


<https://doi.org/10.18778/1644-857X.24.02.09>


LUKA BORŠIĆ

INSTYTUT FILOZOFII W ZAGRZEBIU / INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY, ZAGREB, CROATIA

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7432-7880>

IVANA SKUHALA KARASMAN

INSTYTUT FILOZOFII W ZAGRZEBIU / INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY, ZAGREB, CROATIA

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7769-5259>

Elza Kučera and Two Distinguished Polish Women Intellectuals – Ludwika Izabela Dobrzyńska-Rybicka and Zofia Korczyńska*

STRESZCZENIE

Elza Kučera i dwie wybitne polskie intelektualistki – Ludwika Izabela Dobrzyńska-Rybicka oraz Zofia Korczyńska

W artykule przybliżono relacje Elzy Kučery z dwiema wybitnymi polskimi intelektualistkami: Ludwiką Dobrzyńską-Rybicką oraz Zofią Korczyńską. Relacja Kučery z Dobrzyńską-Rybicką była szczególnie ciepła i serdeczna, charakteryzowała się głęboką więzią osobistą. Natomiast relacja Kučery z Korczyńską miała głównie charakter zawodowy i opierała się na ich wspólnych zainteresowaniach w dziedzinie psychologii. Dzięki zachowanej korespondencji możemy uzyskać cenne informacje zarówno o ich życiu prywatnym, jak i zawodowym. Obszerna wymiana listów pozwoliła Kučerze na dogłębne poznanie sytuacji i rozwoju psychologii w Polsce w tamtym okresie.

Słowa kluczowe: Elza Kučera, Ludwika Izabela Dobrzyńska-Rybicka, Zofia Korczyńska, psychologia

* This article was produced as part of the projects *Croatian Women Philosophers* and *Wundt, Mercier, and Modern Croatian Philosophy*, which are conducted at the Institute of Philosophy and funded by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026 – NextGenerationEU.



© by the author, licensee University of Lodz – University of Lodz Press, Lodz, Poland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

Funding Information: Yes. **Conflicts of interests:** None. **Ethical Considerations:** The Authors assure of no violations of publication ethics and take full responsibility for the content of the publication. **Declaration regarding the use of GAI tools:** not used

Received: 2025-07-11. Verified: 2025-07-11. Revised: 2025-09-12. Accepted: 2025-09-25

ABSTRACT

In this article, we shed light on Elza Kučera's relationship with two distinguished Polish women intellectuals: Ludwika Dobrzyńska-Rybicka and Zofia Korczyńska. Kučera's relationship with Dobrzyńska-Rybicka was notably warm and friendly, characterized by a deep personal connection. Conversely, Kučera's relationship with Korczyńska was predominantly professional, based on their shared interests in the field of psychology. Through their preserved correspondence, we gain valuable insights into both their private and professional lives. This extensive communication afforded Kučera a comprehensive understanding of the situation and development of psychology in Poland during that era.

Keywords: Elza Kučera, Ludwika Izabela Dobrzyńska-Rybicka, Zofia Korczyńska, psychology

Introduction

Throughout her long life, Elza Kučera maintained numerous friendships and engaged in extensive correspondence. Over 2,100 drafts of her letters and almost 8,000 letters she received have been preserved as part of her papers at the National and University Library in Zagreb, where she spent her entire career. In total, she corresponded with 579 individuals and institutions. Her correspondence reveals connections with many prominent Croatian figures from the early and mid-twentieth century. Notable correspondents included Croatian philosophers Franjo Marković, Gjuro Arnold, and Albert Bazala; psychologists Ramiro and Zoran Bujas; librarians Ivan Kostrenčić, Franjo Fancev, and Šime Jurić; actresses Ema Boić and Bela Krleža; and writers Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić and Adela Milčinović. Her international correspondents include the famous Austrian writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal and psychologists Gustav Störring, Jules Sutner, Oswald Külpe, and Ernst Meumann.

