

# How to Be an Unsuccessful Ancient Philosophy Scholar in Uneasy Times: The Case of S. Lisiecki (1872–1960)\*

DOI: 10.14746/PEA.2023.1.7

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The history of classical studies in Central-Eastern Europe is, in many regards, a research field still waiting to be discovered. This area remains largely unexplored by scholars in Western Europe, but even more surprisingly, it still has numerous white spots for researchers in Central and East European countries. What will be presented below is one of the recent discoveries in this area: the personality of a forgotten scholar in classics, in

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\*The preparation of this paper was financed by the National Science Centre, Poland, as one of the results of research project no. 2017/25/B/HS1/01934. All translations of Polish sources are by the author. Language editing of this paper was done by Una Maclean-Hańkowiak. An exhaustive discussion of Lisiecki's biography and his works on Plato was presented in Mróz (2022).

historiography of Greek philosophy, and a translator of the most important Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, whose name for decades was almost completely unknown, even to his compatriots. The person in question is Stanisław Lisiecki (1872–1960), a Polish classics scholar, teacher and translator whose life, as is announced in the title of this paper, can serve as an example of a life devoted to research work that only to a very limited extent saw the light of day.

His life was long and fruitful, yet his biography proves that adverse conditions and the adoption of difficult personal decisions that are hard for the society of the time to accept can result in the name of a prolific writer and devoted scholar being consigned to oblivion for decades. Below, some significant details of Lisiecki's biography will be presented as these are indispensable for our understanding of the fact that so few scholars in Polish humanities are able to recall his name and his works.

Stanisław Lisiecki was born on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1872, as the oldest of four siblings, in Poznań (Posen), then under Prussian rule. He received his education and finally his “maturity diploma” in the well-known Gymnasium ad sanctam Mariam Magdalenam, renowned for the high quality of its teaching. This prestigious school had a long tradition in teaching the classical languages, Greek and Latin. It is worth noting that decades earlier this very school could pride itself on having among its teachers Antoni Bronikowski (1817–1884), the most productive Polish translator of Plato and Xenophon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is possible that it was his mother's wish that Lisiecki, as the eldest son, should enter the priesthood, and he began his studies at a Catholic seminary in Poznań, where he was ordained in 1899 and subsequently worked in various parishes in the archdiocese of Poznań. The life of an ordinary priest did not satisfy Lisiecki's ambitions and the church authorities allowed him to start theological studies at the University of Wrocław (Breslau). Thanks to his education in classical languages, he was able to complete his dissertation in a short period of time, and in 1910 he was awarded a doctoral degree in theology. His supervisor was Joseph Pohle (1852–1922), a specialist in apologetics and dogmatics, but it is likely that Matthias Baumgartner (1865–1933) also had an influence on Lisiecki, for the dissertation was devoted to the views of Ambrose of Milan on the nature of the Eucharist<sup>1</sup> and one of Lisiecki's first papers published after his doctorate was devoted to Alexander of Hales.<sup>2</sup> Both works may be considered as the fruit of Lisiecki's studies in Wrocław and the influence of his professors.

Armed with a doctoral degree, Lisiecki could have started a successful clerical and academic career as a specialist in the history of theology and the Church Fathers. His qualifications as a teacher of Latin, Greek and the Catholic religion could also have stood him in good stead in this career. This, however, was not to be, though teaching classical

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<sup>1</sup> Lisiecki (1910). The dissertation attracted the attention of another expert on Ambrose, Wilhelm Wilbrand (1880–1949), who wrote quite a favourable review of this work (Wilbrand 1912: 146–148).

<sup>2</sup> Lisiecki (1913: 343–404).

and modern languages was to become his main or minor source of income for the rest of his life.

