

MACIEJ DYBOWSKI

**CRITICISM OF CLASSICAL PRAGMATISM:  
THE UNKNOWN ORIGINS OF  
CZESŁAW ZNAMIEROWSKI'S THEORY  
AND PHILOSOPHY OF LAW**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Czesław Znamierowski belonged to a small group of Polish intellectuals who, during the period before the First World War, exhibited regular, albeit selective, interest in American Pragmatism.<sup>1</sup> Particular interest in this philosophical movement emerged after William James had published *Pragmatism* in 1907.<sup>2</sup> Znamierowski's doctoral dissertation, entitled *Der Wahrheitsbegriff in Pragmatismus* (On the Concept of Truth in Pragmatism)<sup>3</sup>, defended at Basel University in 1911, was associated with an intensive search for his own path in science, as evidenced by the recollections he shared with Zygmunt Ziemiński.<sup>4</sup> This article presents the key ideas of this first serious academic work of the founder of Poznań school of theory and philosophy of law – as yet not discussed in the literature – and the impact it had on some of his later ideas.

The objective of Znamierowski's dissertation was to put forward an analysis of pragmatism, based on the assumption that a key component of this doctrine is a specific concept of truth. It is difficult to say whether he was familiar with Max Meyer's opinion that there are as many pragmatisms as there are pragmatists.<sup>5</sup> Suffice it to say that Znamierowski decided to treat various pragmatists, despite their differing stances, as representing one philosophical movement, which probably even at that stage was not entirely legitimate, given the fundamental differences in the views of the creator of pragmatism – Peirce, whose work Znamierowski was not familiar with – and the most famous pragmatists of the time, such as James, Dewey and Schiller, who are extensively cited in his work.

---

<sup>1</sup> In addition to Znamierowski, Florian Znaniński, Stanisław Brzozowski and Władysław Biegański also deserve mention. See Buczyńska-Garewicz (1973): 47–48. This group also includes the translator of James's works into Polish, Władysław M. Kozłowski.

<sup>2</sup> James (1907). It should be noted that the Polish, extended, translation by W.M. Kozłowski – *Pragmatyzm. Dylemat determinizmu* – appeared in Warsaw as early as 1911.

<sup>3</sup> Znamierowski (1912). Subsequently in the text referred to as *Wahrheitsbegriff*.

<sup>4</sup> See Ziemiński (1968): 302.

<sup>5</sup> Meyer (1908): 326.

According to Znamierowski, the main feature of the pragmatist concept of truth is an anti-intellectualism which he identifies with 'Platonism' and labels as such. In Znamierowski's view, this anti-intellectualism fails to grasp the teleological and instrumental character of concepts. Such is the case with the correspondence theory of truth (in the versions known to him in 1912). This does not mean that Znamierowski is on the side of intellectualism, which he accuses primarily of the illegitimate transformation (*Verdoppelung, Umbildung*) of reality into knowledge.<sup>6</sup> In his opinion, James adopts a theory of correspondence provisionally, although he rejects its transcendent assumptions.

Znamierowski sees a characteristic feature of James's pragmatism as being an attempt to replace the static intellectualist relationship between reality and truth with a dynamic account, subordinated to the function of thinking, which at the same time makes it a normative approach, guided by a task set from an external perspective.<sup>7</sup> Thus, pragmatism sought to propose a conception of truth dependent on the consequences deemed desirable by the author of true judgments. James's support for a close relationship between cognition and practical action is indisputable.<sup>8</sup> The pragmatist concept of truth is also usually characterized as being based on the criterion of utility.<sup>9</sup>

## II. LOGIC AND PSYCHOLOGY IN WAHRHEITSBEGRIFF

Znamierowski's criticism of the pragmatist theory of truth primarily addresses the claim of the pragmatists that their theory is a *logical* theory of truth. It is not surprising today that pragmatist reflections on truth, including the truth-value of sentences, characterizes the pragmatist position on logic. From a historical perspective, however, one has to bear in mind that what was at stake in these findings was greater than it might seem today. In the context of the debate on science and philosophy at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the issues of logic and psychology were of paramount importance. First, the autonomy of philosophy was thought to depend on a stand being taken on these issues. Characteristic features of German philosophical reflection in the second half of the nineteenth century were the interest in a psychological interpretation of philosophical issues related to the development of natural sciences and the abandonment of idealism in philosophy. In the scientific psychology of that period, sense data were brought to the forefront, as something that could be empirically examined, and mental life was treated as reflecting those data. Those German philosophers decided that by investigating something non-material, and yet existing in some mode, they

<sup>6</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 7.

<sup>7</sup> Znamierowski (1912: 9): 'Diese teleologische Voraussetzung legt es nahe, das Denken unter den Gesichtspunkt der Norm nicht durch Untersuchung seiner inneren Struktur, sondern durch die Erwägung der ihm äusserlich zukommenden Aufgabe zu bringen.'

<sup>8</sup> See Buczyńska-Garewicz (1970): 5–16.

