DEPARTURE FROM EMPIRICISM TOWARDS THEORY IN SEARCH FOR BALANCE IN PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The author marks a disproportionately small amount of work on theory in comparison to the ample production of empirical information in contemporary psychology. To restore the balance between the two, it seems necessary to reply to the possessive doctrine of empiricism by revealing its theory of knowledge and to matching it with the scientific worldview of positivism. The positivistic climate in science of the late nineteenth century swept up all the aspirations of nascent modern psychology. Brentano and Wundt were the first to attempt to emancipate themselves from the empiricism theory of cognition but psychology failed to followed suit. The same epistemology underlies the developmental psychology of human ontogeny being conducive to conceptualisations in biological terms. Piaget turned out to be ingenious in his invention to elaborate the very same empiricist epistemology. Szuman also stayed under its influence, although his work on the role of upbringing in child development clearly has the power of argument for emancipation from biology. Vygotsky seems to be equivocal in this respect, too. The attempts of Brentano and Wundt consisted in arguing for the irreducibility of the mind to physiology of living organism. There is a continuous need in developmental psychology to reject the reduction of the mind to the adaptive functions of the human organism. Emancipation from the doctrine of empiricism may open the way to reaching a balance between psychological theory and research on the human mind and personality development.

“Why are we carrying out our research in developmental psychology in the very way that we are, while holding the hope to get psychological knowledge of human development?”

The article aims to lead the reader into a discussion conducive to gaining a greater self-consciousness in developmental research. Such a discussion, by its very nature, belongs to epistemological discourses. The title of this introduction suggests that we will be attempting to define the role of theory in empirical developmental research.

Thus, I posit two theses. One is the claim of the dominance of empiricism in human development research. The second is the assertion of the need to move away from empiricism. Questioning empiricism is not tantamount to embracing other than the empirical sources of psychological cognition. It is the rejection of an interpretation, which is inadequate to these empirical sources.

The direct reason for me proposing a discussion on the role of theory in development research is the dwindling interest in developmental theories that I have observed over the past several decades in Poland and other countries. I have the impression that this is driven – at least partially – by the disregard for theory underpinned by the convictions of psychologists about the very nature of scientific
knowledge. It is precisely the value of empiricism, as a theory of knowledge, and positivism, as the philosophy of scientific cognition cultivating empiricism, that I call to question in the name of getting knowledge of the human mind and its development in the individual life course.

THE EMPIRICISM OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Empiricism is a philosophical thesis on our knowledge about the world originating from sensory experience, and only from this experience. It counters the claims of knowledge originating from still other sources. It pervades science with the force of an entire empire. It has established itself and settled right in both psychology and developmental psychology. This has resulted in an emphasis on empirical studies as the sole and exclusive source of knowledge and in the unparalleled popularity of the so-called psychological research methodology where the statistical analysis of data collected through observation, experiments or surveys and questionnaires plays a major role.

The developmental research plans also have their own rules as cross-sectional, longitudinal, mixed, and sequential cross-sections of development, which do not assume anything about the nature of development apart from that developmental changes take place with lapse of time within the life span of the investigated individuals. The accuracy of conclusions that are drawn about the explored reality with the aid of statistics are meant to result from the formal justification of these research plans. Proceeding according to the indications of this methodology is meant to ensure that we will ultimately be relying on solid foundations.

What follows from this is that we stand on sufficiently solid ground when we accept these and only these assertions, towards which we have a sufficient level of statistical confidence. Statistics tell us in how many cases we will obtain the same result when repeating the study. We agree that we will be taking into account those and only those outcomes that stand a chance of turning out to be different in no more than in one study out of twenty repetitions. Once our research successfully passes these statistical tests then we have an established finding or even a series of scientific findings, more modestly called results of scientific cognition. We easily forget that we are not waiting for 20 repetitions of our research as nobody seriously treats such a mass of repetitions as a true postulate, not just a statistical façon de parler.