In 1921 with the death of his mother, who may have induced him to embark on a clerical career, he decided to leave the clergy. Whether his decision resulted from a crisis of faith or was induced by meeting the right woman cannot be unambiguously determined, but in a letter written in 1926 Lisiecki made the following confession: “Before I took up teaching I was a Catholic priest, but I entered the priesthood without a calling, so for almost twenty years I was tormented by pangs of conscience, for I felt unworthy of celebrating mass or conducting other holy sacraments at the Altar.”<sup>3</sup> It was on the advice of his confessor that Lisiecki eventually became a Protestant and subsequently married. At the dawn of Polish independence, that is, after the World War I, he moved with his wife to Warsaw, where he taught classical and modern languages in schools at various levels and started to work on Plato.

Another letter revealed the probable reasons for Lisiecki’s change of research focus to ancient Greek topics. The turning point in this regard was marked by his meeting with Tadeusz Zieliński (1859–1944), who in the early 1920s had taken up a post at the University of Warsaw. Zieliński was a Polish classical philologist, who – thanks to his German works on Cicero – had gained an international reputation, and moved to Warsaw from Saint Petersburg. Lisiecki must have met him at that time, for he wrote: “When I saw Tadeusz Zieliński for the first time, his Olympian character left me speechless. That forehead, that face, that odd composure, the dignity of the whole figure. *Ich will auch so einer werden*, I said to myself, unfortunately already in my fifties: I wish he could have accepted me just as a lector so that I could have seen him up close. This Man appears to be in constant contact with the Divinity: when Moses, after talking to God, came down from the mountain, the people were afraid to look at him, for his face shone with such a heavenly brightness that he covered it with a scarf when he spoke to them. I am equally afraid to look Zieliński in the face because I get a sense of my own misery in his presence.”<sup>4</sup> Lisiecki realised that, being already too old to become one of his students, the only way for him to get close to Zieliński, the ideal figure in classical studies, was to redouble his efforts to win for himself a place in the Olympian world of classical scholars. And indeed, he started the work on translating, analysing and commenting on Plato’s dialogues that was to last for over two decades.

Whether it was, indeed, his meeting with Zieliński and his admiration for this recognised and well-known scholar that brought about Lisiecki’s change in interests from the history of theology and medieval studies to ancient Greek philosophy, or whether there were other reasons, is debatable, but there is no doubt that Lisiecki fervently threw

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<sup>3</sup> Lisiecki, *List z 1 czerwca 1926 r. do Stanisława Kota* [A Letter of June 1st, 1926, to S. Kot], in: Lisiecki (2021: 342).

<sup>4</sup> Lisiecki, *List z 4 grudnia 1937 r. do Marcelego Handelsmana* [A Letter of Dec. 4th, 1937 to M. Handelsman], in: Lisiecki (2021: 352).

himself into the task of translating Plato and publishing minor works on his philosophy in Polish and Latin.

The list of Lisiecki's works in classical studies that appeared in print is relatively short. It includes the following (in chronological order): *Nauka Platona o prabycie duszy* [Plato's Doctrine on the pre-Existence of the Soul] (Lisiecki 1927a), *Układ oraz zagadnienia w Platona Fedonie* [Structure and Issues in Plato's Phaedo] (Lisiecki 1927b), *Demosthenes orationes suas salibusne condiderit* (Lisiecki 1927c), *Plato boni ideam quatenus in Civitate illustraverit* (Lisiecki 1928a), Plato, *Republic*, translation and introduction by S. Lisiecki (Lisiecki 1928b), *De Atlantidis Platonicae nota mythica* (Lisiecki 1929), *Plato duasne mundi animas professus sit* (Lisiecki 1930–1931). With the exception of the paper on Demosthenes and the two papers focused on specific issues from the *Critias* and the *Laws*, Lisiecki concentrated on the dialogues composed in the mature period of Plato's philosophical development, that is, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. Moreover, in 1929 he was able to publish a small translation of Pseudo-Plutarchus' *De liberis educandis*, which was included in a collection of source texts on the history of education selected by Stanisław Kot (1885–1975). It should also be mentioned that the first book listed above served as Lisiecki's doctoral dissertation in philosophy at the University of Warsaw.

