

# Introduction

## 0.1 *The scope of the research*

The subject of this work, Plato's reception in Poland, is not original, nor is it unknown in the research literature. Over one hundred years ago, the first text entitled *Plato in Poland* was published by Lewis Campbell, who enthusiastically reported on Wincenty Lutosławski's studies on Plato.<sup>1</sup> A synthetic study under a similar title was written by Izydora Dąmbska,<sup>2</sup> a representative of the younger generation of Kazimierz Twardowski's students. To this day this work is considered to be the most important reference point for research on the history of Plato's reception among Polish thinkers.<sup>3</sup> Dąmbska's work can therefore be treated as a starting point for further research on this subject, as a preliminary outline of the problem and a catalogue of authors and works that require verification and ordering.

In relation to Dąmbska's work, the present study aims to deepen and expand research on the subject significantly, while narrowing the time frame. By focusing on one and a half centuries of the development of Polish philosophy in an extremely diverse and philosophically eventful epoch that was to have far-reaching consequences surviving up to the present day, it was possible to take into account phenomena that went unnoticed or were deliberately omitted by Dąmbska. This study focuses both on the numerous works on Plato that have been more or less acknowledged by Polish philosophers, as well as on forgotten or unknown authors and works or those that have been misjudged, underestimated or ignored. At times it also proved to be necessary to rectify erroneous information concerning both the biographic and bibliographic facts and data, and to reassess the impact and value of particular texts. In some cases new and unknown texts have been brought to light, in others – available information has been re-evaluated. It may also be of significance that the research on the history of

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1 Campbell, 1893.

2 Dąmbska, 1972a.

3 Paczkowski even declared that the bibliography of Dąmbska's work covered all Polish studies up to the year of its publication (Paczkowski, 1998: 144). Nerczuk also relied above all on Dąmbska (Nerczuk, 2003: 57, note 1).

Plato's reception made it possible for more general conclusions to be drawn regarding the character of some of the trends in the development of Polish philosophy.

In justifying the scope of this study, it is easiest to provide arguments for enclosing the chronological framework within the years 1800–1950. This is a conventional framework covering the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was unique in the history of Polish philosophy, followed by the interwar period, and the short post-war years that coincided with the last years in the lives of the two most important Polish researchers of Plato, namely Lu-  
tosławski and Władysław Witwicki.

From this chronological framework it was necessary to eliminate a number of phenomena that were of secondary importance for Plato's philosophical reception, although they were significant for Polish culture. Studies on Plato's literary metamorphoses, which have their source in the Enlightenment tradition, have not been included in the present study.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the neo-humanism of the Vilnius school, inspired directly by Gottfried Ernst Grodek, has been omitted even though Grodek, despite adversities, was able to instil great passion for Greek antiquity, and especially for Plato, in the Vilnius milieu. The reason for this omission is that the interest in Plato of Grodek's students, of whom Józef Jeżowski and Adam Mickiewicz should be mentioned, did not yield results of a philosophical nature. They viewed Plato as a writer, a poet and an exponent of humanist ideals. For Jeżowski, Plato was an important subject of historical and philological research, and most of the Philomaths treated the dialogues as a source of moral ideals, of intellectual aristocratism, or as a model of *arete*. The case of Mickiewicz is sometimes referred to as "literary Platonism",<sup>5</sup> and it should be mentioned that the exceptional phenomenon of the neo-humanism of Vilnius had a great influence on the formation of the personality and literary works of Poland's national bard. This has been the subject of a great deal of research and has a considerable literature. Unfortunately, Grodek's circle did not yield any lasting fruit in the form of the Hellenistic research tradition. As a result, poetic references to Platonism are not included in this work. These were usually fragmentary and sometimes transformed to such an extent that it was too difficult to distinguish superficial similarities from actual influences, and consequently, to determine clearly the influence of Plato.

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4 Cf. Mróz, 2010b; 2012a.

5 E.g. Rudaś-Grodzka, 2003: 8–9.

Another omission is a work described as a translation of Plato's *Phaedo*,<sup>6</sup> which actually consists of a translation of an adaptation of the *Phaedo* by Moses Mendelssohn, who put his own arguments for the immortality of the soul within the framework of Plato's dialogue. Although this work played a role in *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment in Poland, it remained insignificant with respect to the reception of Plato in Poland.

