

Short History of Polish Philosophy

The formal history of philosophy in Poland is said to have begun in the fifteenth century, following the revival of the University of Kraków by King Władysław II Jagiełło in 1400.



The King Władysław II Jagiełło

However, the true beginnings of Polish philosophy reach back to the thirteenth century.

Among the most famous Polish philosophers a thirteenth century scientist Witelo has to be mentioned, as well as, sixteenth century Renaissance polymath Nicolaus Copernicus.

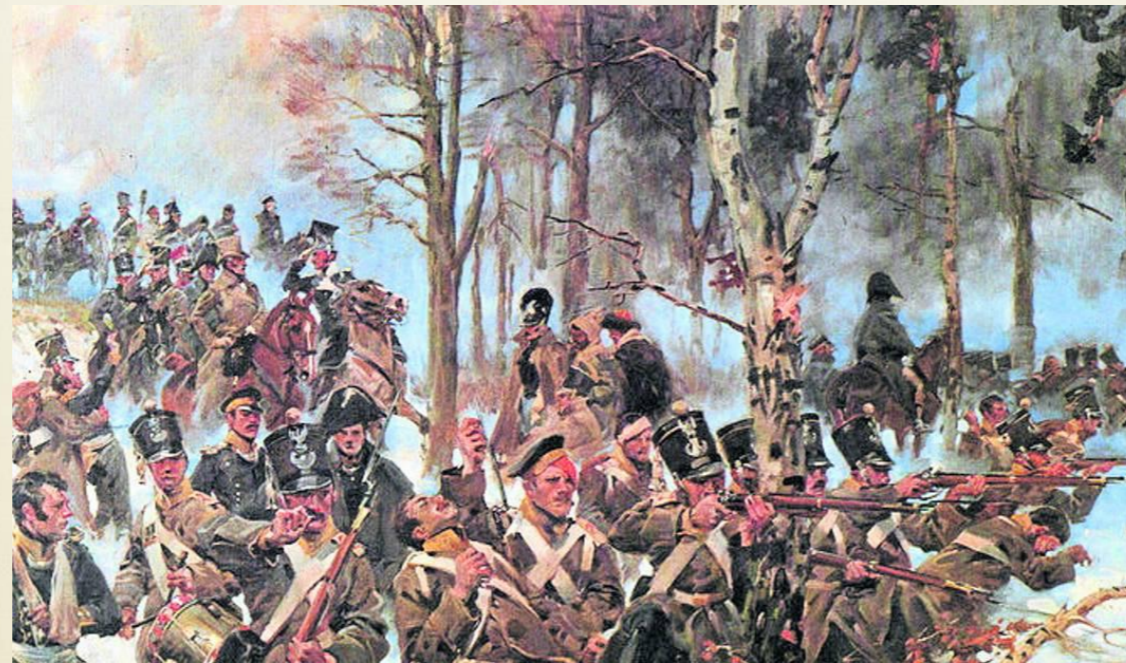


Jan Matejko, "*Nicolaus Copernicus, meaning conversation with God*"

From the beginning of the fifteenth century, Polish philosophy, centered at Kraków University - it did feature representatives of all wings of mature Scholasticism.

In the mid-18th century Scholasticism was followed by the Enlightenment.

The period between November 1830 and January 1863 Uprisings, reflected European Romantic and Idealist trends.



November Uprising
Battle of Olszynka

The disastrous outcome of the January 1863 Uprising led to sober thought and work directed at realistic goals - the watchword became "organic work"



20th century

Even before Poland regained independence at the end of World War I, her intellectual life continued to develop. The twentieth century brought a new quickening to Polish philosophy. There was growing interest in western philosophical currents.

Polish philosophers made contributions to specialized fields—to psychology, the history of philosophy, the theory of knowledge, and especially mathematical logic.

Selected Polish Philosophers

- Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz
- Józef Gołuchowski
- Mikołaj Kopernik
- Józef Kremer
- Stanisław Lem
- Wincenty Lutosławski
- Jan Łukasiewicz
- Władysław Tatarkiewicz
- Kazimierz Twardowski
- Stanisław Ignacy
Witkiewicz
- Józef Tischner

One of the most famous Polish philosophers was Leszek Kolakowski...