This list of publications does not look impressive, especially for a scholar who lived until his late eighties. It seems that Lisiecki was highly active in publishing in the late 1920s and was almost completely focused on Plato's dialogues. He appears, then, to have been only a moderately successful scholar in the field of classics in general and Platonic studies in particular. Therefore the following question arises: what happened that Lisiecki's enthusiasm for classical studies, which had possibly been inspired by his meeting with Zieliński, was ultimately thwarted and manifested itself only in a limited number of translations and studies?

Before answering this question, it may be useful to present a brief outline of Polish studies on Plato in the interwar period.<sup>5</sup> To mention just a few of the most important names: Wincenty Lutosławski (1863–1954) was still active after World War I, though his focus was no longer on Plato, for he had turned to national philosophy and Messianic metaphysics, only to return to Plato after the World War II. Throughout his life Lutosławski enjoyed recognition as the author of a widely discussed book titled *The Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic with an Account of Plato's Style and of the Chronology of His Writings* (Lutosławski 1897) which vaulted him into prominence as a Polish philosopher in the international academic world. His work is still referred to by authors researching the chronology of Plato's dialogues and even belongs to the 'canon' of stylometric studies in this area.<sup>6</sup> Lisiecki referred to Lutosławski's results even though Lutosławski no longer took the lead in Polish research on Plato at that time.

Although Lisiecki's studies on Plato could not compete with the success of Lutosławski's works, the two scholars shared a similar attitude to Plato's philosophy, for

<sup>5</sup> An exhaustive treatment of this topic can be found in: Mróz (2021).

<sup>6</sup> Thesleff (2009: 150).

in various ways they tried to reconcile Platonism and Christianity. In the 1930s Lisiecki had succeeded in completing a huge monograph volume on Plato. Unfortunately, the manuscript was irreparably lost at the time of the destruction of Warsaw during the war. However thanks to Lisiecki's publications and his short manuscript texts on particular dialogues, originally intended as introductions to the translations of the dialogues, it is possible to stitch together his image of Plato.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Lutosławski, Lisiecki was more of a philologist than a philosopher, and we may suppose that his book consisted of a general presentation of Plato's dialogues, one after another, in chronological order. Lisiecki's Plato was a poet and visionary who produced a religious concept of the Good resulting from his divine visions. Considering the metaphysical and ethical role that Good played in Plato's philosophy and the religious language he used to describe it, Lisiecki identified Plato's Good with God and Divine Providence. At the same time, when discussing the *Timaeus*, Lisiecki also seems to have ascribed divinity to the Demiurge. He also commented on the difficulties of the theory of Forms, yet regarding the sources of the theory as irrational, he absolved Plato for not providing an unambiguous concept of the ideas and their relation to the material world. As an ex-priest, Lisiecki devoted special attention to the problem of reincarnation, which he considered to be irreconcilable with Christian theology. Plato's views on the human soul and its life were assessed by Lisiecki as mythical and unverifiable on the basis of rational arguments. He added, however, that Plato's arguments stemmed from his discerning observations of the phenomenon of learning, though the conclusions concerning reincarnation itself were untenable. Lisiecki nevertheless found some solace in this theory, for it gave hope to all those who lived in unsatisfactory conditions and hoped for a better future life. Despite all his criticism of Plato, Lisiecki considered himself to be a true, wholehearted Platonist and quoted Cicero (*Tusc.* 1, 17), with whom he agreed that *errare mehercule malo cum Platone ... quam cum istis vera sentire*.<sup>8</sup> To sum up, Lisiecki was indeed very enthusiastic about Plato, and his enthusiasm was intensified by his Christian faith, which seemed to dovetail with Plato's elevated thoughts. Admiration for Plato, however, did not blind him to the deficiencies of Plato's arguments, which he criticised mostly from a common sense point of view, for he was not a very insightful philosopher, and his interest in the dialogues was rather that of a philologist and a moralist.