The history of Polish translations of the dialogues, which began in the inter-uprising era of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, forms a separate issue in the problem of the reception of Plato's philosophy. Of the many translators of the dialogues, the majority translated single dialogues only, usually focusing on Plato's Socratic writings and translating them because of their main character, Socrates, and not in order to learn about Platonism. These translators were mostly philologists or teachers of classical languages in gymnasia, and their interest in the dialogues was related to their teaching. Their aim was to familiarise students with the colourful and relatively simple language of Socratic dialogues and, at the same time, to draw their attention to moral issues, basic problems of logic, *etc.*<sup>7</sup> Teachers also produced numerous works in which the structure of the dialogues and the logical construction of Socrates' arguments were dissected, explanations of the philological intricacies of the text provided, corrections suggested or remarks on the chronology of the dialogues added. These works, to a large extent derivative and sometimes directly based on German textbooks, have been omitted, with only a few exceptions.

The most important translator of Plato in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Antoni Bronikowski, a teacher at the gymnasium in Ostrów. There is, however, no evidence of his acquaintance with philosophical issues, for, apart from his translations of the dialogues, which were generally not well-received, he did not write any introduction or studies on Plato's philosophy.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, his activity is only recorded here. In contrast, the following writers

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6 In the *Bibliography of Polish Philosophy* this work was listed under the name of Plato, with the following description: "*Phaedo on the immortality of the soul, from Plato, in three conversations* (translated into German) by the famous philosopher M. Mendelssohn, translated into Polish by J. Tugendhold" (*Bibliografia filozofii polskiej 1750–1830*, 1955: 193, item 838a). Dąmbaska wrote that it was "a Polish translation of the German paraphrase of the *Phaedo*, departing from Plato's original" (Dąmbaska, 1972a: 73). She nevertheless included Mendelssohn's *Phaedo* among the translations of Plato in her bibliography (Dąmbaska, 1972a: 81).

7 Cf. Mróz, 2012b.

8 Cf. Mróz, 2014a.

did make attempts at commentary: Felicjan Antoni Kozłowski<sup>9</sup>, the first Polish translator of the dialogues, later Stanisław Lisiecki<sup>10</sup>, and finally, in a unique way, Witwicki. Those three translators wrote studies on Plato's philosophy, and therefore their presence in the present work is justified even though they were primarily translators.

The question of Polish translations of Plato will no doubt continue to be the subject of detailed studies by philologists, who mostly tend to provide critiques of previous translations, and especially those by Witwicki. For readers interested in basic information about the history of Polish translations of Plato, a chronological list of Polish editions of the dialogues has been placed in the appendix.

There was no place either, in the present work, for a separate discussion of the works by the aforementioned Dąbska, or by Maria Maykowska, authors of studies and translations. The reason for this is that the publication of their most important works on Plato falls in the post-war years. The lack of separate treatment does not mean, however, that their studies have been ignored.

While researching the reception of Plato's dialogues, one must be aware of the many related issues in various fields of study. Since the reception of literary material and issues concerning some of the translations of the dialogues have been excluded, the focus is centred on the philosophical aspects of the reception of Plato in Polish thought. The essential aim is to find such influences of Plato on Polish thought that are as pure as possible and not diluted by other influences. So, the basic aim was to search for the reception of Plato himself, of Plato only, and not the reception of the diverse historical forms of Platonisms which have permeated European philosophy since the times of Plato. Tadeusz Sinko has written meaningfully about ancient influences on Romanticism: "the main components of the wonderful scent of Romanticism were so closely interwoven with Hellenism that it is impossible to distinguish where one ends and the other begins".<sup>11</sup> With this in mind, it was decided that alleged "Platonisms", such as those attributed to August Cieszkowski<sup>12</sup> or Adam Jerzy Czartoryski<sup>13</sup>, do not fall within the current study. In the case of the latter, firm conclusions can be drawn only after his entire work *On Consolation* is published

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9 Cf. Mróz, 2011a.

10 Cf. Mróz, 2013.

11 Sinko, 1925: 40–41.

12 Cf. Sajdek, 2008: 163–178, *passim*; Mróz, 2009.

13 Cf. Jaworski, 1994a: 146–155.

as only scattered fragments have appeared so far. When determining whether these thinkers belonged to any particular current of Platonism, one must not overlook the extent of their knowledge or their ignorance of Plato's writings, or the frequency of their references to Plato. And it turns out that Czartoryski referred to Plato only incidentally, Cieszkowski – virtually never.

