-Arnold 2013; Mancosu 2010; Patterson 2010). Her works were widely circulated in German and Polish (e.g., Kokoszyńska 1936a,b). Kokoszyńska's corpus has been receiving more attention over the last few years (Brożek 2017b; Mancosu 2008; Dehnel et al. 2023; Kawczyński 2018). Part of this newly found respect for Kokoszyńska may be connected with how her view shaped the debate in the 1930s and 1940s surrounding Tarski's semantic conception of truth. Her views seemed to have been cultivated by discussions she had with Tarski when the two were meeting regularly on outings to Southern Poland (Feferman and Feferman 2004).

Kokoszyńska was, in many ways, an acolyte of Tarski. She and Tarski shared many of the same interests and both developed a sophisticated semantic conception of truth. However, Kokoszyńska's view stood out from Tarski by addressing the way in which a semantic conception of truth avoids various forms of truth relativism. By contrast, some members of the LWS were less inclined toward formal or mathematical approaches to philosophical problems.

Whereas Kokoszyńska's views were informed by logic and formal semantics, Kokoszyńska's counterpart, Izydora Dąmbska, approached the nature of truth debate using a less formal lens. This may be on account of Twardowski's imparting a respect for methodological pluralism on his students. Nowhere else is this better seen than in one of Twardowski's last students: Izydora Dąmbska. Dąmbska was traditionally trained and deployed traditional philosophical methods of analysis to create and to argue for a variety of philosophic concepts. This does not make her contribution any less rigorous than Kokoszyńska's; instead, the emphasis on theorizing about truth was more conceptual than formal. Henryk Skolimowski had this to say about Dąmbska: she "seems always to have been more traditionally than analytically minded. Her interests ranged over a wide spectrum. Her studies in the history of philosophy are particularly notable" (Skolimowski 1967, p. 210). Skolimowski identified

⁹Anna Brożek has done an immense amount of outstanding work to bring our attention to the work of women philosophers working in the LWS and the groundbreaking ideas that they had in logic, semantics, and ethics—to name just a few areas. She has, in addition to publishing many works on them, curated a museum exhibition: "Lovers of Wisdom" that has showcased the intellectual contribution of LWS women philosophers. The accompanying book, *Miłośniczki Mądrości*, presents an outstanding intellectual portrait of their most important contributions.

¹⁰The remaining works of Kokoszyńska's corpus are available in Polish.

the difference Dąbska had with Kokoszyńska: “after the Second World War, she continued to work within the realm of semantics, following Ajdukiewicz’s semantic epistemology” (Ibid.). On Kokoszyńska’s papers, Skolimowski writes: “The first is a continuation and refinement, with the help of mathematical logic, of the arguments put forward by Twardowski... [and] the second paper is an exposition of Tarski’s achievements in the theory of truth” (Skolimowski 1967, p. 48).

As she herself pointed out in reflecting upon the LWS, Dąbska believed that a virtue of the School tied to Twardowski was its diversity. She averred that members of the LWS approached philosophical problems in different ways because they had been raised in an intellectual ecosystem where diversity was not only appreciated but celebrated. No doubt, there were disagreements between its members, sometimes even disagreements, a consequence of which was an uncomfortable looking photograph¹¹ or a complete intellectual break-up.¹² Dąbska acknowledges that there were different methods that members of the LWS adopted and they were conscious that different areas of study would influence how to resolve philosophical quandries (*cp.* Dąbska 1948 quoted in Woleński 1999, p. 36).

What we learn from Dąbska is the critical role that a multi- or transdisciplinary approach to problems that afflicted disciplines would be beneficial for resolving long-standing issues, whether these issues are professional or personal. The members of LWS lived and breathed their own philosophical interests. Equally, she quite correctly has pointed out that the methods of sociology or psychology play an integral role in the resolution of moral dilemmas. We should approach problems believing that a method popular in a separate discipline may play a partial role in resolving an issue in our own area. Nothing was off-limits when it came to appreciating that methodologies should not be restricted in any area of interest. At the very least, such empirical endeavors may support the conceptual analysis of philosophic concepts, like truth.¹³

Despite their overwhelming influence upon the LWS and their status within it, Dąbska and Kokoszyńska have largely been taken to be *footnotes* in the history of philosophy (Mancosu 2008, 2010; Skolimowski 1967, pp. 48–49). Work on the LWS, however, spells out an alternative story where they play an integral role in the development of truth-theory (Brożek Unpublished ms.). To do this, I will aim to show how Dąbska’s work on truth offered a careful distinction between the concept and property of truth that fed into the LWS’s view that truth is absolute.