So much for Lisiecki's philosophical views on Plato. We now turn to the history of his translations of the dialogues, which is more interesting. In the early 1920s, when Lisiecki

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<sup>7</sup> These translations, which will be discussed below, fortunately survived the war. A selection of Lisiecki's introductions to the dialogues, three introductions to Aristotle's works, Polish translations of three Latin papers and some of his personal documents have been published as a single volume ed. by T. Mróz (2021).

<sup>8</sup> Lisiecki (1927a: 108).

started to translate Plato, Polish readers had at their disposal a number of dialogues available in renderings of varying quality.<sup>9</sup>

The opening publication in the history of Polish translations of Plato was F. A. Kozłowski's book containing the *Apology*, *Crito* and the *Phaedo*, preceded by a general introduction to Plato and forewords to the particular dialogues (Kozłowski 1845). For Kozłowski, the translations of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) were too literal, and he himself preferred the French translations of Victor Cousin (1792–1867), who succeeded in avoiding the errors of the German scholar. Kozłowski's general introduction to the dialogues was, at that time, the most comprehensive Polish presentation of Plato's philosophy. His contemporaries spared no words of praise for his translation of the three dialogues and counted it among the best in Polish, being in a fluent and clear style. The translation itself stood the test of time until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was still recommended. In later decades, however, when Plato came to be studied more intensively in Poland, the work of Kozłowski was barely mentioned, and today it has been largely forgotten.

A. Bronikowski, already mentioned above, worked most of his life in Prussian Gymnasia in Poznań and Ostrów Wielkopolski and was the most productive translator of Plato into Polish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His method of rendering Plato was different from that of Kozłowski, for he claimed that philosophical works should be rendered as literally as possible so as not to distort or transform them. In view of this approach to translation, nothing resembling the artistry of Plato's dialogues could be expected from his productions. Bronikowski started his long series of translations with the *Menexenus* and the *Ion* (1857a–b), then volume I of Plato's *Works* was published (Bronikowski 1858a) and it included the *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Hippias minor*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, and the two previously published dialogues, the *Ion* and the *Menexenus*. In the same year his *Theaetetus* saw the light of day as a separate book (Bronikowski 1858b). Between 1860 and 1866 the translations of the *Crito* and the first three books of the *Republic* were all published in the annual reports of his gymnasium. Subsequently, in 1871 vol. II of Plato's *Works* appeared in print, containing four books of the *Laws* (Bronikowski 1871). In 1879, the next volume appeared in print, again numbered II, which was somewhat confusing for readers. It included the *Alcibiades I*, *Gorgias*, *Meno*, *Laches*, *Euthydemus*, and the *Protagoras* (Bronikowski 1879). Volume III of Plato's *Works* in Bronikowski's rendering appeared in print posthumously, in 1884, being finalised by his son. The whole volume consisted of the *Republic* (Bronikowski 1884). Throughout his entire career as a translator Bronikowski met with severe criticism, and was even ironically advised to learn his own native tongue to the same degree as he had mastered Greek. He was reproached for verging on incomprehensibility in his attempts to stay faithful to the source texts. Another disadvantage of the volumes he published was the absence of any philosophical introductions. His *Republic* was generally considered to be a failure, such that the subse-

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<sup>9</sup> A more detailed presentation of the Polish history of translating Plato can be found in: Mróz (2023); while a simple chronological list is included in: Mróz (2021: 475–480).

quent translator of this dialogue, Lisiecki, while appreciating the enormous effort of his predecessor, referred to his work as an example of and warning against literal translation. Bronikowski's rendering of Plato ultimately failed to gain success among the wider public and even among professionals. His translations of Xenophon or Herodotus fared better, though today they are all regarded as little more than an antiquarian relic.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some of the dialogues, mostly from the early phase of Plato's literary and philosophical production (the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Philebus*), were translated into Polish by various gymnasium teachers. Although their effort did not go unnoticed, their output was too meagre to change significantly the availability of Plato's works in Polish. None of them could compete with the translator of Plato who is still widely read in Poland, that is, Władysław Witwicki (1878–1948).

