RESPONSIBILITY

A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective

Edited by
Barbara Bokus
The need for developing ethical sensitivity at universities

In the present paper I would like to consider the issue of responsibility from two mutually intertwined perspectives. Both are connected with Europe’s oldest institution responsible, among other things, for renewing the elite and consequently ensuring society’s well-being: the university. The first of them is the research perspective related to concern for accomplishing the fundamental objective of a university’s activity, i.e. the quest for truth. The other is linked to the university’s formative role – grossly neglected today, its aim being to develop young people’s personalities; the goal is to form a creative and empathetic person (not a robot).

My remarks will apply to the segment of university work I am most familiar with, namely working in research involving psychology and forming future psychologists.

In the traditional approach to educating future psychologists, the focus has usually been on two key elements: (1) KNOWLEDGE on current theories and models: psychological (or in the quasi-scientific version – visions pretending to be scientific psychological theories), psychometric, diagnostic, statistical, and (2) SKILLS in the methods of scientific and diagnostic research as well as correc-
tive methods. However, this is not enough. What we also need is the development of a future psychologist’s sensitivity from an ethical perspective.

Until recently, the word “ethics” was not featured anywhere, neither in the names of the subjects included in official psychology course teaching standards nor in “homemade” curricula offered by Polish schools that train future psychologists. However, significant changes have occurred as of the second half of the 1990s.

First of all, there have been several conferences on preparing psychologists for their future profession, including a focus on the psychologist’s professional ethics, and the conference proceedings were subsequently published (Brzeziński & Toeplitz-Winiewska, 2004a; Brzeziński & Toeplitz-Winiewska, 2004b; Brzezińska & Toeplitz, 2007). The first textbook on professional ethics was also published during this time, written by an ethicist and psychologists from three university centers: the Catholic University of Lublin, Adam Mickiewicz University and the University of Warsaw, targeted at graduate and PhD students of psychology and entitled *Etyka zawodu psychologa* (Professional Ethics of a Psychologist; Brzeziński et al., 2008).

Secondly, in 2004 the Polish Academy of Sciences’ Committee on Psychological Sciences (KNP PAN) together with the Polish Psychological Association (PTP) appointed a team of experts to work on new teaching standards for psychology courses1. Coincidentally, in a parallel process, the Ministry of National Education and Sport began working on new teaching standards for courses offered at Polish university-level schools2. The ministry accepted the concept developed by the KNP PAN and PTP team (the relevant faculty councils and institute councils were also consulted). For the very first time, “professional ethics of a psychologist” was among the mandatory subjects included in the group of “core subjects.” The group of experts3 appointed by the University Accreditation Commission (UKA) went even further. They concluded that “developing ethical sensitivity” in psychology students is at least as important as providing them with current (scientific!) knowledge and teaching them how to use that knowledge as well as scientific research methods, diagnostic methods and methods of practical psychological help (e.g. rudiments of psychotherapy). In the introduction to the new UKA Standards, the authors write:

“... The range of possible professional roles, and especially the fact that they require not just professional competence but also – and this might even be

---

1 The team included the following psychologists: Jerzy Brzeziński (UAM – coordinator), Edward Nęcka (UJ), Wojciech Pisula (SWPS), Zofia Ratajczak (UŚ), Tytus Sosnowski (UW), Małgorzata Toeplitz-Winiewska (PTP).

2 The role of expert responsible for standards for the psychology course was entrusted to Jerzy Brzeziński (UAM).

3 The expert team included the following psychologists: Jerzy Brzeziński (UAM – chairman), Dariusz Doliński (SWPS), Małgorzata Górnik-Durose (UŚ), Władysław Łosiak (UJ), Piotr Oleś (KUL), Roman Ossowski (UKW), Bogdan Zawadzki (UW).
considered the supreme requirement – ETHICAL SENSITIVITY, demands that special attention be paid to the sphere of ethics in training future psychologists. Psychology courses should equip their students not just with knowledge on the main theories, methods and elementary skills to apply those theories and those methods in solving practical problems, but they should also sensitize students to respect for the fundamental principles of ethical practicing of the psychologist’s profession: confidentiality, privacy, anonymity and obtaining the informed consent of subjects taking part in research and practical procedures. We approach the principle of ethical professional conduct of psychologists very broadly. It also includes calling upon – in the course of fulfilling diverse professional roles – only those practices that find justification (endorsement) in accepted scientific theories.”

