

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF ELZA KUČERA

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Abstract

The focus of this work are two aspects of the philosophy of Elza Kučera (1883 — 1972). Kučera received her doctorate in philosophy from the University of Zurich in 1909, becoming the first Croatian woman born in Croatia to receive a PhD in philosophy. Her main interest was psychology, and later library science, and, apart from her PhD theses, almost all her published works are within these disciplines. However, among her handwritten and unpublished works that are preserved in the archives of the National and University Library in Zagreb a certain number of “purely” philosophical texts can be found. In order to present her philosophical approach, we analyze two particular questions she dealt with. The first is the problem of causality that she discussed in her overview of Thomas Brown’s epistemology in her dissertation entitled *The Epistemology of Thomas Brown: A Historical Study (Die Erkenntnislehre von Thomas Brown: eine historische Studie, Zagreb, 1909)*. The second is the question of national philosophy, which she developed in a short unpublished text from 1918 or 1919. Given that Elza Kučera, as the first woman philosopher, experimental psychologist, and woman librarian in Croatia, has not received due attention to this day, we also present her biography.

KEYWORDS: Elza Kučera, Thomas Brown, cognitive theory, national philosophy

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Introduction

In this paper we introduce some aspects of the philosophical thought of the first Croatian-born woman philosopher, Elza Kučera.¹ She received her doctorate in philosophy from the University of Zurich in 1909. In the same year, upon her return to Zagreb, she published her dissertation under the same title, *Die Erkenntnislehre von Thomas Brown: eine historische Studie* (*The Epistemology of Thomas Brown: A Historical Study*). Apart from a short newspaper article on women's rights to vote in J. S. Mill's philosophy (Kučera 1914), this book is her only published "purely" philosophical work. Among Kučera's handwritten works a few "purely" philosophical texts can be found — "purely" here means that the texts are not part of her psychological research. They are written in German and entitled as follows: "Logic" (*Logik*), "Cognitive theory" (*Erkenntnistheorie*), "History of philosophy" (*Geschichte der Philosophie*), and "Introduction to Logic" (*Logik: Einleitendes/ Einleitung*).² Altogether they comprise approximately 200 barely legible pages and are unfinished. It should be noted that most of her more completed manuscripts and published texts teeter on the verge between psychology and philosophy, and for some of them it is hard to determine whether they should be labelled as either psychological or philosophical. Most of her "psychological" papers deal with concepts and ideas that traditionally belong to philosophy: will, ethical action, motivation, etc. However, she does not seem to have belonged to any particular philosophical school: she uses most of these terms in their common-sense meaning, rarely recalling their definitions as proposed by some philosophers.

Here, we decided to present Kučera's philosophical thought through two different aspects of her philosophy. The first is the problem of causality that she discussed in light of Thomas Brown's philosophy in her published dissertation from 1909, and the second is the question of national philosophy which she discussed in an unpublished text written in 1918 or 1919.

Given that Elza Kučera has not received due attention as the first woman philosopher, experimental psychologist, and woman librarian in Croatia to this day, we consider it useful to present her biography more extensively, so that the context of her philosophical works could be better understood.

1 The paper is based on our recently published monograph on Elza Kučera (Boršić, Skuhala Karasman 2022), and most of the material here has already been presented in our book in Croatian. In the text, we have indicated with interlinear references longer passages that have been translated directly from the book. The novelty in this text is the extension of our interpretation of Kučera's book *Die Erkenntnislehre von Thomas Brown*, as well as a more thorough interpretation of Kučera's approach to "national philosophy".

2 The texts are preserved in the National and University Library in Zagreb, call numbers Kučera 1972, R 4749/13–16.

1. *The life of Elza Kučera*

Elza/Elsa Kučera was born in Vinkovci in 1883. Her father was the Croatian astronomer and mathematician Oton Kučera (1857 — 1931), and her mother Vilhelmina (Vilma) Julie Stenczel, the daughter of an evangelical pastor from Neudorf near Vinkovci, who was highly educated for that time. Elza Kučera completed her elementary education in Bakar.