<sup>9</sup> See Kołakowski (2000): 50.

would be dealing with the psychical, and thus they stood a chance of coming close to psychologism in philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Second, the understanding of logic was thought to depend on determining its relationship with psychology. Psychologism, based on reductionist assumptions, such as that any problem can be ultimately explained in psychological terms, was also extended to logic, understood as the science of cognitive processes, often inspired by works of J.S. Mill. Psychologism in logic was criticized by such thinkers as Frege, Husserl, Łukasiewicz; with the latter claiming that logic consists of logical truths having their proper locus in deductive systems, rather than in empirical laws describing how we actually think.<sup>11</sup>

In order to determine the relation of logic to psychology, Znamierowski examines F.C.S. Schiller's views as representative, in his opinion, of pragmatism in general. Although Znamierowski shares his criticism of the 'psychologistic-descriptive' logic characteristic of intellectualism, this does not remove the odium of criticism from pragmatism which, as a kind of psychologism, focuses on actual cognitive acts.<sup>12</sup> Znamierowski refutes Schiller's psychologistic-normative approach to logic which uses truth as a category of valuation (*Wertkategorie*), on the grounds that valuation (*Wertung*) and validity (*Geltung*) in logic are independent of psychological facts.<sup>13</sup> Although Znamierowski's critique of psychologism in the account of logic is not a positive program, his arguments imply that he favours recognizing logic as an autonomous theoretical science. According to Znamierowski, criticism of Schiller's position provides additional arguments for the autonomy of logic in relation to psychology. He refers to Schiller's claim that psychologistic logic copes better than other approaches with the problem of errors, since formal logic focuses on true sentences. Znamierowski believes that errors belong to the history of knowledge, not to logic,<sup>14</sup> which in turn makes it possible to attribute to him the view that logic is a formal and a priori science. In his criticism of psychologism, Znamierowski also refers to some views of Husserl, from whom he inherits the idea that although thinking is carried out and implemented in our consciousness, and even though it is a condition of understanding what consciousness is, it does not follow that the truth-value of a logical proposition depends on one's psychological situation or that logic depends on psychology.<sup>15</sup> Husserl's research on consciousness is discernibly different from the empirical psychology of that era because in his phenomenology of consciousness, epistemological issues (for example, transcendence of objects with respect to consciousness, the mode of existence of the subject of cognition, the existence of indubitable data) are of primary concern.<sup>16</sup> It is worth emphasizing this Husserlian thread in the

---

<sup>10</sup> See Ingarden (1963): 273–276.

<sup>11</sup> For more on criticism of psychologism in logic, see Tworak (1996). Note, however, that Mill also provided logic with a prescriptive function. See Godden (2005).

<sup>12</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 13–14.

<sup>13</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 20.

<sup>14</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 24.

<sup>15</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 23.

<sup>16</sup> See Judycki (1993): 34–35.

first part of *Wahrheitsbegriff*, because nowadays, mainly due to the work of Lorini and Żelaniec,<sup>17</sup> one better understands the impact of phenomenology on Znamierowski's social ontology, but attention is typically paid to mediating his contact with Husserl's phenomenology through the work of Adolf Reinach.<sup>18</sup>

Znamierowski's dissertation also returns to problems related to the status of logic and its theorems, starting from the observation that axioms and self-evident truths are seen by pragmatists as historically variable statements or postulates.<sup>19</sup> According to Znamierowski, logical claims preserve their validity regardless of doubts related to their origin or to the disputes regarding their justification, in particular among adherents of psychologism and anti-psychologism.<sup>20</sup>

Znamierowski critically recalls Alfred Sidgwick's attempts to apply logic to informal reasoning and his attempts to defend John McTaggart's approach to the principle of contradiction, based on a pragmatic distinction between sentences as such and sentences whose validity depends on the context of use. He notices the analogy between Sidgwick's views<sup>21</sup> and the ideas of Schiller<sup>22</sup> who deals, among other things, with the principle of identity. Schiller rejects apriorism and transcendental necessity as the source of this principle, arguing that, on the basis of directly felt individual identity, we postulate the identity of objects and meanings as expressions of our desire.<sup>23</sup> He also recalls Schiller's view that 'the meaning of a rule lies in its application', and therefore a fortiori 'that the truth of an assertion depends on its application'.<sup>24</sup> Znamierowski rejects this view, which is Wittgensteinian *avant la lettre* if stripped of its psychological and biological assumptions. Adopting this view would presuppose that a sentence is meaningless before being used, but this assumption cannot, in Znamierowski's opinion, be reconciled with the need to understand the sentence by its user.<sup>25</sup> In *Wahrheitsbegriff* either he implicitly assumes the direct understanding of a sentence – because any other understanding includes, even potentially, the context of its use, or ignores the fact that, despite the ambiguity of his argument, he does not write about sentences, but about assertions. Apart from this issue, Znamierowski wanted to defend the demarcation line (*Abgrenzung*) between the logic and science of his time.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Lorini, Żelaniec (1916).