And – as a “final” word on the matter – ethical problems in psychology student teaching are emphasized (even further) in a report by a team of experts working on the benchmark for psychology (in the context of activity envisaged in the draft of the National Qualifications Framework)4:

“... we also wish to emphasize how important an aspect the ethical dimension is in psychologist training. Psychologists work with people who place their trust in them (and this applies not only to those graduates who choose a clinical specialization). Integrity, sensitivity, tolerance and empathy are qualities that have to be developed in students of psychology ...

KNOWLEDGE: “... Therefore, treating this recommendation of the UKA [quoted above] as being of prime importance for defining the profile of knowledge, skills and social and personal competences of future psychologists, they have to be provided with basic knowledge on ethics, and especially professional ethics. In particular, psychology graduates should be familiar with the fundamental documents adopted by the psychologist community (e.g. codes of ethics) and sensitizing psychologists to how they ought to behave in different professional situations so that their conduct does not put a given person or group at risk of loss of dignity.”

SKILLS: “... The knowledge acquired by psychology graduates should be extensive enough and sufficiently reinforced to enable them to:

– accurately identify those areas of their research and practice that can be

\footnote{Cf. D. Doliński & Zespół (2011). Przykładowy zbiór efektów kształcenia na jednolitych studiach magisterskich dla kierunku studiów „psychologii” [A Sample Set of Learning Outcomes in the Uniform Master’s Course in Psychology]. Published as manuscript [team: Professors: Jerzy Brzeziński (UAM), Dariusz Doliński – chairman (SWPS – Wrocław Branch), Małgorzata Górnik-Durose (UŚ), Piotr Oleś (KUL); also involving professors – specialist topic experts: Anna Brzezińska (UAM), Lidia Cierpiałkowska (UAM), Piotr Francuz (KUL), Włodzimierz Oniszczenko (UW), Wojciech Pisula (WSZiP), Bogdan Zawadzki (UW)].}
a potential risk to their clients and to subjects taking part in scientific research;
– translate the recommendations and prohibitions set down in the codes of ethics adopted by the psychologist community into the language of professional activity undertaken always with the client’s well-being in mind;
– in their research, diagnostic, expert and assistance work, always make use only of those psychological theories and those methods of measurement, diagnosis and psychological help in a broad sense (e.g. psychotherapy) that have been lent credence through empirical verification; for ethical reasons, they will not use concepts and methods outside the realm of scientific psychology and will have acquired the skills needed to recognize and reject the latter;
– never undertake any action that would result in a conflict of interest; as members of the psychological community, they will not violate the code of good practice in science – they will not plagiarize, they will not falsify research results."

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL COMPETENCES: “Psychologists proceed actively against any attempts to depreciate the psychologist’s profession – by rejecting, in public discussions, pseudo-specialists’ attempts to impersonate psychologists. In their professional conduct, psychologists work toward increasing society’s confidence in psychological diagnostic, expert and assistance practices.”

Growing awareness of the importance of the ethical aspect in preparing future psychologists for a diverse range of professional roles requires the question to be asked, all over again, as to the role of universities in educating new professionals – especially when universities face new challenges (also those linked to the internetization of life, leading to efforts aiming to change them into network universities, e-universities\(^5\)).

To my mind, however, technological enthusiasm might quite effectively overshadow some major drawbacks of this dynamically progressing internetization of classical universities. Personally, I see some genuine threats to the fulfillment of their important formative role. In the broadly understood education of psychology students (especially them!), this formative role of the university becomes extremely significant. I think that building the new e-university on the ruins of the old university, reducing professors to the role of a “protein peripheral device” running an e-learning platform (only until, due to technological progress, they become a superfluous and rather costly – not being manufactured in the Far East – addition), instead of mentors communicating face to face with their students, will be too high a price to pay for the wide availability of higher education offered by the new quasi-universities.

