

## Edward Taylor – Outstanding Economist and Educator<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of this article is to reflect on the phenomenon of creativity, activity, output, extensive knowledge and interests of the Polish Scot, Edward Taylor – an outstanding economist and educator in the 20th century. I wish to draw attention to where his contribution was seen as the greatest and to the challenges that he indicated, particularly in the field of the theory and practice of economics. The aim is also to establish what thoughts of his have stood the test of time, which thoughts and convictions of his are still important and valid today, which may be an inspiration for contemporary Polish scientists, educators, students, and a wide range of readers who are interested in problematic economics, management, and political science issues.

A brief description of the scientific output of professor E. Taylor is presented, as well as his opinions on the subject of the Polish economy and academic teaching, along with his non-professional interests, passions of life and interest in all facets of life.

He could have been included in the liberal school of thought; in terms of a wide range of issues, his views were confluent with those of the most outstanding representatives of the Austrian School of Economics, albeit he didn't belong to it.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The following research techniques were used in the article: comparative analysis of literature (not only economic), deduction, induction, synthesis.

**Originality/value:** Relatively original content: liberal thought in interwar Poland struggled to break through totalitarian ideologies, which had some supporters here, and also through nationalism and clericalism. After nearly a hundred years, at the turn of the second and third decades of the 21st century, things were generally similar. The reason for this is mainly the economic infantilism of a large part of society, susceptible to populist demagoguery and the giving away of money by the current power. Teaching economics is objectively difficult for a variety of reasons. And then and now it does not generally produce good results. It means negative social and political consequences. Taylor's diagnosis and counteractions were correct. They are worth getting to know better and continuing.

**Findings:** The article shows the versatility of Taylor, who was not only an outstanding economist, educator, organizer of science, publisher and editor of a long scientific series, but also a man deeply involved in many different fields. He was a co-founder of the Polish Economic Society. He was a reformer of the Polish treasury. He fought against inflation and supported the development of the maritime economy. He

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was strongly involved in the development of cooperatives and territorial self-government. In each of these areas, he brought new ideas, values and solutions. His phenomenal interdisciplinarity and activity is shown.

**The values:** promoted by Taylor are worth promoting today. They are: knowledge, truth, independent thinking, responsibility, creativity, patriotism, commitment.

**Keywords:** professor Edward Taylor, outstanding Polish economists, Poznań Economics University, Austrian School of Economics, liberalism.

**JEL:** A12, A20, O10, O11, P16

## Edward Taylor – wybitny ekonomista i dydaktyk

### Abstrakt

**Cel:** refleksja nad fenomenem kreatywności, aktywności, osiągniętych wyników, rozległości wiedzy i zainteresowań polskiego Szkota Edwarda Taylora – wybitnego dwudziestowiecznego ekonomisty i dydaktyka. Uwagę zwrócono na obszary, gdzie jego wkład jest najważniejszy, na wyzwania, które wskazywał i podejmował – szczególnie w zakresie teorii i praktyki ekonomii oraz dydaktyki. Celem jest również ogląd aktualności myśli, przekonań i pragmatyk ich wagi i inspiracji dla współczesnych naukowców, dydaktyków, studentów oraz ogółu ludzi zainteresowanych ekonomią. Interesujące są nie tylko jego naukowe przekonania i dokonania, lecz także poglądy na tematy stanu międzywojennej polskiej ekonomii i akademickiego nauczania; działania związane z praktyką gospodarczą w okresie międzywojennym. W artykule ukazano jego pasje pozazawodowe i fascynacje życiem jako takim.

**Techniki badawcze:** analiza porównawcza literatury (nie tylko ekonomicznej), dedukcji, indukcji, syntezy.

**Treści oryginalne:** myśl liberalna w Polsce międzywojennej z trudem się przebijała przez mające swoich zwolenników ideologie totalitarne czy nacjonalizm i klerykałizm, tu i ówdzie faszyzujący. Po blisko stu latach, na przełomie drugiej i trzeciej dekady XXI wieku, mamy do czynienia z podobną sytuacją, której istotną przyczyną jest infantyizm ekonomiczny znacznej części społeczeństwa, podatnego na populistyczną demagogię i rozdawnictwo pieniędzy na rzecz dużych grup wyborców. Nauczanie ekonomii jest obiektywnie trudne, z różnych powodów. I wtedy i teraz nie daje na ogół dobrych rezultatów, co rodzi złe skutki społeczne i polityczne. Diagnoza i sposoby przeciwdziałania Taylora były właściwe. Warto je poznać bliżej i kontynuować.

