



# Dąmbska's Concept of LANGUAGE and Kokoszyńska's Refutation of Truth Relativism

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Izydora Dąmbska and Maria Kokoszyńska-Lutmanowa may be listed among the most accomplished philosophers of twentieth century analytic philosophy. Despite this, their work has largely been underappreciated, especially by truth-theorists. I seek to rectify this injustice by showing how their ideas represent an important innovation to overcome a challenge repeatedly leveled against semantic conceptions of truth. I argue that Dąmbska's concept of LANGUAGE may serve to neutralise the mistaken impression that Kokoszyńska's refutation of truth relativism, and others like it, must be relativised to a given language.



Izydora Dąmbska and Maria Kokoszyńska-Lutmanowa may be listed among the most accomplished philosophers of twentieth century analytic philosophy. Despite this, their work has largely been underappreciated, especially by truth-theorists. I seek to rectify this injustice by showing how their ideas represent an important innovation to overcome a challenge repeatedly leveled against semantic conceptions of truth. I argue that Dąmbska's concept of LANGUAGE may serve to neutralise the mistaken impression that Kokoszyńska's refutation of truth relativism, and others like it, must be relativised to a given language.



- **Izydora Dąmbska** and **Maria Kokoszyńska-Lutmanowa** have largely been taken to be *footnotes* in the history of philosophy (Mancosu 2008, 2010; Skolimowski 1967).
- Work on the Lvov-Warsaw School, however, tells an alternative story where they play an integral role in the development of truth-theory (Brożek *passim*; Woleński *passim*).
- I would like to present an argument that shows the work on the Lvov-Warsaw School is correct, while historians of philosophy have been, and perhaps continue to be (!), misguided.



The word 'school' is used in this context in a slightly different meaning than when it refers to, e.g. Neo-Kantian or phenomenological schools. The philosophers of the Lvov group were not united by any common doctrine, by a uniform worldview. Not the content of philosophy but rather the method of philosophizing and the common language were the factors which formed the foundation of the spiritual community of these people. This is why the school could produce spiritualists and materialists, nominalists and realists, logicians and psychologists, philosophers of nature and art theorists. If we were to search for similarities, what would be striking in the Lvov school, or in Twardowski's school, would be their certain similarity to the ancient philosophical schools which served not only the exchange of ideas or shaping theoretical views, but formed characters and marked the life-attitudes of their members.

- Damska 1948, p. 17 [as cited by Wolenski 1999, p. 36]

# Dąmbska's concept of LANGUAGE

- What is a concept?
- What is a concept of LANGUAGE?
- What is Dąmbska's concept of LANGUAGE?



# Dąmbska's concept of LANGUAGE

- What is a concept?
  - Take TRUTH.
    - The meaning of the word 'true' when it is used in a particular range of cases (Alston 2002).
    - 'The way we think about truth in ordinary life' (Lynch 2009). Some have taken this TRUTH to be vague and ambiguous (Tarski 1933: §1, 1944: §§14&17).
    - The ability to have propositional thoughts such as beliefs, hopes, or desires (Asay 2021).
  - Concepts “are senses of words given (represented) in definitions and definitions are final results of analyses of concepts” (Brożek ms).



# Da̧mbska's concept of LANGUAGE

- What is a concept of LANGUAGE?
  - **Correspondence** (Tarski, Carnap): LANGUAGE is a system of signs that refer to an objective domain
  - **Operational** (later Wittgenstein; maybe Millikan): LANGUAGE is a form of biological or cultural behaviour of a person
  - **Immanent** (Ajdukiewicz): LANGUAGE is a set of signs and directives of creating signs and transforming one sign into another



# Dąmbska's concept of LANGUAGE

- What is a concept of LANGUAGE?
  - Correspondence (Tarski, Carnap): language is a system of signs that refer to an objective domain
    - “An affirmative sentence is true when the state of affairs corresponding to this sentence occurs” (Dąmbska 1931)
  - Operational (later Wittgenstein; maybe Millikan): language is a form of biological or cultural behaviour of a person
    - Pragmatic conception
  - Immanent (Ajdukiewicz): language is a set of signs and directives of creating signs and transforming one sign into another.
    - A basis of syntactic definition of truth, i.e. coherence theory of truth



# Dąmbska's concept of LANGUAGE

- What is Dąmbska's concept of LANGUAGE?
  - 'The concept of language is... made in a language, in which... nothing can be predicated about the truth and the falsehood of statements' (2015, p. 146).



# Maria Kokoszyńska on truth relativism

- What is truth relativism?
- What is a refutation of truth relativism?
- What is Kokoszyńska's refutation of truth relativism?



# Maria Kokoszyńska on truth relativism

- Absolute theory of truth (Kokoszyńska 1935a, 1935b, 1948, & 1951)
- Relativism about truth
  - Naïve truth relativism
  - Macfarlane's assessment sensitivity
  - Genuine v non-genuine truth relativism



# Maria Kokoszyńska on truth relativism

- **Absolute truth** – an expression is absolutely true if and only if it is true everywhere, at all times, and under all conditions.
- **Relative truth** – an expression is relatively true if and only if it is true in some places, or some times, or under some conditions but is not absolutely true.



# Maria Kokoszyńska on truth relativism

- Truth's relativity disappears when:
  - We examine covert quantifiers or
  - We replace indexical expressions by non-indexical expressions
  - We distinguish between TRUTH and the criteria of truth



# Maria Kokoszyńska on truth relativism

- The definition of truth is relative to a given language in which all of the expressions of that language are meaningful.
  - 'True' is an incomplete predicate
  - Disambiguate quantifiers:  $\exists yz [(x \text{ is true with respect to } y) \wedge (\text{non-}x \text{ is true with respect to } z)]$
- The relativisation of truth in a language, thus, does not lead to genuine relativism.





(1) Given that Dąmbska's LANGUAGE fails to include 'true' and 'false' as predicates, Kokoszyńska's view of truth, while relative to a given language, is absolute since it is outside LANGUAGE.



(2) Given that Dąmbska's LANGUAGE fails to include 'true' and 'false' as predicates and Kokoszyńska view of truth is relative to a given language, the semantic conception of truth (' $p$ ' is true iff  $p$ ) is **absolute** and **free of semantic paradoxes**.



(3) Perhaps the most important upshot of Dąmbska's LANGUAGE and Kokoszyńska's refutation of truth relativism is the fundamental role that they play in resolving a vexing problem of the **semantic conception of truth**.

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