It is this route from positing a hypothesis to the acceptance of that and only that which is supported with empirical data, which is called the path from a scientific discovery to its acceptance. It becomes only then clear what a scientific finding is and it can parade around in the costume of scientific knowledge, which holds a sign of objectivity, that is, intersubjective verifiability. Otherwise we don’t know whether our findings are of scientific value or constitute metaphysics, mere speculation, delusion or fantasy. They can easily be exposed by subjecting them to the empirical verification or particularly and necessarily falsification. Where hypotheses are derived from is of no importance. And the decisions as to which hypotheses deserve empirical verification of falsification standing a chance of becoming a finding is particularly mysterious.

When psychology was becoming a science, the modern philosophy of positive science was also being born and referred to as the second positivism. It has been the philosophy of the natural sciences of Ernst Mach (1886/2010) and Richard Avenarius (1988/1990) with the thesis of empiricism as its foundation. Its impact on psychology has been made through its subsequent incarnations in the works of the
representatives of the Vienna Circle and undoubtedly still dominates it. The criticism of empiricism of the Vienna Circle by Karl Popper (1935) did not take him beyond empiricism though he contributed to its development significantly. However, this development does not at all weaken the anti-theoretical approach of empiricism but even strengthens it, especially in the social sciences. This positivist concept of science invariably and absolutely dominates psychology. It does not belong to any science at all, neither the natural nor social or humanist. It is a philosophical thesis from the domain of epistemology which considers all kinds of our knowledge, not only the scientific one.

Leszek Kołakowski (2009) pointed to four rules that positivism imposes on scientific cognition. The first is phenomenalism, that is, the belief that there is no distinction between the entity and the phenomena being cognised, and searching for it under the surface of phenomena that are directly available to our research is futile. This does not mean that phenomena have no causes which produce them. On the contrary, these causes – as the mechanisms of phenomena – are the goal of cognition using hypotheses that are directly verified by investigating the course of phenomena. The second rule is nominalism, in other words, the prohibition of supposing that knowledge formulated in general categories has other counterparts than individual specific objects. All ideal constructs (of logic, mathematics) that are used in the natural sciences are created solely for the purposes of the conceptual organisation of empirical data. The third rule of scientific positivism is denying any cognitive value of evaluating judgements and normative statements, which are arbitrary by nature. And finally, the fourth rule is that of the unity of the method of acquiring knowledge, that is, the assertion that the same methods of gaining knowledge and the same stages of the processing of data from experiences by theoretical reflection apply across all the sciences, which can ultimately be reduced to the claims of fundamental science in relation to the edifice of positivist knowledge about the real world.

This fundamental position is usually taken on by physics and, lately, also by information technology, although psychology, particularly developmental psychology seems to reduce it to biology since Darwin (1859) came up with the theory of evolution, providing psychologists with the permanent conviction on the subject of their research as a multitude of psychological (mental) functions of the organism which serve the purpose of adaptation, that is, the survival of the representatives of the homo sapiens species in the natural living environment of this species. Information Technology – integrated into the mechanist tradition (l’homme machine) – provides a popular model for the causal explanation of phenomena by cognitive processes, that is, the ways (mechanisms) of information processing coming from the environment and serving, after appropriate processing, the control of behaviour in the environment. That, which is psychological (mental) is reduced by psychologists to what is biological (physiological) and mechanic, which can be explained as being independent of the will, decisions, and a person’s responsibility.

The reduction of the person to the mechanisms of behaviour in the environment is also served by the psychology of individual differences. It reaches back to the times of Charles Darwin (1859/2009), whose distant cousin, Francis Galton (1869) endowed it with statistics and applied statistics within it. He started from differences in intelligence and others followed suit and included in the investigations the differences in temperament and personality, developing statistical methods of analysis of variances and covariances in results of various psychological tests that were meant to measure these differences on construed psychometric scales. Each of the studied persons can be
attributed relevant points on these scales, which can then be used as empirical information on the individual persons (their intelligence, temperament, and personality). The aim of these efforts is predicting their behaviour (to be more precise: differences in behaviour) in the situations set in their environment, involving intelligence, temperament, and personality in the chain of causes and effects (mechanisms) determining coping with environmental challenges and tasks.