<sup>18</sup> See Lorini, Żelaniec (1916): 77. Similarly Czepita (1988): 20, note 23.

<sup>19</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 76–77.

<sup>20</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 78.

<sup>21</sup> Sidgwick (1905).

<sup>22</sup> Schiller (1902): 51.

<sup>23</sup> See Schiller (1902): 95–98.

<sup>24</sup> Schiller (1905): 237.

<sup>25</sup> Znamierowski (1912: 82): 'Dass diese Theorie der Bedeutung unhaltbar ist, leuchtet vollständig ein. Ihr gemäss ist der Satz bedeutungslos, ehe er angewandt wird. Und wie kann er angewandt werden, ohne verstanden zu sein? Kann man etwas als Werkzeug gebrauchen, wovon man absolut nichts weiss?'

<sup>26</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 83.

### III. ON THE SO-CALLED ANTI-PSYCHOLOGISM IN ZNAMIEROWSKI'S THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF LAW

Znamierowski's considerations on the relation of logic to psychology in *Wahrheitsbegriff* remained an important part of his scientific attitude. In 1922, he defended his doctoral dissertation in law at Poznań University. *Psychologistic Theory of Law. Critical Analysis*<sup>27</sup> was partly his polemic against Leon Petrazhitskii's conception of law. Some commentators raise doubts as to the legitimacy of its main polemical thread<sup>28</sup>, and even suggest that it contributed to Petrazhitskii's 'persecution'.<sup>29</sup> They seem oblivious, however, of the fact that Znamierowski's considerations largely concern his own social ontology, already developing at that time, in which he included the theory of law.<sup>30</sup>

Attaching the label of anti-psychologism to Znamierowski's theory and philosophy of law runs the risk of oversimplification, reinforced by the suggestion that he followed primarily a negative research program. Meanwhile, his version of anti-psychologism, partly originating in *Wahrheitsbegriff*, produced at least two important positive insights in his theory and philosophy of law.

The first anti-psychologistic insight in Znamierowski's account of law reflects his lasting belief in the autonomy of logic with regard to psychology. This belief would often return in his legal-theoretical views. By way of example, two important philosophical theses related to this issue were shaped in his polemic against pragmatism and directly translated into some later views.

Znamierowski's first thesis concerns the independence of the truth-value of statements from the acts of their use. The problem which vexed Znamierowski in *Wahrheitsbegriff*, namely that of the absolute truth-value of sentences, independent of the acts of using them, and presented in the criticism of the pragmatist approach to axioms, found a clear transposition on his view of the truth-value of norms as sentences in a logical sense. In his 1924 book, he stated with regard to anythetic norm (which he considered to be a sentence, whose truth-value and validity depend on the act of enacting it<sup>31</sup>), that 'its validity does not extend in time as far as its truthfulness does'.<sup>32</sup> Considering,

<sup>27</sup> Znamierowski (1925).

<sup>28</sup> See Barwicka-Tylek (2010): 49.

<sup>29</sup> 'Znamierowski defended a doctoral dissertation in 1922 entitled "Psychological Theory of Law. Critical Analysis", in which, given his knowledge of the Russian and German languages, he assembled all the critical observations, even caricatures and unjust ones, advanced against Petrazhitskii's doctrine. Znamierowski secured, so to speak, the theoretical base for persecutors and persons envious of Petrazhitskii, Merezhko (2012).

<sup>30</sup> See Znamierowski (1925): 7.

<sup>31</sup> Ziemiński explains that for Znamierowski a norm was a sentence in a logical sense due to the information included in its content as according to whose evaluations or because of whose act of enactment it should be so and so. See Ziemiński (1963): 90. A more elementary outline of this conception, see Ziemiński (1976): 126–175.

<sup>32</sup> Znamierowski (1934): 36, 200 (note 8).

though without ultimately prejudging the question of the truth-value of the thetic norm before its enactment, he explained that there is no ‘logical contradiction between this time-limited validity of a thetic norm and its time-unlimited truth-value’<sup>33</sup> because the ‘thetic norm is valid under certain temporal conditions which limit its validity, but it is a true sentence *about* certain time conditions. Compliance with these conditions ends and the truth-value does not change.’<sup>34</sup> This view appears to repeat the *Wahrheitsbegriff* argument that a sentence must have meaning as well as a logical value independent of the context of its use.

The second thesis, the formulation of which can be found in Znamierowski’s reflections on the independence of thinking (logic) from mental states, in the opening pages of his dissertation, concerns logical relations between sentences, which hold independently of the will. It can be noted that the conception of norms developed in the *Prolegomena*, proceeding from the analysis of an isolated norm and leading to the concept of the system of norms (*układ norm*), is based primarily on the recognition that there is a *logical* relationship holding between the norms belonging to the system. As Znamierowski pointed out, ‘the logical connection between the content of two norms may entail that along with the enactment of one, the other becomes valid, although it had not been subject to special enactment. [...] This case demonstrates that there can be a relationship between norms that connects them, even *independently of our will*, into one whole. We call this whole a system of norms’.<sup>35</sup>

It can be assumed that another positive feature of Znamierowski’s anti-psychologism is the above-mentioned formation of his views on social ontology, and perhaps even the formation of his sociologism in reaction to excessive psychologism. However, these views are not discussed here because at the stage of working on *Wahrheitsbegriff* Znamierowski had not yet started to develop his conception of social ontology. In Section V, however, I will mention the problem of apriorism related to the justification of claims with respect to his later social ontology. Still, there are many indications that at the beginning of his intellectual journey, Znamierowski, as a novice philosopher, had already held those seminal beliefs which were to have impact on the key theses of his later theory and philosophy of law.