**Wyniki:** artykuł pokazuje wszechstronność Taylora, nie tylko wybitnego ekonomisty, dydaktyka, organizatora nauki, wydawcy i redaktora naczelnego długiej serii naukowych publikacji ekonomicznych, lecz także człowieka głęboko zaangażowanego i aktywnego na wielu polach (współzałożyciela Polskiego Towarzystwa Ekonomicznego, reformatora polskiej skarbowości, zwalczającego inflację, wspierającego gospodarkę morską i rozwijającego spółdzielczość, aktywnego działacza w zakresie samorządności terytorialnej; kreatora nowych idei, wartości i rozwiązań). Artykuł pokazuje jego wyjątkową interdyscyplinarność i aktywność.

**Wartości:** promowane przez Taylora, tj. wiedza, prawda, niezależne myślenie, odpowiedzialność, kreatywność, patriotyzm, zaangażowanie, są godne upowszechniania także dzisiaj.

**Słowa kluczowe:** profesor Edward Taylor, wybitni polscy ekonomiści, Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu, austriacka szkoła ekonomiczna.

## 1. Introduction

Edward Taylor (1884–1964) was one of the most outstanding Polish economists and a supporter and propagator of the classical and liberal trends in economics. He was a creator and leading representative of the Poznań School of Economics and the publishing house of Poznań Economic Works, which spread economic science and knowledge actively and successfully in Poland in the period between the wars. This extraordinarily active man of real renaissance interests was first and foremost a brilliant scientist, organizer and promoter of scientific life, and a distinguished educator and supervisor of a multitude of MA and PhD students. He translated the works of a wide range of worldwide economists into the Polish language, thus reducing the gap which existed in this area.

As he was educated in the fields of both economics and law, he combined both of these fields in theory and in practice. He was an expert in the field of financial matters and cooperative activity (he was the first to create this into a field of science in Poland). His knowledge served a multitude of institutes in Poland between the wars: among others, the State Financial and Economic Council, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Poznań, the Educational Authority of the Academy of Trade in Poznań. Following World War Two, he was a member of the Scientific Council of the Regained Territories, the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Finance and the Scientific Council of the Maritime Institute in Gdynia (Knakiewicz, 2018, p. 11). However, when Stalinist course in post-war Poland began to strengthen, he was forced – as a democrat and liberal by convictions – to retire at the age of 65. Professors in Poland usually work longer, if their health allow them.

The number of scientific publications of the professor is impressive, which encompasses over 300 works, which related to those times in Poland and partly the current times also, in terms of the problems of science and economic policies. Likewise, he was involved in propagating economic knowledge in society by means of numerous articles that were also published in the press on a daily basis.

He was a man of integrity who was blessed with intuition. Being from a family home of patriotic traditions, he displayed respect for traditional values. Following World War Two, in times of the overwhelming impact of Marxism, he wrote that *Marxism seems to already be an antiquated intellectual and ideological system that is bereft of values and charm for the future* (Taylor, 1991, volume 3 – published 27 years after his death).

Although he was very hardworking, his professional work did not fill up his entire life. In his own words, it was life itself and people that interested him most. He liked music, went to symphonic concerts, while playing the piano himself. Aside from that, he was also interested in history and genealogy. He claimed that the answers to a multitude of historical and

sociological questions may be found by simply following the genealogy and histories of families. In fact, he was even of the opinion that there were few more passionate activities than studying the “way of social promotion and fall of families” (Taylor, 2008, pp. 68–69).

Indeed, he was an attentive observer and provided accurate syntheses. He was very critical of himself and his own works, while also being a demanding educator and examiner who preferred oral examinations and required thinking and the perception of problems from his students. In spite of all of this, or perhaps for that reason, he enjoyed respect among his students and listeners and was generally speaking liked and acknowledged to be fair. The high level of requirements led to a certain positive selection of students and PhD students. In his own words, “Those who wanted to work signed up for my seminars. I did not tolerate shirking work and shallowness, nor negligence in a Master’s or PhD thesis. Honesty and conscientiousness require character, which are only displayed by people at the appropriate moral level” (Taylor, 2008, p. 102).