\(^5\) I wrote about these problems in Brzeziński, 2009.
Methodological and ethical awareness

The university’s expanding formula and growing accessibility on one hand, and the aforementioned internetization of universities on the other, is leading to a gradual departure from the classical formula involving the creative professor-student relation (as envisaged by the founder of the Lvov-Warsaw School – Kazimierz Twardowski; Twardowski, 1933). I would like to emphasize strongly that the core of this relation was not exclusively the transfer of knowledge, nor the development of skills. The former can easily be accomplished without getting up from your private monitor. The unimaginable future complexity of computer software will enable students to enter the multidimensional virtual world of the Wachowski brothers’ Matrix. This will remove the economic barriers to accessing the world of laboratories and specialist collections of which the professors and students of today’s poor universities operating in the real world can only dream. However...

Universities should not strive only to improve students in an instrumental aspect. Universities should also develop students’ personalities, their pro-social attitudes, sensitivity and tolerance, respect for other people’s dignity (regardless of social status, religion, political views etc.). This might sound old-fashioned, but universities should give students an upbringing. Will students find role models in cyberspace where the universities of the future will be located? Won’t we raise new barbarians at those cyber-universities? Moving education to the web, we will not shape an autonomous and sensitive Person. Technology, even the most advanced kind, will not solve all the problems.

In particular, I look anxiously at the thousands of young people who dream of studying psychology... WHAT will such a “fast-food” university be able to offer them apart from knowledge transfer, sometimes more and sometimes less effective? Therefore we need to ask: Should the education of psychology students be different from the education of, say, students of machining? If so, then how should it be different? How should it be organized?

Unity of the methodological awareness context and the ethical awareness context

Let us start at the foundation, by pointing out that universities cultivate science, that they are, to invoke the title of the well-known book by our Nobel Prize-winner Czesław Miłosz, a “garden of knowledge.” And it will probably not be very innovative to emphasize that psychology is an empirical science. As a consequence of these reminders, we need to highlight the fact that universities are the most appropriate place for educating and forming future psychologists. Not all psychologists, however, especially not those pretending to be psychologists, are prepared to agree with the following idea:
Every practical activity undertaken by a psychologist makes sense (and has ethical value) only when it is founded on an empirically tested theory; in other words, every diagnostic method applied when formulating a psychological diagnosis and every psychotherapeutic method makes sense only when it is linked to a specific, empirically tested psychological theory.

In other words, the professional actions of psychologists depend directly on the state of research conducted by academic psychologists. Thus, you cannot be a “good psychologist” if you sever your ties to the theoretical and methodological achievements of psychology (understood as a science, and not an art or para-religion). One peculiarity of psychological practice (may I add: ethical psychological practice) is its unity with the research practice of psychology. When those ties and that unity is broken, when psychologists do not return to “their” university to update their professional competence, their activity undertaken in social practice becomes ineffective. I would even say: it becomes unethical – as I will try to show more clearly below. All that has been said here so far can be illustrated with three keywords: THEORY (scientific) – METHOD (drawn from scientific theory and made sensible by its framework) – PRACTICE (which invokes scientific theory and method).

Take the problem of depression as an example. To Aaron T. Beck we owe the empirically well tested cognitive theory of depression (THEORY), which makes sensible – on one hand – a diagnostic method: the BDI (METHOD), and on the other – a psychotherapeutic method: cognitive behavior therapy (PRACTICE).

The job of a psychologist is among the professions that are usually called “professions of public trust” (they are mentioned in the Constitution of Poland). The quality of its practice will not only depend directly on professional competence in a broad sense, as manifested by the psychologist solving a given practical problem, e.g. providing psychological help. The fact is, this “quality” is composed of several elements. Only looking at their mutual relations and the context of their mutual conditioning can give us an undeformed image of the psychologist’s activity. This is the activity we would be inclined to call ethical.