Additionally, Kučera maintained extensive correspondence with her family and friends, particularly her father Oton, a renowned Croatian mathematician and astronomer, and her closest friend and former teacher Camilla Lucerna¹.

¹ Camilla Lucerna was an exceptionally important person for Elza Kučera. Camilla Lucerna (1868–1963), was one of the most educated women in Croatia of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She finished teacher training in Klagenfurt in 1894, and German and Slavic studies at the University of Vienna in 1907. She was a teacher in Zagreb and Gospić, and from 1895 until her retirement in 1919, she taught German at the Women's Lyceum in Zagreb. She wrote poetry, plays, and

She also had close friendships with two other women philosophers from neighboring countries: the Slovenian Alma Sodnik and the Serbian Ksenija Atanasijević.

Kučera's personal and professional contacts with various women of her time are an important testimony to women's intellectual and scientific emancipation at the beginnings of women's systematic higher education in Europe. This article explores Kučera's relationships with two Polish women: Ludwika Izabela Dobrzyńska-Rybicka and Zofia Korczyńska. The data for this article was derived from her preserved correspondence at the National and University Library in Zagreb.

One may wonder why these two relationships matter and what the rationale for this analysis is. First, Kučera and Dobrzyńska-Rybicka were among the earliest women students of philosophy and psychology in Zurich. Moreover, they maintained their relationship long after their studies, enduring particularly challenging periods such as World War I, various interwar troubles, World War II, and the early communist years in their respective countries. Their correspondence serves as a testament to a particularly sensitive moment in the broader gender-sensitive history, offering valuable insights into the challenges women faced in their professional lives, such as securing employment.

Regarding Kučera's relationship with Korczyńska, we have a unique record of early women's engagement with experimental psychology – a field that, at the time of their involvement, was not only predominantly male but also relatively new. Their correspondence provides interesting insights into the history of women's participation in this discipline in both Croatia and Poland.

The question of why particular relationships between women intellectuals merit scholarly attention transcends mere biographical curiosity and enters the realm of epistemological inquiry. The study of relationships like that between Kučera and Dobrzyńska-Rybicka, and Kučera and Korczyńska therefore serves multiple

comedy. She was particularly interested in the works of J.W. von Goethe. Kučera met her when she began attending the Women's Lyceum and they remained exceptionally close, visiting each other on daily basis, until Lucerna's death. Elza Kučera wrote a book on C. Lucerna, *Camilla Lucerna. Ein Frauenbildnis*, Zagreb 1928, and edited two books in her honor: *Bibliographie der Arbeiten von Camilla Lucerna bis Ende 1937. Camilla Lucerna 1868–1938*, eds J.F. Schütz, E. Kučera, Graz 1938; *Bibliografija radova Camille Lucerne 1938–1958 / Camilla Lucerna. Bibliographie der Arbeiten 1938–1958*, Graz 1958.

philosophical functions: it recovers lost forms of knowledge, challenges dominant epistemic frameworks, and demonstrates the resilience of alternative intellectual traditions. Their correspondence across decades of political turmoil testifies to the persistence of women's intellectual engagement despite systematic barriers, revealing forms of epistemic community that sustained philosophical inquiry outside traditional institutional structures.

As the mutual relationship between Dobrzyńska-Rybicka and Korczyńska does not constitute the primary focus of this study, the subsequent two chapters – following an overview of Kučera's biography – will address Kučera's relationships with each of these figures individually².

Short biography of Elza Kučera³

Elza Kučera (1883–1972) enrolled in the renowned Women's Lyceum in Zagreb in 1894⁴. Her teachers were prominent Croatian women intellectuals, such as translator and writer Camilla Lucerna, writer Jagoda Truhelka, linguist Natalie Wickerhauser, and poetess and translator Štefa Iskra Kršnjavi. Kučera remained friends with her teachers throughout their lives, particularly with Camilla Lucerna. During her schooling, she wrote and published poems and short stories, graduating from the Lyceum in 1902. She then enrolled in the Private School for Commercial Subjects for Girls and Women in Vienna, where she also attended lectures on philosophy and psychology at the University of Vienna. For unknown reasons, she abandoned her studies in Vienna and returned to Zagreb to study

² Contacts between Dobrzyńska-Rybicka and Korczyńska cannot be ruled out. Both women operated in a similar academic environment in Poznań in the 1920s and represented the first generation of Polish women scientists, which could have formed the basis for establishing contacts.