#### IV. THREE VERSIONS OF THE PRAGMATIST APPROACH TO TRUTH

Another group of issues raised by Znamierowski in *Wahrheitsbegriff* concerns the problem of truth criteria. The slogan of classical pragmatism asserts that the truth of a sentence lies in its consequences. Yet how should

---

<sup>33</sup> Znamierowski (1934): 37.

<sup>34</sup> Znamierowski (1934): 38.

<sup>35</sup> Znamierowski (1947/1948): 38. Emphasis added.



these consequences be understood: are they a fact, or a proposition? If these consequences have any use, is it practical or theoretical? Starting from such questions, Znamierowski distinguishes three model versions of pragmatism according to their respective attitudes towards truth:<sup>36</sup> trivial, moral and scientific pragmatism.

### 1. Trivial pragmatism

‘Truth has practical consequences’: this phrase captures Znamierowski’s first interpretation of the pragmatist truth criteria. If this statement is understood in such a way that the truth-value of propositions is associated with *some* practical consequences which, however, do not constitute the very truth-value of these propositions, the formula is theoretically trivial, since any theory of truth can take it as its own.<sup>37</sup> In moral and scientific pragmatism, however, unlike in the correspondence theory, the assessment of a proposition, or a sentence expressing it, is postponed in order to take into account the relationship between the sentence and the relevant state of affairs. In the light of how the correspondence theory of truth developed after the publication of Znamierowski’s work, the above objection loses its force to the extent that it can also be successfully brought against those correspondence conceptions which, among other things, seek the criteria for verifying sentences in their logical form (early Wittgenstein) or in sentences of the language of science (Carnap). Whenever we use the criteria of truth, namely whenever we do not embrace the sceptical view that truth in the correspondence theory is acriterial, the decision on the truth-value must be postponed. In addition, according to Znamierowski, every version of pragmatism must necessarily fall into infinite regress because recognition of the truth-value of the proposition (sentence) about consequences will require further assessment in terms of consequences, and so on.<sup>38</sup> Solving the problem of regress is, however, a bone of contention of all theories of knowledge, therefore this objection also seems to miss the point. Epistemology must remain content with the panorama of possible positions on the limits of justification, and a given conception of cognition must either be on the side of scepticism or deny it, by choosing some version of internalism or externalism.<sup>39</sup> It is also possible, though both early and contemporary pragmatists did not adopt a common stance on this issue, to recognize the value of regress as an expression of the endless process of acquiring true beliefs.

---

<sup>36</sup> In his dissertation, Znamierowski discusses moral pragmatism and scientific pragmatism while his arguments include one more type of pragmatism which I call ‘trivial’ for lack of a better description.

<sup>37</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 31.

<sup>38</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 32–33.

<sup>39</sup> The most comprehensive review to date of positions regarding the solution of the problem of infinite regress in theory of knowledge can be found in Armstrong (1973): 150–161.

## 2. Moral pragmatism

Moral pragmatism, as interpreted by Znamierowski, claims that ‘truth lies in practical consequences’ broadly understood, that is covering all *Lebensinteressen*.<sup>40</sup> Referring to the views expressed by James in *The Will to Believe*, Znamierowski ascribes to pragmatists the identification of practical consequences with external action which is useful in a moral sense. He finds an example of such an identification in the pragmatist justification of religious beliefs or science. According to Znamierowski, under the criterion of moral evaluation adopted by pragmatists, cognitive access to utility, and the choice which the pragmatist is forced to make between the perspective of an individual and the perspective of humanity, remain debatable. If, he argues, a pragmatist comes to the conclusion that there is a conflict between the considered interests of the same individual, that pragmatist will be forced either to make an arbitrary choice or to adopt some absolute point of view, and thus abandon pragmatism. The criterion of utility from the perspective of an individual turns out to be uncertain, and surely does not give rise to permanent and intersubjective judgments about the truth-value of sentences. If, on the other hand, one considers the interests of humanity, two doubts arise. If ‘the interests of humanity must be represented in every human being so that they are truly valid at all times,’<sup>41</sup> they either form a special group of interests whose determination would be arbitrary, or they involve the interest of everyone, which in turn is impossible to determine. When writing *Wahrheitsbegriff*, Znamierowski underestimated the social conditions of the criteria of truth, somewhat treating this issue as zero-one: either the criteria of truth are exclusively social, or they should be sought exclusively outside the world of social interaction. Admittedly, such an approach was reinforced by the vagueness of the social science terminology of the era. For instance, André Lalande, a Durkheimian extensively cited by Znamierowski, uses the vague terminology of social tendencies or instincts in his criticism of pragmatism.<sup>42</sup>