After a consideration of all the areas of extra-philosophical or dubious reception that will *not* be taken into account in our study of Plato in Poland during the period under examination, it will now be appropriate to consider what *will* be included and to provide a general outline of the content of this study. Plato's philosophical reception in the Polish milieu has been divided into three types, which basically correspond – with only a few exceptions – to three chronological stages of Plato's reception which are reflected in the three unequal parts of this book. The first stage concerns the passive reception of Platonism as a part of the wider process of the reception of contemporary philosophical currents by Polish authors who introduced the Polish philosophical milieu to the philosophy of Plato in its Kantian, Hegelian or neo-Kantian interpretations. The second stage consists of evaluations of Plato's philosophy provided by the representatives of different philosophical currents and philosophical approaches who referred directly to Plato and evaluated his philosophy from their own points of view, their philosophical positions. Their studies on Plato had essentially no effect on the content and direction of their own philosophical research. The third stage involves the implanting or integration of the Platonic material into the tissue of Polish philosophy. The authors classified into this stage used Plato's dialogues to build their own philosophical views and systems. In this stage Plato became the initial material on the basis of which these philosophers developed their own philosophical work. Plato became helpful and useful in the co-creation and co-production of works representing philosophical currents that originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Sometimes Polish philosophers integrated Plato so deeply into their philosophical thought that explanation and understanding of their own philosophical positions were made impossible without reference to Platonic sources and inspirations. Plato's dialogues were variously processed and interpreted by these philosophers and Platonism was integrated with their philosophies. Plato thus became one of the essential inspirations for a Polish philosophical tradition, the representatives of which, sometimes *expressis verbis*, declared the ancient pedigree of their own works.

It would be pointless to assess the value of these works from the present point of view or to compare them to the present state of research on Plato.

Today's experts in ancient philosophy may find in these works both familiar ideas which are still discussed today and those which have already been rejected. If, however, this work leads to a realisation that the Polish tradition of research on Plato was richer than it is usually believed to be, its task in the area of historiography of ancient thought will have been fulfilled. When interpreting Plato, it is worth referring not just to the state of the latest research published in Western centres, but also to Poland's philosophical heritage, for such studies were also conducted, and they were often unavailable to Western readers. The basic problems faced by the contemporary reader of Plato remain largely the same as a hundred years ago. It is therefore advisable to become acquainted with past attempts to interpret Plato. Hopefully, this work will contribute to further comparative studies on Platonic traditions, and the authors discussed here will be the subject of such studies. This does not mean that recent studies of Plato's philosophy are neglected here, but they are quoted only when their authors directly refer to earlier Polish works, either critically or by adopting earlier conclusions.

Let us repeat: it is not the aim of the present study to assess critically past views and works from today's point of view. In many cases our assessment would probably turn out to be negative. Sometimes the old views on Plato consisted of opinions which are certainly false or distorted. It would be futile, however, to argue against them from the perspective of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the historian of Polish philosophy, the following fact is essential: these works created the image of Plato in Polish philosophy, and at the same time, they were a part of Polish intellectual history.

Given that occasionally doubts have been raised regarding the discipline affiliation of research on the reception of ancient thought in Polish philosophy, it is necessary to state unambiguously that this work belongs to the field of the historiography of Polish philosophy. The primary sources of this work consist of texts written by Polish researchers analysing an important philosophical problem, namely Plato and his dialogues. Therefore despite the name of Plato in the title of this reception study, it belongs to the historiography of Polish philosophy. The source material that has been subjected to analysis is the effect of the work of Polish historians of philosophy, philosophers and sometimes philologists who confronted the problem of Plato, Platonism and the dialogues, and who used Plato's works in their own studies.

It seems that research of this kind can be regarded as an overdue fulfilment of Twardowski's demand that building a Polish philosophical tradition should be dependent on our philosophers' knowledge of their prede-

cessors. Twardowski wrote: “We have, in fact, much richer philosophical achievements than one might think. We neither use them properly in philosophical research nor in teaching philosophy. And we do not use them because we do not know them”.<sup>14</sup> Most likely this demand should also be applied to Polish research in the history of philosophy, including research on Plato. Not all of the results presented in older works have become outdated, and it is unlikely that problems with Plato will ever become obsolescent.