After Oton Kučera's relocation to Zagreb, Elza was enrolled in the renowned Women's Lyceum in Zagreb. Her teachers were prominent Croatian women intellectuals, such as translator and writer Camilla Lucerna (1868 — 1963), writer Jagoda Truhelka (1869 — 1957), and linguist Natalie Wickerhauser (1853 — 1906), who was one of the founders of the Lyceum. Kučera developed a close relationship and remained friends with her teachers for the rest of their lives. During her schooling, she wrote and published poems and short stories in which she talked about the painful loss of her mother, who died when Elza was seven years old, and about the process of growing up. She graduated from Lyceum in 1902.

As she wanted to continue her education, she enrolled in the *Privatschule für Kaufmännische Lehrfächer für Mädchen und Frauen* (Private School for Commercial Subjects for Girls and Women) in Vienna in 1902. The school was, what we would call today, a “business school”, and it is safe to say that Kučera did not find her place in this discipline. During her Viennese days, she attended lectures on philosophy and psychology at the University of Vienna. For unknown reasons, she abandoned her studies in Vienna and returned to Zagreb where she studied at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb for three years. Her professors were philosopher Franjo Marković (1845 — 1914), philosopher and poet Gjuro Arnold (1853 — 1941), philosopher Albert Bazala (1877 — 1947), historian and politician Isidor Kršnjavi (1845 — 1927), as well as her father Oton Kučera, and chemist Gustav Janeček (1848 — 1929). These people were the *crème de la crème* of Croatian sciences and humanities of the time, and they were all family friends of Kučera.

In 1905, she moved to Zurich where she began studying philosophy and attending also lectures in psychology and physiology. In 1909, she was promoted to Doctor of Philosophy and thus became the first Croatian woman born in Croatia to be promoted to Doctor of Philosophy.³ Her mentor was

3 In the rare literature on Elza Kučera, it is sometimes falsely stated that she received a doctorate in psychology. For example, this information can be found in the entry “Kučera, Elza” in Hrvatska enciklopedija, <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=34407>. In contrast, the *Croatian Biographical Lexicon* correctly states that she studied philosophy and received a doctorate, Cf. Lada Šojat, “Kučera, Elza (Elsa, Elizabeta)”, *Croatian Biographical Lexicon* (2013), <http://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=10783>.

the German philosopher and psychologist Gustav Störring (1860 — 1946). The time she spent studying in Zurich, which she would later call the happiest period of her life, was spent between attending lectures, participating in Störring's psychological experiments, and the inevitable socializing with colleagues with whom she would remain friends even after finishing her studies.

A new chapter in Elza Kučera's life is marked by her return to Zagreb and her search for adequate employment. Being a woman, Kučera had a very limited range of possible jobs. For a woman of her position, it was expected she would become a teacher. However, since she suffered from a serious speech impediment, this was not an option for her. For some time, she dreamt about working in psychology, but she soon realized that it was impossible, about which she later wrote: "Since after the end of my studies there were no more opportunities in our country to work in experimental psychology, which I wanted to devote myself to, I applied for a position at the Royal University Library in Zagreb." (Kučera 1972: "Biography", R 4744)

After some initial problems, Kučera found a way to get a job at the National and University Library in Zagreb, where she worked until her retirement in April 1944. In this respect she was also a "first" in Croatia: she was the first woman to be appointed as a civil servant. From 1920 to 1942, Kučera was also the deputy director of the Library.

Along with her job at the library, Kučera was actively involved in psychology and, partially, philosophy. In her apartment at Jurjevska 14, where she lived with her father, from 1910 to 1914 she had a small private laboratory for experimental psychology, about which 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. (Kučera 1972: "Biography," R 4744, 1)

As a renowned psychologist, she was a member of the committee for evaluation of the work capacity of job applicants. For that purpose, she adopted the Binet–Simon test, and adapted it to regional conditions. In 1922, she stayed at the Institute of Psychology at the University of Bonn, where she was engaged in research on volitional actions. Together with Dr. Mathilda Kelchner in Bonn and Dr. Zofja Korczyńska in Poznań, she compiled tests to examine the characteristics of certain nations, which were conducted in Poznań, Berlin, and her region (Kučera, R 4753). In 1927, she co-founded the *Review for Philosophy and Psychology* (*Revija za filozofiju i psihologiju*), whose editor-in-chief was 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. Psychology remained an important part of Kučera's life. 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 colloquia she attended in Bonn from 1924 till 1930:

Following the example of the 'philosophical colloquia' in Bonn, which I also attended in 1922, I initiated the organization of such colloquia in Zagreb as well. They were held 67 times between 1924 and 1930 and were born around the publication of the *Review for Philosophy and Psychology*. In this way the cooperation [among philosophers and psychologists] would finally be realized in our country, which would enable us to conduct more intensive and organized research in these areas. (Kučera 1972: R 4753)

Unfortunately, only one issue of the *Review for Philosophy and Psychology* was published.