Lech Kolakowski



1927 - 2009

Biography

Born in Radom in 1927, Kolakowski is the outstanding living Polish philosopher. He has lived in exile since 1968 and is currently a Fellow of All Saints' College at Oxford.



Old Radom's photo

Intersts

His primary interest is the history of philosophy, especially since the eighteenth century liberalism, the philosophy of culture, and the philosophy of religion. Aside from philosophical texts, Kolakowski has written literary works. These, however, are closely associated with the author's professional concerns, and would have to be classed as philosophical tales (THIRTEEN TALES FROM THE KINGDOM OF LAILONIA and CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEVIL).

Problems of Kolakowski's works

In these tales, Kolakowski uses an accessible and attractive literary form to analyze philosophical problems and paradoxes and to present discussions among different philosophical schools and doctrines. These stories are marked by intelligent wit and a mastery of literary conventions and styles, especially in the BIBLICAL TALES.

Problems of Kolakowski's works

Kolakowski's books long appeared in Poland in underground editions, playing a prominent role in shaping the Polish intellectual opposition.

The first text of Kolakowski's to be confiscated by the censor - and, subsequently, the first to begin to function underground - was the 1956 manifesto "What is Socialism?"

In 1996, Leszek Kolakowski recorded ten short lectures on issues in the philosophy of culture (on authority, tolerance, betrayal, equality, fame, and falsehood, among others) for Polish Television. These were then published in book form as **MINI-LECTURES ON MAXI-ISSUES.**

Problems of Kolakowski's work

This volume contains two unusual and appealing satirical works



Book cover of 13 STORIES FROM THE KINGDOM OF LAILONIA

Message of Kolakowski's work

The first, **TALES FROM THE KINGDOM OF LAILONIA**, is set in a fictional land. Each story illustrates some aspect of human inability to come to terms with imperfection, infinitude, history, and nature. The second, **THE KEY TO HEAVEN**, is a collection of seventeen biblical tales from the Old Testament told in such a way that the story and the moral play off each other to illustrate political, moral, or existential foibles and follies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS: 13 TALES FROM THE KINGDOM OF LAILONIA

Looking for Lailonia

The Hump

A Tale about Children's Toys

A Beautiful Face

How Gyom Became an Elderly Gentleman

The Famous One How the Divine Maior Lost His Throne

The Red Patch

The War with Things

How the Problem of Longevity Was Solved

Outrageous Mints

The Story of the Greatest Quarrel

A Tale of Great Shame



"13 Tales from the Kingdom of Lailonia for Big and Small" by Leszek Kołakowski presents us with various phenomena of the modern world. In these stories we will see absurdities, weaknesses, stupidities in which we participate every day.

What we can learn from the book:

- The most obvious message is to show the effects of lack of time, agreement, respect, acceptance in the parent-child relationship.

- The book is full of wonderfully ridiculous stories about the absurdities of our everyday life. We got used to them so much that we do not even notice them.

- We destroy our little worlds thoughtlessly. Just as people in Laliloni destroyed their small globes but when they got bored they reached for more.
- We want to have more, so we buy a lot of unnecessary things the same as the residents of Lailonia who bought unnecessary objects .

- We often focus on non-essential things, we do not notice how much evil we do to our planet and the people around us.

- Kolakowski remains a philosopher, but his teaching is very accessible and understandable to everyone

the end

THANKS FOR WATCHING

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI



Born in Radom in 1927, Kolakowski is the outstanding living Polish philosopher. He has lived in exile since 1968 and is currently a Fellow of All Saints' College at Oxford.

His primary interest is the history of philosophy, especially since the eighteenth century liberalism, the philosophy of culture, and the philosophy of religion. Aside from philosophical texts, Kolakowski has written literary works. These, however, are closely associated with the author's professional concerns, and would have to be classed as philosophical tales (THIRTEEN TALES FROM THE KINGDOM OF LAILONIA and CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEVIL).

In these tales, Kolakowski uses an accessible and attractive literary form to analyze philosophical problems and paradoxes and to present discussions among different philosophical schools and doctrines. These stories are marked by intelligent wit and a mastery of literary conventions and styles, especially in the BIBLICAL TALES.