EPISTEMOLOGY IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Returning to research on human development and moving on to the role of theory in such research, we have empiricism as a theory of the scientific cognition of development, and biology with its concepts and theories as the foundation for every conceptualisation and every theory of individual human development during the lifecourse. This fundamental set comprises: (1) the concept of ontogeny; (2) the concept of the psyche (mind), in other words of that, which is subject to developmental changes; and (3) the concept of laws (correctness, determination) of development. Below is a succinct explanation of these concepts.

1. Ontogeny as the development of specific representatives of the species can constitute the subject of human developmental psychology research if the psyche (mind) is considered a part of the biological construct of the representatives of the homo sapiens species. Whatever the biological nature of the phenomena studied by us means, the psyche (mind) has such a nature. Modern biology is rooted in the theory of evolution, therefore, the ontogeny of the human psyche (mind) has the same nature as the ontogeny of the stomach, lungs, etc., that is, of every organ, system, and part of the organism taking part in its complex life vital processes taking place in tune with the environment of the representatives of the species. It follows from this that the psyche (mind) essentially develops in the same way as the stomach, lungs, and every other vital organ of the homo sapiens. We have several conceptual models for this development in literature.

2. The psyche (mind) and every component of the psyche (mind) plays a specialised role in the entire living process of the organism of the homo sapiens. Thinking is this specialised vital function of the organism or a set of such functions; hence, such a vital function is speech, also divided into its partial functions making up the entirety of speech functions in the life of the organism. Emotions or affects are another vital function; apart from that, needs, drives, motivations are yet other functions of this kind. All psychological functions are – like physiological functions – necessary to execute the functions of the entirety of the vital processes, in other words, to adapt to the environment. We can also encounter in literature many theories of psychological (mental) adaptation to the environment.

3. The determination of all ontogenetic development takes place through heredity, which leads to the formation of the representative of the species, and through the living environment of the species, which is an essential condition for this. The laws of this development are the laws of (a) maturation, (b) learning from experience, (c) transformation of own activity, maintaining the balance of the organism in the environment, and (d) internalisation of the socio-cultural ways of regulating the relationships and cooperation of people. We can find a multitude of developmental theories in literature that either take only one kind of these four factors into account, or two or three of them, and also theories referring to all four factors for human development during the individual life course.

Psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology theories, in all their forms, refer to the laws
of maturation. Behaviourists and cognitive psychology, referring to the processing information about the environment, also rely on the rules for learning from experience. Jean Piaget (1967), and the plethora of theories stemming from his conceptual model of development, point to the adaptation of the spontaneous mental activity to environment and the innate and rooted in experience conditions when it comes to the development of this activity. This gets complicated with the fourth factor, namely, pertaining to the issue of if and how to separate it. The authors of the theory of maturation and/or environmental determinism distinguish different types or aspects of environmental impact (physical, social and, within it, also educational, cultural, and historical), but this does not necessarily lead to the concept of various environmental factors for development. With Piaget and the stream of emerging trends influenced by him, for example, we have the appearance of the symbolic function (which is, of course, a cultural phenomenon) without any import of it from the environment, and it rather appears as a continuation of the inner developmental transformations of sensory-motor intelligence (Piaget, 1939, 1966).

It seems that in the distinction by Lev Vygotsky (1971) – in fact following suit on Wilhelm Wundt (1897) – of the primary and higher psychological functions, a detachment of development of higher psychological function from the laws of biology emerged. Cultural measures of regulating children’s activity used by parents, guardians, educators, and teachers open up before them a completely different path of development – social, cultural, and historical – on which symbolic, semantic, and interpretative constructs play a central role. These interpersonal activities taking place with the help of semantic constructs cannot be reduced to the adaptation of relevant persons to the environment. The first step is an assimilation by a child of cultural forms from adults while interacting with them and then using the assimilated forms to regulate the behaviours of others when playing, interacting, and cooperating, is the next phase of entering into the human world of culture and civilisation. The third phase is an internalisation phase, started by directing the cultural measures of regulation to one’s own activity and finalised by the reconstruction of one’s own activity to a typically human form, i.e., cultural and civilised, and it closes the cycle. This is an activity that has the form of a free choice among desires that are recognised and have their axiological place in the world, and possible to actualise in this world of culture and civilisation.

