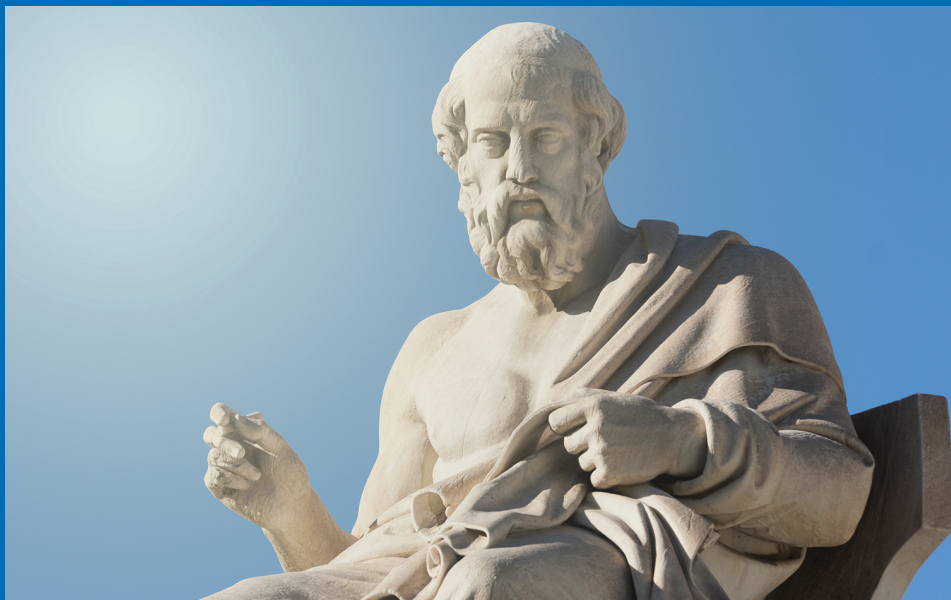


Tomasz Mróz

Plato in Poland 1800–1950

Types of Reception – Authors – Problems



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Preface for international readers

This book, which I now have the pleasure of presenting to international readers, was originally written and published in Polish (*Platon w Polsce 1800–1950. Typy recepcji – autorzy – problemy*, Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, Kęty, 2012) and initially intended for historians of philosophy researching Poland's philosophical tradition and for experts in ancient philosophy who felt the need to find out more about the history of their own research area. The book was the final outcome of a research project funded by the Polish government and carried out in the period 2008 to 2011. I then submitted the book as one of the requirements for the procedure of granting me my postdoctoral degree (habilitation) in 2014. An integral part of the research project was the publication of an anthology of texts that reflected the main trends and research areas of Polish Plato scholarship (Mróz, 2010). These texts were difficult to access at that time and some even had to be retrieved from manuscripts.

The aim of the English version of the book is to present a kind of map of the history of Polish research on Plato to international readers. I was encouraged to undertake this project on account of the more marked interest in Polish philosophy in recent decades, with works on the history of philosophy in Poland being increasingly published in English, and also in German or French. Most frequently these works have focused on the philosophers of the Lvov-Warsaw school or on specific currents of reception of foreign philosophies in Poland, such as 19th century Polish Hegelianism. A separate set of studies available in Western European languages consists of works on the history of medieval and early modern thought in Poland, but the attention of international audiences has also been drawn to some outstanding figures of Polish philosophy, e.g. Wincenty Lutosławski, Leon Chwistek or Władysław Tatarkiewicz, who cannot be unequivocally classified into any particular trends of their times. At the same time, it seemed to me that a presentation of the Polish reception of Plato's philosophy would be of some value for foreign researchers, especially as this reception reflects a more complex image of Poland's philosophical tradition, and in some cases includes less well-known works and figures. My intention was to supplement the general image of Polish philosophy in an important area of the history of philosophical studies on Plato and the history of the historiography of ancient philosophy in Poland,

and so to fill a gap in the literature that had been graphically brought to my attention in Anthony Kenny's excellent *History of Philosophy* (Oxford, 2007). In Volume 2 of this work, which was devoted to medieval philosophy, there is a map of 'the world of medieval philosophy' (p. X) which may appear quite striking to Polish and other East European readers because of the vast blank spaces east of Munich and north of Constantinople. Since such blank spaces also still exist in the historiographical literature and discourse on European philosophy of the 19th and 20th centuries, I saw the need to supplement this literature and fill in some of the white areas.

With the original target audience in mind, I decided to intersperse my narrative and arguments with quotations so as to provide examples of the language and style used in discussing Plato. The quotations chosen were significant, graphic and vivid, but also sometimes suggestive and earthy in character. When it came to the translation of the book, an attempt was made to ensure that the quotations remained as close to the original as possible, yet this led to numerous translation difficulties, for it was impossible to portray the sometimes archaic charm of the language to the English-speaking reader, and some of their ambiguity and the peculiarities of their style may have been lost in translation. It is to be hoped that at least some of the richness of expression and the colourful idiosyncrasy of the style can still delight non-Polish speaking readers. As for various Polish forms of the titles of the dialogues, they have been anglicised and made more uniform.

Most of the footnotes in this book, as well as in the original Polish version, refer to Polish literature, and although these are unlikely to be of use to historians of Plato scholarship or Platonism in Europe, they may be of some value for researchers in the field of Polish studies, and so they have been retained in their original form.

The present English volume, like the original Polish book, is the result of a project funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland, and the anonymous experts of the Ministry should be thanked, for without their positive reviews it would not have been possible to undertake the effort of rewriting the book in English as a part of the National Program for the Development of Humanities (NPRH), *Uniwersalia* 2.1. I am also grateful to my home institution, the University of Zielona Góra, for granting me partial exemption from my teaching duties in order to carry out the work on the text of this book. Last but not least, I owe great thanks to Mrs. Una Maclean-Hańćkowiak, an essential collaborator in the NPRH project, for doing the language editing of the entire text repeatedly, which involved discussions on the structure of the text and on

more general issues concerning aspects of linguistics and translation, all of which were, for me, very fruitful and instructive.

Finally, I would also like to draw the readers' attention to three of my recent papers published in English, where further enquiries into issues touched upon in this book are developed. Their subjects are Lewis Campbell's studies on Plato (Mróz, 2019), Campbell's relations to Wincenty Lutosławski (Mróz, 2018), and the latter's correspondence with Bertrand Russell (Mróz, 2020).

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