

Izydora Dąmbska's concept of independent ethics

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Abstract

Izydora Dąmbska was one of the closest collaborators of Kazimierz Twardowski, the founder of the Lvov-Warsaw School. She was also his assistant at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov for several years. Dąmbska focused her scholarly interests on the theory of cognition and methodology of sciences. She also dealt with ethical issues, especially the practical aspects of ethical education among school youth. To this end, she used her studies of ancient culture and philosophy. In 1930, she got a scholarship from the National Cultural Fund, thanks to which she continued her studies at the universities of Vienna and Paris. Influenced by the views of Moritz Schlick and the French philosopher André Lalande, as well as her own studies of scepticism, she developed an original system of ethics, which constituted a compilation of the theses of Twardowski's independent ethics and her own research into philosophical scepticism. In his article, the author distinguishes two stages in the formation of Dąmbska's concept of ethics, the first of which was influenced by Twardowski's views, and the second, sceptical, which was associated with the search for justified reasons for resolving moral dilemmas. Dąmbska gained great recognition in the academic community in Poland, as no other reasons than scientific ones affected her views. For this reason, she was not only a true authority, but also a voice of conscience for academics in the totalitarian political system in post-war Poland.

Keywords: Izydora Dąmbska, Kazimierz Twardowski, independent ethics, scepticism, Lvov-Warsaw school

Introduction

Izydora Dąmbska (1904–1983) was one of the closest associates of Kazimierz Twardowski, the founder of the Lvov-Warsaw School. For several years, she was also his assistant collaborator at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov. Her position in the Lvov philosophical milieu increased significantly after Twardowski's death, when, together with Daniela Gromska, she took over the editing of "Ruch Filozoficzny" (*Philosophical Movement*), at that time one of the most important Polish academic specialist journals. Dąmbska also held managerial positions in the Polish Philosophical Society. During World War II, she worked at the most important library in Lvov, contributing significantly to saving the archives of the Jan Kazimierz University, and, also, of Twardowski's own documentary materials. After the end of the war, she worked in the provincial library in Gdańsk, and later as a professor of philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. The main subject of her scholarly interests focused primarily on issues related to the theory of cognition and methodology of sciences. However, she also dealt with ethical issues, trying to combine the views of her master, Kazimierz Twardowski, with the latest trends in world philosophy. As a result, she developed an original ethical concept, which, even though it falls within the framework of the Polish trend of independent ethics initiated by Twardowski, shows its specificity related to the strong influence of Viennese Neo-Positivism. Her achievements in this field are less well-known, but due to the significance of the issues she undertook, they deserve closer attention, encouraged by the recent 120th anniversary of her birth. What is essential, however, is that her views in this area were dynamic and showed a distinct evolution depending on her own studies and research.

Izydora Dąmbska's achievements in the field of ethics contribute significantly to the trend of independent ethics developed in the Lvov-Warsaw School. Since her works in this field were written at different times over several decades, and, in addition, they are scattered throughout many publications, which is why they have not yet been included in a uniform system, this article is also an attempt to fill this gap in the history of Polish philosophy. On the basis of the

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research carried out, it transpired that Dąmbska continued the programme line of independent ethics initiated by Kazimierz Twardowski, adapting its indications to the changing conditions, which allowed her to play the role of an unquestionable authority in Polish philosophy.

Izydora Dąmbska's path to ethics

Initially there was no indication that Dąmbska would take up research in the field of ethics. After defending, on 26th February 1927, her doctoral dissertation on *Edmund Goblots theory of judgment* (Suchmiel, 2000, p. 258), she dealt primarily with methodology and epistemology. Having finished her job as Kazimierz Twardowski's assistant in 1930, she received a scholarship from the National Cultural Fund thanks to which it was possible for her to continue her studies at the universities of Vienna and Paris. In Vienna, Dąmbska participated in seminars held by the Vienna Circle. Most probably she was the first Polish philosopher to analyse the scholarly output of this school (Dąmbska, 1932a, pp. 379–388). However, not all of the research carried out by the Viennese philosophers gained her approval at that time. In particular, she criticised the assumption according to which “the representatives of the Circle assume that the clause has as many parts, as many parts are included in the state of affairs assigned to this clause” (Dąmbska, 1932a, p. 379). According to Dąmbska, every clause can be extended to a multi-part form, so such a relationship does not necessarily have to be obvious. She also did not approve of recognizing clauses as true only when the information contained in them can be verified. As an example of such impossibility, she cited a judgment about the past: “Seneca was bald”, which is unverifiable in the present. Nevertheless, it is ethical judgments that provide such possibility at any moment in time. For her, it was probably one of the most important arguments justifying the scientific nature of ethics. This does not change the fact that at that stage of her scholarly development, ethical issues were not a subject of her special interest. “The last stage of her scholarly journey was a stay in Paris, during which Dąmbska listened to lectures held by André Lalande, Léon Brunschwick, and Édouard Le Roy. She established contacts with the French philosophical community, which were continued and maintained until the end of her life [...]. This journey resulted in the crystallisation of Dąmbska's methodological and epistemological interests” (Wójcik, 2011, p. 278). It also provided the basis for going beyond the circle of issues dealt with by her master, Kazimierz Twardowski.