I would like to stress at this point that I understand the ethicality of psychologists’ professional activity – the activity for which a course in psychology should prepare them – much more broadly than is usual. In my view, ethical reflections should not be restricted only to all that goes on between the psychologist and his or her client in their direct relations. Of course this is very important, and we as university teachers (transferring scientific knowledge from different areas of psychology and developing practical skills) should, wherever possible, pay particular attention to respect for human rights, dignity and values.
Therefore we are right to be outraged – referring to the matter of a certain sex therapist, publicized a year or so ago (and still not resolved!) – at the way he molested clients who trusted him as a professional. However, what all of Poland saw in a TV program (something, I am guessing, that also had its “television” dimension – e.g. the way the man used his own special language that had no place in a therapy room) also had a hidden aspect that was very important from my point of view. This particular problem is a good illustration of how the principles of professional ethics could be (can be) violated, and from which moment this pathological process had already begun.

Hence, let us start from the very beginning, common to all sciences whose results are applied to effective solving of practical problems. And though it is of no consequence whether we consider achievements from chemical laboratories or psychological research rooms, in this case I would like to concentrate on a psychological illustration.

**The dialogue between social practice and research practice**

The dialogue between social practice and research practice, the latter giving the former scientific justification for satisfactory functioning, begins when we observe social practice’s visibly worse, even unsatisfactory functioning. For example, an excessively high percentage of teachers suffer from burnout syndrome or – another problem – medications used to treat depression are not effective enough. In the normal course of events, social practice addresses the sphere of research practice (science) and presents its specific need – according to Jerzy Kmita6 whose concepts I want to invoke here – for new results. Within a given scientific discipline (here: psychology), a response is prepared in the form of a new theory, or corrections to an existing theory, and a new method built on that theory. Thus, the objective maximized by researchers is to build theories leading to a more thorough explanation of the correlations occurring in a given area of social practice and to their increased predictive power. Needs encounter a specific state of social methodological awareness – for example the social methodological awareness of psychologists. It is this state that determines the quality of the response offered by the sphere of research practice7.

---

6 Cf. Kmita, 1976. The notion of methodological awareness in psychology has been expanded upon in the works of J. Brzeziński (2011) and Z. Spendel (2005).

7 “The need for a specific type of research result is always originally objective, while methodological awareness is a subjective representation of this need. If this is a sufficiently adequate representation, i.e. the research practice subjectively based on it is effective, it becomes the social, relatively lasting subjective context of this practice and exists as an independent ‘judge’ of subsequent research results for a substantial length of time” (cf. J. Kmita, 1976, p. 97).
In the same way, there is a connection between the state of social methodological awareness and the research practice carried out within a given scientific discipline. This research practice is carried out by individual researchers, each of them with a specific state of individual methodological awareness. Hence, individual methodological awareness is a specific concretization of ideal (social) methodological awareness – specific for individual researchers.

Subjective research practice that refers to a given state of social methodological awareness becomes the “social, relatively lasting objective context of this practice and exists as an independent ‘judge’ of subsequent research results for a substantial length of time” (Kmita, 1976). This continues until new needs emerge in social practice that research results obtained within the existing state of social methodological awareness fail to meet. The social methodological awareness of, say, psychologists, includes the research experience of generations of psychologists. Effective research procedures replace ones that have shown themselves to be lacking in effectiveness and to carry significant errors. As Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz noted (Ajdukiewicz, 1965):

“The standards of a scientific procedure’s correctness that are defined by methodology are not dictated to academic specialists. Methodology reads these standards from the practice of specialists, who approve of certain actions in scientific work and disapprove of others, rejecting them as unsuccessful. Evaluating their own and other people’s scientific conduct, however, specialists judge them in accordance with these standards, but are not sufficiently aware of them to realize this and express it explicitly. In other words, academic specialists have a scientific conscience developed through practice, but do not always realize what principles guide the voice of that conscience. Codifying the principles of this scientific conscience is the task of methodology” [emphasis mine].

Acting against the “scientific conscience” is a fundamental symptom of pathology in science. Well-known social psychologist and methodologist Robert

---

8 “Theoretical explanation of phenomena related to individual awareness always has to take place in terms of phenomena related to social awareness, though additional explanatory premises are usually essential. Moreover, even the description of a given set of individual beliefs can only be provided in terms that assume certain characteristics of the relevant set of beliefs from the sphere of social awareness: in terms of the differences separating the former set from its ideal social equivalent. ... Of course the possibility of individuals ‘producing’ significantly new ideas, i.e. the possibility of creative output in a broad sense, is based ... on the fact that the relationship between individual awareness and social awareness is regulated by ... the assumption of rationality – applied to particular individuals. This is exactly why various innovative individual ‘deformations’ of social awareness are possible, some of which later turn out to be creative in the (this time) narrower sense of the word: they respond sufficiently adequately to a newly emerged objective need, thanks to which they are transferred to the sphere of social awareness” (cf. J. Kmita, 1976, p. 20-22).
Rosenthal strongly highlighted the unethical nature of research practices that invoke methodologically flawed procedures:

“Obviously, research that is unsafe for participants is ethically questionable. However, I propose that perfectly safe research in which no participant will be put at risk may also be ethically questionable because of the shortcomings of the design. ... Poor quality of research design, poor quality of data analysis, and poor quality of reporting of the research all lessen the ethical justification of any type of research project” [emphasis mine].
(Source: Robert Rosenthal, 1994)

He also wrote that “bad science makes for bad ethics,” and it is hard not to agree.

In this sense, “therapeutic” procedures used by “specialists” who make use of shamanic practices (sometimes beneath a cleverly constructed pseudoscientific façade) have a bad methodological origin. A (methodologically) flawed piece of research yields results that may become the grounds for many different practical actions. Poorly justified usefulness of, for example, a new kind of psychotherapy could cause incalculable damage to the psyche of the clients subjected to it by a psychotherapist.

Let us emphasize: we can act unethically not only when we manipulate someone without their knowledge, when we exploit them against their will to fulfill our own (carefully concealed) goals, but we act unethically also when we disseminate research results obtained under conditions that diverge from the methodological standards approved by the research community and when those results are used to justify practical activity. Conducting research when we are not properly prepared will consequently lead to results burdened with (let us not be afraid to use these words) the factor of stupidity and incompetence. Breaking the rule of intersubjectivity (in the sense of Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz’s rationality principle) leads us astray. I fully agree with Rosenthal’s thoughts quoted earlier.

Also ethicist Włodzimierz Galewicz, in his sketch O etyce badań naukowych (On the Ethics of Scientific Research; Galewicz, 2009) writes that apart from honesty, researchers should be characterized by “care” and “conscientiousness.” Among other things, he writes that “... a researcher who offers an erroneous hypothesis can act dishonestly if he or she founds it on falsified data; but they can also do so as a result of carelessness, if they did not take care to search for data that could have overturned it or proven its falseness.”

Let us go back to the important theoretical construct of methodological awareness. It is presented schematically in Figure 1.
Let me begin with the momentous words of eminent biologist François Jacob, who said that “In the dialogue between theory and experience, theory always has the first word” (Jacob, 1973, p. 15). And one more momentous thought, this time from a sociologist, David Silverman (Silverman, 2001, p. 3): “Without a theory, such phenomena as ‘gender’, ‘personality’, ‘talk’ or ‘space’ cannot be understood by social science. In this sense, without a theory there is nothing to research” [emphasis mine].

Psychological theory (theory of the research object – TRO) is the basis, on one hand, for designing a given method (theory of operationalization of variables – TOV, and when a psychological test is involved the researcher additionally has to take into account the psychometric theory and theory of statistics, TS, related to the quantitative interpretation of test results), and on the other – for empirical research. Hypotheses are usually tested either in an experimental model or a correlational model. Thus, the researcher has to invoke another theory: theory of empirical research, TER. The experimental model corresponds to the statistical model of analysis of variance – the univariate ANOVA and the multivariate MANOVA. The correlational model, on the other hand, corresponds to the statistical model of multiple regression, MR. Finally, the obtained research result (RR) is
subject to interpretation in the language of the initial TRO and the same language is used for its **generalization** to specified populations and specified situations – as determined by the theory of generalization of the research result, TGRR.

Psychological research differs from the research conducted by, say, a physicist in that a psychologist designing empirical research and then carrying it out has to consider an extra factor that distorts the final research result: the **interaction occurring between the researcher and the subjects**. This interaction is the source of such confounding variables as the researcher’s interpersonal expectations, fear of judgment, instructions suggesting the research hypothesis etc. This interaction determines the **methodological peculiarity** of psychological research.