It is uncertain whether Vygotsky would agree with such an interpretation of his theory, moving out towards the dualism of biology and culture in human nature. He might have struggled with it, probably just like both Stefan Szuman (1959), my scientific protoplast, and Maria Przetacznikowa (1973), his student and my master struggled with their dualism of similar kind. In fact, they both outlined a solution to these difficulties in their research on the development of children and adolescents. Szuman presented four factors of this development, which were later somewhat differently formulated by Maria Żebrowska (1985) in the Developmental Psychology textbook that she edited. Przetacznikowa, however, made Szuman’s innate and environmental factors the subject of conditional analysis, and made the child’s own activity and education the matter of causal analysis. The aim of causal analysis is to show the developmental changes of the own actions of a child, which are taking place during the upbringing process, leading to them to taking on the forms that are dependent on upbringing. In my attempt at the theory of human development in the full individual life course (Niemczyński, 1980, 1994, 2007), I am following Szuman and Przetacznikowa, and the thesis of Vygotsky (1971)
on the relation of behaviour to development unveiled a completely new perspective on the third and fourth factor, along with a causal analysis. This has deepened my dualism taken from Przetacznikowa and Szuman. I mention this because Szuman, the founding father of developmental and educational psychology in our country (Stefan Baley approached education rather from the social psychology side), was a naturalist as well as a humanist. It is as though he carried within him the distinction between the natural sciences, on the one hand, and social and humanist sciences, on the other (German Naturwissenschaften und Geisteswissenschaften). This distinction from the 19th century was crucial for Wilhelm Wundt and Franz Brentano, two central figures of nascent psychology.

Piaget (1967) also had very pronounced views on the problem of epistemological dualism, which can be seen in his extensive and frequently appearing in successive monographs justifications for selecting his own path between apriorism and empiricism. For Piaget, genetic epistemology ultimately engulfed two excluding theories of cognition in the structure of cognition as biological adaptation.

The distinction known to Szuman, Piaget, and Vygotsky between the natural sciences and the social sciences and the humanistic sciences was used earlier – as already mentioned by me – by Wundt and Brentano. Wundt (1897) clearly distinguished the lower and higher psychological (mental) processes. Experimental psychophysics, that is, the field of research on sensory perception processes, deals with the former. According to Wundt, a laboratory experiment is out of the question in psychology of higher mental processes but other means of scientific research are possible. He argued this in the 10 volumes of the psychology of the peoples (Voelkerpsychologie), and he almost entirely dedicated the first several of these volumes to speech and thinking without even trying to hide his scepticism towards the usefulness and overall possibility of carrying out the experiments in this field of research due to their social, cultural, and historical nature (Wundt, 1990-1920).

Brentano (1874/1999), however, introduced a divide into physiological psychology and descriptive psychology, highlighting the referentiality of mental acts, absent from psychophysiological processes. One and the other clearly and explicitly stressed that research belonging to Geisteswissenschaften on the operations of the mind and research on the psychology of the peoples (Voelkerpsychologie) are empirical sciences and both criticised introspection as conceived by Wundt’s student, Edwin Titchener, by a student of Fechner (1860), Hermann Ebbinghaus (1885), and by a student of Wundt, Oswald Külpe (1893). This triplet of classical introspectionists, resistant to the criticism of introspection by Wundt (1897) and Brentano (1874, 1999), belong to the precursor of ignoring the significance of the theory of Wundt and the theory of Brentano, at the same time disregarding the efforts required to create any solid theory, including the efforts of empirical insights into the researched mental processes (social, cultural, and historical), which cannot be reduced to phenomena of physics or physiology, or even to phenomena from evolutionary biology circles. Edwin Boring (1929, 1950), Titchener’s student, contributed to consolidating the absence of Wundt from mainstream psychological research and to the banishment of Brentano to philosophy. His history of psychology textbook, which dominated both sides of the Atlantic for many years, fails to address the theory of Wundt but stops merely at his laboratory as the first in the history of experimental psychology, and Brentano is not visible at all in the psychological research mainstream.