## 3. Scientific pragmatism

Znamierowski gives the name of scientific pragmatism to a pragmatism which differs from moral pragmatism by interpreting practicality and utility, concepts characteristic of moral pragmatism, as ‘being rich in scientific consequences, useful for theory-building and the like’ rather than as ‘being desirable from a moral point of view’. The key formula of such a pragmatism, ascribed to James, Schiller and Dewey, would be ‘The truth is in theoretical consequences.’<sup>43</sup> Schiller also captures this concisely: ‘what is useful in building science, is true’.<sup>44</sup> On this conception, the function of truth is economy and simplification

<sup>40</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 36 f.

<sup>41</sup> Znamierowski (1912): 45.

<sup>42</sup> Lalande (1908).

<sup>43</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 50.

<sup>44</sup> Schiller (1907): 154.



in the scientific processing of facts and the corresponding sentences. According to Znamierowski, scientific pragmatism shares this functional approach with the empiriocriticism of Mach and Avenarius, who in the late nineteenth century paved the way for logical positivism and conventionalism (in Poincaré's version<sup>45</sup>). For Znamierowski, such conceptions of truth are relativist: since if the consequences of judgments which are desirable from some point of view are taken into account as a criterion of truth, then not all judgments are taken into account, but only those that are selected.<sup>46</sup>

However, Znamierowski's doubts can be aligned with other questions. Since constructivism in science is inevitable, would it be possible to put experience into a meaningful whole without accepting the theoretical character of observation? Can any universal hypothesis be justified otherwise than merely to some extent, and isn't a scientist always forced to discriminate between hypotheses? Pragmatists seem to say that the best measure of our belief is the propensity to act, based on a given hypothesis. Znamierowski is not able to undermine this position, but he focuses instead on the ambiguities or obvious errors of selected pragmatists. For example, he accuses Dewey of psychologism because he deals with the actual genesis of judgments leading to justified beliefs, while according to Znamierowski those judgments should be divided into those whose certainty imposes itself on the basis of complete factual accuracy (*vollkommene Uebereinstimmung mit dem Sachverhalte*) and those that are provisional and arbitrary.<sup>47</sup> However, Znamierowski does not provide methods for distinguishing the judgments belonging to the first class. James, in turn, is accused of succumbing to psychologism in the intellectualist version, at least with regard to necessary truths that are directly available to cognition, which he distinguishes from provisional judgments that are not yet verified by means of their consequences.<sup>48</sup> Znamierowski holds that such a duality within the category of 'mental ideas' undermines James's consequentialism: if pragmatists recognize some truths without verifying their consequences, then the consequentialist criterion of truth proves to be unnecessary. However, as pointed out above, Znamierowski himself is in favour of a similar differentiation of judgments into those that are considered true and those that have the nature of hypotheses, and the only difference between him and the pragmatists lies in the accepted conditions of truth. Pragmatists essentially declare themselves to be epistemological consequentialists, while Znamierowski's scattered comments are rather indicative of a preference for empiricism, as he distinguishes the issues of the scientific cognitive value of judgments from the issues of their truth value, and a strong inclination for anti-psychologism.

---

<sup>45</sup> Poincaré, in his works published in the beginning of the twentieth century, postulated the replacement of the a priori structure of space and time with arbitrarily chosen measurement conventions imposed on a given experience. See Grobler (2008): 268–269.

<sup>46</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 52.

<sup>47</sup> Znamierowski (1912): 57.

<sup>48</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 60–62.

## V. THE JUSTIFICATION OF CLAIMS IN ZNAMIEROWSKI'S THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF LAW: BETWEEN EMPIRICISM AND APRIORISM

Znamierowski's analysis of trivial, moral and scientific pragmatisms as accounts of truth possibly led him to seeing the problems associated with the justification of judgments and setting the limits for extending this justification in time. His dissatisfaction with the requirement of waiting for the conditions of justification to be met, leads to a kind of epistemological impatience in his efforts to dispel the infinite regress of our justifications. Such an attitude to justification issues might have brought about a mixture of empiricism and apriorism,<sup>49</sup> which was characteristic of his later research program. The unambiguous qualification of Znamierowski as an empiricist has already been convincingly questioned, along with the unclear methodological status of his a priori claims.<sup>50</sup>

Znamierowski did indeed take an a priori position on various issues, which he most clearly expressed for the first time in a 1921 text on social objects and social facts. The task he set for social ontology was to 'establish general truths regarding all social entities, both existing and possible, [...] as an a priori science [...]'.<sup>51</sup> Methodological apriorism enabled Znamierowski to identify the social entities that happened to be fundamental for his – and his students' – theory and philosophy of law, such as the 'construction norm' and 'thetic act'.<sup>52</sup> Later, although he would still use the results of his a priori findings, he would associate a priori statements almost exclusively with analytical ones.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, along with the development of his scientific conceptions, Znamierowski's orientation was more and more determined by empiricism, and even sensualism and physicalism. As Czepita observed, since the mid-1920s he was inclined to the view that 'all reasonable claims about reality must be based directly or indirectly on sensory experience'.<sup>54</sup> Later, under the influence of Kotarbiński's reism, he adopted a reductionist understanding of things as 'bodies in the physical sense'.<sup>55</sup>