¹¹See one photograph in particular where two members seem visibly agitated and are seated on either side of Twardowski but, because of their ongoing personal and professional feuds refused even to face *toward* one another.

¹²Famously, Tarski completely disavowed the views of his *doktorvater* Leśniewski to a point where Tarski detested everything that he had written on any subject matter (*cp.* Feferman and Feferman 2004, pp. 109–188).

¹³Nowhere else was this more pronounced than in the works of Stanisław Ossowski and Maria Ossowska, but especially the latter. In her works, Maria Ossowska successfully integrated questions of moral philosophy and axiology with empirical methods that were common in the social and behavioural sciences, like sociology and psychology. See, for example, Ossowska (1970).

Dąbska on the concept and property of truth

Dąbska had a thoroughly worked out concept of language. (Hereafter, I follow the convention that concepts appear in small caps, e.g., LANGUAGE, and properties appear in italics, e.g., *truth*). What a concept is may be distinguished from what a property is. In fact, it is not only common in analytic philosophy to distinguish between a concept and a property but it was common for members of the Lvov–Warsaw School to make a similar distinction between two different forms of concept: psychological and logical. Since this is the case, we should clarify the distinction between the two before we discuss Dąbska.

Let's say for purposes of this article that in contemporary analytic philosophy of language, particularly in the debate on the nature of truth, to be a concept is for something to be represented within one's own mind, and a property is for something to have certain specific features. One's concept of x need not be reflective of a property of x because what one has in mind need not be consistent with the features or characteristics of x . To better appreciate the distinction, let's think of a practical example to distinguish between the two. Suppose that, for Władysław, *kaszanka* is represented in his own mind as raw, uncooked pork. Every time that Władysław sees *kaszanka*, he thinks "that is raw pork." In thinking about this case, we can say that Władysław's KASZANKA misrepresents the property *being kaszanka* since we know that this is not what it takes for something to have the property *being kaszanka*. For something to have the property *being kaszanka* it has to be made of pig's blood, buckwheat, and barley and oftentimes wrapped in a pig intestine casing. The important fact that this example brings out is that the properties of an object themselves are distinct from our concepts of them.

One may contend that the toy example concerning the concept and property of *kaszanka* fails to support the distinction between concept and property since it may be the case that Władysław misapplies RAW PORK to things that instantiate the property *being kaszanka*. If it is not one's concept of x but one's concept of, say, y and z that are being misapplied to the property of x , then this would then mean that one's concept of x is reflective of a property of x and that the distinction between them cannot be maintained. To this challenge, I would point out that Władysław's KASZANKA may include RAW and PORK without harming the distinction I have drawn between the concept and property. When we think about other examples, any concept may be composed of simpler, more primitive concepts. Since RAW and PORK are simpler concepts than KASZANKA, there are likely other less fundamental concepts that Władysław possesses where RAW and PORK apply equally well too. For example, Władysław's concept BIAŁA KIELBASA may have as its parts RAW and PORK. To distinguish between BIAŁA KIELBASA and KASZANKA it may be in terms of the color properties unique to the two: *being white* for BIAŁA KIELBASA and *being black* for KASZANKA. This suggests then that one's concept of x need not be reflective of a property of x because even the component parts of a concept that one has in mind need not be consistent with the features or characteristics of that object.¹⁴

The distinction that I have in mind here between concept and property may also be traced to views shared by Hilary Putnam and Saul Kripke. In his familiar argument

¹⁴I would like to thank a reviewer for this journal who alerted me to this possible objection.