What is enlightening in this is precisely that Ebbinghaus, Külpe, and Titchener were
completely oblivious to the empirical nature of research that was being conducted by Wundt and Brentano when analysing mental processes. The thing is that Wundt and Brentano were set on differentiating introspection from inner perception. The former was rejected as being fallible, and even – like Brentano – actually impossible. Fear of something or a reminiscence of something disappears once we direct our attention to it, wanting to observe it. For Brentano, this essentially proves the impossibility of introspection. Titchener, Külpé, and Ebbinghaus completely ignored the criticism and its author.

What Wundt and Brentano had in mind was the reliable inner perception of the acts of the mind. It was recently excellently pointed out in Polish literature by Ryszard Stachowski (2013) that Wundt was not an introspectionist. This is how Brentano characterises this inner perception after the rejection of the possibility of introspection. “It is a universally valid psychological law that we can never focus our attention upon the object of inner perception. (…) It is only while our attention is turned toward a different object that we are able to perceive, incidentally, the mental processes that are directed towards that object (1999, p. 43).” John Macnamara thus developed this thought: “If you see a cow, for example, the cow is the object of your vision, and you may attend to her a much as you wish. You are also aware, incidentally, that you are seeing her, not imagining or touching her. You are further aware, incidentally, that it is you, not your friend, who is having this experience of seeing. The cow is the object of the outer perception; the facts that you are seeing, not touching, and that it is you who is having the experience are given incidentally in inner perception. (1999, p. 205)” (Macnamara is Irish and a cow in that culture has a very positive sentimental value, which does not completely correspond to the Polish sentiment.)

It is most probably Aristotle’s Metaphysics that resonates in this distinction of Brentano’s (2009): “…Knowledge, perception, notions, and thinking always have a different subject, they only deal with themselves incidentally…” Macnamara (1999) suggests for this inner perception to be rather called intuition so as to clearly differentiate it from introspection. He also adds here that, contrary to the epistemological doctrine of intuitionism, the ‘insight into the nature of things’ does not necessary have to be always considered as reliable and incorrigible, or as the highest type of cognition. This kind of empirical cognition has been categorically and absolutely excluded by empiricism. It is also noteworthy that thus understood intuition is, however, also involved in the cognition of nature using the external senses. Positivism also does not reject it altogether but only warrants it in the context of a finding, that is, it rejects the epistemological doctrine of intuitionism but does not contest the reality of intuition. It seems, in this respect, that it is not, however, capable of granting it full status of a source of cognition in both contexts or phases of the cognitive cycle – in the phase of reaching a discovery and in the phase of justifying it alike.

It is not difficult to notice why intuition cannot be acknowledged by empiricism as an independent source of cognition – as experience subject to correction. The subject of intuitive cognition is surely not the subject of sensory perception (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch). So what is it? Mathematical and logical cognition cannot go without intuition. This is what clearly and explicitly allows the mind to come to know such ideal objects as a point, a straight line, parallel lines, prime numbers, and even numbers, etc. If the ideals are available to intuition as real objects of mathematical cognition then this is the fall of the nominalism of positivism. The objects of sensory experience are not the only objects.
of cognition by the human mind. Apart from that, logic and mathematics also serve coming to know nature. Positivism does not dispute this but it does fail to accept the real existence of the objects of mathematics and logic, they are to exist nominally, one could say that they comprise useful fiction in cognition for the purpose of the structuring of sensory data.

Leszek Kołakowski (2009) rightly considers the positivist philosophy as a peculiar doctrine. I hasten to add that it has all the earmarks of ideology, scientific worldview, which is eagerly adopted and forced by scientists because it positions science and scientists in contemporary society in an elite position, as the only authentic experts in natural science and social processes from whom every modern person can find out genuinely useful truths, vital to coping in individual and collective life. Scientists often have divergent views but it is they and they alone who have the right to argue over, debate about, and settle possible controversies, of course, according to scientific principles, passing absolute judgements as to what constitutes knowledge and what groundless speculation. Everyone else outside their narrow scope are laymen, ignoramuses not entitled to take part in such a debate because, not belonging to the select group, they have no understanding of things.