An authentic relation of master and pupil was formed between the professor and his students and PhD students. He also met multiple students after studies at common periodical and rather spontaneously organized seminars (also in restaurants) in Poznań and other cities where the current economic problems and situations in the country were discussed, while also important information was presented and commented on, whereby somebody usually presented a paper on the topic that had been previously agreed on. These must have been meetings that were pleasant, successful and somewhat necessary as people wanted to be with their mentor (and with each other) even scores of years after completing studies or graduating with a PhD degree. These meetings confirmed the theory that this was a man of charisma who enriched people. Few professors find the time today, nor have the desire for such long-lasting ties that are time-consuming and emotional.

Edward Taylor is an honour to all Polish people, particularly in the case of people of Kielce, Lviv, Cracow and Poznań – with regard to his closer and longer ties with the aforesaid cities. The most significant connection was with Poznań, where he lived and worked in a scientific capacity for the longest period of time. The memory of the professor is still vivid and also visible in a symbolic sphere: the largest aula in the University of Poznań is named after Edward Taylor, as a stately monument to him stands at the entrance to the university, while one of the streets of Poznań, as well as Kielce, bears his name.

## 2. Origin, Adolescence, Studies

Marcin Tomczak puts forward the following question: Where did the lineage of a foreign sounding surname of ‘Taylor’ in Poland come from?

In his response, he says: In determining this issue, Edward Taylor himself provided the answer when in 1933 he wrote and published the “History of the Taylor family in Poland”. The surname Taylor (‘tailor’ in Middle English) occurs very frequently in all the classes of people in England and among the Saxons of the Scottish lowlands. His family derives from Jan Taylor, whose ancestors emigrated from Scotland to Poland. Jan Taylor became an inhabitant of Cracow and dealt with trade. He lived in Poland in the years 1677–1686 and 1689–1716. The son of Jan, Robert, became a professional soldier (in the rank of captain) in the Polish army and his grandson (Robert too) even received the rank of general-major. The fact that this Scottish family became so assimilated with the Polish environment and brought brave Polish patriots who were involved in military and community activities into this world may be surprising, which was particularly certified by the lifetimes of the great-grandfather, grandfather and father of Edward Taylor (Knakiewicz, 2008; Tomczak, 2015).

Edward Taylor was born in Kielce in 1884. This region was then a part of Russia. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Poland lost its independence – for up to 123 years – and was divided between the three strong and aggressive neighbours at that time: Russia, Prussia and Austria. Later, several generations of Poles tried to regain the independence of the country, also fighting for it in armed uprisings, which, however, ended in disasters and repressions.

When Taylor was already in middle school in Kielce at the age of 15, he claimed that work towards regaining independence had become for him a programme of life, which made him particularly sensitive to social issues and the associated economic issues. Even then he realised that their inappropriate ranking and solution were the cause of the fall of Poland. In this atmosphere, more sub-conscious reactions and impulses than the reasoned views matured (Tomczak, 2015)<sup>2</sup>.

Two secret organizations functioned in the middle school of Kielce: socialist and nationalist. He chose the nationalist one as the socialist one struck him as being cosmopolitanism, an ideology based on the fight of classes and dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat was in glaring conflict with the ideas of democracy, which were dear to him. He perceived the nation in terms of all its classes, not only the proletariat. The nationalistic orientation was more acceptable to him than a class orientation. The ties of Taylor with the National Democracy party turned out to be long-lasting – which to a significant extent was a result of his friendship with Roman Dmowski – the leader of this party.

In his youth, he was attracted to both economics as well as chemistry, philosophy and law. At that time, his wide range of interests hindered his choice of studies.