Although it may seem that Dąmbska was only a continuer of Twardowski's philosophy, the influence of Moritz Schlick on her philosophical views was quite significant. She became confirmed in her conviction about the superior position of one's own reason in deciding on matters of a moral nature. After all, such a position was not opposite to Twardowski's views. However, it was characteristic that her convictions were also reinforced by the lectures of André Lalande, who believed that reason is shaped on the Kantian model, i.e., its capabilities are determined by intellectual norms that we ourselves accept. They constitute a dynamic system, constantly updated and modified, which is determined by errors and successes in our reasoning (Davy, 1957, pp. 624–626). Since then, her views were so crystallised that she placed herself in a certain historical sequence of rationalist philosophy which had begun in ancient Greece (Janik, 2009, pp. 120–123).

The further evolution of Izydora Dąmbska's ethical thought went parallel to her independent studies in philosophical scepticism. A characteristic feature of the second stage of Dąmbska's ethical research was her resignation from instructing others and gaining supporters for her own position. She assumed that each person has their own and unique ethical convictions which result from their entire life experience. It is not that ethics shapes one's view of the world, but rather the image of the world (the worldview), shaped and approved by the individual, forms their moral attitudes. Therefore, it is crucial for the worldview to be formed based on facts, and free from principles that are not compatible with it. Accordingly, education about maintaining the adequacy of applied concepts to the actual state of affairs is of key importance for human

moral conduct. Thus, one should not be surprised that later Dąmbska became interested in the language used in the empirical sciences, especially in physics. That is why she always defended her position so uncompromisingly, because it resulted not only from scientific reasoning, but above all from her deepest and indisputable conviction.

At this stage, the starting point for Dąmbska was Schlick's concept of statements that are a subject of scientific interest: "a problem makes sense when it is possible, at least in principle, to provide a way to solve it, even if empirically this path could not be realised. A problem that is fundamentally unsolvable is an apparent problem, and a statement that constitutes an answer to such a problem is an expression without any meaning" (Dąmbska, 1937a, p. 99). Schlick altogether rejected metaphysics, because the statements formulated within its domain do not meet this requirement. This was a more radical position than that represented by Twardowski, who, while excluding metaphysics from the field of science, recognized its usefulness for philosophy. The entire rejection of metaphysics was associated with the deprivation of traditional ethics of the foundations to which it referred. In fact, it can be said that Schlick's school strengthened Dąmbska's so far conviction of the need to free ethics from the burden of religious tradition through its logical justification.

However, Dąmbska was reserved about Schlick's detailed considerations on the scientific nature of ethics.

In developing his basic book on ethics, he avoided any moralising, and emphasised the scientific, theoretical nature of ethics. It should not be inferred therefrom that Schlick ascribes the scientific character exclusively to some descriptive ethics in the sense of the history of ethical views. Ethics defines the meaning of the word 'good' just as physics defines the meaning of the word 'movement', indicating a set of features that distinguish the class of good ways of behaving from all other ones. And this is most often done in the form of a rule which states: a certain way of behaviour must have such and such qualities to be considered good. He wonders about the question when something is rightly judged as good and why it is judged to be such. Thus ethics does not arbitrarily create norms, but only affirms their existence and formulates them. And in this sense it is a science of facts. The final highest judgments are the facts of human consciousness. Not limiting itself to establishing the concept of good and specifying norms, ethics seeks an answer to the question of what motifs incline man to create and apply ethical norms. The question about the causes of human behavior is the central question of ethics (Dąmbska, 1937a, p. 101).