It is also worth mentioning that Elza Kučera took part in the fight for women's rights. She participated in the work of the Zagreb Section of the Association of University-Educated Women of Yugoslavia, which published the book *Bibliographie des livres des femmes auteurs en Yugoslavia* in 1936, for which Kučera wrote the "Introduction". Elza Kučera also 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.

Elza Kučera lived a long life and died in Zagreb in 1972.

2. *Kučera's dissertation The Epistemology of Thomas Brown*

Elza Kučera's dissertation *The Epistemology of Thomas Brown* was published in Zagreb in 1909. She dedicated this book to her father, Oton Kučera, who, despite not being a trained philosopher or psychologist, used his enormous humanistic education to advise his daughter in some decisive moments during her studies, as we learn from their correspondence. The book contains an "Introduction", then "Part One: Presentation of Brown's cognitive theory", which is further divided into six chapters: "Methodological determinations", "Intuitive principles as assumptions of thinking", "Problem of causality", "On the identity of spirit", "On our beliefs in the existence of the external world", and "Critical review of the exposed". The second part, entitled "Brown's cognitive theory in its historical connections" has three chap-

ters: “The historical position of Brown’s cognitive theory according to the understanding of his critics”, “Brown’s position against Hume and the Scottish ‘common sense philosophy’” and “French sensualists, Thomas Brown and J. St. Mill” (Boršić, Skuhala Karasman 2022, 101).

In the “Introduction”, after having given some general information about the little-known Scottish philosopher Thomas Brown, Kučera presented the goal of her work:

This work has the task of systematically presenting all the epistemological determinations scattered in Brown’s lectures and in his treatise on the relation between cause and effect, in order to establish on the basis of these the rather interesting special position of his epistemology vis-à-vis Hume and the Scottish school on the one hand and vis-à-vis J. St. Mill on the other. In doing so, his psychological and logical determinations are only taken into account insofar as this is absolutely necessary for understanding his epistemological views. (Kučera 1909, 3)⁴

As stated above, Kučera aimed at systematizing Brown’s epistemology. Her point of departure of this systematization, as a sort of hermeneutical key, was the conviction that Brown’s epistemology opposes David Hume’s and J. S. Mill’s epistemological approaches. To demonstrate this point, Kučera analysed Brown’s book *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind* published in Edinburgh in 1820:

The ‘philosophy of the human mind’, according to Brown, breaks down into four parts: the physiology of the mind, and the doctrines of general ethics, politics, and natural theology. He himself deals only with the physiology of the mind and ethics, whereby in the former he discusses epistemological and logical problems as well as psychological ones. Likewise, his methodological provisions, which indicate that the scientific method of natural science can and should be used in the study of psychological phenomena, apply especially to the psychological investigations of the first part, which he therefore calls, in a deliberate transposition of the expression, the physiology of the spirit. Here, first of all, this method must be characterised in more detail according to the provisions that he himself establishes about it, and furthermore, the research method that he specifically adopts in solving epistemological problems must be determined. (Kučera 1909, 7)⁵

- 4 “Vorliegende Arbeit hat die Aufgabe, die gesammten in Browns Vorlesungen und in seiner Abhandlung über die Beziehung zwischen Ursache und Wirkung zerstreuten erkenntnistheoretischen Bestimmungen systematisch darzustellen, um auf Grund dessen die ziemlich interessante Sonderstellung seiner Erkenntnistheorie gegenüber Hume und der schottischen Schule einerseits und gegenüber J. St. Mill andererseits zu fixieren. Dabei werden seine psychologischen und logischen Bestimmungen nur insofern berücksichtigt, als dies zum Verständnis seiner erkenntnistheoretischen Anschauungen unbedingt nötig ist.”
- 5 “Die ‘Philosophie des menschlichen Geistes’ zerfällt nach Brown in vier Teile: in die Physiologie des Geistes und in die Lehren der allgemeinen Ethik, der Politik und der natürlichen Theologie. Er selbst behandelt nur die Physiologie des Geistes und die Ethik, wobei er in der ersteren neben psychologischen auch erkenntnistheoretische und logische Probleme bespricht. Ebenso gelten seine methodologischen Bestimmungen, welche dahin ge-

Furthermore, she systematically dealt with Brown's cognitive method and reached the conclusion that in his epistemology, Brown not only continued to develop what was passed on to him by his predecessors and use it for new questions, but through these questions he offered a sharper formulation to those traditional question, which, according to Kučera, represents the basis for further development in the direction of finding solutions.