³ This part of our text represents the results of our research into Elza Kučera that have already been published in our monograph on E. Kučera, L. Boršić, I. Skuhala Karasman, *Dr. Elza Kučera*, Zagreb 2022 (2nd revised and expanded edition: 2024).

⁴ The Women's Lyceum was founded in 1892, "and was divided into two four-year units. In the higher grades of the Lyceum, training was divided into three directions: pedagogical, Latin, and general. The majors differed only in the choice of relatively compulsory subjects: pedagogy, Latin, or English. Pedagogical students could take the professional exam for teachers, girls who chose English acquired the general education needed to work as governesses, and those who chose Latin prepared for university education". I. Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Otvoranje ženskog liceja u Zagrebu*, "Povijest u nastavi" 2006, vol. IV, no. 8(2), p. 158.

at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for three years. In 1905, Kučera went to Zurich to study philosophy, psychology, and art history. She received her doctorate in philosophy in 1909 with a thesis titled *Die Erkenntnistheorie von Thomas Brown: eine historische Studie*. She became the first woman born in Croatia to earn the title of a Doctor of Philosophy. Her mentor was the German philosopher and psychologist Gustav Störring.

A new chapter in Kučera's life began with her return to Zagreb. Seeking employment, Kučera faced significant limitations in the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy due to her gender. It was customary for women of her standing to pursue a teaching career. However, her serious speech impediment made this path unfeasible. For a time, she aspired to work in psychology, but soon recognized the impracticality of this ambition, as she later reflected: "Since after the end of my studies there were no more opportunities in our country to work in experimental psychology, to which I wanted to devote myself, I applied for a position at the Royal University Library in Zagreb"⁵. Despite initial challenges, Kučera eventually secured a position at the National and University Library in Zagreb, where she remained employed until her retirement in 1944. In this capacity, she achieved a significant milestone as the first woman in Croatia to be appointed as a civil servant.

Kučera continued to engage in psychology and philosophy alongside her library duties. From 1910 to 1914, she maintained a private laboratory for experimental psychology in her apartment, examining the laws of emotional life and the psychogalvanic reflex phenomenon. About this she wrote: "In my private apartment at Jurjevska Street 14, I set up a small psychological laboratory, because there were no opportunities for experimental psychological work in our country. In the laboratory, I examined the laws of emotional life with the help of my associates, using the method of controlled self-observation. In this connection, I also checked the psychogalvanic reflex phenomenon with a precise instrument, which I ordered from Frankfurt, where it was adjusted to my special needs and according to my instructions [our translation from Croatian]"⁶.

⁵ E. Kučera, *Curriculum vitae*, National and University Library in Zagreb [hereinafter: NSK], R 4744.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

In 1922, she conducted research on volitional actions at the Institute of Psychology at the University of Bonn. In 1927, she co-founded the “Review for Philosophy and Psychology” (“Revija za filozofiju i psihologiju”), edited by the eminent Croatian philosopher Albert Bazala. From 1933 to 1936, she participated in exercises at the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Zagreb. The largest number of her publications are in the field of experimental psychology. Since Kučera’s research was on the border between psychology and philosophy, some of her experiments would today be considered part of experimental philosophy, particularly her research in the field of free will and volition. Part of her philosophical engagement included the organization of philosophical colloquia in Zagreb modelled after the philosophical colloquia in Bonn which she attended in 1922, she initiated the organization of such colloquia in Zagreb as well. They were held 67 times between 1924 and 1930 and were born at the same time as the publication of the “Review for Philosophy and Psychology”.