The history of psychology has proven that scientists can also exclude scientists in this way. Wundt turned out to be a false empiricist and the Voelkerpsychologie, on which it would be better to cast a veil, is proof of this. Brentano does not merit the name of a genuine empiricist so his place is among philosophical speculations and not among solid, scientific psychology. This history of exclusion with the motivation of faith in empiricism is still alive and faring well. I myself am not a follower of this faith and I am not alone in this resistance to the pressure of empiricism to reduce our discipline to biology and reduce research on the mind to the physiology of the brain.

ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH BEING FREED FROM THE LIMITATIONS OF EMPIRICISM

I have advanced two theses beginning this introduction to the discussion. The first was that empiricism, as a concept of science, dominates in developmental psychology research. I end with widening this observation to all research in psychology. The second thesis is the assertion of the need to move away from empiricism. Its inadequate concept of experience restricts the role of theoretical invention, having no adequate appreciation of the importance of theory in psychological research.

If the positivist version of empiricism is responsible for the atrophy of psychological theory in research not just on the development of the human mind, then we now have an open path to asking questions about the role of theoretical propositions. With empiricism, we have rejected understanding them as simply reporting on sensory experience. Admitting inner perception as a source of corrected experiential knowledge (intuition, in Macnamara’s understanding), we are extending the empirical base for scientific knowledge. In order to reach, in light of experience – whether inner or external, or one and the other – knowledge on reality that is available to our experience, we have to formulate these theorems. Positivism does not provide the answer to the question of how this can be done. Popper, a critic of positivism, by adding falsification to the verification of theorems that are already posited, also leaves this question unanswered. Where do theorems, which are subject to verification or falsification as hypotheses in light of empirical data, come from?

Stachowski (2013) reminded that the testing of reaction times by Wundt and his students – in other words, obtaining empirical data about the physical size of time intervals between the presentation of a stimuli and the execution
of a response – was not at all the aim of the research programme of Wundt (1987). The objective was testing the theory of apperceptive-volitive functions, that is, the theory of apperception as the will in action. Apperception, according to this theory, is the selective focus of attention on the object and takes place through the will. The mentioned time intervals, i.e., reaction times, should therefore be divided into two sections. One of them is the time spent focusing on the stimuli exposure, that is, on the object of sensory perception, in order to possibly differentiate between stimuli. This is the perceptual component of apperception. The second component is decision time, thus, an act of the will, culminating in the selection of reactions in the form of a perceptual judgment on the differences between stimuli. The respondent, and Wundt was one too, has access within inner perception to this perception of external stimuli of him or her and to deciding on the difference. Inner perception occurs incidentally (German neben), as it were, on the side plan of attention focused on the object of external perception.

If the inner experience of the perception of what has been exposed incidentally provides insight into the course of apperception, the phase of focusing on the object and the phase of decision about what is being perceived (the same, or two different stimuli in a sequence) may, possibly, be captured. The fact that the respondent repeats this inner perception multiple times is rather down to it being tricky to capture that, which can only be captured while focusing on something different. To have these numerous occasions, the procedure of the experiment must be repeated. Once Wundt, as the respondent, established – as a result of these numerous inner insights into his perception of external stimuli – that both apperception and the act of the will make up this perception, then his doctoral students and any other experimenters may repeat this gaining of insight multiple times and, possibly, also capture in it the two components of the act of perceiving the differences between experimental exposition stimuli – apperception and the act of the will.

Stachowski (2013, p. 75) is close to grasping this difference between intersubjective control through the repetition of research, applicable to all experimental research, and the multiple repetition of a phenomenon which is difficult to pick up in inner perception. Surely the same occurs in the case of the perception of objects in the surroundings. Sometimes they are difficult to perceive and many attempts must be made for them to be clearly and explicitly perceived. Accurate and reliable inner perception – for example, of the phases of the process of seeing (differences in brightness of successive light flashes in the laboratory) – is never easy, and the course of inner perception is short, hence, must be repeated multiple times, recreating the experiment so as to ultimately be able to capture the phases of this perception of differences in brightness of the light flashes. This is the point and the aim of the experiment, to see if the biphasic nature of the process is available directly to the observer. The theory of apperception demands such a type of data if they are to indicate whether the theory is true or false. Only such type of data provided by inner perception can be taken into account and the reports of the respondent supply this kind of data.

