

THE CONTRIBUTION OF LEŚNIEWSKI

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The present paper* aims at giving an account of the logical work of Stanislaw Leśniewski. Many other papers, as well as a book, are available, which treat Leśniewski and his work. However, I feel that another paper is called for. None of the articles presently available gives a satisfactory account of what Leśniewski did and why he did it. And the book, *The Logical Systems of Leśniewski*, by E. C. Luschei, which is a complete account of certain aspects of Leśniewski's work, does not make it easy for a person who knows little or nothing about Leśniewski to appreciate Leśniewski's work. The present paper attempts to give a brief, sympathetic, and relatively complete account of Leśniewski's work. What Leśniewski did and his reasons for doing it are both interesting and important—important enough to justify still another paper these many years after his death.

Leśniewski, a Polish logician, died in 1939. He did an enormous amount of research in formal logic, and seems to have had considerable influence in his own country; outside of Poland, little is known about his work. The chief reason for this is that Leśniewski left very little material in print, and what has been published is very abstract and technical. Some explanation of the scarcity of Leśniewski's printed word is afforded by the fact that he was a perfectionist. He would not publish anything that was not just right. He probably intended to present a systematic exposition of his work, but was prevented by his death. And his unpublished results, which were to have been edited by Sobociński, were destroyed during the war.¹

It is unfortunate that Leśniewski's work is not better known, because it reveals insight and originality. Leśniewski's logical research was motivated and informed by his views about the nature of language and of the world. While these views may not be entirely satisfactory, some of them are very persuasive. The formal systems which Leśniewski devised contain the outlines of a language capable of talking (efficiently) about the

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