Kolakowski's books long appeared in Poland in underground editions, playing a prominent role in shaping the Polish intellectual opposition. Especially significant was the essay THE CHAPLAIN AND THE JESTER, which analyzed the attitudes of the intelligentsia toward authority. The first text of Kolakowski's to be confiscated by the censor - and, subsequently, the first to begin to function underground - was the 1956 manifesto "What is Socialism?", which he wrote for "Po prostu" magazine. In 1996, Leszek Kolakowski recorded ten short lectures on issues in the philosophy of culture (on authority, tolerance, betrayal, equality, fame, and falsehood, among others) for Polish Television. These were then published in book form as MINI-LECTURES ON MAXI-ISSUES.

This volume contains two unusual and appealing satirical works by the well-known European philosopher Kolakowski. The first, Tales from the Kingdom of Lailonia, is set in a fictional land.

Each story illustrates some aspect of human inability to come to terms with imperfection, infinitude, history, and nature. The second, The Key to Heaven, is a collection of seventeen biblical tales from

the Old Testament told in such a way that the story and the moral play off each other to illustrate political, moral, or existential foibles and follies.

Table of Contents:

TALES FROM THE KINGDOM OF LAILONIA

Looking for Lailonia

The Hump

A Tale about Children's Toys

A Beautiful Face

How Gyom Became an Elderly Gentleman

The Famous One

How the Divine Maior Lost His Throne

The Red Patch

The War with Things

How the Problem of Longevity Was Solved

Outrageous Mints

The Story of the Greatest Quarrel

A Tale of Great Shame

THE KEY TO HEAVEN

God, or the Contradictions Between the Motives and the Consequences of Human Action

The People of Israel, or the Consequences of Unselfishness Cain, or the Interpretation of the Principle "To Each According to His Merits"

Noah, or the Temptations of Solidarity Lot's Wife, or the Appeal of the Past Sarah, or the Conflict Between the General and the Personal in Morality Abraham, or Lofty Grief Esau, or the Relation of Philosophy to Trade

God, or the Relativism of Mercy Balaam, or the Problem of Objective Guilt

King Saul, or Two Kinds of Consistency in Life

Rahab, or Real and Imagined Solitude Job, or the Contradictions of Virtue King Herod, or the Misery of the Moralist

Ruth, or the Dialogue Between Love and Bread

Jael, or Heroism Gone Astray

Solomon, or Men as Gods

Salome, or All Men Are Mortal

Najbardziej śmiałym literackim przedsięwzięciem Kołakowskiego wydaje się 13 bajek z królestwa Lailonii. Stosunkowo dużą rolę odgrywają w nich fabuła, metaforyka i konstrukcje paraboliczne²³. Przyjrzyjmy się bliżej właśnie powiastkom lailońskim, jako że cechuje je największa autonomia wobec filozoficznej części pisarstwa Kołakowskiego. Co prawda, także w bajkach doszukać się możemy wyraźnych konceptów teoretycznych organizujących fabuły i sprowadzić je, jak

21 Dyskursywność rozumiem tu przede wszystkim jako przeciwieństwo wypowiedzi literackiej i dominację rygoru logicznego nad elementami obrazowymi i ekspresywnymi. 22 Mencwe I, op. cit., s. 204. 23 Michalski i zalicza bajki lailońskie właśnie do parabolicznej strategii filozofowania.

I-5.indd 88 2013-06-17 13:22:44

OPOWIEŚĆ O WIELKIEJ WZGLĘDNOŚCI... 89

czynili niektórzy krytycy, do kilku wyrazistych morałów²⁴, jednak zabieg taki miałby charakter redukcyjny. Bajki zasługują na bliższą uwagę, szczególnie że nie doczekały się dotąd pełniejszego omówienia, a tylko kilku krótkich i zdawkowych recenzji. Ponadto – co dla nas ma znaczenie kluczowe – w tym właśnie cyklu najsilniej doszły do głosu, szczerkowo występujące także w pozostałych utworach, groteskowe środki wyrazu, takie jak: deformacje postaci (cielesne i psychologiczne) oraz ograniczenie ich do funkcji marionetek, motyw metamorfozy, parodia, hiperbola, absurd, czarny humor, a także: łączenie wykluczających się porządków motywacyjnych, zderzanie sprzeczności (kontrastowanie nastrojów, jakości, etc.), uniezwyklenie.