When the level of social methodological awareness is high, only those theories make it into normal scientific circulation that have been checked in controlled and replicable empirical research. The more a given research practice refers solely to the intuition and individual authority of a “specialist,” the more it is based on unverifiable convictions and the more “local” it is, the more doubtful a foundation it becomes for any psychological practice built upon it. And, it is all the more susceptible to various distortions (cf. footnote 17). Any doubts that arise are not just methodological but – perhaps first and foremost – ethical in nature. Such a pseudo-theory is sometimes used as scientific justification for charlatanic (I do not think this word is at all too strong) helping practices. The mushrooming network of private practices offering treatments whose “scientific” aspect refers to such “scientific achievements” as NLP, magic, shamanism, rebirthing, Hellinger’s systemic constellation methods, educational kinesiology, Szondi’s test, Tarot cards, and also the presence of such content in syllabuses, university textbooks and books popularizing psychology, leads to psychology being littered with pseudoscientific concepts so aptly described by Tomasz Witkowski, PhD, in his *Forbidden Psychology. Between Science and Charlatanry* (Witkowski, 2009) as “psycho-rubbish”. Unless we, as academic

---

9 If psychologists complied with this important requirement (which they do not), we would not have had the case, casting a shadow on our research procedures, of Diederik Stapel, a professor of psychology from Tilburg University who gained notoriety for being a “talented” fraudster who managed to lead astray even the editors of such reputed periodicals as *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and *Science*. This swindler specializing in social prejudices and stereotypes based his numerous papers on... completely fabricated results. This disgraceful incident would never have occurred if the editors of JPSP had not refused to publish a replication of Stapel’s “research.” If psychologists attached the same kind of importance to the replication of empirical studies – before publication – as their fellow scientists from the natural sciences (cf. Sun, Pan, Wang, 2010), the kind of compromising situation as described above could have been avoided. I agree with the critical remarks about psychologists offered by Jelte M. Wicherts (cf. Wicherts, 2011) when he commented upon those shocking events in Nature magazine: “To scientists in other fields, not sharing data may seem extraordinary; to psychologists it is sadly common practice” [emphasis mine].

psychologists precisely, oppose this invasion, psychology is in danger of dissolving in pseudo-philosophical and pseudoscientific babble (e.g. of the “intelligent design theory” variety).

Do we talk to our students about this often enough and strongly enough? Do we have a right to be surprised and shocked when, years later, these same students end up working in such practices as qualified psychologists? No. We carry the burden of responsibility for developing their ethical awareness. And this is a process that begins in the first year, in the Introduction to Psychology and History of Psychological Thought classes, when we expose the pseudoscientific character of various “psychological theories,” when we tell students that not all that has psychology in its name is psychology work sensu proprio, when we use means appropriate for a scientific discussion to reject all of that psychological “trash.” Even the best lectures on ethics (whether in the first or fifth year) cannot replace pointing out those dark places and our own original “master” comments. In this, the “direct” university based on the master-student relationship will always be better than an e-university or a cyber-university.

**Between two spheres – social practice and research practice**

Accepting the demand coming from the sphere of social practice, psychology “responds” with a new empirical theory (or a major correction to an existing one) which, as I mentioned earlier, first has to be empirically tested in order to be used as the foundation for a planned new (presumably more appropriate and reliable) diagnostic method and a new (presumably more effective) method of interaction that will be applied, for example, to people expecting psychological help. As I have shown schematically (see Figure 2), it has to pass through the first of three filters – the methodological filter. Its quality is determined by the state of methodological awareness – social and individual.

The resultant practical consequences – not necessarily derived by the theory’s author – in the form of assistance programs, for example, cannot be used immediately, either. They, too, have to pass through a filter to check, just as in the case of the candidate for a new theory (or major corrections to an old one), their appropriateness understood to mean effectiveness, i.e. achieving the planned practical goals – this is the praxiological filter.

However, despite high effectiveness (references to a strong theoretical foundation), we will not (should not) accept practices that violate the dignity of the person who is to be subjected to certain actions. We will not accept brainwashing techniques, despite their high effectiveness. An ethical problem also emerges –
Methodological and ethical awareness

again as a side-effect of psychological research (especially studies involving laboratory research “technologies” typical of neuroscience) – when we speak of “dual purpose research.”