In 1930, Znamierowski laid out his conception of 'individualizing reduction'.<sup>56</sup> The conception required that scientific statements about a community, group or collectivity should be synonymous with a certain set of sentences, including both empirical sentences about the observational properties of

---

<sup>49</sup> With all ambiguities associated with the philosophical entanglement of apriorism, it is basically about independence from experience.

<sup>50</sup> See Czepita (1988): 16–17.

<sup>51</sup> Znamierowski (1921): 2.

<sup>52</sup> More on thetic entities, see Lorini (2010): 21–30.

<sup>53</sup> See Czepita (1988): 17, note 11.

<sup>54</sup> Czepita (1988): 17.

<sup>55</sup> Znamierowski (1957): 24.

<sup>56</sup> See Znamierowski (1947–1948): 211 f.

members of a given group, community or collectivity and, among other things, a priori sentences that characterize the thetic structure of that community, group or collectivity. This double requirement exemplifies Znamierowski's tendency to combine the empirical paradigm of neopositivist sociology with anti-positivist threads, both conventionalist and those open to empirically non-verifiable apriorism.<sup>57</sup> The 'individualizing reduction' also reflects his discussion of moral pragmatism<sup>58</sup> in *Wahrheitsbegriff* in which he attempted to solve the problem of taking into account both the social perspective of the individual member of any social group and the perspective of the group to which that individual belongs.

Epistemological impatience, revealed for the first time in *Wahrheitsbegriff*, was to resonate in Znamierowski's general methodology of opting for the reduction of temporal conditions for the justification of epistemic claims. Both of his favourite types of justificatory claims, namely the collection of empirical sense data and the postulates (postulation = thoughts ideas) of ontological modalities, are the shortest, albeit unconvincing, ways to construct justified scientific or philosophical claims and the easiest ways to avoid infinite regress.

## VI. REALISM – SCIENTISM – DOGMATISM

The last part of Znamierowski's dissertation is occupied with the problem of applying pragmatist concepts of truth to such issues in science as objective reality and scientific method. Most of his considerations contain criticism of the pragmatist method, in connection with its underlying conception of truth, and – which may seem paradoxical, if one considers Znamierowski's opposition to consequentialism – the consequences of being pragmatist.

The first issue discussed by Znamierowski is the fundamental attitude of pragmatism to reality. Znamierowski, limiting his considerations to epistemology, assumes that the objective reality which is the object of cognition is primal and given prior to knowledge about it.<sup>59</sup> His objection to pragmatists concerns their treatment of scientific hypotheses as true beliefs about reality, 'creating reality by formulating hypotheses' and 'creating truth'.<sup>60</sup> Znamierowski's cursory argument boils down to a common-sensical rejection of 'dogmatism' as a stance which illegitimately confuses knowledge with faith.<sup>61</sup>

In fact, the claim that we create the truth, and not discover it, can be found in the writings of James, Dewey and Schiller.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, James

<sup>57</sup> For a supportive interpretation of this methodologically eclectic conception, see Czepita (1987): 70.

<sup>58</sup> See Section IV.2.

<sup>59</sup> See Znamierowski (1912): 69–70.

<sup>60</sup> Znamierowski (1912: 70): '[...] das Gemachtwerden der Wirklichkeit durch die Ausbildung der Hypothesen.'

<sup>61</sup> Znamierowski (1912: 73): 'Vermengung des Wissens und Glaubens.'

<sup>62</sup> For references to the pragmatist's writings, see Haack (2018): 1072.

declared in *The Will to Believe* that ‘in our dealing with objective nature we obviously are recorders, not makers of truth’.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, it seems quite obvious that Znamierowski’s criticism alludes to the views from *The Will to Believe* in a manner similar to positivism’s attempts to discredit the truth of religious faith, but with the aim of discrediting the pragmatist views of scientific method. To extrapolate from the young James’s views which were directed against the theses of Victorian Scientists on religion, to the philosopher’s overall views on science, shows that Znamierowski was still immature at that time. He should have noticed that even in *The Will to Believe* the rejection of the idea that scientific evidence forms the only basis for beliefs is subject to strict conditions.<sup>64</sup> First, James attempts to show that the protocols of science are not universally applicable to beliefs. He adds: ‘The rules of the scientific game, burdens of proof, presumptions, experimenta crucis, complete inductions, and the like, are only binding on those who enter that game.’<sup>65</sup> There are cases when a belief without proper grounds may be considered justified, due to favourable consequences, especially when a certain option is vital in life or intellectually undecidable. Second, according to James, also in science, belief in the truth of the judgment is sometimes necessary for that judgment to be confirmed. Znamierowski’s ranting about the pragmatists’ dogmatism is at least a double-edged sword since it implies that true beliefs can only be based on scientific grounds. This is precisely the ‘dogma’ which James rejects as limiting our thoughts and actions.

