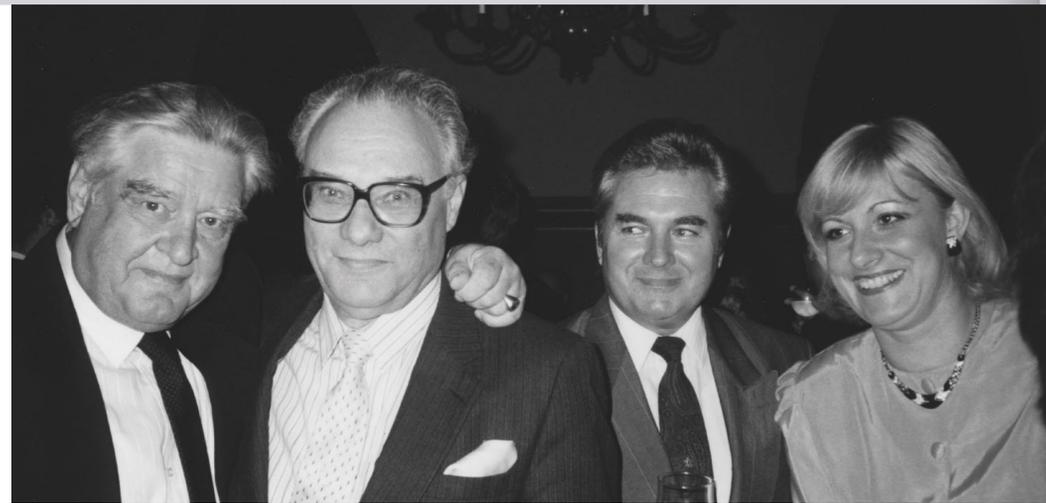
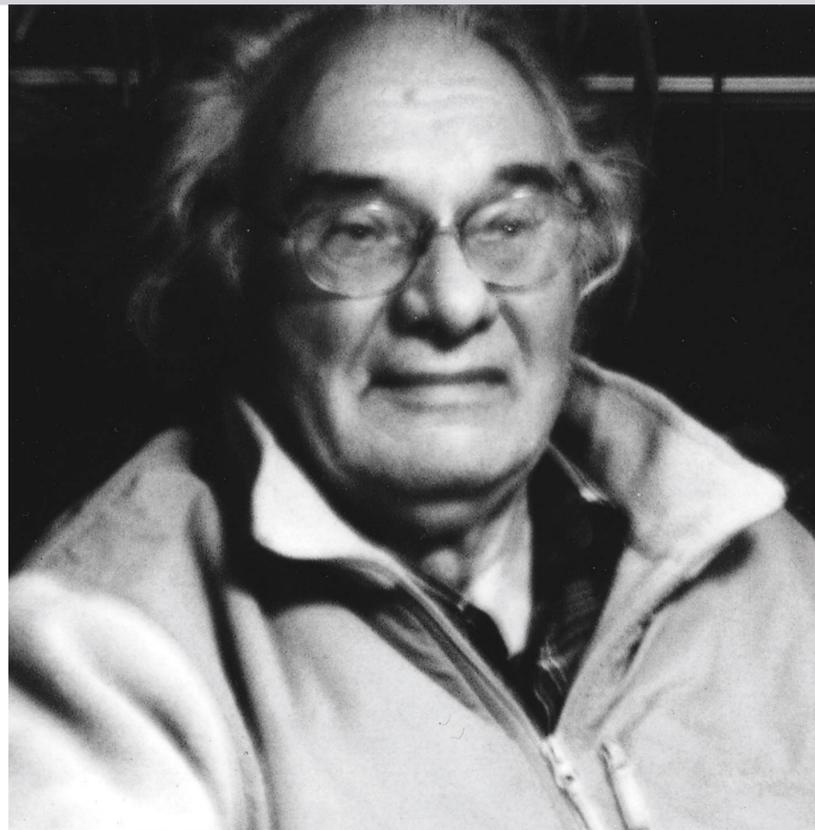


Jerzy Wojciechowski

(b. 1925)