A tale of Children's toys

In days of old the merchant of Lailonia kept up a lively trade with Babylon. Their principal export to Babylon was special sheath for the protection of pheasant forks, while their imports were mostly confined to combs for the grooming of camels. The reason for this import was the total absence in Lailonia of a camel-grooming comb industry and this absence was due in part to the fact that there had never been any camels in Lailonia. Not a single one, and that was that. But we shall not delve too deeply into reasons, we shall describe facts.

The fact was, then, that among those who traded in this way with Babylon was an old merchant by the name Frejklo. He was called Frejklo because he had a big crooked nose with four freckles on it – a yellow one, a red one, an orange and a black one – with the tip pointed slightly downwards, which gave its owner some resemblance to a vulture, and the ancient Lailonian name for such a nose, big and crooked, with just such four freckles and with its tip pointed slightly downwards, giving, was ‘its owner some resemblance to a vulture, was ‘frejklo’. (its name in modern Lailonian does not concern us, we must not be led astray by details.)

The merchant Frejklo, then set off every six months to Babylon, duly equipped with an ample supply of sheaths for the protection of the pheasant forks (pheasants were considered a great delicacy in Babylon, perhaps because they were so seldom to be found there: in the whole of Babylon you might be able to bag one every thirty years or so, and even then no one knew where it had come from), and returned bearing a very large amount of combs for the grooming of camels, which were immediately snatched up for every hefty price by the residents of Lailonia. As a result of these trips, the merchant Frejklo amassed a sizeable fortune, and with it he built a handsome villa for his daughter, whose name was Memi. (In ancient Lailonian ‘Memi’ is a verb which means, “to ride dashingly on a small pink elephant with one ear missing while brandishing a pale blue flag made out of silk ribbons and grinding a mill with hands tipped by nails varnished a blood-red”, sweet little Memi often played in this way, hence her name.)

One spring day, just when the chamomile orchards were in full blossoms (in Lailonia chamomile is a huge tree that grows to the height of six pounins; a pounin is a measure of height roughly equivalent in size to the horns of a four-year-old fallow deer) and the marzipan streams were flowing in all directions (in Lailonian marzipan streams flow only in spring, when their passage channels deepen furrows through cities, demolishing houses and streets, not much notice is taken of this by the residents, because in spring it doesn’t really matter where you live, and by summer the marzipan streams have disappeared, and the houses and streets grow back quickly), the merchant Frejklo was just returning from his trip, exceedingly pleased after some profitable transactions. Before going home, he stopped off to see his little Memi at her villa. Not finding her at home, however, he sat down in the sitting room and took out his instrument for making holes in globes. (This was an occupation of which the merchant Frejklo was very fond; the Lailonian hole-in-globe-instrument factory sold him its products at discount price, because he advertised them in Babylon, making holes in Babylonian globes whenever he was over there.) Thus occupied he waited for his daughter, who rode up within a short time on a small pink elephant with one ear missing, waving to him from a distance. She greeted him and at once began pleadingly: “Oh, Papa, don’t you be angry with me!”

“And why should I be angry with you, my dear?” asked the merchant Frejklo.

“Because, Papa darling. I treated myself to a present, but you will have to pay for it.”

Here the merchant Frejklo showed some concern, for he knew that sweet little Memi tended to be something of a spend-thrift. However, he asked her calmly, “And what is this present?”

“I ordered a life-sized globe”, Memi replied . (Here it must be mentioned that making holes in globes was a favourite pastime in the merchant Frejklo’s family, as indeed it was in the rest Lailonia. Young and old devoted days on end to this fascinating occupation, and indeed this was one of the reasons that holes in globes were so cheap in Lailonia.)

The merchant Frejklo was considered the matter. He wasn’t quite sure exactly what “life-sized” meant but he thought that everything in the world was probably life-sized; of such a size, in other words, as a nature had endowed it with. Just in case, however, he asked Memi for a more detailed explanation.

..... Soon a globe was delivered and Pigu, seeing him, said he could not pay him. So he shouted at the shop boys that they would take him back, because he was poorly finished. Memi was very unhappy. So he suggested her making holes in a real globe.