His attraction to chemistry dated back to the sixth class of middle school when he organized chemistry laboratory lessons and devoted a lot of time to chemical experiments. After obtaining his leaving certificate in 1903, he

left for Cracow, which then belonged to Austria. He did not wish to stay in the “deeply captivating” Russian sector, and there was a little more freedom in the Austrian sector. In Cracow, Edward Taylor commenced studies at the Jagiellonian University in the fields of philosophy and chemistry simultaneously. Nevertheless, the manner of conducting lectures in the course of philosophy disappointed him, while a serious study of chemistry was hindered by his weak familiarity with mathematics and physics (the school of Kielce that he graduated from had a linguistic profile). At the insistence of his cousin, he commenced law studies, which he graduated from with a PhD degree in 1909 and which did not require a dissertation at that time. The Austrian monarchy was the only one in Europe in which a student of law also had to participate in lectures and pass exams in economics, which became very useful for him later.

After completing his studies, he decided to engage in practical activities. He left for Lviv and commenced work in the Office of the Patronage of the Savings and Loans Firms in the modest capacity of *concept apprentice (office clerk)*, where he was employed by Franciszek Stefczyk – the founder of the rapidly developing savings and loans associations in Galicia. Zenobia Knakiewicz supposes that E. Taylor chose cooperative activity as it was the most independent of the invaders, while also facilitating a relatively fast perception of economic activity. Furthermore, by promoting it (and small firms), it was possible to help Polish society in terms of economic and civilizational development (Knakiewicz, 2008).

Later Taylor mentioned that his encounter with economic life gave him a lot, as it first and foremost *enabled him to understand the course of economic phenomena*. Franciszek Stefczyk quickly became aware of the possibilities of his new employee and placed a big burden of duties on him and used him for *various special work duties*. In 1910, the National Division of this office sent him on a *scientific trip* to Germany and Belgium for three weeks with relation to the preparation of a bill on the *formation of craft and small industry*, in order to avail of the good role models and collect opinions. His report was later an *appendix to the appropriate draft of a [Polish] bill*. As he mentioned himself, at that time he read a lot; apart from vast literary sources relating to cooperative activity, he also read Alfred Marshall, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, Polish professors from John Casimir University in Lviv – Leon Biliński and Stanisław Głabiński (Taylor, 2008, pp. 44–45).

In 1911, he left for Cracow, where he took the position of the head of the Branch Office of the Patronage. He established and conducted a novel Scientific Course of Cooperative Activity. He witnessed the First World War in Lviv, where he was transferred in 1913. In his own words, he had a lot of time which he used to learn English and prepare his post-doctoral dissertation on the *Notion of Cooperative Activity*. He received this title in 1917 at the age of 33. Directly after that, he commenced lectures at the

Jagiellonian University in Cracow as a junior professor in the subject “Statics and dynamics of change in economics” (this is the title of the book which he claimed himself to be his best). However, not many people went to his lectures; clearly, the name of the subject was not appealing.

### 3. Poznań Long Period

In 1919, Edward Taylor moved to Poznań with his family and commenced work in *Wszecznica Piastowska* (Piast University), which was changed to the University of Poznań a year later. He took the position of associate professor of economics and financial matters of the Faculty of Law and Economic Science. Prof. Taylor was soon entrusted with the position of director of the economic section, which was the only one of its kind in Polish universities in the period between the wars. As stated by J. Małecki (2017), during the whole period of 20 years between the wars he conducted economic seminars, while also being the creator of the original concept of the Economic Study Centre – law studies were run within its framework. The aim of the Study Centre was to educate personnel to be fully prepared for the needs of the economic life of the country, in which the studies were of an elite nature. E. Taylor was also the initiator of the publishing series “Poznań Economic Works”, within the framework of which the works of the graduates of the Study Centre were published, among others (Małecki, 2017) [as well as almost 30 PhD and post-doctoral dissertations and several works of the professor himself]. It is necessary to add that E. Taylor was very proud of this publishing house.

The scientific interests of the professor to a significant degree concentrated around three areas. The first of these related to cooperative activity, including savings and loan associations, which is connected with his first professional work in Galicia. He became interested in cooperative activity the earliest, as this occurred during his period spent in Galicia (Lviv, Cracow), and dealt with this issue until practically the end of his professional activity. The second area was financial issues. The most important works were, among others, his contribution to the *Treasury Law of the Republic of Poland* (Poznań, 1920); *Polish Inflation* (Poznań, 1926); *Finanzpolitik und Steuersystem der Republik Polen* (Jena, 1928); *Treasury policies and the tax system of the Republic of Poland* (Poznań, 1929).