Witwicki belonged to the first generation of students of Kazimierz Twardowski (1866–1938), the founder of the Lvov (today: Львів) and, consequently, Lvov-Warsaw school of philosophy. Witwicki, a philosopher and a psychologist, followed a similar scheme in all his translations: each dialogue was preceded by an introduction presenting the situation, *personae*, character or chronological position of the dialogue. In the case of the first dialogue he translated, the *Symposium* (Witwicki 1909), the introduction even included an outline of the development of pre-Platonic philosophy. After the introduction, the text of the dialogue appeared, followed by Witwicki's summaries of each chapter, explanations, comments, philosophical deliberations, including ridicule of popular morality and anticlerical remarks. It was in the *Phaedrus* (Witwicki 1918), the second published dialogue, that Witwicki's drawings started to appear in the text, for he was also a talented artist. The *Symposium* was the inaugural work in the long series of Plato's dialogues translated and published by Witwicki and it immediately sold out, and even an almost instant reprint did not help to satisfy the demand for this book. Like many of Witwicki's other renderings of Plato's dialogues, it subsequently had numerous reprints and re-editions. In 1920, a volume was published containing three of the most frequently read dialogues, the *Euthyphro*, *Apology* and the *Crito* (Witwicki 1920). The next dialogues translated by Witwicki were devoted to the disputes between Socrates and the Sophists. These were the *Hippias minor*, *Hippias major* and the *Ion* (Witwicki 1921). The *Gorgias* appeared in the following year (Witwicki 1922), and in the subsequent year the *Protagoras* was published (Witwicki 1923). Then followed the *Phaedo* (Witwicki 1925), and by that time Witwicki's reputation as a Plato translator was well established. In general, the reactions of the reading public to Witwicki's translations were positive, the more so because reading Witwicki's Socrates was a far cry from the torment they had experienced learning ancient Greek at school. Even critical philologists had a high regard for his work, with only minor reservations of a philological nature. Lisiecki can be counted among them because he not only dedicated one of his works to Witwicki,

*Platonis interpreti subtilissimo*, but also indicated inaccuracies, e.g. in the *Phaedo*, which were corrected by Witwicki in subsequent editions of this dialogue.

It was about the mid-twenties when Lisiecki started to translate Plato. His undertaking was not exactly pioneering, but many dialogues had still not been translated into Polish and many others were considered incomprehensible. Lisiecki, himself a teacher of classical languages, managed to publish only one dialogue, though admittedly a long one. He had far-reaching ambitions to translate all of Plato's dialogues, but failed to pursue an academic career or to publish his translations of classical Greek philosophical texts, including Plato's dialogues, despite his qualifications and devotion to academic work. This failure to achieve his aims can be put down to psychological and biographical factors: his renunciation of the priesthood, which was frowned upon by many representatives of the academia of that time, and his intensifying inferiority complex, which was the result of his inability to adjust his Prussian-style teaching methods, based on discipline and rote learning, to the more modern ways of teaching in Warsaw, or to adapt to the Warsaw mentality in general.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of unfavourable circumstances Lisiecki managed to publish a translation of the *Republic* (Lisiecki 1928). All the other dialogues, unfortunately, remained in manuscript form. Although Lisiecki did all he could to change this situation, it was difficult for someone on the margins of academia to find the resources necessary for publishing. Moreover, the reception of Plato's *opus* in Lisiecki's rendering was not all positive. On the one hand, its language was considered to be a great improvement on Bronikowski's productions, while on the other, his translations could not rival the increasing number of dialogues published in W. Witwicki's translation. Lisiecki had learned from Bronikowski's errors and his *Republic* is still not only readable, but also supplemented with a good introduction and footnotes. Nevertheless, it was believed that his translation of the *Republic* could not compete with W. Witwicki's works.

