

## **Conventionalism in Izydora Dąmbska (1904-1983)**

Ulatowski, Joseph  
University of Waikato, New Zealand

Popular among members of the Lvov-Warsaw School conventionalism is the view that statements, particularly those that make up scientific theories, may be supported not only by empirical evidence but also by convention (Jedynak 2009). Since, on this view, conventions may change in accordance with what the consensus believes, conventionalism is susceptible to the charge that it is a form of relativism. On her unique version of *radical conventionalism*, Izydora Dąmbska (1938/2016, 1973) argues that conventionalism does not lead to relativism but actually provides support in opposition to it (See also Jadacki & Brożek 2016; Pakszyz 1998; Woleński 2001). On Dąmbska's radical conventionalism, it doesn't lead to relativism because conventions do not have to be arbitrary. Conventions may be a certain kind of agreement, decision, or custom. For Dąmbska, conventions are not arbitrary because they are pragmatically justified: they are a piece of data that serves a specific aim for a view or theory. And, according to Dąmbska, conventionalism opposes relativism because acceptance of such a moderate pragmatically motivated form of conventionalism may be reconciled with the absolutist conception of truth. Conventions provide the necessary conditions of the decidability of sentences instead of support for their truthfulness.

### **Primary Sources**

Dąmbska, Izydora 1938/2016. Conventionalism and relativism [Konwencjonalizm a relatywizm], in: Brożek, Anna (ed). *Knowledge, language, and silence: Selected papers of Izydora Dąmbska*. Leiden: Brill, 109–116.

Dąmbska, Izydora 1973. On semiotic conventions [O konwencjach semiotycznych], *Studia Semiotyczne – English Supplement, vol IV*, 1-14.

### **Secondary Sources**

Brożek, Anna and Jadacki, Jacek 2016. Editorial afterword: Izydora Dąmbska – a steadfast thinker, in: Jadacki, Jacek and Brożek, Anna (eds). *Knowledge, Language and Silence: Selected Papers of Izydora Dąmbska*. Leiden: Brill, 351–372.

Jedynak, Anna 2009. French and Polish conventionalism, in LaPointe, Sandra, Woleński, Jan, Marion, Mathieu, and Miskiewicz, Wioletta (eds). *The Golden Age of Polish Philosophy: Kazimierz Twardowski's Philosophical Legacy*. Dordrecht: Springer, 61–77.

Pakszyz, Elżbieta 1998. Women's contributions to the achievements of the Lvov-Warsaw School: A survey, in: Kijania-Placek, Katarzyna and Woleński, Jan (eds). *The Lvov-Warsaw School and Contemporary Philosophy*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 55–71.

Woleński, Jan 2001. Izydora Dąmbska – Between conventionalism and realism, in: Krajewski, Władysław (ed.). *Polish Philosophers of Science and Nature in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 107-111.

**Keywords:** conventionalism, conventions, relativism, Lvov-Warsaw School