from “The Meaning of Meaning” (1975), Putnam gives us an explanation of how to distinguish between the concept and property of water. According to Putnam, WATER is an odorless, colorless, and tasteless clear liquid, but *being water* is H_2O . Here is William Alston who offers an origin story of the distinction:

It is [a] (sic) familiar point nowadays, thanks to the work of Putnam and Kripke, that a property (or a kind) may have features, may have a constitution, that is not reflected in our concept that picks out that property. What heat really *is* is mean kinetic Energy, though our (ordinary) concept of heat is not in those terms at all. The essential nature of water is to be H_2O , though our ordinary concept of water is in terms of its observable properties [...]. (Alston 1996, p. 37)

Alston suggests just after this passage that the same distinction may be applied to truth: “In the same way, the *property* of truth may have various features that are not reflected in our *concept* of truth” (Ibid.). Given that there is a distinction between the two, it seems easy to reason that, “there could be facts about the nature of the property that are no part of the content of our concept of that property” (Alston 1996, p. 228). As we will see later, perhaps Dąbmska applied a similar distinction to her views of truth.

It would not be sufficient to call upon an argument by analogy without further explanation. So, suppose now that we apply what we have been discussing about the distinction between the concept and property of x to truth. Consider the following example. Krzysia is an aspiring actress and she wants to learn what method acting is. Her teacher Zdzisława describes method acting as a technique that encourages actresses to fully inhabit the role that they are playing, and Krzysia thinks to herself “That is true. I should commit it to memory.” When Krzysia thinks that Zdzisława’s description is true, her thought is composed not only of the concepts that may be a part of the Zdzisława’s definition of method acting, e.g., FULLY, INHABIT, ROLE-PLAYING, but also, in part, of TRUTH. TRUTH, then, is meant to be a mental entity that is part of all of our thoughts involving accurate descriptions of the world, such as in this case. When Zdzisława answers Krzysia’s query, TRUTH is just as much a part of the answer as INHABIT, ROLE-PLAYING, and FULLY are a part of the answer.

This leaves us with the property *truth*. *Truth* is meant to be the property that is possessed by all and only the true statements. Properties describe characteristics of certain objects that are similar and provide a means to distinguish these objects from other dissimilar objects. For example, balls and wheels are round, whereas $\aleph_0$ is not round. To capture this fact, we can say that there is a property—the property of *being round*—that balls and wheels share but that $\aleph_0$ lacks. When it comes to *truth*, the basic idea is the same. The proposition that Donald Tusk is human and the proposition that balls are round are similar to one another in that they are both true. The proposition that whales are fish, which is false, is dissimilar to the proposition that Donald Tusk is human and the proposition that balls are round because it has the property of *being false*. To capture this, we can say that there is a property *truth* that these two propositions have and that the proposition that whales are fish lacks.

The concept–property distinction shows that when thinking about truth, we have to take care to keep two things separate. On the one hand, we might be interested in

questions concerning TRUTH. These are questions about a mental entity that is part of our thoughts involving truth. Alternatively, we might be interested in questions concerning the property *truth*. These are questions about a property that is had by everything that is true and by nothing that isn't true.

While the discussion above purports to give us reason to adopt a clean distinction between the concept of x and the property of x , it still remains somewhat of a mystery what a concept is. Work on concepts has offered many different positions for how to resolve this question, but one standard view of concepts in philosophy is that concepts are the *building blocks* of our thoughts. Suppose I see an object rustling in the grass-land and think to myself, "A predator is going to pounce." My thought is composed of at least two concepts: PREDATOR and POUNCE. The work of the philosopher, so Christopher Peacocke (1992) has argued, is to decide *a priori* the possession conditions of specific concepts, such as PREDATOR, POUNCE, and TRUTH among others, while the work of the psychologist is to "explain why the thinker meets the possession conditions" (1992, p. 177). The psychologist's project is descriptive, while the philosopher's project is normative. Members of the LWS straddle the philosophy–psychology divide when it comes to the analysis of concepts because they recognized that there was a logical and psychological means of interpreting them. The LWS's interpretation of concepts has it that there is a distinction between the logical and psychological concepts, and this distinction goes back to at least Twardowski's (1898/1965) 'Wyobrażenie i pojęcie' / 'Images and Concepts' but the origin of the distinction would likely go as far back as Bernard Bolzano and debates had within the Brentano School. To get a better grasp of the distinction between psychological concepts (concepts_ψ) and logical concepts (concepts_ℒ), here are two discussions of concepts in the LWS. Ajdukiewicz writes:

Thoughts uttered by means of terms are those experiences which in psychology are called representations. These are in turn classified into images and concepts. The difference between them consists in the fact that an image is accompanied in our consciousness by a sensory picture of the object in question, a picture either preserved in memory or evoked by imagination, whereas a concept is not accompanied in our consciousness by any picture. In psychological usage, both the term "image" and the term "concept" are applied to definite experiences at a given moment in a given person's mind. (Ajdukiewicz 1974, p. 20)

What Ajdukiewicz describes here is what I will call concepts_ψ because it focuses on the images and representations evoked in a person about whatever concept is under discussion. This overlaps with what was said above about concepts. To return to the Władysław example above, we can believe that what Władysław has in mind is KASZANKA may be best represented by his thought that "this is raw pork." He imagines this in his mind when he thinks about kaszanka. But, according to members of the LWS, there are concepts_ℒ. Ajdukiewicz continues:

The term "concept" is also being used in another sense, which will be called here its logical sense. The meaning of a term will be called a concept in the logical sense of the word, and, in particular, a nominal concept in the logical sense of the word. In one of the preceding sections attention was drawn to the fact that the meaning of an expression is not the thought, experienced by a

person at a given moment, by means of which he understands that expression at that moment. The meaning of an expression rather is a way of understanding an expression in some respects. The thoughts in which the understanding, by different persons at certain moments, of an expression consists always are different thoughts. But the way in which that expression is understood by all persons may be the same. The word "square," for instance, has only one meaning in the language of geometry, although there are many thoughts by means of which different people at different moments understand that word when using it in that meaning. All this shows that when we call the meaning of a term a (nominal) concept in the logical sense of the word, we use the term "concept" in a different sense than that which is used in psychology. (Ibid.)

Here, Ajdukiewicz distinguishes concepts_g from concepts_ψ. Note that, for Ajdukiewicz, concepts_g seem to be what Alston (and Putnam and Kripke) may have called the property of x . He says that a square "has only one meaning in the language of geometry" despite the fact that "many thoughts by means of which different people at different moments understand" by a square. The distinction between concepts_g and concepts_ψ reflect what Alston has said of the distinction between concept and property.

Elsewhere in the LWS, just like Ajdukiewicz, Tadeusz Kotarbiński acknowledges that there is a difference between logical and psychological concepts, but his division does not follow Ajdukiewicz exactly because he introduces a third component, the act of conceiving.

With reference to concepts [...] it is customary to speak of "the act of conceiving," "the intension (or content) of a concept" and "the object of a concept" in several meanings. The term "concept" is quite often used with reference to the act of conceiving, in other cases to the content corresponding to that act, in still other cases even to the object corresponding to that content. (Kotarbiński 1966, p. 88)

Kotarbiński here acknowledges a three-part distinction between an agent's act of conceiving, i.e., what goes on when one thinks of a concept under consideration, and the intension or content of a concept and the object of a concept. The distinction between the content and object of a concept on Kotarbiński's view roughly follows the distinction that Ajdukiewicz made between concepts_g and concepts_ψ since the act of conceiving is a mental state and the content or intention of a concept is what is represented in that mental state. The object of a concept corresponds to the mind-independent object or state of affairs that is represented in the content of an act of conceiving (*cf.* Kotarbiński 1960, 1983).

This brings us to Izydora Dańbska, how she understood concepts and whether she distinguished concepts in the way Ajdukiewicz and Kotarbiński had, which is reminiscent of how Alston distinguished concepts from properties. If she did and if this distinction follows the absolute–relative divide, then I would contend that the distinction between concept and property in Dańbska's work implies a means of distinguishing between absolute and relative truth.