It must have been Tadeusz Sinko (1877–1966) who helped Lisiecki to publish the *Republic*, because it was included in a series run by the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, of which Sinko was a member. He was a renowned classical scholar, a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, and he encouraged Lisiecki to continue his translation work. It was, in fact, not necessary to convince Lisiecki to do more translation work, for he was himself sufficiently motivated and soon translated the *Laws*, *Timaeus* and the *Critias*. All the manuscripts were sent to Sinko, as subsequently were the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* in 1930, the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides* in 1931, and the *Cratylus*, *Euthydemus* and the *Meno* in 1932. With every year, however, hope of publishing these dialogues was diminishing and Sinko openly asked Lisiecki not to send him new translations, although he did advertise them in his huge study, *Greek Literature*.<sup>11</sup> This did not discourage Lisiecki, for very soon, in 1933, Sinko received a parcel with the *Laches*,

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<sup>10</sup> S. Lisiecki, *List z 1 czerwca 1926 r. do Stanisława Kota*, (Lisiecki 2021: 343); *List z 4 grudnia 1937 r. do Marcellego Handelsmana* (Lisiecki 2021: 352).

<sup>11</sup> Sinko (1932: 611).

*Menexenus*, *Charmides*, *Philebus*, *Lysis* and both *Alcibiadeses*. All these works made him the most productive Plato translator at that time, although among the translations available in print there was still only a single dialogue, the *Republic*.

In the meantime, Witwicki was not idle and continued translating Plato and publishing his books. Apart from reeditions of the dialogues published in previous years, Witwicki finished new ones: the *Meno* (Witwicki 1935), *Theaetetus* (Witwicki 1936), *Charmides*, *Lysis* (Witwicki 1937a), *Laches* (Witwicki 1937b) and the *Philebus* (Witwicki 1938). Lisiecki took this as a threat to himself personally and to his work. What was even worse was that the professors whom Lisiecki admired and trusted, Zieliński and Sinko, wrote very positive reviews of some of Witwicki's translations. It is little wonder, then, that Lisiecki eventually came to the conclusion that he had been deceived by the academic community, and especially by Sinko, who despite words of support and encouragement expressed in his book and letters, eventually turned his back on the hardworking translator, disregarding his work and directly promoting his most important competitor in the field of translations of Plato's dialogues. In these circumstances Lisiecki gave up on Plato and turned to Aristotle, translating the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *On the Soul* and *Metaphysics*. This last work, or at least some parts of it, was subjected to analysis at a philosophical seminar conducted at the Lvov University in 1938 by the phenomenologist, Roman Ingarden (1893–1970). As one of the results of this seminar, Ingarden advised against the publication of this work by the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences. His objections were serious and he assessed the text as demanding further corrections.<sup>12</sup> The outbreak of World War II stopped all publication plans, and Polish readers had to wait until 1983 for Kazimierz Leśniak's (1911–1987) rendering of *Metaphysics*.

Lisiecki and his wife remained in Warsaw until the final days of World War II, when they were forced to leave the city, never to return. They stayed in Łowicz, a town about 60 kilometers west of Warsaw, where Lisiecki died on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1960. For some time he had worked there as a language teacher, while attempting to collect together all his manuscripts, only to sell them eventually to the new Polish Academy of Sciences, which supported him financially until his last days.

The list of Lisiecki's yet unpublished translations of Plato's dialogues includes: the *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Laws*, *Parmenides*, *Statesman*, *Sophist*, *Theaetetus*, *Cratylus*, *Euthydemus*, *Meno*, *Laches*, *Menexenus*, *Charmides*, *Philebus*, *Lysis* and the *Alcibiades I & II* and other works of doubtful authenticity. In selecting the dialogues, Lisiecki's fundamental intention was to translate those that had not previously been accessible to Polish audiences in their native tongue. Had they been published in Lisiecki's rendering, the *Parmenides*, *Cratylus*, *Laws*, *Sophist* and *Timaeus* would have been available for the first time in Polish. Polish audiences had to wait to read these dialogues for many years: until 1951 for the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*, 1956 the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, 1961 the *Parmenides* – all in Witwicki's translation; 1960 the *Laws* in M. Maykowska's translation were published