In her book, Kučera analysed Brown's epistemology from several perspectives: the problem of causality, the identity of spirit, and our belief in the existence of the outer world. All these aspects of Kučera's analysis cannot be covered in this paper, so we decided to focus only on the first issue she dealt with: the problem of causality, which is crucial in her approach. The other two questions — the identity of spirit and our belief in the existence of the outer world — will be left for another time.

Kučera adopted Thomas Brown's belief that our thinking rests on certain unprovable assumptions. If we want to prove something or if we want to doubt something, we must recognize the correctness of this unprovable assumptions (Kučera 1909, 74). In order to elaborate this idea, Brown needed further analysis of psychological concepts. For Brown, spiritual wealth is identical to the irreducible psychic elements of which we are immediately aware (e.g., feelings, ideas, relationships). The knowledge which presupposes that experience, then transcends all these experiences, but still makes sense for us, Brown called intuitive knowledge or intuitive faith (Boršić, Skuhala Karasman 2022, 102–103).

Brown described the necessity of thinking as the ultimate necessary identifiable criterion for the generality of our judgments. Most contemporary cognitive theorists would agree with this position, as Kučera stated. Furthermore, Brown noted that along with the validity of intuition, the validity of the causal principle of our knowledge was simultaneously imposed.

Kučera commented on Brown's approach to this intuitive insight into the validity of the principle of causality with these words:

Brown also bases the objective validity of the causal relationship on his own intuition. For this very reason, despite his efforts to maintain it, this validity can be doubted by all those who do not like to take recourse to sacrosanct intuitions, where one cannot get by with thinking or seems not to get by with thinking for the time being. All the more so since Brown himself tacitly admits that the validity of the necessary relations of not thinking that are set with the necessity

hen, dass die naturwissenschaftliche Methode auch bei dem Studium der psychischen Phänomene angewandt werden kann und soll, besonders für die psychologischen Untersuchungen des ersten Teiles, welchen er deshalb in bewusster Übertragung des Ausdrucks die Physiologie des Geistes nennt. Hier ist zunächst diese Methode nach den Bestimmungen, die er selbst darüber aufstellt, näher zu charakterisieren und es ist ferner die Forschungsweise zu bestimmen, welche er speziell bei der Lösung erkenntnistheoretischer Probleme einschlägt."

of thinking is not included in the validity of the necessity of thinking, in that in this sense, for example, he only ascribes an unchanging subjective validity to time. (Kučera 1909, 77)⁶

Here one could ask why Kučera wrote her dissertation on Thomas Brown, who was not a particularly significant philosopher and was little-known then as he is today. One of the reasons lies in the fact that Kučera was particularly interested in epistemology from the beginning of her philosophical education. Epistemology, as she understood it, is a philosophical discipline that comes close to experimental psychology which was the focus of her interest. If we take a look at the list of dissertations that were defended around the time of Kučera's stay in Zurich, we will find that there were several of them that dealt with the philosophy of Thomas Brown, and all of them were mentored by Gustav Störing. It could be concluded that Störing, who himself worked along the border between psychology and philosophy, found Brown's approach to philosophy congenial to his own. Störing, like Brown, was a physician and philosopher, and they both used their medical background to enhance their philosophical insights.

