

Preface

When today someone speaks of Alfred Tarski's renowned monograph about the concept of truth in formalized languages, she can mean one of the three different texts:

- (1) The English translation published for the first time in 1956, in Tarski's collected works *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics. Papers from 1922 to 1938* which is used as the standard text today. For the translation of his English text, J.H. Woodger used the German edition as a basis.
- (2) The German version published in 1935 under the title "Der Wahrheitsbegriff in den formalisierten Sprachen" in Vol. 1 of *Studia Philosophica*. Until the publication of the English version (1), the German edition served as the most important basis for the scientific discussion of Tarski's ideas outside of Poland. Also in the case of the German version, we are dealing with a translation, however here from the Polish original.
- (3) The Polish original written at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s of the twentieth century. On March 21, 1931, it was presented by Jan Łukasiewicz to the Warsaw Scientific Society. In 1933, the Polish original was published under the title "Pojęcie prawdy w językach nauk dedukcyjnych." The complexity of this—generally known—situation is reflected in a series of problems with which both translations (from Polish into German and from German into English) were confronted:
 - (a) A translation of a scientific text requires, apart from the language proficiency, expertise in the subject matter. At the time when Tarski's text was translated from Polish into German, only a very small group of specialists were familiar with Tarski's ideas and with the applied methods and techniques of modern logic. An adequate translation of Tarski's complicated text turned out to be tremendously challenging for the translator. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the translator had to deal with a series of obstacles.
 - (b) The translation of the English version, which is used as a standard text since its publication, is not based on the Polish original but on the German translation.

Tarski's article is considered one of the major contributions to logic, semantics, and epistemology in the twentieth century. It has, not without good reason, been called "*the watershed between early and modern methodology of deductive sciences*" (Corcoran 2006). It is important to remember that Tarski wrote this article in Polish and published it in 1933. Kazimierz Twardowski approached Tarski with the suggestion that his article be translated into an internationally known language. In a letter written on the November 22, 1933, Tarski expresses his gratitude.

I am very thankful for the offer to publish my paper on the concept of truth, translated into German language, in the journal "Studia philosophica"; this proposal agrees completely with my own wishes..... I would not undertake the translation of my work myself because this task would significantly exceed my knowledge of the German language, and in the current financial situation I could bear neither the whole nor even a part of the translation cost. [Translation M.G.]¹

It took two years and two translation attempts before it was translated into German in 1935. At first, a young and promising student of Kazimierz Adjukiewicz, Zygmunt Schmierer was to translate a part of Tarski's article. Having read this sample translation and consulted on it with Adjukiewicz and Ingarden, Kazimierz Twardowski, who acted on behalf of Tarski, decided that Schmierer could not be entrusted with this task. Following this, Twardowski considered another candidate, Leopold Blaustein, who met the high expectations and was entrusted with the German translation, as Twardowski writes to Tarski on the April 16, 1934.

The translation has been undertaken by Mr. Dr. Blaustein. I attach a sample of this translation, and ask Dear Mr. Colleague, to send me his possible remarks regarding the terms used in the translation – on the linguistic–stylistic side, the translation is completely correct. It also is absolutely adequate. [Translation M.G.]²

Tarski read the translation, together with one of the logicians from Vienna,³ and was satisfied with Blaustein's sample of the translation and expressed his content in a letter written to Twardowski on the April 21, 1934.

¹"Za propozycje wydrukowania mej pracy o pojęciu prawdy, przełożonej na język niemiecki, w czasopiśmie "Studia philosophica" jestem bardzo wdzięczny; propozycja ta odpowiada całkowicie moim własnym życzeniom....sam nie podjąłbym się przełożyć mej pracy, gdyż zadanie to przekraczałoby znacznie moją znajomość języka niemieckiego, a w obecnej sytuacji materialnej nie mógłbym ponieść ani w całości ani nawet w części kosztów przekładu". Letter L. 194/33 archived in Polskie Towarzystwo Filozoficzne, Poznań.

²"Podjął się mianowicie przekładu Pan Dr. Blaustein. Próbkę tego przekładu załączam, prosząc Szanownego Pana Kolegę, aby zechciał mi przesłać Swoje ewentualne uwagi, dotyczące użytych w przekładzie terminów – co do strony językowostylistycznej bowiem przekład jest zupełnie poprawny. Jest też zupełnie wierny". Letter L. 98/933 archived in Polskie Towarzystwo Filozoficzne, Poznań.

