

*Andrzej Bielski*  
Instytut Fizyki, Uniwersytet  
Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń  
[Institute of Physics, Nicolaus Copernicus University]  
*Lech Bieganowski*  
Toruń

## **Zarys tradycji witełońskiej w literaturze nauk przyrodniczych**

### **On Witelo's diffraction of sunlight in a crystal**

#### SUMMARY

The goal of the current paper is to present the evolution of views on Witelo and the assessment of his contribution to the development of the natural sciences.

The paper is based on studies devoted to the history of the natural sciences, chapters containing historical introductions in textbooks, and popular-scientific publications devoted to the field. The paper deals mainly with Polish writings on the topic. The paper points to recurring mistakes in such writings, and these involve not only the spelling of Witelo's name.

The paper stresses important role played in the evolution of the Witelonian tradition by Risner's publication in 1572, in one volume entitled "Opticae thesaurus", of Alhazen's work *De aspectibus* and Witelo's *Perspectiva*. Because Risner included references in Witelo's text to assertions made by Alhazen, it is likely that this led to the appearance of unfavourable comments with regard to Witelo at the end of the 16th century. Similar critical opinions were repeated in the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries, and sometimes they persist even today. Their authors stress the dependence of Witelo's views on those of Alhazen's, without noticing the circumstance that the latter scholar also made recourse to works of other authors.

Witelo's *Perspectiva* dealt mainly with issues in astronomy, physics and mathematics. It is for the reason that Witelo's views are taken account of in works on the history of those sciences. Yet, in spite of the fact that Book Ten of the *Perspectiva* Witelo provided the basis of meteorological optics, Witelo is disregarded in the history of meteorology. On the other hand, due to the fact that in his *Perspectiva* Witelo included a description of the structure of the eye, its geometrical model and a discussion of the process of vision, his work is of interest also to historians of medicine. The analysis of the material collected in the paper leads to the conclusion that historians of natural sciences have a rather superficial knowledge of the content of the *Perspectiva* and the person of Witelo himself.

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