Little Memi being a quick-witted child, grasped the suggestion at once. Sulked a little, complained that the other globe had been better and stressed the superiority of the firm that had produced it, but finally, having extracted from her father the promise that on the following day he would take her to a dinner of orange guinea-fowl, , she relented, and allowed herself to be won over. She ran quickly outside, snatched up her instrument for making holes in globes, and began to play.

The results were not long in coming. By the evening the whole earth was in holes, and from the every country telegrams began to pour into Lailonia: who was making holes in the earth in this outrageous way? Alas, they came too late; for before anyone had had time to realize it, little Memi had made hole in everything.

The earth was full of holes and practically unusable.

Hard times now awaited the merchant Frejklo. He was forced to take responsibility for what his daughter had done, and all the countries demanded huge sums in compensations. Not having the money to pay it, he went to prison for non-payment of debts while little Memi continued to play. He stayed there for a very long time (and doubtless he is still there now) , reflecting sadly on the inadvisability of begrudging children money on toys.

Here is Lailonia - the land of the chamomile orchards were in full blossoms (in Lailonia chamomileis a huge tree that grows to the height of six poinins; a ponin is a measure of height roughly equivalent in the length of the neck of a four-year-old flamingo.

Lailonians' favorite pastime was making holes in the globes. Both young and old devote themselves to this exciting occupation.

Making holes in the globes was also the favourite pastime of the old Pigu. He was called Pigu because he had a big crooked nose with four freckles on it – a yellow one, a red one, an orange and a black one –in Lailonian the name for such a nose is Pigu.

Pigu was a merchant and ran serious business but every free moment he devoted to his favourite pastime.

the merchant Frejklo amassed a sizeable fortune, and with it he built a handsome villa for his daughter, whose name was Memi.

In Lailonian 'Memi' is a verb which means, "to ride dashingly on a small pink elephant with one ear missing while brandishing a pale blue flag made out of silk ribbons and grinding a mill with hands tipped by nails varnished a blood-red", sweet little Memi often played in this way, hence her name.

But more than anything else, Memi loved making holes in the globes.

In days of old the merchant of Lailonia kept up a lively trade with Babylon. Their principal export to Babylon was special sheath for the protection of pheasant forks.

pheasants were considered a great delicacy in Babylon, perhaps because they were so seldom to be found there: in the whole of Babylon you might be able to bag one every thirty years or so, and even then no one knew where it had come from.

The Lailonian merchant imported large amounts of combs for the grooming of camels which were immediately snatched up for every hefty prices by the residents of Lailonia. The reason for this import was the total absence in Lailonia of a camel-grooming comb industry and this absence was due in part to the fact that there had never been any camels in Lailonia.

The merchant Frejklo set off every six months to Babylon, these trips took him a few weeks.

In order to recompense her daughter the difficulties of parting, after his every returning, he gave her various gifts.

When he was returning from one of his trips, Memi greeted him waving his hands.

"Because, Papa darling. I treated myself to a present, but you will have to pay for it."

"And what is this present?"

"I ordered a life-sized globe"

Pigu considered the matter. He wasn't quite sure exactly what "life-sized" meant.

"It means as big as the whole Earth"

“Oh look, they are just carrying the finished globe”

“Oh noooo!”

Pigu immediately assessed the deplorable state of affairs. Throughout his life he wouldn't be able to sell so many combs for grooming camels to earn enough to pay off the globe.

“Please, take this globe back. It is poorly finished.”

“Ah Papa, you are so unkind. You begrudge some money to treat you little Memi to a present.

Pigu was soft-hearted and he was sorry to hear that but he could not get into debt for life. He tried to explain to his daughter that he had no money for such expensive gifts.

Pigu could no longer endure his daughter's crying.

“The Earth is also a globe, and it's even better because it is real.”

“You can just make holes in the Earth.”

“Hello, who is making holes in the Earth?”

“Who is making holes in the Earth in such horrible way?”

The results were not long in coming. The earth was full of holes and practically unusable.

Hard times now awaited the merchant Pigu. He was forced to take responsibility for what his daughter had done.

All the countries demanded huge sums in compensations.

Not having the money to pay it, he went to prison for non-payment of debts while little Memi continued to play.

He stayed there for a very long time , reflecting sadly on the inadvisability of begrudging children money on toys.