In her habilitation dissertation, Dąmbska reflected on the durability of human attitudes which have no scientific justification and therefore contradict reality as it is. As she concluded: "In apparently healthy people, feelings and desires often provide the right basis for belief in irrational statements. It is especially easy to believe in such statements when they are proclaimed by people who are revered, loved, powerful and dangerous. Then one believes out of love and fear, which paralyse the ability to think clearly" (Dąmbska, 1937b, p. 107). In the spirit of Schlick, she tried to explain the existence of such contradictions on the semantic level.

[A] thought of rejecting an internally contradictory sentence Z arouses in us objections of an emotional nature, manifested in moral evaluation (e.g. rejecting such statement seems to us to be a sin) or utilitarian assessment (e.g. rejecting such statement seems to entail the loss of precious life values, which seems to be dangerous). This is the case with a series of statements with religious, philosophical or social contents. A religious man, for example, even if noticing an internal contradiction in this or that thesis of his confession, tries not to see this contradiction, tries to convince himself that it is only apparent and exists only for his limited mind. He does so most often out of fear that by rejecting such thesis he would commit a sin, offend the deity, or deprive himself of a

valuable source of security and power in life, which religion gives him (Dąmbska, 1937c, p. 108).

She also pointed out that contemporary irrationalists try to use the discoveries of natural sciences to justify their groundless beliefs. Therefore, without fundamentally changing her convictions about the place and role of ethics, she only changed the way of polemics with advocates of its metaphysical aspect. Therefore, in her conclusion, Dąmbska stated as follows

the postulate of rationalism does not have to be combined with some kind of scientific dogmatism. Even when acknowledging the theoretical insurmountability of radical skepticism, it is possible to fight for the primacy of rational cognition, believing that a man who respects the principle of contradiction and takes experience into account is more human and less dangerous than the one who is ready to believe in internally contradictory and fundamentally insolvable statements, and follows this faith in life, also converting others to it. But this belief in the value of rationalism and the fight against irrationalism outside the field of science, and at the same time a concern not to deprive man of the richness and charm of experiences which sometimes are the basis of irrationalism are no longer matters of cognition but rather of a difficult art of living which eludes the scientific category (Dąmbska, 1937c, p. 212).

For this reason, ethics must result from what reality is, and not from how people perceive it. Ethics is necessarily an empirical science, because no ethical rule can be applied on the basis of automatism. This is an extension of both Twardowski's and Schlick's beliefs that ethics can only be scientific.

The independence of ethics according to Dąmbska

In Twardowski's school, ethics was understood as the final product of human rationality, and not as something given, or rather discovered. Developing one's own ethics was, therefore, a necessary condition for reaching adulthood and independently managing one's own life and the lives of others. For Twardowski, the discoverer of ready-made ethics would only be a lucky finder or someone who knows in advance what he has been looking for. One's own intellectual effort would not even be necessary, which obviously contradicts the rules of introducing the young generation to their independent life. Nevertheless, the development of one's own approved ethical concept had to be the result of a long-term educational process. In a sense, it was a continuation of the Socratic version of ethical intellectualism: to be moral, you must first learn how to act. That is why Twardowski separated moral education from ethical education. The former basically does not much differ from learning other subjects and boils down to passing on the values necessary for becoming a useful member of society. It does not require any special intellectual input from the student, who, during this type of education, learns how to function in society avoiding conflicts. However, before acquiring such skills, he has to go through the path of primary education, which familiarises him with already existing norms and values supported by real-life examples, when such norms are applied in practice. At this stage, there is still a master (teacher) who helps and prompts the student so that he could see the need for and usefulness of being moral in relationships with others. With this assumption, education in the moral sphere does not didactically differ from teaching other subjects. Nevertheless, it is very important for society that the entire young generation gains such knowledge and skills. From this perspective, the popularity of religion seems to be natural, because religious education significantly relieves society from fulfilling this task. Twardowski, however, believed that religion restricts man who, instead of striving for the comprehensive use of his potential, submits to dogmas that may be contrary to his own interests. Only a person who can

use his intellectual potential for the good of himself and others should be the goal of education. The education system prepares the young generation for this task only at the level of higher education, where the first independent scholarly papers are created and groups of enthusiasts of particular scientific and artistic disciplines are formed. They are formed spontaneously and do not show a prescriptive character; and they create a social elite capable of leading other people. The way to achieve this social status requires the student to acquire the ability to manage his or her own life. In order to lead others, one must first be able to do the same with oneself. What makes it possible is ethics.