In "Truth and the Concept of Language," Dańbska argues that since LANGUAGE is constructed within a language, TRUTH cannot be exhausted by a choice between the

different conceptions of truth, i.e., correspondence, coherence, or pragmatic (Dąmbska 1979, pp. 144–147). The comment is suggestive. Dąmbska may have in mind that the way that we conceptualize language and truth differs, perhaps in the way that Kotarbiński and Ajdukiewicz distinguished between psychological and logical concepts. We must, she says, return to the “epistemological issue of the definition of truth” (Dąmbska 1979, p. 146). By *epistemological issue*, Dąmbska appears to question whether merely identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for truth will fully inform TRUTH. By TRUTH, she means to call upon the psychological or representational notion that aligns with Alston’s concept in his concept–property distinction and Leśniewski’s or Kotarbiński’s psychological concept. And, of course, what this means is that there is more to truth’s nature than merely satisfying certain conditions of a particular concept. The concept of language stands in for concepts *g*. Anna Brożek, for example, has pointed out how Dąmbska believed understanding not to be “interchangeable with the term ‘knowing’” (Brożek Unpublished ms., p. 138). The two cannot be interchanged because one cannot be *conceived of* as a part of the other, despite what some epistemologists have argued recently, i.e., that knowing overlaps completely with understanding. It is not that understanding reduces to knowing, or vice versa, but that the two are not identical. When one grasps UNDERSTANDING, the person need not grasp KNOWING, and vice versa.

Just as we may distinguish UNDERSTANDING from KNOWING on Dąmbska’s account, we may distinguish between different forms of TRUTH. On the one hand, one may conceive of it as a correspondence notion, or one may conceive of it as a pragmatic notion. All we would really need to do to understand how this could unfold is to look at the debate on the nature of truth that took place in the period 1900–1909 in *Mind*. If it is possible that there are different TRUTH₁ and TRUTH₂, then the gap between TRUTH₁ and TRUTH₂ and *truth* widens. Likewise, TRUTH has features that *truth* does not, and this suggests that Dąmbska offered a means of distinguishing absolute from relative truth using LANGUAGE as a mechanism. Whereas we may conceive of truths that are relative like aesthetic claims: “piwo jest smaczne” (“beer is tasty”), we represent such a truth in the content of a concept and say that it exemplifies a relativized TRUTH. Let me show how this may be argued for by returning to what Dąmbska says about LANGUAGE.

Dąmbska identified three potential concepts of LANGUAGE: correspondence, operational, and immanent. The correspondence LANGUAGE has it that language is a system of signs where its signs refer to an objective, mind-independent domain. It is the kind of concept that Bertrand Russell (1903/2010, pp. 54–66) rejected early in his career when he thought that meaning is a consequence of ostensive definition of words. “An affirmative sentence is true when the state of affairs corresponding to this sentence occurs” (Dąmbska 1979, p. 145). Second, the operational LANGUAGE has it that language is a form of biological or cultural behavior of a person. This kind of concept finds its natural home in the work of later Wittgenstein and, perhaps, Ruth Garrett Millikan (2017, pp. 42–55). For Millikan, however, concepts, which have been traditionally understood to cut across whole populations, have been replaced by *unicepts*. A unicept is an accessible form of content “when one understands a name for an individual, kind, property, activity and so forth” (Millikan 2017, p. 42). Finally, according to the immanent LANGUAGE, language is a set of signs and directives of

creating signs and transforming one sign into another, which is the view of concepts espoused by Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (1978a,b).

