

Отметим слова Виткевича: свободный ото лжи. На этой максиме настаивает философ, создавший онтологию, в которой неискоренимый дуализм Бытия становится основанием дисгармонии между Бытием как целым и Единичным существованием. Однако начало, примиряющее с абсолютным и приближающее к глубочайшей сути бытия, существует. Это — искусство как метафизическая сфера существования...

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### STANISŁAW BRZOZOWSKI AND THE ENDS OF THOUGHT

В статье дается толкование философским работам польского мыслителя Станислава Бржозовского (Brzozowski, 1878–1911). Его мысль была направлена против претензий позитивизма, и выводы польского философа сопоставимы с идеями Ницше и Бергсона. Однако проблема Бржозовского была в том, что его мысли не могли выбраться из тавтологического круга (*circulus vitiosus*, как он называет его в одном из своих эссе).

Stanisław Brzozowski (1878–1911), philosopher, social and political activist, thinker of ideas, witness of the epoch of crisis and its self-anointed prophet, has always been a controversial figure in Poland. His status and significance have had their ups and downs. Between the wars he was condemned for the apparent collaboration with the tsarist secret police (the *Okhrana*) and almost completely forgotten. In the communist Poland, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, he was approached with reserve and suspicion — Brzozowski shared Marxist views but they were not orthodox enough, not to say heretical. It is not accidental that the only serious book written at that time — Czesław Miłosz's *Man Among Scorpions* — was published in the West. Brzozowski's reputation was somewhat improved in the 1970s, after excellent and now canonical studies by Leszek Kołakowski, Andrzej Walicki and Andrzej Mencwel, and after the publication, in 1970, of Brzozowski's letters. It does not mean that he was no longer an object of controversy and even scorn. However, the 1970s marked the beginning of serious and detailed discussion on the role and meaning of Brzozowski's thought.

The revival of Brzozowski the philosopher, the political activist and the critic (he was also a novelist) came as a surprise though in a way it could have been perfectly understandable, especially in the context of hot debates on the role of Polish intelligentsia that were taking place after 1990 and well into the first decade of the XXI century. Brzozowski has returned and has become the main point of departure for many critical discussions centering around such issues as political involvement in the era of general distrust towards politics, the place and *raison d'être* of the left-wing political parties, the meaning of individual and social emancipation, questions involved in our understanding of modernity and postmodernity, and finally the role of politically committed literary criticism. The Renaissance of Brzozowski's thought has been possible also because of the wide spectrum of issues and problems posed as well as analyzed by the Polish thinker. Brzozowski cannot be pigeon-holed and discussed in the light of this or that field of the humanities. His thought is, so to say, interdisciplinary and finds its momentum in crossing, or at least blurring, the borders between various areas of human activity. That is one of the reasons why his ideas are being recalled in all kinds of discussions, as either arguments or counter-arguments, and they rarely seem out of place.

Despite the widespread interest in Brzozowski his philosophy remains strangely elusive. What is missing is a general interrogation of the project in its entirety and depth. Brzozowski's work as a whole is not only problematic — in fact, it seems to resist all kinds of critical appreciation and evaluation. The thinker himself admitted many times that although his ideas may seem heterogeneous, they gravitate towards one or two central insights. But what are those insights? Can we articulate them? Are there any? I realize that the last of these questions is dramatic but, as matter of fact, it is the last question that interests me most. Brzozowski constantly changed his views but most of the commentators and critics agree that we can discern something like an evolution in his thinking. My contention, put in radical terms (and Brzozowski always considered himself a radical) is that what we have here is an evolution devoid of anything that might be called its teleology or predicate; just a pure and abstract process of evolving for its own sake. A far-reaching hypothesis, I know. But each time I read Brzozowski and try to grasp the gist of his phi-

losophy, it all bursts and implodes, as if there was no gist at all. Accordingly, this paper is a brief recapitulation of my efforts at squeezing something out of Brzozowski and failing to do so. What I would like to say is *not* that his thought is unnecessary or pointless. There is a point but it is more about Brzozowski himself than about his ideas.

Critics writing about Brzozowski usually begin by pointing out the fact that we can distinguish several stages and turning points in his intellectual development. Accordingly, let me first recapitulate in outline the development of Brzozowski's thought (later on I will provide more details and complicate the picture).