Kučera was active in the Zagreb Section of the Association of University-Educated Women of Yugoslavia, contributing to the book *Bibliographie des livres des femmes auteurs en Yugoslavia* for which Kučera wrote the *Introduction*⁷. In the same year she organized the Exhibition of Books by Women Writers in Dubrovnik in 1936. She tried, as much as it was in accordance with her nature, to participate in all events that promoted women’s rights.

Kučera was a pioneer in four areas in Croatia: the first Croatian woman born in Croatia to receive a doctorate in philosophy, the first civil servant, the first librarian, and the first experimental psychologist. Her work paved the way for other women in Croatia.

⁷ E. Kučera, *Introduction*, [in:] *Bibliografija knjiga ženskih pisaca u Jugoslaviji / Bibliographie des livres des femmes auteurs en Yugoslavie*, Beograd-Ljubljana-Zagreb 1936, pp. VIII–X.

Elza Kučera and Ludwika Dobrzyńska-Rybicka

Kučera met Ludwika Izabela Dobrzyńska-Rybicka (1868–1958) in Zurich, a period that was formative for both women. To understand the significance of their meeting, it is essential to provide some context regarding their time in Zurich.

Since 1864, the University of Zurich has admitted women as regular, full-time students, making it one of the first institutions in Europe to do so. Initially, women were allowed to attend lectures at the Faculty of Philosophy, later expanding to include the polytechnic and medical faculties. By the end of the nineteenth century, numerous notable women had studied at the University of Zurich, including Meta von Salis-Marschlins, Resa von Schirnhöfer, Josephina Theresia Zürcher, and Lou Andreas-Salomé. However, most of female students in Zurich, like Kučera, belonged to the middle, bourgeois class.

Several Croatian women studied at the University of Zurich, as the University of Zagreb only began admitting female students in 1901. For instance, Milica Šviglin Čavov, the first Croatian female physician, graduated from the Medical School in Zurich in 1893. A few years later, in 1903, Augusta Buček also graduated from the Medical School in Zurich. Two Croatian women received their doctorates in Zurich before Kučera: Vera Philippović and Ada Broch⁸. Both received their doctorates in English philology.

During their studies in Zurich, Kučera became acquainted with Ludwika Izabela Dobrzyńska-Rybicka. The friendship was significant for both women. Kučera and Dobrzyńska-Rybicka, whom she called 'Luise', studied together in Zurich from 1905 to 1909 and became close friends. They both attended the same lectures and had the same mentor for their doctoral theses, Gustav Störring. Moreover, their thesis topics were similar: Kučera focused on Thomas Brown's epistemology, while Dobrzyńska-Rybicka addressed his ethics. The similarities did not end there; like Kučera, Dobrzyńska-Rybicka worked as a librarian after leaving Zurich, specifically at the Poznań Society of Friends of Science.

⁸ For more on Ada Broch see L. Boršić, I. Skuhala Karasman, *Pedagoški rad sestara Broch*, "Nova prisutnost: časopis zaintelektualna i duhovna pitanja" 2023, vol. XXI, no. 1, pp. 133–147.

Their careers diverged after this point. In 1920, Dobrzyńska-Rybicka wrote her second doctoral thesis, titled *Ethical System of Hugo Kollataj*, at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. In 1933, she became a professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where she taught philosophy and sociology. Kučera, on the other hand, remained employed as a librarian throughout her entire career.

After their time in Zurich, they often exchanged letters. Their correspondence lasted from 1911 until 1955, with almost 500 letters that Kučera received from Luise and 17 drafts of letters that Kučera sent to Luisa being preserved. The exchange of letters was not regular, and there were periods when they did not write to each other for two or three years. However, the preserved letters give an impression of friendly closeness and intimacy. Additionally, from 1909 to 1920, Kučera kept a diary, written in German, which she titled *Diary for Luise*⁹. Kučera addresses Dobrzyńska-Rybicka in the diary as “my only beloved” and writes that she constantly talks to her in her mind. The diary contains mainly notes and thoughts about everyday life. It seems that it was only Elza’s internal dialogue with Luise, as Kučera likely never sent the diary to Dobrzyńska-Rybicka¹⁰.