That is why man must 'search for ethics', because he will not find it in any ready-made form, and a chance to formulate it depends only on whether one really searches for it. However, not everyone wants to do this. Some people are just unable to do it, and others care only about their own comfort. They condemn themselves to imitation, to copying what has already existed and what is widely known. In Twardowski's opinion, if everyone were like that, people would never come down from the trees. For him, it was obvious that if one wants something, one can do it. Consistently, man can desire his own solutions only if he can design them in the form of a goal to be achieved. Twardowski was convinced that, in the conditions of modern civilisation, this task required a completion of the entire cycle of education, i.e., graduation at the academic level. In this way, moral conduct can result from either external pressure or one's own choice. From the point of view of the educational objectives, the outcome of this whole process should be a graduate capable of independent decision-making, who, at school, has acquired knowledge sufficient to predict the effects of their own actions. Therefore, it is not surprising that shaping the ability of students to act independently of external influences constitutes a goal of educational procedures.

This conviction was taken over by Izydora Dąmbska, Twardowski's student. She put it into practice after returning from scholarships in Vienna and Paris, when she started working as a secondary school teacher. For this purpose, she primarily made use of her previous studies in ancient culture and philosophy. At this level of education, her task was to teach moral technology, still with no need to introduce young people to their independent life. Therefore, it was advisable to use the experience of previous centuries. Studying the experiences of outstanding ancient thinkers allowed her to develop her own path of moral education, the implementation of which she could popularise on the national forum. At that time, she proposed setting up a philosophical laboratory in the secondary school, which would *de facto* prepare the students for academic studies. In such a workshop, "students work either under the supervision of the teacher or on their own (reading books, preparing papers, etc.) or in a team. Teamwork can take various forms according to the interests of students" (Dąmbska, 1938, pp. 93–94). It was, hence, a proposal to create an intermediate institution between high school and academic studies. In this way, Dąmbska wanted to make it easier for future university students to search for autonomous and consistently entirely independent moral signposts. Regardless of that, at that time, her proposals in the field of ethical education constituted only a slight modification of what Twardowski called *moral technology*. The situation changed after the end of World War II, when Dąmbska began to teach ethics at Polish universities. Then she had to redefine what the independence of ethics is, and also to answer the question to what extent the philosophical tradition can be used for it.

This phase of the evolution of Dąmbska's ethical views was no longer a continuation of Twardowski's views but resulted from her independent studies in philosophical scepticism, which was associated with the search for justified reasons that would allow her to resolve moral dilemmas. No arguments put forward by others could fulfil this task in the way satisfying someone searching for the solution. In the case of Dąmbska herself, the first stage began naturally, as, in her family home, she grew up in the spirit of religious tradition, and it was only her studies under Twardowski that undermined her faith, mainly because the dogmas turned out

to be incompatible with scientific reason. Religious dogmas were replaced by sober rationalism and criticism, which allowed for individual access to knowledge about reality. Her attitude formed during the studies under Twardowski were not to change in the future, either. In a letter from 1966 addressed to Rev. Cieński she wrote: "As Father advised me, I have been praying so that God – if He exists – would let me believe that He is and that He is love and truth. But there is emptiness all around. Or rather, not emptiness, but a great river of transience of all things" (Bober, 1997, p. 22). However, this did not prevent her from cooperating with the clergy as well as church institutions. She never judged the value of people on the basis of their views. She was further strengthened in her conviction by her cooperation with the radical anti-clerical Władysław Witwicki.² Religious faith, like everything else in this world, had a rational explanation for her.

Nevertheless, her youthful publications are the reason why, for today's commentators on Dąmbska's scholarly work, the postulate of the independence of ethics is most often unjustly narrowed down to her separation from religious beliefs. However, already in her early article *O sceptykach greckich* [*On the Greek sceptics*], referring to Xenophanes of Colophon, she pointed to the merit of scepticism, which recommends refraining from issuing a decisive judgment in the case of two contradictory judgments. This should be done especially in the case of dilemmas of a theological nature, because then man: "is guided in action by what appears to him at the moment, and not by the knowledge of what really is" (Dąmbska, 1932b, p. 215).