In her dissertation, Kučera does not expound many of her own ideas, but it is rather a very detailed and learned analysis, almost like an exercise, that primarily belong to the field of the history of philosophy, as it was noted by Albert Bazala. As for the reception of Elza Kučera's book, only one review was published, written by her former professor, Albert Bazala. The review was published as a "literary notice" in 1910. Bazala's review of the book is valuable not only as a testimony of the only review of Elza Kučera in Croatia, but also as a reflection on the status of philosophy in Croatia at that time, so we quote a lengthy section of the review:

Miss E. Kučera discussed Thomas Brown's epistemology. The book has two parts: in the first, Brown's theory is discussed, in particular the problem of causality, unity and stability of the mental being, and lastly the basis of belief in the existence of the external world. The presentation is systematic, exhaustive and clear, and indeed the essence can be understood as if Brown's figure emerged from some fog. The entire first part is dedicated to depicting Brown in the most favourable light possible, so that he can be seen and understood properly: Miss Kučera did it with great passion that shows an already solid and confident worker in the field of science. Anyone who would like that the author shed light on

6 "Auf eine eigene Intuition gründet Brown auch die objektive Gültigkeit der Kausalbeziehung. Diese Gültigkeit kann, eben deshalb, trotz seiner Anstrengung sie zu halten, von allen denjenigen bezweifelt werden, welche überall dort, wo man mit dem Denken nicht auskommt oder vorläufig nicht auskommen zu können meint, ihre Zuflucht nicht zu sakrosankten Intuitionen nehmen mögen. Umso mehr, da es Brown selbst stillschweigend zugibt, dass in der Gültigkeit der Denknötwendigkeit die Gültigkeit der nichtdenknötwendigen Beziehungen, die man mit Denknötwendigkeit setzt, nicht eingeschlossen ist, indem er in diesem Sinne der Zeit beispielsweise nur eine unveränderlich subjektive Gültigkeit zuspricht."

the character of Brown with “critical” rays — so to speak — will certainly not find it in certain sections. However, at the end of the first part (pp. 74 — 86), and finally, the entire second part, in which Brown is presented in relation to his background, certain aspects of Brown’s teaching must necessarily be compared and evaluated. And there, Miss E. Kučera showed not only a comprehensive knowledge of the subject she is working on, but also a clear and intelligent spirit, and it can rightly be said that Brown managed to win a proper place in the history of philosophical problems.

Such work must certainly be considered a positive contribution to philosophy, and from that point of view, the work of Miss E. Kučera is worthy of all praise. I would just like to add one thing: With this dissertation, the young lady showed that she is skilled in philosophical discussion, that she knows her subject and aroused in us the hope that she will prove herself creative in whichever field she decides to invest her energy: the field of philosophy is vast and unploughed. We could say that the truly philosophical work [in Croatia] started only a few decades ago, when Marković and later Arnold began to work more actively in our country; it is a vast field — and there are still too few workers, so we confidently expect that Miss E. Kučera will join our circle and succeed to enrich our rather scarce philosophical literature. (Bazala 1910, 516)

Apart from this note from Albert Bazala, the book of Elza Kučera has had no reception that we know of, nor have we been able to find that anyone has ever covered or analysed it (Boršić, Skuhala Karasman 2022, 103–104).

3. *Elza Kučera on national philosophy*

Elza Kučera did not compose any complete text on a topic within the field of Croatian philosophy, that is, an analysis of any particular Croatian philosopher. However, among her unpublished works kept in the National and University Library in Zagreb, there are some manuscript notes on the Croatian philosopher Vladimir Dvorniković (1888 — 1956).⁷ Dvorniković and Kučera were friends and long-time correspondents, and Kučera was familiar with his philosophical work, particularly with his most famous books, *Contemporary Philosophy (Savremena filozofija) I and II*, which were published in 1919 and 1920.

Kučera’s text “Filozofija malih naroda” (“Philosophy of small nations”) was probably written in 1918 or 1919.⁸ The text contains twelve densely written pages. We assume that Kučera’s original intention was to write a

7 Vladimir Dvorniković was a Croatian philosopher. He received a doctorate in Vienna in 1911. From 1919 to 1926, he was a professor of philosophy at the University of Zagreb. His work *Contemporary philosophy I and II* was the first systematic overview of contemporary philosophy in our region.