Among other things, the Code of Professional Ethics for the Psychologist issued by the Polish Psychological Association states that:

“In the exercise of his profession, the psychologist must always respect these basic values, in particular the dignity of the human being, his integrity and autonomy and his right to unconstrained development. ... the psychologist must be aware of the consequences or possible future consequences of his actions, which should ultimately be to the benefit of the subjects of professional treatment.”
Similarly, our European code – devised as a kind of “supreme code” in relation to the codes of professional organizations of psychologists in European Union countries – states as follows (EFPPA, 1995):

“2. Ethical Principles
2.1. Respect for a Person’s Rights and Dignity
Psychologists accord appropriate respect to and promote the development of the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all people. They respect the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy consistent with the psychologist’s other professional obligations and with the law.

2.2. Competence
Psychologists strive to ensure and maintain high standards of competence in their work. They recognize the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitations of their expertise. They provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by education, training or experience.

2.3. Responsibility
Psychologists are aware of the professional and scientific responsibilities to their clients, to the community, and to the society in which they work and live. Psychologists avoid doing harm and are responsible for their own actions, and assure themselves, as far as possible, that their services are not misused.

2.4. Integrity
Psychologists seek to promote integrity in the science, teaching and practice of psychology. In these activities psychologists are honest, fair and respectful of others. They attempt to clarify for relevant parties the roles they are performing and to function appropriately in accordance with those roles” [emphasis mine].

How, then, let us ask, is it possible to reconcile a psychologist’s work for another person’s benefit, respect for that person’s integrity and autonomy on one hand, with, on the other, working for an institution that commissions research from the psychologist with the aim of achieving such “packaging” of goods and services that would maximize sales to specified social, age, professional, territorial categories? I don’t think it is possible to reconcile the agendas of advertising agencies that make use of specialist and very sophisticated knowledge from the fields of cognitive psychology, social psychology, psychology of emotions and motivation or neuroscience with the noble objectives of the work of psychologists as set down in codes of professional ethics. In particular, we should ask about the ethicality of psychologically grounded advertisements of various goods targeted
Methodological and ethical awareness

at children. If, by representing a public benefit profession as it were, psychologists are meant to serve people, then WHO are they serving when they design effective advertising – meaning advertising that enslaves its audience? Psychologists working at advertising agencies, in the special services, in human resources management at large corporations – this is something on the borderline of ethical acceptability (or has this line already been crossed?). In the above-mentioned and similar cases, a third filter must come into play – the ethical filter. In a sense, it is already built into the methodological filter (it cannot be extracted from it in its pure form).

Apart from the normal circulation of information between the two spheres: social practice and research practice, taking into account the three aforementioned filters, there also exists its pathological form. This involves bypassing one, two or all three positive filters, or introducing another, fourth and negative filter: the ideological filter.

Bypassing a filter, avoiding what can be a time-consuming, arduous and costly complete sequence of control measures and taking a shortcut instead, has to lead to ethical abuse. Perhaps the widely publicized “sex therapy” mentioned earlier to illustrate my point would never have occurred if it had been passed through all three filters.

On the other hand, an ideological filter (especially in totalitarian systems) blocks the normal circulation of information in a society that is held captive by totalitarian government.

A good example here, one that causes young students to smile today, is the condemnation of psychological tests in the first half of the 1950s, when applying them but also teaching about them was forbidden in Poland (following the Soviet model, where using them in psychological and teaching practice had been banned in the 1930s). It was at the 2nd National Conference of Teachers and Psychologists held in 1951 that the keynote lecture of Tadeusz Tomaszewski (Tomaszewski, 1952) made approving reference to the decree of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of 1936, according to which psychological tests were harmful because they fulfilled the role of “tools of strengthening class and racial oppression.” And further along:

“The test method has certain significant and inherent qualities that enable it to be quite successfully used to accomplish the social function of bourgeois psychology, but cannot be useful when solving problems of socialist psychology. The important qualities of the test method consist in the fact that it has the semblance of special scientific accuracy while at the same time being based on fiction, on a completely false image of reality. These features ensured its huge popularity in the times of imperialism because many scholars succumbing to the appearance of scientific accuracy failed to notice the falsity behind it, from
which someone else gained benefits. The latter of these features renders this method completely useless under socialism”. (Tomaszewski, 1952, p. 17-18)