³In a post card from Vienna, dated April 6, 1935, Tarski wrote Twardowski that "Korektę będzie przeglądać – obok mnie – jeden z tutejszych logików" – "Next to me, one of the local logicians will look through the correction". Letter 109/35 archived in Polskie Towarzystwo Filozoficzne, Poznań.

I am very happy that mr. dr. Blaustein took up the translation; from the sent sample I conclude that the entire translation will be satisfactory in every respect. [Translation M.G.]⁴

By the time the German translation appeared, and during his stay in Vienna, and later in Paris, Tarski has written *Postscript* which was added for the first time to the German publication of his manuscript. At that time, there were already two German logicians interested in Tarski's work and helping him with the corrections of the translations of the main text and of the postscript. Tarski wrote from Paris a letter to Twardowski on the August 28, 1935, requesting additional copies of the German translation.

If sending it in three copies meets difficulties, I will settle for just one; I needed the two additional copies mostly because I've been sending them to two German logicians, who are very interested in my work and for whom my work is very accurate (I've done the same thing with the copy of the first correction.) [Translation M.G.]⁵

The English translation followed in 1956, written by Joseph H. Woodger. Unfortunately, it had to be based on the German version. Moreover, the circumstances made it impossible for the translator to discuss with Tarski the difficulties encountered in his work. Due to similar reasons, Tarski did not get a chance to read a greater part of the translation before it was submitted for publication. Therefore, certain mistakes which occurred in the German version have been carried over into the English one. Additionally, new discrepancies came up in the process of translation from the already once translated version. Also, there are some mistakes which appear only in German or English, while others in both translations.

Having said that, I hope to have clarified the picture for the readers of the present work, assuming that most of Tarski readers are already familiar with this complex situation. Now, there are a few words on the present project. This book deals with the translational discrepancies between the most often read and quoted English version, the German translation which served as its basis, and the Polish original which was used for the German translation. Due to the legal matters, specifically to copyright issues, it was not possible to reprint the English pages and comment directly on them, one after another. Instead, the sentences or simple phrases will be quoted from the (Tarski 2006) edition. Moreover, in spite of the courtesy of Hackett Publishing, legally the quotes cannot extend a certain length, and hence, occasionally they may be seen a bit taken out of context. Additionally to the translational issues, I will comment on certain, possibly most essential and perhaps most controversial, problems of Tarski's monograph. My commentary will not be

⁴“Rad też jestem bardzo, że przekładu podjął się p. dr. Blaustein; z nadesłanej próbki wnoszę, że całość przekładu wypadnie pod każdym względem zadowalająco”. Letter archived in Polskie Towarzystwo Filozoficzne, Poznań.

⁵“Jeśli przesyłanie jej w trzech egzemplarzach nastręcza trudności, zadowolę się jednym; dwa inne egzemplarze potrzebne mi były z tego głównie względu, że przesyłałem je dwóm logikom niemieckim, którzy bardzo się mą pracą interesują i dla których praca moja jest b. aktualna (to samo czyniłem z jednym egzemplarzem pierwszej korekty).” Letter L. 224/35 archived in Polskie Towarzystwo Filozoficzne, Poznań.

exhaustive, a commentary rarely is. Tarski's writings, especially his monograph on truth, have been read, reread, and commented on multiple times. The scholars dealing with Tarski's work have much more experience and expertise in the subject matter than I do, and I shall not pretend otherwise just because Polish is my native language; instead, I will suggest further literature to the reader.

This monograph is meant to be read parallel to the English edition of Tarski's "Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages," as a kind of manual or a guide for better apprehension of the text. It is thought as auxiliary means for all scholars having the expertise in the subject but lacking the knowledge of Polish. It should also be helpful to philosophy students, of all levels, making the understanding of this very complex and groundbreaking text somewhat more reachable. The comprehension itself is left to the reader.

The last chapter consists of a rare and most valuable collection of the letters concerning the translation of Tarski's manuscript. Most of the presented letters were exchanged between Alfred Tarski and Kazimierz Twardowski, but there are also letters from Karl Popper. Additionally, there are a few letters not directly regarding the translation of Tarski's article, but interesting, nevertheless. The collection has never been published before, which makes it even more precious to include it in this publication.

Reference

- Tarski, A. (2006). The concept of truth in formalized languages. In J. Corcoran (Ed.), *Logic, semantics, metamathematics* (pp. 152–278). Papers from 1923 to 1938 by Alfred Tarski. Hackett Publishing Company.

Alfred Tarski and the "Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages"

A Running Commentary with Consideration of the Polish Original and the German Translation

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