8 The title itself was given by the librarian who edited her legacy, probably Šime Jurić. The manuscript is kept under the call number Kučera 1972 R 4749/9:1.

review of Vladimir Dvorniković's book *Die beiden Grundtypen des Philosophierens* (*The two basic types of philosophizing*), printed in Berlin in 1918. In the process of writing, she included some of her thoughts on the philosophy of "small" nations, which also includes Croatian philosophy. The problem she addressed in the text was the following: what sense does it make to talk about national philosophies if "philosophical questions are essentially the same for all"? Philosophical questions must be the same for all because "[...] philosophy encompasses a certain type of human research and, while knowledge is the truth and the goal of science, which is decided neither by depth, nor by originality, nor by beauty, nor by the interestingness of thought, but by the correctness of its results." (Kučera 1972 R 4749/9:2) (Boršić, Skuhala Karasman 2022, 109)

Kučera's answer to this problem was that different nations had their own specific different methods of arriving at the truth, which, for Kučera, was clearly "one". The specificity of the methods depends on the "psychogenetic origin" of different peoples, and this, according to Kučera, is ultimately good for philosophy. Namely, "[...] complementing each other and correcting mutual mistakes, caused by the necessity of psychological subjectivity, one can create a common system of objective knowledge." (Kučera 1972 R 4749/9:2) At the same time, the role of the philosophy of small nations is that they develop their own approaches and build their own philosophical terminology in accordance with their "psychic traits". As these psychological specificities of a particular nation represent limitations and the context of how this national philosophy arrives at the truth, so these same psychological specificities also represent a kind of corrective for other nations' psychological specificities and their one-sidedness and limitations (Boršić, Skuhala Karasman 2022, 109–110).

Kučera's interest in national philosophy partially arises from Wundt's psychology and philosophy. During her studies, she became well acquainted with Wundt's doctrines, since Störring was a student of Wundt and remained in close contact with him, despite some evidence that Wundt was disappointed by Störring's refusal to devote himself entirely to experimental psychology. Here one can see traces of Wundt's research on differences in the mentality of nations. Wundt wrote that each nation has its own special psychology that springs from the so-called "folk spirit" whose spiritual substance is ingrained in the nature of each nation (Wundt 1911, 3). Wundt called this method *Völkerpsychologie*.

Kučera's ideas on national philosophy are not further elaborated in this text. In order to better understand her position, we have to look into the work and research she conducted together with Dr. Mathilda Kelchner in Bonn and Dr. Zofja Korczyńska in Poznań. 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 bring you pain or discomfort?”, etc. This project was never completed, so we are deprived of the results of those extensive studies. However, we can conclude that the idea of national philosophy was the subject of philosophical interest of Elza Kučera, which is proven in a short text that she wrote but never published.

In this context we must take into consideration the fact that Kučera’s professors were Franjo Marković and Albert Bazala, who are both well known as propagators of Croatian philosophical heritage. It is likely that Kučera became interested in the national philosophy under their influence. We also have a letter that her father sent her during her studies in Zurich, encouraging her to study Croatian philosophers, which is fully in accordance with Franjo Marković’s famous inaugural speech from 1881, in which he stressed that studying “Croatian philosophy” should be one of the main focuses of contemporary Croatian philosophers. Furthermore, Kučera corresponded with important Croatian philosophers of that time: Franjo Marković, Albert Bazala, Stjepan Zimmermann, Zdenko Vernić, Vladimir Dvorniković and Pavao Vuk–Pavlović. She translated their texts from Croatian to German. The texts she translated are as follows: Albert Bazala, “Franjo Marković”; Albert Bazala, “Philosophische Studien I: Die metalogische Wurzel der Philosophie”; Stjepan Zimmermann, “Die Bedeutung des ontologisch–noëtischen Problems für den Ausbau der Philosophie”; Stjepan Zimmermann, “Juraj Dragišić (Georgius Benignus de Salviatis) als Philosoph des Humanismus”; Stjepan Zimmermann, “Der Kantische Kritizismus im Lichte der zeitgenössischen Noëtik”; Pavao Vuk–Pavlović, “Erkenntnis und Erkenntnistheorie”. The translated texts were published in *Bulletin international de l’Académie yougoslave des sciences et des beaux–arts: Classe d’histoire et de philologie — de philosophie et de droit — des beaux–arts et belles–lettres*, in 1931.