The first stage of Brzozowski's intellectual quest was connected with his initial fascination with what one of the critics called his «absolute individualism» and *Selbstkultur*. The fascination was a direct consequence of the thinker's anti-positivist and anti-scientist sentiments, and led him to a brief appreciation of the then popular symbolist and decadent literary movements. The 1901 essay on Frederick Amiel, perhaps the first significant text written by the Polish philosopher, is an important case in point. In it, Brzozowski stresses moments of contemplation and insights as decisive in our attempts to do away with the scientific paradigms which fall short of showing the uniqueness of human consciousness. For one moment, Brzozowski became a spokesman of the «Young Poland» (*Młoda Polska*) movement, a group of artists and critics whose notions of art, culture and civilization echoed those of the French Symbolists. Here is a typical fragment which summarizes the first phase in Brzozowski's intellectual development:

Objective man is only a mirror image of everything which can be mirrored in him, of everything which can be known... What remains of his own individuality appears to him as merely an obstacle to the cognitive process. Thus, he has reduced himself to a mere point through which alien objects and events pass and in which they are mirrored. He reminds himself of himself with difficulty and effort... sometimes he would like to concentrate on his own pains, forces himself to do so, but all in vain. His thought goes beyond his particular case...<sup>1</sup>

Very quickly, however, the philosopher voiced his strong disappointment and accused both Amiel and Polish decadent poets of «spiritual polymorphism». In 1903 he published two texts in which he criticized what seemed to him quietism, passivity and even nihilism inherent in the artistic ideas associated with the notion of the poet as seer and prophet. One of the essays was devoted to the philosophical insights of Richard Avenarius, German-Swiss philosopher who propagated his concepts of empirio-criticism. The other paper bore a significant title «The Philosophy of Action» and included what was to become Brzozowski's central idea of the human act as a form of life and a sign of man's autonomy. The idea of the aesthetic pluralism was abandoned and gave way to an activist attitude and an assumption that the ego should exert conscious control over an alien world. Brzo-

<sup>1</sup> Qtd in Andrzej Walicki, Stanisław Brzozowski and the Polish Beginnings of «Western Marxism», Clarendon Press, Oxford 1989, pp. 80–81. As the subsequent footnotes will show, I am heavily indebted to Walicki's book. This is not only because the monograph is probably the best available exposition of Brzozowski's views but also because this is the only English book-length study of the philosopher. At the same time, however, the main drift of my paper differs radically from Walicki's propositions.

zowski wrote: «The act is the only form through which we can have direct knowledge of reality... Free creation is the essence of the world. Action and creation are not an illusion but the highest truth»<sup>2</sup>. One can see the influence of Nietzsche but it should also be remembered that at the time Brzozowski started his anti-modernist campaign, and his view of Nietzsche's philosophy was rather ambivalent. The philosophy of action, as understood by the Polish thinker, was much closer to the ideas shared by Fichte, Georg Simmel and Georgy Lukacs.

Brzozowski's growing fascination with Marx, reinforced by the revolutionary turmoil of 1905, brought with itself a different placing of the stresses. Now it was not so much the action undertaken by an individual but the labour understood as process and communal (communist) action that was at stake. 1906 marked Brzozowski's reformulation of his philosophy of action so that it became the «philosophy of labour» describing the never-ending process of opposing the natural world, projecting oneself against it and winning one's identity. It was at that time that he could write: «Man does not come to know being, but through his work creates his own basis in being... The world created by labour, subordinated to labour, mastered by technology, constitutes humanity's ontological foundation»<sup>3</sup>. We should not be deceived by the concluding words. Brzozowski strongly opposed any ontological thinking which for him was just an inoperative narrative devoid of intensity. The only criterion of humanity was involved in moments of inconclusive labour and constant self-creation. All teleological aims were viewed by him as products of consciousness which can't help escaping its own logocentric effects.

It should be added that the post-1906 period resulted in Brzozowski's most interesting and mature works. His analysis of the post-Enlightenment «illusions of rationality», his critique of the Engelsian determinism as well as appreciative remarks on the early Marxist philosophy, his detailed descriptions of the phenomenological underpinnings of human perception and cognition, his unique ability to include philosophical concepts with critical interpretations and social analyses — all these added up to what is rightly termed as a most noteworthy contribution to the XX century history of ideas.

