

Abstract

The dissertation is an interdisciplinary study of a systematic-historical nature and is devoted to the complex relationship between psychology, as a relatively young discipline of knowledge, and the metaphysical foundations of modern science. The main thesis is that psychology is burdened with a certain antinomy which is very difficult or even impossible to avoid. The closer psychology comes to being a science – as in the case of classical behaviorism – the less it is able to describe and explain the mind, and conversely, the more fully it describes and explains the mind, the less it resembles a science. The dissertation intends to demonstrate that the root cause of this lies in the radical shift in worldview instigated by the pioneers of modern science, which involved the rejection of an earlier philosophy of the world based on a strict correspondence between mind and nature. This rejection resulted in the fact that science became fundamentally mechanistic and consequently excluded intention and the final or purposeful causes from among the categories relevant to explaining nature. At the same time the inability to use the categories of intention and purposefulness makes it impossible to describe the mind, and therefore to practice what is called psychology. This thesis, which is guiding the dissertation, can also be put in the way that the fundamental recommendation to eliminate the mind (and mental categories) from the natural world, makes it impossible to simultaneously treat the mind as an object of science. In order to demonstrate the validity of this thesis, the dissertation carries out a historical study of the scientific worldview starting from ancient atomism, through the Renaissance (when this atomism was resurrected), the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century (when the modern science was born), and the so-called Radical Enlightenment, which solidified the metaphysics of modern science. In addition to Descartes, who was a key figure of the 17th century revolution and the thinker who made the greatest contribution to separating matters of mind and nature, the discussion also encompasses other scholars, particularly those affiliated with medicine, physiology, and early biology, who significantly influenced the transformation of the relationship between humans and the world, such that the human entity and the world effectively exchanged roles, and consequently, the former began to be explicated in terms of the latter, rather than vice versa, as had been the prevailing paradigm until then. The second part of the dissertation focuses especially on materialist ideas, which were closely linked to the development of science since the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment. The new physiocentric (as opposed to anthropocentric) perspective on the world is represented here in particular by the French radical philosopher Julien Offray de La Mettrie, who, in addition to having a significant influence on psychology,

was also one of the most progressive pioneers of evolutionism. The dissertation also analyzes the ideas of such thinkers as Michel de Montaigne, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hartley, Joseph Priestley and Denis Diderot, and culminates in showing the implications of the physiocentric philosophy they developed for modern psychology.