Dąmbska's early works on ethical issues do not pose any problems with their classification, as she noticed the danger of basing the ethical education of young people "on the assumptions of this or that religious denomination. There is a certain danger in such a solution, which consists in the fact that it is easy to create a conviction in the mind of the student that the system of ethics is inseparably connected with the religious system, being almost a part of it" (Dąmbska, 1936, p. 711). At the same time, abandoning religion is associated with the danger of losing life signposts, whereas changing one's religion may be associated with uncritical acceptance of the assumptions of its moral component, which may result in hostility towards followers of other religions. This was her first step to independent research in this area, which allowed her to formulate her own ethical position in the near future.

When she first outlined her concept of ethics which she derived from the classical division of the sciences into normative and theoretical (descriptive) ones, in a sense she stepped forward in opposition against the Polish ethical tradition because, from this perspective, ethics as a science can be limited either to descriptive or to normative ethics. At that time, she used the term "normative scientific ethics" because it is practised "not by referring in the justification of its norms to religious or metaphysical assumptions, but to considerations about the good, the nature of the human mind, the conditions of social life, etc." (Dąmbska, 1936, p. 713). Such ethical education of young people is the main task of the school.

If we want the school students to be people who appreciate the importance of moral principles and moral obligations, we should lead young people to understanding that there are independent ethical values, that the development of a system of ethical principles is generally the human mind's need, and that the effort and joy of working on oneself can be undertaken by everyone, regardless of their religion and racial or national affiliation (Dąmbska 1936, p. 713).

² The culmination of their cooperation was Dąmbska's translation into French of his free-thinking treatise, *Wiara oświeconych* [*The Faith of the Enlightened*]. Witwicki had problems with the publication of this work in Poland, because due to its anticlericalism, all attempts to publish it ended in failure. He made his first attempt to publish the paper in the "Psychological Quarterly" as early as 1935. After further failures, he gained the support of Dąmbska, who suggested that he should publish this work outside Poland. The French edition (W. Witwicki, *La foi des éclairés*. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1939) was published just before the start of the war, and the Polish edition only 11 years after the author's death.

Therefore, she recommended familiarising students with the ethical tradition in order to create opportunities for young people to make choices. At the same time, it meant that the work of a teacher could not be identical to the position of a preacher proclaiming ultimate and indisputable truths, but was to teach caution and criticism in thinking, so that students could choose for themselves the option that suited them best. Undoubtedly, studies in scepticism have not been without influence on Izydora Dąmbska's philosophical position. Apparently, from these studies, she took over the postulate to refrain from making and approving judgments, and the closest to her was probably "methodological scepticism, which makes the researcher refrain from making a judgment until he has found a satisfactory criterion of truth" (Dąmbska, 1958a, p. 9). This is also confirmed by Dąmbska's important text *O funkcjach semiotycznych milczenia* [*On the Semiotic Functions of Silence*], where she shows that in many situations silence is a human choice, although communication by means of speech is a biological and social necessity. Silence therefore means protecting something valuable to the individual and should not be perceived as negative (Dąmbska, 1975, pp. 94–96). As the author said, it is a form of *speaking without using words*.

Dąmbska's didactic orientation in issues related to morality and ethics at the time of her classes held at the Jagiellonian University in the 1960s seems particularly important. It was already then that she showed interest in metaethical problems which she considered to be a prospective way of solving the question of the scientific nature of ethics. The aim of her lectures at that time was "1) reflecting on the structure of scientific ethics, 2) defining its basic issues, and 3) characterising the main directions of scientific ethics in its various meanings, on historical examples" (Cichoń, 1984, p. 330).

In these lectures, Dąmbska implemented a project of scientific ethics which was by definition independent, as developed by Kazimierz Twardowski. She did not impose on her students any of the ethical proposals distinguished by her. Nevertheless, one can note a clear coincidence with the lectures on ethics given at the University of Lvov by Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz at a time when he could be considered a radical conventionalist. According to Ajdukiewicz, convention in ethics is a derivative of social usage, which results in approval or disapproval expressed in the form of assessing statements (Konstańczak, 2017, p. 149). When Dąmbska wrote about practical conventions, she had this type of convention in mind. She introduced a division into evaluative and assessing statements (Dąmbska, 1975, p. 120), as they always refer to practice. The adoption of the conventionalist position allowed Dąmbska to preserve the empirical character of ethics, postulated by Franz Brentano, and, moreover, made it possible to ascribe the criterion of truthfulness to norms. As she wrote: "A normative statement is true when there is an obligation or admissibility or inadmissibility of behaviour stated in it, it is false when denoted properties do not occur" (Dąmbska, 1975, p. 124). In the period that can be called "conventional", Dąmbska adopted a common-sense position resulting from her conviction at the time: "In any case, the world as it is given to human consciousness is an axiologically qualified world, and all our conscious actions are guided by striving to realise certain values that give meaning to these actions" (Dąmbska, 1975, p. 131).