Before his death in 1911 Brzozowski got seriously interested in Henry Newman and the modernist variant of Catholicism. In a way, the turn, although surprising, was logical. Brzozowski gravitated towards the philosophy that would combine social and socialist issues with anything which would provide them with a sanction, and which would transcend the limitations connected with the Marxist view of man as defined by community and labour. It remains problematic whether modernist Catholicism would fulfill Brzozowski's maximum expectations. What we have is a handful of casual remarks and a few entries in a diary kept in the last months of his life. The philosopher stressed the fact that his interests lay in the communal and not theological or dogmatic dimension of Catholicism. He made

<sup>2</sup> Qtd in Dorota Kozička, «Stanisław Brzozowski's performative criticism» [in:] *Studies in East European Thought*, vol. 63, no. 4 (November 2011). Edited by Jens Herlth and Edward Swiderski. 257–266. The quote is on p. 261.

<sup>3</sup> Qtd in E. M. Swiderski, «Was Brzozowski a 'constructionist'? A contemporary reading of Brzozowski's 'philosophy of labour'» [in:] *Studies East European Thought*, op. cit., 329–343. The quote is on p. 337.

it clear that he was far from resorting to any kind of religious credo. His last statements are vague and ambiguous. All we can say for sure is that Brzozowski was not satisfied with the philosophy of labour and he was looking for a new metaphor of his existence.

Importantly, the brief overview I have just sketched does not do justice to the complexity and ambiguity of the development of Brzozowski's thought. The subsequent stages do not lend themselves to obvious or simple taxonomy. These are not just three or four distinct periods, one following another. In reality, we notice essential and far-reaching interdependencies between them. With each stage, Brzozowski comes to a point of contradiction but the whole process is a dialectical one: the view that has been rejected and abandoned is then a residual force («residual» in Raymond Williams's sense) which haunts the thinker as a repressed possibility. Starting in 1901, when he published his first important essay on Amiel, Brzozowski moved with such a speed that a detailed genealogy and trajectory of his thinking is almost impossible. But it is not necessary, either. Commenting on the social philosophy of Georges Sorel, Brzozowski stressed that his French mentor was interested in thinking as a continuous and inconclusive process, and that what counted after all were not specific results but the thinking that might be shared with readers; thinking which could have opened a community. Thus, the very idea of intellectual development is for Brzozowski informed by the imperatives of intensity of the processes of consciousness, and not by their net results (cognition, metaphysical narratives, and stable identity). In this perspective, talking about intellectual crises and new beginnings is not such a big deal after all. What is important is the quality of thinking.

It should be noted that the very term «development» is neither accurate nor relevant. True, the philosopher himself is repeatedly trying to give impressions of intellectual evolution. We can find in his statements a general supposition to the effect that the shifts from individualism to the philosophy of action to the philosophy of labor result from serious intellectual deficiencies and inadequacies of the positions he took and then abandoned. In other words, Brzozowski attempts to point to the internal logic of the subsequent forms his thinking is taking on. However, we can easily observe that the arguments and counterarguments used by the thinker are more or less the same, and the mechanism of their distribution and discrimination operate in a similar way throughout his whole life. Put briefly, the mechanism is based on an apparent antinomy between a need to formulate something and a premise that the thought that has been formulated is no longer operative. In this perspective, any kind of philosophy or system abstracted from the actual thinking processes is always already dead. Brzozowski was terrified by this and accordingly wanted to fill in the emptiness by referring to still other philosophical traditions and subscribing to more and more ideas that would guarantee that his thinking makes sense.

So, let us complicate the otherwise obvious taxonomy referring to his philosophy.

As I have just mentioned, Brzozowski's initial interest in Amiel, Nietzsche and decadent poetry gave way to a fascination with Fichte and the philosophy of action. The reason for this was that the Amiel-like individualism led to the state of tautological ego-centricity and then nihilism. As Andrzej Walicki puts it:

Brzozowski agreed that people of Amiel's type are only spectators, organically unable to express themselves in action, but yet praised their supreme capacity to understand

different culture-bound world-views, their willingness to see relative truth everywhere while rejecting all forms of making any truth absolute. This richness of understanding was, in his view, a result of individuation, although, admittedly, a paradoxical one: it turned out, he thought, that strong, clear-cut individualities have to be wiped out by the rise of modern individualism. In other words, the price to be paid for individuation was individuality itself.<sup>4</sup>

What happened was that the «absolute individualism» revealed its basic contradiction — it negated individuality in endless acts of cognition. In his 1903 essay on Avenarius Brzozowski remarks a number of times that cognition is necessarily circular. The self cannot transcend itself and what it perceives is its own projection.<sup>5</sup>

