

## Introduction

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Józef M. Bocheński (1902–1995) was among the most distinguished Polish philosophers of the twentieth century. Such was the depth and breadth of his erudition that he was equally proficient in the history of Western philosophy as in contemporary continental and and anglo-american philosophy. As for his contributions to logic, his pioneering investigations in the history of logic—including Indian logic—were highly regarded by the best logicians of the twentieth century. Bocheński achieved world-wide reputation thanks to his comprehensive history of logic, *Formale Logik*, published in 1956 (translated as *Formal Logic* in 1961). Alongside these achievements another major area of his research concerned Marxist philosophy in the Soviet Union. Together with several collaborators he founded, at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, the Institute of East European Studies (Ost-Europa Institut/Institut de l'Europe orientale) in 1957 with the aim of systematically studying Soviet philosophy in all its aspects.

Bocheński's close and critical examination of Soviet ideology most likely is the reason why, following World War II, the reception of his work in Poland was so limited. The representatives of the dominant communist ideology in Poland succeeded in preventing his achievements from exercising any influence on Polish philosophy. What few contacts did exist between Bocheński and philosophers in Poland were based largely on personal ties. But they did include as well the narrow circle of those who continued to work in the spirit of the Lvov-Warsaw School, such as professor Nieznański in Warsaw and professor Woleński in Cracow. Poles established in the West, such as Leszek Kołakowski, who held a position in Oxford following his expulsion from Poland in 1968, had by far more contact with Bocheński.

Nor was Bocheński's style of philosophy greeted with much enthusiasm by Catholic thinkers in Poland. The dominant current of Catholic philosophy, the

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existential Thomism of the so-called Lublin School, looked rather disapprovingly at Bocheński's approach to Thomism. The greatest opposition from these circles had to do with attempts to apply the rigorous methods of logical analysis to the solution of philosophical problems. In contrast, the Catholic philosophers maintained that philosophy begins in the intuitive grasp of existence (of being) on the basis of which a corresponding metaphysics of reality as a whole is to be constructed. The methods they applied harkened back to scholastic forms of reasoning to the detriment of the tools of contemporary mathematical logic. Few, if any among them, attributed any significance to Bocheński's declaration that had Aquinas lived in our days he would have had recourse to the achievements of contemporary logical analysis. For these reasons Polish Thomists treated Bocheński rather as a force to be resisted in view of what they considered to be his unfounded attempts to render Aquinas' thinking "contemporary."

Bocheński's reentry into Polish philosophical life started in the 1980s. At the time Bocheński conducted, in Fribourg, a private seminar in Polish—the 'Sempol'—attended by students and scholars travelling from Poland on grants. They thus had the opportunity to become acquainted with the current state of research by philosophers and logicians in the West. As a result more and more information about Bocheński, his person and his work, began to appear in the course of the 1990s in Poland. Philosophical journals published articles about him by Jan Woleński and Władysław Stróżewski from Cracow; Edward Nieznański and Tadeusz Olszewski from Warsaw; A. Czech and Czesław Głombik from Katowice; but also, in a critical vein, by Andrzej Bronk and Stanisław Majdański of the Catholic University in Lublin.

In the wake of the fall of communism in 1989 Bocheński travelled frequently to Poland. At the time he was a self-declared proponent of "hard" analytical philosophy who enjoyed considerable renown and respect throughout the world. He was alarmed by the irrationalism prevalent in Western culture to which Poland at that time appeared to be all too open, uncritically. In accordance with the tradition and the imposing heritage of the Lvov-Warsaw School he advanced instead the ideals of clear and rigorous thinking based on logical principles. He was deeply suspicious of all manner of 'superstitions' propagated by what he termed 'humanist' intellectuals, 'humanism' being in his eyes the bane of scientific philosophical thinking and a cultural scourge. Convictions like these caused him to produce a dictionary-like compendium of one hundred popular, widespread superstitions exerting a nefarious ideological—unfounded—influence on scholarship, ethics, politics, and everyday life.

Bocheński's views on questions like these gained considerable popularity among a wide cross-section of readers in Poland. But apart from these writings, translations appeared of his notable analysis of authority—*Was ist Autorität?* (published originally in 1974)—and *The Logic of Religion* (1965) along with several shorter texts applying logical analysis. In due course, texts from Bocheński's sovietological period as well as his presentations of philosophical themes for the broader public were likewise translated. Among those who contributed to disseminating in Poland Bocheński's philosophical accomplishments mention should be made especially of Fr. Korneliusz Policki. Despite these developments lacking still are Polish

translations of *Formale Logik* and *Europäische Philosophie der Gegenwart* (2nd edition, 1951), the latter of which exists in many languages, including Russian. The translation of these and other texts by Bocheński will be the basis of drawing up a portrait of Bocheński's scholarly achievements as well as assessing his importance within Polish culture. In any case, this portrait will certainly show him not only as a sovietologist, a critic of ideologies and superstitions but likewise as a notable philosopher of logic and a penetrating historian of significant moments in twentieth-century philosophy.

The present special issue of *Studies in East European Thought* includes texts originally presented (except that by E.M. Świderski) at a symposium organized in October 2012 by the Institute of Philosophy of the Casimir the Great University, Bydgoszcz, Poland, on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of Bocheński's birth. Taken together, these contributions show how Bocheński's thinking, some 20 years after his death, is being received today.

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