

Abstract of the PhD Thesis:

*Aristotle as a Research Material and Source of Inspirations of Władysław Tatarkiewicz  
(1886-1980)*

The aim of the thesis was to answer two questions: How did Tatarkiewicz interpret Aristotle's philosophy? How did Aristotle inspire him in his own philosophical considerations? Domański's division (developed in the introduction to the thesis) into researcher and user (follower) of ancient heritage – which helps clearly define the conditions of reception – was adopted to answer these questions. According to Domański, reception must be preceded by recognition of the research subject and its positive evaluation. Therefore, a reconstruction of Tatarkiewicz's interpretation of Aristotle was needed to answer the question about the reception of his philosophy in Tatarkiewicz's writings.

In the thesis, a chronological-problematic perspective was adopted. More precisely, biographical, logical, and comparative analyses were used to examine Tatarkiewicz's research on Aristotle and the influence of his studies on the Stagirite on his own philosophical considerations. As biographical analysis showed, Tatarkiewicz developed several interpretations of Aristotle throughout his life. That is why one of the issues was to examine the relationship between them. The analyses suggest that these interpretations are complementary. Tatarkiewicz himself stated that during his life he created two "pictures" of Aristotle and described him in two different ways. However, as the analyses show, these differences do not imply a contradiction. The two pictures of Aristotle seem to complement each other. Tatarkiewicz did not change his mind regarding the main issues of Aristotle's research approach and philosophy, he rather developed other aspects of Aristotle's philosophy (from metaphysics to aesthetics) in subsequent works. For this reason, it is justified to regard Tatarkiewicz's interpretations as pieces of a one picture of Aristotle.

Notably, the main argument in this regard is presented in one of Tatarkiewicz's works. In studies on Aristotle's ethics from the 1930s (the second picture of Aristotle), Tatarkiewicz referred directly to his earlier studies from Marburg (the first picture). He did this in the most fundamental aspect: the pluralistic nature of Aristotle's philosophy. This means that Tatarkiewicz took his first understanding of Aristotle's metaphysics and applied it to describe Aristotle's ethics. Moreover, his work on Aristotle's aesthetics, where he called Aristotle an "aesthetic pluralist", led to the conclusion that he upheld this interpretation in his later works as well. Therefore, pluralism is something that Tatarkiewicz consistently associates with Aristotle. This is evidenced by the following works of Tatarkiewicz: his doctoral thesis

(1910), *Historia filozofii* [*History of Philosophy*] (prepared after 1925 and first published in 1931), *Trzy etyki Arystotelesa* [*Three Ethics of Aristotle*] (1931/1933), and his aesthetic studies (prepared after 1950 and published in the 1960s). Even in the *O szczęściu* [*Analysis of Happiness*], Tatarkiewicz's most important philosophical work, Aristotle appears as someone who had a pluralistic view on happiness.

Another significant aspect of Aristotle's philosophy in Tatarkiewicz's interpretation is its teleological orientation, which, unlike pluralism, has been less highlighted by researchers of Tatarkiewicz's legacy. Already in his doctoral dissertation, Tatarkiewicz wrote that teleology was one of the main tendencies of Aristotle's philosophy. Later, in the *History of Philosophy*, he showed that it applied both to Aristotle's natural science and ethics. Therefore, it is not surprising that Tatarkiewicz emphasized the teleological character of Aristotle's ethics also in the 1930s. The same applies to his studies on Aristotle's aesthetics from the 1960s. In general, pluralism and teleology seem to be the two most important attributes of Aristotle's philosophy in Tatarkiewicz's interpretation.

Other attributes seem to be linked in Tatarkiewicz's interpretations to these two. For example, Aristotle's way of thinking was both empirical (based on observation) and rational (based on reasoning). The empirical side links with pluralism, the rational side – with teleology. Tatarkiewicz also highlights Aristotle's distinction between the “subjective” and “objective” perspective, which is connected with common experience and natural view of the world as a starting point for Aristotle's philosophical investigations. Common experience, which belongs to the empirical side, is the starting point to reach the truth, which belongs to the rational side. For Tatarkiewicz, this was a typical way of philosophizing for Aristotle. It is confirmed by his doctoral thesis, *History of Philosophy*, and his works on Aristotle's ethics and aesthetics. This connection shows the importance of the teleological tendency in Aristotle's philosophy in Tatarkiewicz interpretation.

Another important issue for Tatarkiewicz's picture of Aristotle is his opinion about Plato's influence on Aristotle. In this case, Tatarkiewicz also maintained his perspective across his various works. In his doctoral thesis, *History of Philosophy*, *Three Ethics of Aristotle*, and aesthetic works, he stated that Plato influenced the rational side of Aristotle's thought. The difference is that during his time in Marburg, Tatarkiewicz focused more on Aristotle's system of metaphysical notions, so the influence was not described in a chronological perspective such as it was in later works. Nevertheless, Tatarkiewicz maintained in all these works that Aristotle's rational side came partly from Plato, while his

empirical side was original and linked to his father's work as a doctor and his own studies of nature.

To sum up, the different pictures of Aristotle in Tatarkiewicz's writings are complementary and together constitute a coherent interpretation. Importantly, Tatarkiewicz described – from his earliest studies on Aristotle to the last – the Stagirite in positive terms: as a great mind, the author of an original system, an outstanding scholar, a master of carefulness, common sense, and classification, and an archetype of the classical philosopher. Thanks to this positive evaluation, it is possible to answer the question about the influence of Tatarkiewicz's studies on Aristotle on his own philosophical considerations.

Comparative analysis of Tatarkiewicz's works is crucial in this regard. Examination of his works shows that his studies on Aristotle influenced his own philosophical considerations and impacted his research attitude and philosophical approach. Attributes of Aristotle mentioned in Tatarkiewicz's interpretations correspond to his own philosophical investigations in many cases, for example the subject–object perspective or recognizing the significance of common experience and a natural view of the world. The same applies to other aspects of Tatarkiewicz's research attitude and philosophical approach highlighted in the PhD thesis. Most importantly, pluralism and teleology has a fundamental role in Tatarkiewicz's considerations.

Teleology is noteworthy here because it has been less emphasized by scholars of Tatarkiewicz's legacy than pluralism. Recognition of the role of teleology in Tatarkiewicz's philosophy was possible thanks to the inclusion of Tatarkiewicz's inaugural lecture in Vilnius from 1919 (mostly ignored in the literature), in which he described his own ethical position as teleological. This position corresponds also with his ethics generally and even his overall philosophical considerations. Therefore, in the thesis, Tatarkiewicz is recognized not only as a pluralistic, but also as a teleological thinker. The point is that pluralism and teleology appear to be central ideas for both Tatarkiewicz and Aristotle (in Tatarkiewicz's writings). For example, the *Analysis of Happiness*, Tatarkiewicz's main philosophical work, demonstrates that this influence was fundamental and lasting in this case. However, Aristotle's inspiring influence is not limited to the issues presented here. The thesis shows that it was much broader.