The third area was that of macro-economic work. It is particularly worth mentioning the two-volume work entitled *Introduction to economics* and the three-volume work entitled *Introduction to economics*.

Great merit is attributed to professor Taylor for the translation of a wide range of worldwide economic literary works into Polish. He translated the following great works, among others:

- E. Cannan, *Wealth. Brief lecture on the causes of economic prosperity together with a supplement about money*, Poznań 1921;



- Ch. Gide, *Principles of political economics*, Poznań 1922;
- G. Stigler, *Price theory*, Poznań 1959.

The professor also amassed the largest collection of economic works in Poland alongside the Warsaw School of Economics.

The professor spent the interwar period mainly in Poznań. It was also a time of his great commitment to the creation and development of Polish statehood. Poland regained its independence at the end of the First World War, in which all three powers (Russia, Prussia, Austro-Hungarian monarchy) that were destroying Poland for as many as 123 years, collapsed (I mentioned it before). It was necessary to undertake the work of consolidating the country torn into three parts, creating state institutions, rebuilding, educating, and making up for the lost time. Professor Taylor was very active in this field, too. He participated in the work of many state and economic institutions – for example, the State Finance and Economic Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Poznań. He also worked for the city of Gdynia – both before the war (together with Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski) and after the war.

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The political views which E. Taylor openly expressed and his “politically incorrect statements” led to his retirement (on 1 November 1949). His innovative organizational initiatives were not continued and his works became inaccessible for the users of scientific and public libraries. It was necessary to have a special permission to be able to read them (only for scientific purposes by trusted researchers). This was justified by his “reactionary and backward views.”

He received a paltry pension of only PLN 450 (the average remuneration in Poland in 1950 was low and only amounted to PLN 551). He returned to science and didactics for four years after a partial political thaw in 1956. Nevertheless, he could not continue his most important initiatives from the period between the wars that were associated with the interdisciplinary approach, nor a publication series on the freedom of expressing opinions relating to economic issues, not to mention political issues.

Professor Taylor was associated with the Poznań University in 1919–1949 and later in 1956–1960.

#### 4. Orientation and Views

Professor Edward Taylor represented liberal economics, while simultaneously his views were clearly expressed by the prestigious and influential Austrian School of Economics. He particularly appreciated the works of A. Smith, D. Ricardo, J.B. Say, J.S. Mill and A. Marshall. There were also certain shared views with contemporary L. Mises (1881–1973) and slightly



younger F. Hayek (1899–1992), as well as the earlier representatives of the Austrian School of Economics – Eugen von Böhm, Friedrich von Wiesner, Ludwig von Mises.

Taylor tried to follow the progress of the worldwide economies, which was so fast between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that he felt this to be a problem. Although he wrote that he belonged to a small group of Polish economists who were successful, he reproached himself for reading mainly books and neglecting worldwide scientific magazines where this progress was more quickly described and where the friction between various views and scientific deliberation and also the evolution of science were more visible. Generally speaking, he acknowledged the Polish economy to be behind the world by about 10–20 years, and even 30 years in the case of some areas (Taylor, 2008, p. 38). He shared the aforementioned economists' affirmative approach to the market economy and freedom – in economic terms and all other dimensions. He was greatly interested in the theory of money, prices, business cycles, inflation and economic policies. With regard to state interventionism, Taylor was not so critical as Mises and Hayek, albeit he shared their disapproval of an omnipotent state, convictions of a utopian communism (all three used the term “socialism”) and the inability of rational functioning of the planned economy.

Central planning is (in those economists' opinion) technically unworkable mainly due to the fact that the central planner is unable to define what quantity of goods should be produced in order for supply to meet demand. It is unable to do so as it cannot collect the necessary knowledge of the needs of consumers. This is done incomparably better by millions of entrepreneurs and their co-workers who not only know the market better than the state officials but also have significantly stronger motivation to become more familiar with the needs of citizens – clients. Good familiarity with these needs is their “to be or not to be”.