The immanent LANGUAGE comes closest to what Dąmbska argued for because it is in the spirit of what members of the LWS endorsed when they were analyzing concepts. Concepts in the LWS, Anna Brożek tells us, “are senses of words given (represented) in definitions and definitions are final results of analyses of concepts” (Brożek [Unpublished ms.](#), p. 4). The senses of words given in definitions are the sorts of things that inhabit the mind. For Dąmbska, “The concept of language is... made in a language, in which... nothing can be predicated about the truth and the falsehood of statements” (1979, p. 146). Thus, for Dąmbska, LANGUAGE and all of the discourse surrounding it occur in the metalanguage, because truth and falsity cannot be predicated of any statement occurring in the language of LANGUAGE. *Truth*, then, is a property distinguishable from TRUTH because we may speak of what is represented in our mind and TRUTH independent of speaking about the truth property. Discussion of the truth property occurs in the metalanguage. Returning to the relative aesthetic truth above: “piwo jest smaczne,” beer’s being tasty may be relativized to someone who enjoys the taste of malt, fruity hops, or something bitter. Speaking of the truth or falsity of the expression takes place at the level of fixing the sense of the statement. So, “piwo jest smaczne” is true for *S*, at time t_1 , at a certain location. If we were able to speak of *truth* in the object language, then that would make truth susceptible to paradox (*cp.* Tarski 1933).

If TRUTH and *truth* are distinguishable, then it is entirely possible that one’s concept of truth fails to align with the property of truth. So long as that is possible, we have to wonder when someone espouses a view on the nature of truth that it reflects a concept that is not also a property of truth. Like Twardowski before her, Dąmbska has made room for the precisification of an expression in order to explain away the illusion from which many people suffer when it comes to believing that truth is relative, especially in aesthetic or moral cases. The question is when we should distance ourselves from a concept that people espouse in order to preserve truth’s property as being its nature.

Some have argued that Tarski’s schema, ‘*p*’ is true-in-*L* iff *p*, is relativized to a specific formal language and that it is reason enough to abandon the semantic conception. However, if there is a means of defining ‘true-in-*L*’ as not relativized to a formal or natural language, then the theory of truth is absolute. One way in which we may be able to argue that ‘true-in-*L*’ is not relativized to a formal language is to accept that LANGUAGE occurs in the object language and that we speak only of truth, which is a feature of our conceptual structure rather than a reflection of the property or characteristics of truth. That leaves *truth* unscathed, and free of the semantic paradoxes it would be subject to if it occurred in the object language.

Relativists’ examples are only plausible because they overlook the distinction between the concept and property of truth. Suppose we consider the proposition that a centaur does not exist. My judgement that a centaur does not exist is based on my understanding of CENTAUR and EXISTENCE. That the presentation is at the basis of the judgement means that the object, the centaur, is given to the judgement by a presentation. When I judge that it does not exist, the object, the centaur, is in my mind in a double way: it is presented and it is judged. Then, the centaur exists in my mind

as long as I present it, for it is immanent in my mind (an unreal existing object) and yet I say at the same time that it does not exist (since the proposition that a centaur does not exist is true). If we accept a difference between an immanent object (call it content) and the object simpliciter (call it the object), then we have a simple option to solve the problem: we now say that we present a non-existing object through a content and we say that object is what is rejected in the judgement.

Relativists do not acknowledge a distinction between a statement—a *sentence that expresses a judgement*—and the judgement itself—a *mental product*. Thus, they fail to accept a strong, principled distinction between concept and property.

Conclusion: Dąmbska saves truth

What I have shown is that Dąmbska's distinction between concept and property gives rise to absolute truth, a doctrine that has been held consistently across different members of LWS from Twardowski onwards. While I believe that the distinction is nascent in Tarski, Leśniewski, and Kotarbiński, it was Dąmbska, and also Kokoszyńska, who showed us how to comprehend the distinction, thereby saving the semantic theory from its demise. My focus in this paper has been on Dąmbska's underappreciated view.

Truth's relativity disappears when we distinguish between TRUTH and *truth*. The relativization of truth in an object language, thus, does not lead to genuine relativism. Expressions may designate two different judgments since each of them pertains to different states of the world, even though these states-of-affairs happen to be subsumed under the same generic concept. Thus, Dąmbska preserves absolute truth, that is, an expression is absolutely true if and only if it is true everywhere, at all times, and under all conditions, by showing that proponents of relative truth fail to appreciate the distinction between truth as a concept and as a property.

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