## 0.2 The problem of reception in studies on the history of philosophy

When one attempts to study the reception of a philosophical work, any philosophical idea or the image of a certain philosopher in the age-long development of European philosophy, one might be tempted to precede the publication of such a study with the well-known and frequently repeated maxim: *Habent sua fata libelli*. When studying Plato reception, another comment immediately comes to mind, namely the famous opinion about the history of philosophy expressed by Alfred North Whitehead, in which he refers to the history of philosophy, Plato, and the footnotes. The methodological foundation of the study of Plato’s reception has also been aptly described by a Polish scholar, Mirosława Czarnawska, who conducted research on the neo-Kantian interpretation of Plato: “Grasping Plato’s thought means almost grasping the basis of philosophy itself – and one can do this in many ways. It is in fact an encounter with thinking itself and all philosophers must constantly experience this meeting anew, individually for themselves and on their own.”<sup>15</sup> The study of the reception of Plato must not, then, be reduced to the history of the impact of a chronologically distant philosopher on a number of later thinkers. Instead, every philosophical era, many philosophical trends and many philosophers are substantially reflected in their interpretations of Plato. Their relation to Plato may be considered as their relation to philosophy itself. Plato and his dialogues form a challenge and a task which every philosopher confronts and must continue to confront. The history of diverse interpretations of Plato is not just a history of reception, but it is the history of the answers to the questions which are posed by Plato and his legacy since he is still a con-

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14 Twardowski, 1927a: 138.

15 Czarnawska, 1997: 95.

stant source of problems and inspiration. His dialogues are still the philosophers' *Bible*.<sup>16</sup>

It should also be remembered that research into Plato's reception in modern thought is a methodologically distinct task. The reception of Kant's philosophy, of Hegel's philosophy, or of any other author by their contemporaries does not involve the same complications as those which are inevitable with regard to the reception of a chronologically distant, ancient author, especially one whose name is still considered as synonymous with "philosopher". The studies already conducted on various phenomena of Plato's philosophical reception demonstrate that he should rather be treated as a complex philosophical, artistic, literary, philological and historical problem, and it was this that the authors examined in our research had to confront. Philosophers who were chronologically and intellectually closer to these authors did not present such a problem. It was not necessary to determine the basic biographical facts nor the authenticity of their writings, and there was no need to separate the layers of myth or poetry from their philosophy. They attempted to resolve the problems that beset their contemporary readers and to express the common issues of their times. In the case of Plato's reception, it was only the problems themselves that were shared by Plato and his readers since they were of a universal nature. That is why the Plato presented in this reception study is not just a thinker under reception; he is rather one of the many philosophical problems which have been tackled by modern historians of philosophy and philosophers who have sometimes had to reach far beyond philosophy itself to solve this problem.

Even when the issue of Plato's reception is reduced only to philosophical problems, it is still unique. When a less unique philosopher goes under reception, what is processed and subjected to criticism is the more or less defined image of that philosopher, a complex of distinct ideas, etc. The reception of almost any philosopher can be considered as a survey of the history of a certain philosophical idea or of a certain philosophical concept. In the case of Plato, it is a reconstruction of the answers to the questions about Plato and Platonism themselves, about the form of the very concept undergoing reception. For the reception of Plato is not a simple reception of a complex of well-defined ideas, but rather the reception of a problem, which consists of Platonism itself and of its author.

An attempt to delineate a theoretical framework for reception studies in the history of philosophy was made by Jan Garewicz, and some of his con-

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16 Stróżewski, 1963: 373.



clusions are still worth considering. Stanisław Borzym referred to Garewicz's reflections in his research on the reception of Henri Bergson in Polish thought. Garewicz distinguished two layers in the reception process. The first involves merely factual reconstruction. The second layer concerns the diffusion of philosophical ideas that are capable of "making a change in a global structure, which could be referred to as philosophical awareness. This may involve individual consciousness only, when the reception of one philosopher's ideas by another philosopher is concerned; or collective consciousness, and then the transformation can be characterised as an overall change in a particular philosophical tradition".<sup>17</sup> The present study contains a great deal of factual information which forms the basis for determining the impact of Plato on Polish philosophy. It is difficult, however, to point to a certain current of Polish thought or a philosophical tradition and decide whether it might have been in some part the result of the direct impact of Plato or whether it was simply a form of Platonism. Nevertheless, it is clear that the image of Plato held by the general public underwent a process of evolution, and this change can be regarded as a result of the activity of some of Plato's researchers. Undoubtedly, Plato's dialogues influenced the philosophical views of numerous individual researchers as well. The impact of Plato is mutual, since in the process of reception "the object under reception is transformed, even if the recipient considers himself to be a follower of the ideas and views acquired".<sup>18</sup>

It is difficult, at the outset, to answer the question about the views that were acquired in the process of Plato reception; they cannot be assumed as established or given since even such a fundamental issue as determining the set of authentic dialogues on which Plato's philosophy could be reconstructed is itself an important subject in Plato's reception. It cannot therefore be assumed that the contemporary state of knowledge on the subject of Plato's writings and philosophy, where there is, in any case, a lack of consensus among historians of philosophy, could form the basis for the assessment of past views.