At this point it is interesting to note that the *circulus vitiosus* which makes all statements and truths merely self-referential is for Brzozowski a general and unavoidable law governing all kinds of intellectual activity. In contradiction to his, the Polish thinker turns to the idea of the action as sanctioning human thinking and life. Individual activity sets up a relation with the external world and thus helps to break the spell of the self's tautology: the self may ground itself in something exterior. This was connected with Brzozowski's fascination with Fichte about whom he had the following to say:

Fichte was right to deduce the ego from the principle of identity... If we reject the notion of the ego, if we draw logical conclusions from the thought: I am not myself, I am only an outcome of some processes in nature, then everything immediately becomes shifting sand, written on by chance. Where there is no ego there are no values and everything depends on blind forces. Cease to believe in the ego and you will have to abandon your belief.<sup>6</sup>

This Fichtean «strong individualism», however, led to another contradiction. Is it not the case that the action *creates* the external world? Can we separate it from the self? What Brzozowski noticed after two or three years was that the philosophy of action is strongly theoretical, dualistic and Cartesian in its radical juxtaposition of the thinking self and the inanimate reality. The act was supposed to be a medium between the two extremes, but the validity and legitimacy of the medium lay only in the individual self. Thus, the action which was to give the self an external sanction could have been validated only by the same self. Like before, the philosopher came up with a proposition which must have been systematic to be articulated. And like before, his thinking could not have aligned itself with the acts that were to express and validate it.

What Brzozowski finally found was the philosophy of labour, anti-individualistic and community-based, inconclusive and postulating the «throwness» of human existence. As Walicki it, «Marxism provided Brzozowski with a solution to the main axiological problem of neo-Kantianism, of how to avoid relativism and endow at least some human values with a universally human validity»<sup>7</sup>. From that moment on, one can find in Brzozowski

<sup>4</sup> Walicki, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Walicki, op. cit., pp. 81, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Qtd in Walicki, op. cit., pp. 94–95.

<sup>7</sup> Walicki, op. cit., p. 102.

many crucial Marxist ideas. For one thing, Brzozowski realized and put it in the strongest possible formulations that human consciousness is produced and shaped by external forces. There is no consciousness as such. It is an effect and a function of natural conditions and social-economic relations. In striking contrast to Engels, however, and in agreement with the early Marx, Brzozowski made room for freedom. This blend of freedom and economic conditions was articulated by the Polish philosopher in the following way: «If man is to be free he must first master economic alienation which now rules over him; otherwise, all emancipations will remain in the sphere of illusion».<sup>8</sup>

As Brzozowski himself remarked in his seminal book *Idee*, «in recognizing the necessity required by labour man, in fact, defends his freedom, because unrealized freedom is an illusion and only labour realizes freedom through providing man with a foundation in being which is obedient to his will».<sup>9</sup> In consequence of his newly-won anti-individualistic views, Brzozowski stressed the communal dimension of labour though he never described that aspect of his philosophy in a precise way. Now it was the community which gave an absolute and supra-individual sanction to our lives, perceptions and thoughts.

As it quickly turned out, the philosophy of labour led to another contradiction — between the ideal of autocreation (we are free to construct and determine our lives and ourselves) and the concept of labour which is teleological as it cannot be imagined without its outcome as the very definition of the word suggests that we have to do with production, be it material or intellectual. On the one hand, «Brzozowski's ardent commitment to the view of human labour as capable of producing entirely new and unpredictable results led him to reject the very concept of 'development'».<sup>10</sup> In other words, through labour man creates himself in history. On the other hand, labour is seen here as a struggle with natural and social-economic determinants, and as such it has to be understood as a teleological enterprise. Thus, he is determined by the outcome of labour.

No wonder Brzozowski returned to his obsessive metaphor of the vicious circle. In his 1910 essay «The Stages of Sentimentalism» he claimed: «There exists the circle of each life, understood as a creative life, the climate of ultimate things. But the ultimate things must not be created, no given results».<sup>11</sup> In other words, life is absolute in the sense that it has its purpose. However, we cannot see it so and should reject thinking in teleological terms as it weakens and negates our existential freedom.

It should be noted that the suspension of the teleological moment is purely psychological. The idea of the purpose should be repressed but *not* abandoned. This is exactly at this point that the philosopher's drama appears once again. Brzozowski could not have realized that the repressed content returns as a ghost, a spectre, a nightmare of the dead-end street with no way out, a dilemma with no solution. You can reject the paradox but it will haunt you and will not let you out.