As for the content of the letters, Kučera’s letters to Dobrzyńska-Rybicka bear witness to her private life and the challenges she faced at work. In this context, of particular interest are two letters in which Kučera describes the reasons for the belated publication of the “Review for Philosophy and Psychology”, the journal for which she was an editor. In a letter from March 1926, she wrote that one of the reasons that the “Review” was still unpublished was the character of the South Slavs, about whom Kučera wrote: “And our *Revue* still hasn’t appeared either. It doesn’t depend so much on the circumstances as on the people [...] it’s the Slavic blood and, moreover, the southern Slavic blood!!! But the thing is still alive, and I try hard to keep it alive [our translation from German]”¹¹.

⁹ E. Kučera, Tagebuchblätter für Luise, NSK, R 4769.

¹⁰ It cannot be ruled out that Kučera harbored more romantic feelings toward Dobrzyńska-Rybicka. Kučera never married, and there is no evidence of any romantic or sexual relationships with men. On the other hand, some of her correspondence with other women contains affectionate expressions of emotional closeness. However, there is also no definitive evidence that she was a lesbian, or that these expressions were anything more than a mannered style of communication.

¹¹ E. Kučera, Korespondencija. Njezina pisma drugima, NSK, R 4770a: “Und auch unsere *Revue* ist noch immer nicht erschienen. Es hängt nicht so viel an

This observation of Kučera is not surprising if we consider that she was interested in the characteristic traits of different nations, the then-popular discipline called *Völkerpsychologie*, the ‘psychology of nations’. From the quote it appears that Kučera considered the South Slavs to be undisciplined and slow in carrying out their duties.

In the letter from January 1929, Kučera explained to Dobrzyńska-Rybicka why the second issue of the “Review” was not published: “There’s nothing going on with our *Revue*, even if we haven’t lost all hope yet. Unfortunately, it’s not just about the money, but also about the people. Since Dr. Bujas¹² has remarried, our working relationship has also loosened up considerably. He’s no longer up for a psychological conversation with me. That’s a shame, but unfortunately there’s nothing that can be done about things like this [our translation from German]”¹³.

Only one issue of the “Review for Philosophy and Psychology” was published. That first and only issue contained texts on philosophy and psychology by six authors, two of whom were women (Ksenija Atanasijević and Mira Vodvařka-Kočonda).

In 1921, Kučera spent six months in Berlin and Poznań. Thanks to her Polish friends, Kučera was well acquainted with the status of psychology in that country. Along with the “Bibliography of Croatian Philosophical and Psychological Literature”¹⁴, in the “Review” was also published a text by the famous Polish psychologist Stęfan Błachowski, who wrote the article *The Situation of Psychological Research in Poland in 1924 and 1925 (Stanje psihologijskih strazivanja u Poljskoj godine 1924. i 1925.)*¹⁵. In the note following

den Umständen, als an den Menschen [...] es ist eben Slavenblut und noch dazu südliches!!! Die Sache ist aber noch immer lebendig und ich gebe mir viel Mühe sie lebendig zu erhalten”.

¹² Ramiro Bujas (1879–1959) was a prominent Croatian psychologist and professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Zagreb. He received a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Graz. His mentor was Brentano’s student Alexius Meinong.

¹³ E. Kučera, Korespondencija. Njezina pisma drugima, NSK, R 4770a: “Mit unserer *Revue* geht es garnichts weiter, wenn wir auch noch nicht alle Hoffnungen verloren haben. Es liegt leider nicht nur an dem Gelde, sondern auch an den Menschen. Seitdem Dr. Bujas wieder verheiratet ist hat sich auch unsere Arbeitsgemeinschaft stark gelockert. Für ein psychologisches Gespräch mit mir ist er eigentlich garnichts mehr zu haben. Das ist eigentlich schade, aber an solchem Dingen ist leider nichts zu ändern”.

¹⁴ E. Kučera, *Bibliografija domaće filozofijske i psihologijske literature. Godina 1924.*, “Revija za filozofiju i psihologiju” 1927, vol. I, no. 1–2, pp. 85–91.