Opposition to centralization, the strengthening of the role of the state and a centrally planned economy were also voiced in the superiority of *spontaneous order over purposeful order*. Spontaneous order ensures a market economy, but not “strong” and omnipotent state authorities. Spontaneous order and thus the market economy is the result of human activity and not a human project. As stated by R.G. Holcombe, *the very suggestive phrase “the result of human activity and not a human project” was coined by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish philosopher Adam Ferguson and was popularized by Hayek in the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Holcombe, p. 18). Spontaneous order was termed by Adam Smith in a metaphoric way as an *invisible hand*. Not the *invisible hand of the market*, as someone later called it, but an invisible hand. Spontaneous order ensures optimization and the best results.

*Purposeful order*, which may be termed better as *voluntary order*, which is an artificial order, volitional and of the nature of “manual control”. In economics and management, this gives incomparably worse results with

regard to flexibility and speed of adjustment, and also efficiency and general rationality.

Spontaneous order may be observed in multiple social activities, both within the framework of economic phenomena and outside of it. Who invented language?– asked Holcombe. Nobody, aside from Esperanto, which (unfortunately) did not take off. Language was formed and has evolved spontaneously for a very long time and indeed this process is still continuing. Nobody thought up money, shares, etc. – they were the effect of spontaneous order. The market, fashion, art, literature, customs and thousands of other things are formed in the process of *spontaneous order*. When a state or any other authority attempts to shape and regulate, nothing good comes of this.

Last but not least, the argument against central planning and the excessive activity of the state is that it creates a totalitarian system. In such a system, the state deprives entrepreneurs of the freedom of activity by imposing what is to be produced and in what quantities, while simultaneously entrepreneurs are limited to the role of state functionaries executing orders from the state authorities. The omnipotent state not only defines the programme of economic activity in a significantly worse manner than entrepreneurs who are free to make their own decisions but also accumulates excessive power. This thought was articulated much more clearly by Mises and Hayek than Taylor, but they also had more time for this.

All three acknowledged that the private ownership of the means of production signified higher efficiency than state ownership. This was most strongly formulated by Mises: *either private ownership of the means of production, or hunger and poverty for everyone* (Mises, 2017), which is confirmed by the reality of the last two “socialist” states – North Korea and Cuba.

All three exposed the myth of the alleged superiority of the proletariat (this is rather the past) and “simple people” (this myth is still valid) over other social groups/classes. In this case, Mises also defines it in the most accurate way: *Faith in a simple man is equally unjustifiable as faith in the supernatural abilities of kings, clerics and nobles* (Mises, 2007). Taylor did not accept Marxist terminology at all, such as class war, proletariat and proletarian, dictatorship of the proletariat, nor the conviction of the moral superiority of proletarians or other “simple people”, but rather deemed that the Marxist ideology disintegrates and demoralizes society.

It is no coincidence that I am listing Taylor, Mises and Hayek together as I am of the opinion that in spite of certain natural differences, all three spoke out on a multitude of key issues in a similar manner, while the insightfulness of their views was thanks to not only their outstanding intellectuality, knowledge and personal experience with totalitarianism, but also their interdisciplinarity. They were not only economists, but also lawyers, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists and philosophers – perhaps not in a formal sense, yet this was thanks to their own interests, the merits of their mentors and self-education. From a formal viewpoint, it looks most

impressive in the case of Hayek, who studied law, economics, psychology and political science at the University of Vienna, and received his PhD titles in law and political science.

Edward Taylor owed a great debt to professor Włodzimierz Czerkowski – probably the first representative of the psychological school in economics in Poland. The development of Hayek was greatly influenced by Mises, while Mises in turn was greatly influenced by Carl Menger and Friedrich von Wiesner. All of these people were associated with the Austrian School of Economics, whose icons were Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek, alongside older Carl Menger (the initiator of the school) and Eugen Böhm-Bawerk.

Taylor, Mises and Hayek were polyglots. Incidentally, Taylor, who lamented over the low level of Polish economics, felt that the cause of this state of affairs was a low level of familiarity with foreign languages among Polish economists. Edward Taylor knew the following languages: German, Russian, French, English and Italian, albeit he was not entirely satisfied with his level of English, while his knowledge of Italian was rather weak.