In *Wahrheitsbegriff* Znamierowski is already a self-declared realist, but his realism is still ‘reactionary’, as a result primarily of his polemic temper and positivist scientism. An in-depth affirmation of realism and reading James’s writings could have led Znamierowski to the insight that the author of *Pragmatism* attempted to build a nuanced version of realism. Classical pragmatism probably was not able to arouse Znamierowski’s sympathy, but he should have noted that the problem of the consequences of the truth in James’s and Schiller’s pragmatism, in particular the consequences implying variability in the logical value of judgments or sentences, had already been raised by Peirce in James’s time. What Znamierowski attacked in *Wahrheitsbegriff* was the most common ideas of pragmatism. In particular, he opposed the so-called instrumental pragmatism, that is, the classical pragmatist conception of the truth of judgments which treated true judgments as if they were tools that can have a better or worse use, on a par with other judgments available in a given situation and with regard to an agent’s desires or goals.<sup>66</sup> Robert Brandom notes that it is a mistake to treat instrumental pragmatism as a position on the truth of judgments rather than a position on the meaning of sentences. According to Brandom, classical pragmatism’s insight was that ‘the contentfulness of intentional states such as belief should be understood in terms of the

<sup>63</sup> James (1897): 20.

<sup>64</sup> For a detailed discussion of James’s argument, see Kawalec (2010): 284–287.

<sup>65</sup> James (1897): 93.

<sup>66</sup> See Brandom (2011): 16.

contribution they make to what the believers *do*.<sup>67</sup> In this context, equating the success of such actions with the truth of judgments, as Znamierowski did, is optional and susceptible to legitimate criticism.

## VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Having defended and published his doctoral dissertation in philosophy, Znamierowski abandoned further research on pragmatism.<sup>68</sup> Through dealing with pragmatism at the early stage of his work, he developed the foundations of his own conceptions in the philosophy and theory of law. His polemic against this movement, which was only partially effective, reinforced his own views on logic, and in particular on the problem of the logical value of sentences. Joining sides with the enemies of psychologism, he blamed the pragmatists for a ‘psychologist fallacy’ based on conflating objective causes or the rules of logic with subjective reasons, but without noticing that the dichotomy of logic and psychology was problematic for the pragmatists.<sup>69</sup> The above reflections on *Wahrheitsbegriff* with regard to logic show the founding insight, hitherto unknown, of Znamierowski’s anti-psychologism in the philosophy of law. They also provide a deeper explanation of the dualism in his theory of legal norms, to which he ascribed both truth-value and validity, independent of one another. Re-reading *Wahrheitsbegriff* with a focus on its author’s epistemological oscillation between empiricism and apriorism may also supply an indirect understanding of the origins of his objectivist social ontology, and of such theoretical concepts as ‘construction norm’ and ‘thetic act’.

Maciej Dybowski

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

dybowski@amu.edu.pl

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8699-1292>

Armstrong, D.M. (1973). *Belief, Truth and Knowledge*. London.

Barwicka-Tylek, I. (2010). W kwestii „psychologiczności” psychologicznej teorii prawa Leona Petrażyckiego. *Państwo i Prawo* 65(2): 44–56.

Brandom, R.B. (2011). *Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary*. Cambridge.

Buczyńska-Garewicz, H. (1970). *Wartość i fakt. Rozważania o pragmatyzmie*. Warsaw.

Buczyńska-Garewicz, H. (1973). *James*. Warsaw.

---

<sup>67</sup> Brandom (2011): 16.

<sup>68</sup> Even though he was sometimes considered a ‘pragmatist’, it was only in the colloquial sense of the term. For example, Zygmunt Perz argued that Znamierowski’s assessment of the value of religion in relation to universal kindness, and therefore to morality, was purely pragmatic. See Perz (1966): 158, 161. Similarly, in his socio-political writings, as Janusz Ziółkowski noted, Znamierowski advocates ‘national social engineering’ and follows a ‘directive of national pragmatism’. See Ziółkowski (1987): 18. The cited expressions can be found in Znamierowski (1938).

<sup>69</sup> For more on the issue, see the texts contributed to Calcaterra, Dreon (2017).