¹⁵ S. Błachowski, *Stanje psihologijskih strazivanja u Poljskoj godine 1924. i 1925.*, “Revija za filozofiju i psihologiju” 1927, vol. I, no. 1–2, pp. 92–95.

Błachowski's text, Kučera wrote: "Dr. St. Błachowski, university professor and director of the psychology institute in Poznań, was the first to respond to write for our review an original account of the contemporary psychological or philosophical work of his nation. At this point, we once again praise him for his friendly hospitality, and we will bring separate reports about his own psychological works, which he did not want to talk about, in a future issue [our translation from Croatian]"¹⁶.

In his text Błachowski also mentioned a text written by Dobrzyńska-Rybicka and published in Poznań in 1925: "«Studies on Graphic Automatism» by L. Dobrzyńska-Rybicka deals with the case of a woman who writes automatically, and brings an interpretation of automatic writing, in which it is assumed that automatic writing takes place in emotional ways, which correspond to intellectual ones (on the basis of a theory by Abramowski) [our translation from Croatian]"¹⁷. From the letter that Kučera sent to Dobrzyńska-Rybicka on 22 March 1926, we learned that Korczyńska was supposed to write about Błachowski's works in the never published second issue of the journal.

From Kučera's letters to Dobrzyńska-Rybicka, we also learn something about her private life. For instance, in one of the letters from 1934, Kučera testifies about her closeness with Camilla Lucerna, and how much she valued her friendship: "Of all my friends here, Camilla is of course still the closest and dearest to me. I often realize what a blessing this is for me! [our translation from German]"¹⁸. In some other letters, Kučera shares with Dobrzyńska-Rybicka some very intimate details about her family and personal life, otherwise quite atypical for Kučera and which indicates that their relationship was quite close.

Elza Kučera and Zofia Korczyńska

In contrast to the relationship between Kučera and Dobrzyńska-Rybicka, we know significantly less about Kučera's relationship with Zofia Korczyńska, and we have considerably less access to information about her.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 92.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 93. Besides Ludowika Dobrzyńska-Rybicka, in his text Błachowski also mentioned the Polish psychologist Józefa Franciszka Joteykówna.

¹⁸ E. Kučera, Korespondencija. Njezina pisma drugima, NSK, R 4770a: "Von allen meinen Freunden hier ist mir Camilla natürlich noch immer die nächste und die liebste. Oft werde ich mir dessen bewusst, was für ein Segen das für mich ist!"

Most likely Kučera met Korczyńska during her stay in Poznań in 1921. Zofia Korczyńska, born Obalińska, defended her doctoral thesis at the Department of Psychology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, in 1921, under the title *On the Suggestive Influence of the Previous Situation on the Next One*¹⁹. Her mentor was Stéfan Błachowski, who most likely facilitated the meeting between Kučera and Korczyńska. After 1921, they regularly exchanged letters and conducted some experiments together. Seven letters that Korczyńska sent to Kučera, between 1923 and 1961, have been preserved and are kept in the National and University Library in Zagreb. Unfortunately, the drafts of the letter or letters that Kučera sent to Korczyńska have not been preserved. In the letters Korczyńska addresses Kučera as ‘Fraülein Doctor’, which indicates that their relationship was strictly professional rather than friendly. We learn from the letters that Korczyńska knew of Dobrzyńska-Rybicka as well. Though the letters we also learn some information about her private life: Korczyńska began teaching a course in psychology in the eighth grade of the gymnasium run by the Ursuline nuns in Poznań in 1923.