We also have another proof of her engagement in the study of national philosophy. In 1923 she participated in the attempt to organize an all–Slavic philosophical congress. Interestingly, Elza Kučera was the only Croatian representative in this international collaboration. The idea of an all–Slavic congress was originally Vladimir Dvorniković’s. In 1923, Dvorniković published an article entitled “Ideen zu einem slavischen philosophischen Kongreß in Prag” in the Czech newspaper *Prager Presse*. In this article, Dvorniković advocated and encouraged the organization of such an all–Slavic congress as a kind of response to the dominance of the “big nations” philosophies, paradigmatic German and the newly developed French and Italian philosophies. Polish professor Wincenty Lutosławski (1863 — 1954) was elected president of the organizing committee. The representatives of the participating nations were as follows: Nikolaj Onufrijevič Lossky (1870 — 1965) representing Russia, Tadeusz Strumiłło (1884 — 1958) representing Poland, Elza Kučera rep-

representing Croatia, Ivan Georgov (1862 — 1936) representing Bulgaria, and Mihajlo Rostohar (1878 — 1966) and Antonín Uhlř (1882 — 1957) representing Czechia (Boršić, Skuhala Karasman 2022, 111). Although the first organizational steps were taken, the congress unfortunately never took place. The fact that Elza Kučera was elected as the sole representative of Croatia — in addition to being the only woman in the committee! — shows us that she had a good reputation among Croatian philosophers as a connoisseur of national, Croatian philosophy.

Conclusion

There are two reasons why Elza Kučera is important for the history of Croatian philosophy. The first reason is that she is the first female philosopher born in Croatia who received a doctorate in philosophy and published her philosophical book *The Epistemology of Thomas Brown: A Historical Study*. At the time of the book's publication, in 1909, women rarely had the opportunity to publish their work. This is the first published philosophical book by a female philosopher in Croatia. For this reason, we decided to present the basic ideas of the book in this article.

The second reason is that she was one of the first in this region to write about the problem of national philosophy. Inspired by Vladimir Dvorniković's book *Two Basic Types of Philosophizing (Die beiden Grundtypen des Philosophierens)*, published in 1918, she dedicated part of her philosophical research to a new field that is still relevant. However, it should be noted that Kučera's interest in national, i.e., Croatian philosophy, in our opinion, lies in the fact that she was primarily motivated by investigating the psychological characteristics of small nations and their development, rather than by patriotism. This is not to say that she was not patriotic — after all, despite her abundant international experience, she decided to live and work in Croatia and explicitly remarked that she wanted to be a model for future Croatian women — however, her scientific interest lay in psychology. This primarily psychological occupation might have motivated her to delve deeper into research of national philosophy as a part of national "character". This is also evident from the fact that, instead of studying the history of Croatian philosophy, as suggested by Franjo Marković in his famous inaugural rector's speech, she went in the direction of studying how different nations approach different philosophical problems in different ways.

This approach to national philosophy is of great relevance today. In any case, it is unquestionable that with her involvement in Croatian philosophical life and as the first women philosopher who studied the question of national philosophy, she left her mark on Croatian philosophy of the early 20th century.

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Sažetak

NEKI FILOZOFSKI ASPEKTI ELZE KUČERE

LUKA BORŠIĆ, IVANA SKUHALA KARASMAN

U središtu ovog teksta nalaze se neki filozofski aspekti Elze Kučere (1883. — 1972.). Kučera je 1909. godine doktorirala filozofiju na Sveučilištu u Zürichu i tako postala prva Hrvatica rođena u Hrvatskoj koja je doktorirala filozofiju. No, glavni joj je interes bila psihologija, a kasnije i bibliotekarstvo te su, osim doktorskih disertacija, gotovo svi njezini objavljeni radovi unutar tih disciplina. No, u arhivu Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu čuvaju se njezina rukopisna i neobjavljena djela, a među njima se može pronaći i određeni broj čisto filozofskih tekstova. Kako bismo prikazali filozofiju Elze Kučere, u ovom tekstu analiziramo dva aspekta njezina filozofiranja. Prvi je njezina diskusija problema uzročnosti kojim se bavi u pregledu epistemologije Thomasa Browna u svojoj doktorskoj disertaciji pod naslovom *Spoznajna teorija Thomasa Browna: povijesna studija (Die Erkenntnislehre von Thomas Brown: eine historische Studie, Zagreb, 1909.)*. Drugi je pitanje nacionalne filozofije kojim se bavimo u kraćem

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tekstu o toj temi, napisanom vjerojatno 1918. ili 1919. godine i koji nikad nije objavljen. S obzirom na to da Elza Kučera kao prva žena filozofkinja, eksperimentalna psihologinja i knjižničarka u nas do danas nije dobila dužnu pozornost, donosimo i njezinu biografiju.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Elza Kučera, Thomas Brown, spoznajna teorija, nacionalna filozofija