Philosopher



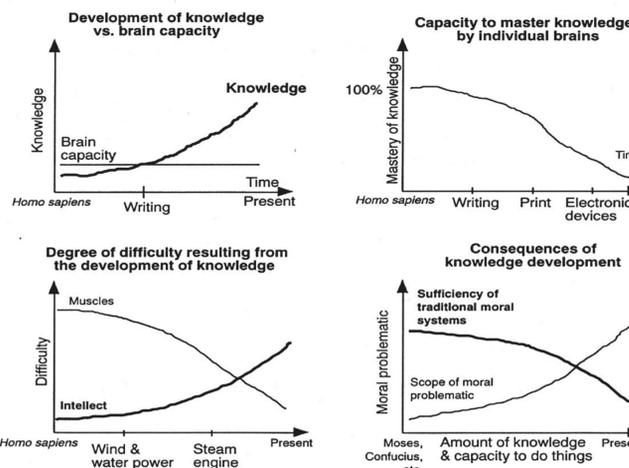
POLISH SPIRIT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE, ENVIRONMENT AND ETHICS

Jerzy A. Wojciechowski
Professor of Philosophy
University of Ottawa

The Problem

The title seems rather enigmatic. The development of knowledge, environment and ethics are notions that refer to differing aspects of reality. What do these notions have in common, and why speak of them collectively? Firstly, the development of knowledge is an important aspect of present-day life. It is a man-made fact. Environment refers to a sum total of factors, both natural and humanly created. Together, the two concepts constitute the life-sustaining surroundings of our existence. The present state of these surroundings is a source of growing concern. Ethics, finally, is the study of standards of human behaviour in light of value judgements. It is an old, well-established, venerable discipline and an inexhaustible source of ever-new disputes and controversies. The problematics of the discipline were developed satisfactorily many years ago and do not require a major reevaluation or expansion, or so it would appear. Whether this latter opinion is justified will be one of the issues discussed in this paper. Before initiating the discussion however, let us first attempt to elucidate the inter-relationship of the three notions that comprise our title.



Law VI: "Humans' ability to determine the development of humanity is proportional to their knowledge."

Prof. Wojciechowski is the originator of the theory of the ecology of knowledge, a study of the relationship existing between humans and the body of knowledge. Knowledge is viewed in this theory as a distinct element of the human environment and a rapidly growing factor in human life. He published a systematic exposition of his ideas on this subject in the book *Ecology of Knowledge*, issued by the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.

Jerzy Wojciechowski was born in Brzesc, Poland. After completing his secondary education, he studied at the Warsaw Technological University. During the war he served in the underground Polish Home Army (1942-44) and fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising against the German occupiers (he was twice wounded and awarded the Cross of Valour). After the war, he studied philosophy at the University of Louvain, Belgium, and at Laval University in Quebec, where he obtained his Ph.D. in 1953, four years after his arrival in Canada.

Before moving to Ottawa, he taught in Montreal and at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. Promoted from Associate Professor to full Professor of Philosophy at the University of Ottawa in 1965, Wojciechowski specialized in the philosophy of science and the philosophy of nature. He chaired many conferences and lectured at over sixty universities in Canada and overseas. Among his numerous distinguished positions, he was the President of the Ottawa Chapter of the Humanities Association of Canada; elected Fellow of the International Institute for Advanced Studies in Systems Research; member of the Executive Committee of the Humanities Research Council of Canada; Chairman, Committee on External Relations of the Humanities Research Council of Canada. Prof. Wojciechowski was appointed the First Honorary Life Member of the Canadian Philosophical Association

Also active in the Polish Canadian community, he was Vice-President of the Canadian Polish Congress and a board member of the Polish Canadian Research Institute. In recognition of his achievements, he was awarded the Officer's Cross of Polonia Restituta by the Polish government in 1990.

Photos from top left clockwise:
 • Prof. Jerzy Wojciechowski / Photo – family archive • The Conference of Polish Scientists, Ottawa / Photos – private archives • A facsimile of Prof. J. Wojciechowski's philosophical paper • Prof. J. Wojciechowski, member of the Polish delegation to Ottawa / Photo – Murray Mosher, Photo Features Ltd.