Kučera and Korczyńska worked together in a field of common interest, that is, psychology. Together with Mathilde Kelchner²⁰ in Bonn and Korczyńska in Poznań, Kučera compiled tests to examine the characteristics of certain nations (*Untersuchungen zur vergleichenden Völkerpsychologie*), which were conducted in Poznań, Berlin, and Zagreb. The project consisted of a series of experimental tests in which they interviewed a certain number of people from different nations and asked them some basic questions, such as “What makes you happy?”, “What brings you pain or discomfort?”, etc. In this way, Kučera examined sixty-six subjects in Zagreb. However, the results of the experiment could not have been practically applied, because, in Kučera’s words, there were no means (probably financial) to turn these results into applied practice, that is, to evaluate characteristics of certain national groups according

¹⁹ This information comes from the official webpage of the Department of Psychology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, <https://psychologia.amu.edu.pl/o-wydziale/historia> (accessed 28 May 2024).

²⁰ Mathilde Kelchner was born in 1872 in Berlin. She studied at the University of Zurich from 1901, and in 1904 she defended her doctorate thesis under the title *Untersuchungen über das Wesen des Gefühls mittels der Ausdrucksmethode / Investigations into the Nature of Feelings using the Expression Method*. Her mentor was the famous psychologist, student of Wilhelm Wundt, Ernst Meumann. Elza Kučera most likely met Mathilde Kelchner during her studies in Zurich as well.

to this method of assessment. From the letters that Korczyńska wrote to Kučera, we learn that conducting interviews in Poland was blocked due to several obstacles. Thus, in a letter dated 14 April 1924, Korczyńska wrote that they sent three series of questionnaires to the participants in the experiment, but only one responded. It seems that the lack of interest of the Polish participants in the experiment also contributed to the impasse of this project.

This unfinished experiment shows the clear influence of Wilhelm Wundt on Kučera, Korczyńska, and Kelchner. Namely, it was a famous theory of Wundt's that investigation into differences in the mentality of certain nations would yield results through which one could draw conclusions about the common traits of certain nations. His starting point was that every nation has its own special psychological characteristics that emerges from the so-called 'folk spirit' (*Volksgeist*) whose spiritual substance is ingrained in the nature of every nation²¹.

Conclusion

In this article, we provide an overview of the relationships that Elza Kučera had with two Polish women intellectuals: Ludowika Izabela Dobrzyńska-Rybicka and Zofia Korczyńska based on archives from Zagreb's National and University Library. Kučera's relationship with Dobrzyńska-Rybicka was notably warm and friendly, characterized by a deep personal and emotional connection. Conversely, Kučera's relationship with Korczyńska was predominantly professional, based on their shared interests in the field of experimental psychology. Through their preserved correspondence, we gain valuable insights into both their private and professional lives. This extensive communication afforded Kučera a comprehensive understanding of the situation and development of psychology in Poland during that era.

The significance of these relationships extends beyond biographical interest. These relationships serve crucial philosophical functions by recovering marginalized knowledge, challenging dominant epistemic frameworks, and demonstrating the resilience of alternative intellectual traditions. Their sustained correspondence across

²¹ W. Wundt, *Probleme der Völkerpsychologie*, Leipzig 1911, <https://archive.org/details/b2152371x/mode/2up> (accessed 22 March 2024).

decades of political upheaval evidences women's persistent intellectual engagement despite systematic barriers, revealing epistemic communities that maintained scientific inquiry outside traditional institutions.

Kučera's collaboration and interactions with Dobrzyńska-Rybicka and Korczyńska, three women who shared a profound passion for psychology and science, underscore their roles as pioneers in the field. Their contributions significantly advanced the presence and recognition of women in science in their respective countries, highlighting their importance in the early development of psychological research and their influence on subsequent generations of female scientists. The preservation of their letters and professional exchanges offers a unique glimpse into the historical context and personal dynamics that shaped their scientific endeavors and achievements.

Bibliography

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

National and University Library in Zagreb [NSK]

Kučera E., *Curriculum vitae*, R 4744

Kučera E., *Tagebuchblätter für Luise*, R 4769

Kučera E., *Korespondencija. Njezina pisma drugima*, R 4770a

Kučera E., *Korespondencija. Pisma drugih njojzi*, R 4770b

SECONDARY SOURCES

Bibliographie der Arbeiten von Camilla Lucerna bis Ende 1937. Camilla Lucerna 1868–1938, eds J.F. Schütz, E. Kučera, Graz 1938.