<sup>8</sup> Qtd in Walicki, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> Qtd in Walicki, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> Walicki, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> Stanisław Brzozowski, *Idee*, Hachette, Warszawa 2011, p. 373 [translation mine — J. G.].

The working of the mechanism apparently became evident to Brzozowski at the end of his life when he abandoned his philosophy of labour and turned, quite surprisingly, to questions of spirituality and the spiritual self. In fact, this was yet another variation on the same theme, but this time moved to a higher level. In a letter written in 1909 Brzozowski wrote: «I have never doubted that the essence of the world is spiritual, and that bodily life is important only as a place where our spiritual essence makes contact with the spirit outside us. You will ask what is spirit. My answer is: creating ourselves»<sup>12</sup>. The last two words should be stressed as they testify to the fact that the belief in the spiritual world was for Brzozowski a result of self-creation.

In another letter written in July 1909, two years before his death, the thinker tries to account for his unexpected accession to the ideas of Cardinal Newman and advocates of Christian modernism. His main argument is that all systematic notions are artificial and detached from life, and that the only way out of this deadlock is a complete rejection of the logic, or even logocentrism, of the Western thought: «Formulated thoughts are sterile»<sup>13</sup>. One can only guess that now Brzozowski realized how metaphysical and essentialist his notion of labour was. The teleological and historical language was dangerously close to the language of determinism which had haunted the Polish thinker under the guise of the tautological circle. The very idea of individual and then communal struggle carried with itself essentialist undertones and stood in striking contradiction to the idea of free and emancipated thinking.

Similar sentiments are present in Brzozowski's *Diary*, composed in the last months of his life. The entries are dramatic as they reveal the basic drama of Brzozowski's thought — the drama of an inability to give any kind of sanction to one's beliefs and intuitions, which in its turn resulted from the premise that all forms of foundational thinking are contradictory in themselves: thinking processes are inconclusive and unstoppable; abstractions are necessarily separated from life and thus dead and gone; what survives is an endless dialectic of arguments and counterarguments, endlessly sublated, preserved and appearing in subsequent syntheses which do not synthesize anything but inform the never-ending dialectical process. It would be wrong to maintain that Christian modernism might have provided Brzozowski with the final rationale of his philosophy (if we can still use this term here). What he arrived at at the end of his life was just another contradiction that he would then try to overcome in still another dialectical move. As Walicki rightly notices, «[Brzozowski's] attempts to add a transcendental dimension to his 'philosophy of labour' involved a contradiction which he accepted, without trying to find a solution».<sup>14</sup>

All of this sounds Hegelian, and it comes as no surprise that one of the most significant entries in Brzozowski's *Diary* is devoted to a discussion of Hegelianism. The points made by the Polish thinker are immensely interesting as they seem to refer to his own intellec-

<sup>12</sup> Qtd in Walicki, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>13</sup> Stanisław Brzozowski, *Listy* [Letters], Edited by Mieczysław Sroka, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1970, vol. 2, p. 170 [translation mine — J. G.].

<sup>14</sup> Walicki, op. cit., p. 314.



tual evolution. Responding to Karol Irzykowski's claim that in the Hegelian perspective life is viewed as a «self-creating» and «self-realizing» agenda in which moments of self-creation make human life inauthentic and nihilistic, Brzozowski argues that the Hegelian dialectic makes sense only if we refer it to life as a whole, that is, if we treat subsequent self-creations as negative stages in the development of the authentic and rational human being. In other words, everything that is, is rational, and all contradictory moments are just moments in the progress of the mind. This Hegelian formula, articulated by Brzozowski at the very end of his life, is surprising in Brzozowski and one can speculate that he would very quickly reject it. What should be noted is that by referring to Hegel's dictum Brzozowski returned to his point of departure — the reality is «swallowed» by the individual consciousness. Thus, the circle closed itself and was complete. The next step would be to question the all-embracing authority and tautology of the individual self. Obviously, this would mean repeating the same process that I have just outlined. A new circle would be opened, and a new tautology would present itself in the form of the apparently radical transgressions and emancipations.