For obvious reasons, any analysis of the reception of Plato must be essentially diachronic, although its synchronous aspect comes to the fore when contemporary interpretations or contemporary images of Plato go under reception. Among reception levels, Garewicz distinguished the following: "the level of direct references; the level of the conceptual apparatus; the level of the subjects undertaken and the way they were expressed;

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17 Garewicz, 1979: 104–105.

18 Garewicz, 1979: 105.

the level of the main ideas. These levels are listed here by way of example, but it is by no means suggested that the study of philosophical reception must be conducted on all levels”.<sup>19</sup> When starting a study on the reception of Plato, the first of these levels must be explored, namely the direct references. Without direct references, attempts to examine the main ideas or concepts that have their origins in the dialogues, including the area of philosophical reflection, would most likely turn into the overall history of European philosophy, or at least a large part of it. In the case of Plato and his impact, there is a very high probability of such an outcome since even in relation to the broadly understood reception of Kant in the philosophy of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries a similar danger exists. Borzym warned against such a broad understanding of reception, providing the following example: “There are some who question the original character of Bergsonism; they want to consider it, say, as a continuation of neo-Platonism, and neo-Platonism, in turn, as you know, is a reception of Platonism. Moreover Husserl and Bergson were included among the Platonists, so both of them would simply be followers of Plato. Considerations of this kind can really discourage one from dealing with the problem of reception”.<sup>20</sup> It is clear, then, that only when a firm framework limited to direct references has been established can the other reception levels, as listed by Garewicz, be examined within it. For the purposes of the present work, it is also worth noting the importance of a substantial presence of references to Plato himself, without which research on Plato’s reception would be seriously hampered.<sup>21</sup>

To sum up, in the light of the above methodological reflection on the study of reception, the research task of the present work consists, above all, in limiting the research area to those works in which direct, and not incidental, references to Plato can be found. Such references should at least constitute an important axis for considerations in the authors’ philosophical activity, if not the autonomous subject of their research. This research step is essentially equivalent to reproducing the factual level, by finding references to Plato. Partially, therefore, it belongs to the field of the history of the historiography of philosophy because “it is very difficult to draw a clear boundary between the position of the author who belongs to a particular reception current and that of the interpreter who is not directly com-

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19 Garewicz, 1979: 106.

20 Borzym, 1984: 10.

21 Cf. Borzym, 1984: 13.

mitted”.<sup>22</sup> It is difficult to make this distinction because the detached attitude of historians of philosophy is an illusion and reception research should explore “cool and balanced direct reactions, written intentionally from neutral positions that do not differ much in their intentions from historiography of philosophy, all the more so, because a neutral attitude is itself usually a pretence, being simply a hidden attack or defence, taken consciously or unconsciously”.<sup>23</sup> It was only when the area of research was limited to direct references to Plato that it was possible to elaborate the research into further layers of reception. The present study is therefore diachronic research with small synchronous exceptions which are limited to the reception and impact in the layer of particular methods or interpretations of Plato that appeared contemporaneously with the authors under discussion.

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Preliminary work on the subject of Plato reception in Poland between 1800 and 1950 began with the publication in 2010 of a selection of texts.<sup>24</sup> This included shorter studies or fragments of larger works produced by Polish philosophers, historians of philosophy, philologists or poets, some of which came to light as a result of archival research. As a whole, these works represented only a small part of the broad spectrum of Polish approaches to Plato. The present study, on the other hand, was intended rather to be a synthetic work in the history of philosophy. Works of this kind are usually preceded and based on the results of monograph studies, the subject of which, in the case of research on reception of Plato should be the figures of individual researchers or histories of the reception of individual dialogues or philosophical ideas. In many areas, however, it still proved necessary to undertake basic research. Some of the researchers whose works were essential for the present study were barely mentioned in the literature, and sometimes it was difficult to determine basic biographic data, such as the dates of their births and deaths, thus necessitating archival research. There is much uncharted territory in the history of Polish philosophy. Thus, the work contains some biographical facts which were hitherto unknown. This may seem insignificant, but it should be remembered that Plato is rarely the subject of dispassionate research. Reading Plato has

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22 Borzym, 1984: 10.

23 Borzym, 1984: 11.

24 Mróz, 2010.

frequently influenced the decisions and fates of scholars who displayed an emotional, personal attitude towards their subject. Plato's works aroused and still arouse emotions. This should also be seen as a justification for the numerous quotes included in the present study since it seemed important to acquaint the reader with the language that was used to talk about Plato in previous epochs.

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