Wundt was not an introspectionist but an excellent researcher who performed tenacious experimental research using the method of inner perception. And their tenacity came from his theoretical invention and boldness of hypothetical thinking based, among others, on empirical data, but most of all thanks to the breadth and depth of his approach to the human mind, the meaning of mental processes in social life and in the history of mankind. The issue of how the mind works in sensory perception is the axis around which the experimental
programme of Wundt (1897) revolved. Investigating the mentality of societies and nations in the cultural history of humankind is the programme of Wundt’s Voelkerpsychologie (1900-1920). Although he failed to see the role of the experiment in this project, but he did not have the slightest doubt that it is not only is scientific and implies empirical evidence, but he was also conceived that it requires effort to build theories and posit hypotheses on its basis to refer to all aspects of culture and the components of the mentality of the nations, to ideas driving and shaping the behaviour of societies, and to historical social-cultural changes. And this is not a simple task. It requires extensive knowledge, and, most of all, not a narrow empiricist spirit but the broad horizons of psychological thought, and also countering the suppression of the freedom of research and investigations with the cry of ‘away with speculation’, cutting down like a sword any attempts of thought liberated from the dominion of statistics and psychometric methodology.

The logic of scientific cognition is not statistics and psychometrics. It would be good to know why logic, particularly the logic of scientific cognition, was – for a long time – nowhere to be seen in psychological studies (including PhD programmes). The postulates of the rational recognition of convictions and intersubjective communication and the correction of claims, accepted after Ajdukiewicz (1934, 1958) (Brzeziński, 2008, pp. 181-189), are important and undoubtedly necessary principles but carrying insufficient logic and epistemological knowledge bases to mould a researcher in psychology. This thread, however, is best left for a separate discussion.

Since the times of Galton (1874), attempts have been made to measure and weigh the human person convinced in the success of this endeavour that is worthy of a better cause. It is time to try to set ourselves free from this futility once and for all. Especially research on the development of the mind and personality of children, adolescents, and adults needs liberation from the infertile, closed thinking on development in the nineteenth-century dilemma of Galton (1874) – nature vs. nurture. Physics refused to allow itself to be contained in the empiricist philosophy of cognition burgeoning at the time. As did all the other natural sciences. Even social or human science (German Geisteswissenschaften), emerging during this time of romantic nineteenth-century culture, were served on the European continent rather with the concept of the nobility of the spirit than the nobility of birth, but they too were prone to stratifying society into the elite and the common mass.

I invite you to a discussion where no view is apriori excluded. In my introduction, I clearly advocate the dualism of physiological psychology and the psychology of the mind. And I am against reducing the mind to the physiology of the brain. Research of psychophysiological changes with age according to the methodology of biological studies is one thing. Research on the development of human mental functions is something completely different, taking place during the course of his/her biological maturation of transformation, which leads their development out from under biological determination and subjects it to socio-cultural regulation. Upbringing and education, the essence of which is historic, intergenerational cultural content, are the source of this socio-cultural regulation of the development of persons as individuals.

The discussions vary. The moderator of our discussion and I propose a discussion that – as Roman Ingarden (1972) would have said – has no assumptions. This means that its participants are entering into the debate without assuming which position (including their own) is acceptable, or rather with the intention of investigating what empiricism is and what argues in favour of it, what is its criticism, rejection,
and what grounds do they have. May our aim not be to convince anyone to anything. Science is not politics or an ideology. It is an attempt of the mind, searching for appealing arguments in a contested matter.

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ODEJŚCIE OD EMPIRYZMU W STRONĘ TEORII DLA RÓWNOWAGI W BADANIACH NAD ROZWOJEM CZŁOWIEKA

STRESZCZENIE