This practical aspect of ethics forces one to take a stand in moments of historical trial. At the moment when democratic changes were initiated in Poland in 1980, Dąmbska spoke about the most important value of the time which lay at the basis of social opposition to the totalitarian reality but made her speech in a basically descriptive manner. She stated namely that

The freedom of science from ideological and administrative pressures is the freedom of its proper function of seeking and transmitting the truth; freedom of speech is also the freedom to publicly express one's own views and beliefs; freedom from ties is at the same time the freedom to move freely, freedom from fees is the freedom to use free benefits, etc. The word 'freedom', being a relational term, is also a term closely linked

in its semantic functions to the modal category of possibility. Freedom is an indispensable condition for the possibility of certain acts, ways of being, and behaviour (Dąmbska, 1981, p. 857).

At that time, Dąmbska linked freedom with responsibility, and, thus, she signalled that freedom can only be understood in the context of truth.

It is a question of moral responsibility which everyone bears when he acts as a free and conscious being, and of the truth. The relationship between freedom and responsibility has been a subject of exhaustive analyses by ethicists and philosophers of law. Less often taken into account is the basic – as it seems to me – connection between the denotations of the word ‘freedom’ and the denotations of the word ‘truth’. This connection takes different forms depending on, firstly, what meaning of the word ‘truth’ is considered, and secondly, what the nature of this relationship is. [...] According to this concept, the basic freedom of man is a freedom from falsehood in the sense of error, and therefore the ability to accurately recognise and accept the truth in the sense of a true judgment about things. In this understanding, freedom is a condition of cognition. To reveal what is cognised, what the actual state of things, is i.e. the truth in the ontological sense, is the good of a rational being, and as a consequence, freedom as its condition acquires an instrumental value as a means of achieving the supreme value which is truth. [...] Freedom from so understood falsehood and at the same time a possibility of unmasking it and proclaiming the truth constitute the basis of social morality. There is no social morality without truth in the sense of negating a lie calculated to subjugate people by preventing them from making true judgments about the situation of their social existence. Hypocrisy of social life, expressed, among other things, in the use of empty words, or in any change of their meanings in order to mislead and thus fool people, violates the fundamental freedom of man as a rational being (Dąmbska, 1981, p. 859).

Dąmbska also pointed to the second necessary aspect of freedom, which is freedom from self-deception, i.e. she referred to the Platonic compliance of what is outside man with what is inside him.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is clear that Dąmbska’s relationship with her master, Kazimierz Twardowski, showed numerous similarities to the relationship between Plato and his teacher, Socrates. For Dąmbska, independence of thinking and acting was inextricably linked, and she believed that this must characterise every philosopher. Furthermore, this is because philosophy, understood in the spirit of Twardowski, on the one hand – as the ancients taught – as a certain way of constant search for and love of truth, on the other hand as a certain theory of cognitive activities of human consciousness and an analysis of the sense of concepts, questions and possible answers that lie at the basis of theoretical and practical sciences, and as an analysis of theoretical and axiological forms of human creativity, is indispensable in life. It gives meaning to human existence, is worth serving and should be defended against the pressures of preconceived or imposed ideologies and worldview solutions. It is so important that it requires from those who devote themselves to it even more than other forms of scientific research – a disinterested love of truth, honesty of thought, faithfulness and courage. This axiological character of philosophy as a life activity results in important obligations for the philosopher and a great moral responsibility.

Dąmbska’s concept of ethics was therefore a continuation of the assumption that ‘man is searching for ethics’, but such a search basically never ends, because it is associated with the constant adaptation of approved ethical rules to the existing reality. Of course, this does not

mean the need to make a revolution in ethics, but the already existing moral evaluations and norms, the veracity of which we do not question, also have to include those areas of reality that have arisen at a given moment or are just being revealed. No one can count on any lenient treatment or leniency from the evaluators, because the values important to philosophers, such as the good, truth and beauty, never lose their connotative meaning, even if someone tries to use them for instrumental, and, therefore, transient purposes.

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