The consequences? Up to 1956, only 17 papers were published on problems of psychological research methods and 12 on psychological tests (including 2 on the Wechsler scale and the Stanford-Binet scale). A breakthrough came in 1959 when, after years of being banned, issue 3 of Przegląd Psychologiczny was published (issue 1 had been published in 1952) with the famous paper by Mieczysław Chojnowski, “Elementy teorii testów psychologicznych” (“Elements of the theory of psychological tests”). It was a watershed for Polish psychometry and diagnostic practice invoking the “bourgeois” test method. As a psychology student at Adam Mickiewicz University in 1967-1972, I had Chojnowski’s paper practically committed to memory, but that is history and material for a different “story.”

If I were to summarize what has been written above, I would emphasize the primacy of the ethical context over the other two contexts: (scientific) research and (psychological) practice. In this sense, the professional functioning of our graduates (I have focused on psychology, but I’m sure these conclusions can be applied to graduates of other courses), the social practice, will be whatever their ethics is. Meanwhile, the ethicality of psychological practice, as I have tried to show, is derived from the methodological awareness of psychologists. The fact is, “bad” (according to Rosenthal) or “careless” (according to Galewicz) research practice shapes bad ethics.

Different codes of ethics developed by psychological associations draw psychologists’ attention to a comprehensive approach to both their scientific research and the practical (diagnostic, expert, teaching, therapeutic) activities they undertake. Good examples include the aforementioned code of the EFPPA and the code issued by the American Psychological Association (2002).

Besides high standards of research work and practical work with other people, psychologists are expected to act according to four fundamental principles (mentioned by probably all the codes of ethics): (a) the principle of informed consent, (b) the principle of confidentiality, (c) the principle of anonymity, (d) the principle of privacy. I don’t think they need to be discussed here (Brzeziński et al., 2009). They apply both to research and to working with people to whom the psychologists provide professional services (consulting, expert opinions, diagnosis, therapy).

Of the four fundamental principles of Meta-Code of Ethics. (cf. p. 13), I would like to focus on principle number 3: responsibility. Again, I would like to go back to that sex therapist and his behavior which shocked public opinion so much. Obviously, his conduct violated this principle. From this principle we can draw the imperative of taking care to ensure a high standard of research as the foundation for an equally high standard of psychological practice.
What should we do? – recommendations

All that I have written so far translates into our conduct as university teachers of psychological studies, starting from our very first meeting with students. I see this translation as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. THEORIES</th>
<th>→ Transfer of knowledge on psychology theories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II. METHODS</td>
<td>→ Developing skills in making use of scientific knowledge and methods for the purpose of conducting research and diagnostic studies and providing psychological help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PRACTICE</td>
<td>→ Preparing students to apply theories and methods in order to solve practical problems and developing their social skills and ethical sensitivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The kind of teaching program outlined above “bursts” the framework of the “Bologna system” (3 years for a BA + 2 years concluding with an MA). I think, and I am not the only one, that you cannot train a good psychologist (also one who acts ethically) in this system. Luckily, so far in Poland you can still only study psychology in the system of a uniform five-year master’s course. I find it hard to understand why we would have students study for 3 years to be professionals (completing this first level would entitle them to practice a profession – only what would it be? Certainly not a psychologist because the law only allows people with an MA to practice this profession). After another 2 years they would obtain qualifications needed to conduct research.

These are false premises. In the present paper I have tried to show that to be a good and responsible psychologist, you first need to master the theoretical and methodological foundations of this discipline and then use them to build an effective (also: ethical) practice. For things to be rational and good, there is no other way. You cannot put the cart before the horse.

11 Cf. the June 8, 2001 law on the profession of psychologist and the professional self-governing body of psychologists (Journal of Laws, July 18, 2001 No. 73 item 763); the Dec. 21, 2001 law amending the law on the profession of psychologist and the professional self-governing body of psychologists and the law amending the law on traffic (Journal of Laws, Dec. 29, 2001 No. 154 item 1798).