It is not difficult to see that the spectral and abyssal dimension of his philosophy haunted Brzozowski throughout his life. In fact, we can speak of the existentialist drama of life which attempts to find its absolute sanction but fails to do so, and of man who tries to win his identity and self-presence but finds himself constantly determined by «dead thoughts» — arguments and counterarguments in their endless distribution, systematic and abstract narratives, conclusions detached from the actual thinking processes. As usual, Andrzej Walicki provides us with an accurate description of the state:

Brzozowski's philosophy was always in motion, passing dialectically from one phase to another and constantly assimilating, in an original way, new and newer ideas. At the same time, it was remarkable for its capacity to preserve continuity in change, to enrich itself through confrontation with other currents of thought while never losing its peculiar focus and a distinctive style of its own<sup>15</sup>.

The point is that the «peculiar focus» and the «distinctive style» were not enough. Brzozowski was looking for the ultimate and unquestionable foundation of his life, for something that would put a stop to the motion of his thinking and feel like a fulfillment. This he could not have achieved, and we can only wonder if such a fulfillment can be achieved.

Let me conclude with three points.

Firstly, the moments of ambiguity and inconclusiveness are inherent to the philosophy of Stanisław Brzozowski — that is, they are its structural faults making it impossible to state anything specific about his ideas or arguments (as there are always counterarguments and counter-ideas which are equally valid). Critics and commentators writing about Brzozowski usually point to the fact that the Polish thinker is vague, and that his statements often contradict each other. But the complaint is very quickly dismissed. After all, Brzozowski himself was strongly critical of relativism and pragmatism and he stressed that his ideas have their existential, epistemological, communal, economic and political aims. Consequently, ambiguities and paradoxes of his thought are treated as accidental and

<sup>15</sup> Walicki, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

easily overwhelmed. My contention is that the philosophy of Brzozowski is meaningless and self-contradictory. There is in it only a free distribution of ideas which often crystallize into meaningful narratives but then are questioned and undermined by other narratives. In the long run nothing definite is said.

Secondly, self-contradiction and ambiguity which subvert Brzozowski's thought do not have to be understood as nihilistic. Brzozowski anticipated many philosophical and intellectual tendencies and modes that would appear after his death (in some cases he expressed views which paralleled the then-existing philosophical positions, but it is quite probable that Brzozowski did not know about them). It should not be surprising as Brzozowski was not only a fervent advocate of Marx and Nietzsche, two philosophers who exerted a great impact on the XX century thought, but managed to question their positions and do so in the spirit of their own philosophies. However, after pointing out the failures of the Western systematic philosophies and meta-narratives Brzozowski always returned to the circle of rationality. The point is that he did so, or at least tried to do so, by way of what Jean-Francois Lyotard called «paralogy» — that is, by contradicting himself and opening his discourses to the possibility of transgression (action, labour or a religious leap, to use his own ideas). That Brzozowski failed in this was due to the fact that he was not ready to question his own language and, consequently, he always got trapped in the Cartesian opposition of cogito (the thinking and speaking subject) and the inanimate matter (signs), the opposition that he wanted so desperately to avoid and question. In sum, Brzozowski's insights could not have been fully or properly expressed as the language used by the Polish thinker, ostensibly transparent and straightforward, turned them into self-contradictory meta-narratives. Put simply, Brzozowski overlooked the fact that language is neither transparent nor innocent — it is inherently rhetorical and inscribed into the endless tautology of constantly referring us to itself.

Thirdly, Brzozowski might be said to be a pioneer of such intellectual formations as existential hermeneutics, philosophy of dialogue (in its Levinasian variant), deconstructive criticism and postmodernity. Also, his ideas easily and naturally adapt themselves to the philosophical projects of, say, Giorgio Agamben or Peter Sloterdijk. In other words, the philosophy of Brzozowski needs a serious revaluation, and it should find its proper place on the map of the XX century Western thought. The trouble with the Polish philosopher is that he was strangely blind to the rhetoric of his texts, overlooking their internal ambiguities and contradictions, apparent to anyone reading Brzozowski in a careful and detailed way. Still, it is obvious that the Polish thinker formulated and re-formulated the questions that would preoccupy the philosophers in the XX century.

What remains is the drama of a man who tried to find the absolute sanction for his life and was not satisfied with partial answers. Perhaps that is why Brzozowski haunts his numerous followers who refer to different aspects of his thought but have a sense that the gist of the matter is always elsewhere, not in the words, not in the texts which for Brzozowski were only dead, inoperative chronicles and memorials, but in something recurring and reappearing as a disturbance of the archive. This elusive disturbance, this non-recordable supplement, was I think Brzozowski's curse and blessing.