- Calcaterra, R.M., Dreon, R. (eds.) (2017). Pragmatism and psychologism. *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 9(1).
- Czepita, S. (1987). Czesława Znamierowskiego koncepcja „redukcji indywidualizującej”. *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny* 49(3): 63–73.
- Czepita, S. (1988). Koncepcje teoretycznoprawne Czesława Znamierowskiego. Poznań.
- Godden, D.M. (2005). Psychologism in the logic of John Stuart Mill: Mill on the subject matter and foundations of ratiocinative logic. *History and Philosophy of Logic* 26(2): 115–143.
- Grobler, A. (2008). *Metodologia nauk*. Kraków.
- Haack, S. (2018). The pragmatist tradition: lessons for legal theorists. *Washington University Law Review* 95(5): 1049–1082.
- Ingarden, R. (1963). *Z badań nad filozofią współczesną. Dzieła filozoficzne. Volume 6*. Warsaw.
- James, W. (1897). *The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. New York.
- James, W. (1907). *Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking: Popular Lectures on Philosophy*. New York.
- Judycki, S. (1993). Co to jest fenomenologia? *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria* 2(1): 25–38.
- Kawalec, P. (2010). Woluntaryzm epistemologiczny Williama Jamesa. Próba rekonstrukcji na gruncie probabilizmu B. van Fraassena. *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria* 19(4): 283–295.
- Kołakowski, L. (2000). *Kultura i fetysze*. Warsaw.
- Lalande, A. (1908). Pragmatisme, humanisme, et vérité. *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 65: 1–26.
- Lorini, G. (2010). Ontologia społeczna Czesława Znamierowskiego. *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny* 72(4): 21–30.
- Lorini, G., Żelaniec, W. (2016). Czesław Znamierowski's social ontology and its phenomenological roots, [in:] A. Salice, H.B. Schmid (eds.), *The Phenomenological Approach to Social Reality. History, Concepts, Problems*. Cham: 75–89.
- Merezhko, A.A. (2012). The mystery of a legal philosopher's death: L.I. Petrazhetskii. *Journal of Comparative Law* 108(7): 108–114.
- Meyer, M. (1908). The exact number of pragmatisms. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 5: 321–326.
- Perz, Z. (1966). U podstaw poglądów etycznych Czesława Znamierowskiego. *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 2(1): 135–164.
- Schiller, F.C.S. (1902). Axioms as postulates, [in:] H. Sturt (ed.), *Personal Idealism: Philosophical Essays by Eight Members of the University of Oxford*. London: 47–134.
- Schiller, F.C.S. (1905). The definition of 'pragmatism' and 'humanism'. *Mind* 54(14): 235–240.
- Schiller, F.C.S. (1907). *Studies in Humanism*. London.
- Sidgwick, A. (1905). Applied axioms. *Mind* 14: 42–57.
- Tworak, Z. (1996). Logika wobec myślenia. *Nowa Krytyka* 7: 73–91.
- Ziemiński, Z. (1963). Normy tetyczne a normy aksjologiczne w koncepcji Cz. Znamierowskiego. *Studia Filozoficzne* 33(2): 85–100.
- Ziemiński, Z. (1968). Czesław Znamierowski 1888–1967. *Ruch Filozoficzny* 26(4): 299–302.
- Ziemiński, Z. (1976). *Practical Logic*. Dordrecht.
- Ziółkowski, J. (1987). Socjologiczna koncepcja narodu Czesława Znamierowskiego. *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny* 49(3): 13–27.
- Znamierowski, C. (1912). *Der Wahrheitsbegriff im Pragmatismus. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Philosophischen Doktorwürde, Vorgelegt der Hohen Philosophischen Fakultät der Basler Universität*. Warsaw.
- Znamierowski, C. (1921). O przedmiocie i fakcie społecznym. *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 24(1/2): 1–33.
- Znamierowski, C. (1925). Psychologistyczna teoria prawa. Analiza krytyczna. *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 25(1): 1–78.
- Znamierowski, C. (1934). *Podstawowe pojęcia teorii prawa. Część pierwsza. Układ prawny i norma prawna*. 2nd edition. Poznań.
- Znamierowski, C. (1938). *Rehabilitacja narodu*. Poznań.
- Znamierowski, C. (1947/1948). *Prolegomena do nauki o państwie*. 2nd edition. Poznań.
- Znamierowski, C. (1957). *Oceny i normy*. Warsaw.



---

CRITICISM OF CLASSICAL PRAGMATISM:  
THE UNKNOWN ORIGINS OF  
CZESŁAW ZNAMIEROWSKI'S THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF LAW

Summary

The article presents the key ideas of Czesław Znamierowski's 1911 doctoral dissertation on the concept of truth in pragmatism (*Der Wahrheitsbegriff im Pragmatismus*), thus far not discussed in the literature, and the impact it had on some of his later ideas in the philosophy and theory of law. His polemic against pragmatism reinforced his later views on science and logic, and in particular on the problem of the truth-value of sentences. This founding insight of Znamierowski's anti-psychologism in the philosophy of law, namely the independence of logic from mental states, provides a deeper explanation of a dualism in his theory of the legal norm: the ascription of both truth-value and validity, mutually independent, to legal norms. When analysed with regard to Znamierowski's epistemological oscillation between empiricism and apriorism, *Wahrheitsbegriff* may also enable a better understanding of the origins of his objectivist social ontology and of such legal-theoretical concepts as 'construction norm' and 'thetic act'.

Keywords: Znamierowski; truth; logic; pragmatism; apriorism; psychologism; legal theory