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kuliniak, Pandura (2020: 100 ff.).

and it was not until 1990 that two translations of the *Cratylus*, by W. Stefański and M. Brzostowska, appeared in print. Although Lisiecki's plan of translating the dialogues was impressive and his style was readable and regarded as a step forward in the history of Polish reception of the dialogues, the majority of his translations of the dialogues nevertheless remained unpublished. His translations in general can be considered as taking the middle path between the verbatim renderings of Bronikowski and the accessible and even light productions of Witwicki. Moreover, Lisiecki took time to provide the readers with a number of philological comments in footnotes, which were almost absent from the works by Bronikowski and Witwicki. Lisiecki's introductions to the dialogues (and to his translations of Aristotle) consisted of general remarks on the setting and persons, and preliminary presentations and analyses of the problems, arguments, structure of the text *etc.* They aimed to prepare the reader for the material they were about to assimilate, while Witwicki's commentaries provided summaries of the dialogues and focused on issues that were of interest to his 20<sup>th</sup> century audience.

To sum up, reception of Lisiecki's translations was, naturally, very limited, for readers in Poland knew only his *Republic*, while even some foreign researchers were aware of the amount of work that remained in manuscript.<sup>13</sup> If we take into account his long life, his career can be assessed as almost completely unsuccessful, though he had devoted his life to scholarly work. He decided to become a classical scholar on impulse after a meeting with T. Zieliński, and although they met when Lisiecki appeared to be too old to change his research focus, he started to work fervently on Greek philosophers and produced a considerable corpus of texts consisting of translations, commentaries and studies in Polish and Latin. Why only about one fourth of this production appeared in print is another matter. One reason is related to his cultural and educational background and the effect this had on his state of mind when he moved to Warsaw. Having been educated in a Prussian gymnasium and having received a doctorate from a German university, Lisiecki found it difficult to adapt to the teaching environment in Warsaw, which had been under Russian rule for over a century and had developed, in Lisiecki's view, more casual methods of working with schoolchildren. Moreover, as a person with a complicated life history, that is, the abandonment of the priesthood and the Catholic church, he was disregarded by some representatives of Polish academic institutions and thus his feeling of isolation intensified. His attempts to become a member of the academic community ultimately failed and he had no other choice than to accept that his translations of Plato, and later of Aristotle, would be pigeonholed. Unfortunate circumstances also played their part in his lack of success. Lisiecki's career as a Plato translator started at a time when W. Witwicki was quickly developing his career in this field. Another stroke of bad luck was the loss of the manuscript of Lisiecki's monograph book on Plato, which was burnt during the Warsaw Uprising. All these factors taken together meant that the name of Lisiecki

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<sup>13</sup> Novotný (1977: 593); cf. Mróz (2018: 141–143).

fell into oblivion even among his compatriots, despite his arduous, though unpublished, efforts to become recognised as a scholar at least comparable to T. Zieliński.

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**How to Be an Unsuccessful Ancient Philosophy Scholar in Uneasy Times: The Case of S. Lisiecki (1872–1960)**

The paper provides a brief outline of the biography and works of Stanisław Lisiecki (1872–1960), a little-known Polish classics scholar, who is remembered only, if at all, as a translator of Plato's *Republic*. In his early fifties, having given up his career as a Catholic priest, he started working in the field of classics and managed to publish several minor works on Plato in Polish and Latin. His decision to abandon the clergy was not welcomed by many members of the Polish academia and most of his translations of Plato and Aristotle remained unpublished. His renderings of Plato could not compete with the highly accessible translations made by W. Witwicki, which were becoming increasingly popular at that time. Furthermore, Lisiecki's translations of Aristotle, despite the pioneering nature of his undertaking, met with strong criticism at various university seminars.

KEYWORDS

S. Lisiecki, Plato, history of translations, reception of ancient philosophy in Poland