Błachowski S., *Stanje psihologijskih straživanja u Poljskoj godine 1924. i 1925.*, "Revija za filozofiju i psihologiju" 1927, vol. I, no. 1–2, pp. 92–95.

Boršić L., Skuhala Karasman I., *Dr. Elza Kučera*, Zagreb 2022 (2nd revised and expanded edition: 2024).

Boršić L., Skuhala Karasman I., *Pedagoški rad sestara Broch*, "Nova prisutnost: časopis za intelektualna i duhovna pitanja" 2023, vol. XXI, no. 1, pp. 133–147.

Kučera E., *Bibliografija domaće filozofjske i psihologijske literature. Godina 1924.*, "Revija za filozofiju i psihologiju" 1927, vol. I, no. 1–2, pp. 85–91.

Kučera E., *Camilla Lucerna. Ein Frauenbildnis*, Zagreb 1928.

Kučera E., *Introduction*, [in:] *Bibliografija knjiga ženskih pisaca u Jugoslaviji / Bibliographie des livres des femmes auteurs en Jugoslavie*, Beograd-Ljubljana-Zagreb 1936, pp. VIII-X.

Kučera E., *Bibliografija radova Camille Lucerne 1938–1958 / Camilla Lucerna. Bibliographie der Arbeiten 1938–1958*, Graz 1958.

Ograjšek Gorenjak I., *Otvoranje ženskog liceja u Zagrebu*, "Povijest u nastavi" 2006, vol. IV, no. 8(2), pp. 147–176.

INTERNET SOURCES

<https://psychologia.amu.edu.pl/o-wydziale/historia> (accessed 28 May 2024).

Wundt W., *Probleme der Völkerpsychologie*, Leipzig 1911, <https://archive.org/details/b2152371x/mode/2up> (accessed 22 March 2024).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Luka Boršić – obtained his first PhD in Ancient Philosophy, with an emphasis on classical languages, from the Internationale Akademie für Philosophie in 2001. He earned his second PhD in the History of Philosophy, focusing on Renaissance anti-Aristotelianism, from the University of Zagreb in 2010. He is currently the Director and a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Philosophy in Zagreb. In 2019, he was a Fulbright Scholar at Columbia University in New York. He has been the Principal Investigator of the research project *Croatian Women Philosophers in the European Context*, funded by the Croatian Science Foundation, *Croatian Women Philosophers*, funded by the Next Generation EU fund and the Principal Investigator of the Croatian part of the Weave Czech-Croatian project *Natura historiae, historia naturae: Unveiling Nature's Historicity through Early Modern Analyses of Continuity, Time, and Human History*. He is the author or co-author of 5 books and over 40 articles and book chapters. In coauthorship with Ivana Skuhala Karasman there is a new book forthcoming: an edited translation of Helene Druskowitz philosophical works in De Gruyter / Brill publishing house.

Research interest: Ancient Philosophy, Renaissance Philosophy, the birth of modern science, and Gender Philosophy, particularly the history of women philosophers.



luka@ifzg.hr

Dr Ivana Skuhala Karasman – she studied Philosophy and Croatology at the Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb and in 2011, she defended her PhD thesis, titled *Prediction in Medieval and Renaissance Natural Philosophy (in the Works of H. Dalmatin, F. Grisogono, G. Raguseus)*. She is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Philosophy in Zagreb. She is also the head of the Department of the Croatian Philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy and serves as Principal Investigator of the projects *New Topics in Croatian Philosophy from 1874 to 1945* and *Wundt, Mercier and Modern Croatian Philosophy*. She is Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Contributions to the Research of Croatian Philosophical Heritage*. She has published 5 books and more than 40 articles and book chapters. In coauthorship with Luka Boršić there is a new book forthcoming: an edited translation of Helene Druskowitz philosophical works in De Gruyter / Brill publishing house.

Research interest: Gender Philosophy, specifically the history of Croatian women philosophers, Croatian Philosophy, Renaissance Philosophy.



ivana@ifzg.hr