As it would seem, professor Edward Taylor had the predisposition to exist as an outstanding economist on a European and world scale. The fact that he did not make such a career was the effect of the oblivion from the territorial divisions that functioned in a country that was peripheral, yet resurgent in the period between the wars. Following the Second World War, a “lunar economy” was implemented in Poland, which, generally speaking, was not conducive to the interest of Polish economists worldwide. Moreover, the professor was reluctant to “make a career” and did not seek attention. Nevertheless, in his *Memoirs* he wrote several times that he “made a mistake not continuing his studies abroad” after completing his PhD degree, which would have enabled him to gain more thorough knowledge and create closer ties with the world of science and scientists.

## 5. Evaluation of Level of Education

Taylor wrote in very critical terms about the level of education at higher level colleges at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and stated that he gained more knowledge as a self-learner than from colleges and their educators. “I learnt very little at the Jagiellonian University (...). Those of us who attended the Austrian, Russian and even German universities during the period of territorial divisions of Poland were not looked after. We had to acquire everything ourselves (...). The professor was at that time a distant, venerable master of life and death, who was only seen at lectures. There were no scientific assistants at the Faculty of Law in the Jagiellonian University [where Taylor also studied economics]. The contact with the professor was therefore weak. He was usually only available to the brightest students who had scientific aspirations.”

He probably only spoke well of professor Jan Wróblewski, who conducted a seminar on Roman law at the Jagiellonian University and relatively well of professor Włodzimierz Czerkawski, who lectured on economics and conducted a seminar in this field. Attendance at the seminars was not compulsory, thus they were most frequently empty.

Taylor evaluated the level of education and interest shown by professors towards students after Poland regained its independence much better. However, he remained critical as far as reading literature by students was concerned, including prescribed reading: “I must add that the students of mine and my colleagues usually did not want to do anything more for examinations such as scripts or recommended handbooks (...). For examination purposes, [only] summaries of recommended books were in circulation” (Taylor, 2008, pp. 41–42).

## 6. Validity of Message

Edward Taylor had liberal views – while emphasizing the freedom theme of these words. This referred to both economic freedom and national freedom, which he expressed as a pupil and by belonging to school organizations geared towards the independence of Poland.

He did not accept centralization and “manual control”, nationalization, the myth of the alleged moral superiority of a simple man. He did not accept the reversal of the social hierarchy, so characteristic of totalitarian systems, nor did he accept the antagonization of one social group over another. He felt that cooperation and harmonization are essential and not conflicts – for sure not arousing or strengthening them. As in contemporary Poland there has been a reversal of liberal democracy and state law by the ruling party, along with the pursuit of populism and authoritarian government, the warnings of the professor have once again become valid.

Edward Taylor as a lawyer and as a *statesman* who actively participated in the process of building the institutions of the modern state in the period between the wars, by building and not destroying, would certainly not be pleased with the dismantling and destruction of the authority of a range of state and public institutions as we may observe today. He would be most displeased by the appropriation of the state by one political party with a populist and undemocratic programme in a rather intolerant country, which he experienced in PRL (the Polish People’s Republic), where he was harassed. Likewise, he would also not be pleased with the rebuilding of the “lunar economy” – even if the accusation of restitution of socialism would not be justified today. The national tones today could be close to him as he himself displayed affection towards ND (a right-wing political party between the wars) and was an advocate of Roman Dmowski. However, let us not forget that both Taylor and his generation actively participated in the journey from state oblivion to Polish independence, thus patriotism and the

“nationalist notion” had a different level of importance than nowadays. Let us all remember that Taylor came from a family that adopted Polishness as a free choice over the ages providing a multitude of evidence of their sacrifice for Poland, including fighting in its defence.

The patriotism of Taylor did not bother him in his sober judgement of the place of Poland and Polish people in terms of European and world-wide economies. As he claimed himself, in the period between the wars there was a gap of two or three decades. The appropriate way of reducing this gap was obviously not the propaganda assurances of extraordinariness of Poland and Polish people, but as he wrote, active presence in more advanced projects, learning from better qualified people and international cooperation. A very important factor and prerequisite is a good knowledge of foreign languages. Overcoming this barrier also appears to be important and valid today, even if this gap is smaller in contemporary times. With regard to the knowledge of foreign languages, the current knowledge of the English language is certainly much better and more widespread. Nevertheless, the French and German languages that were commonly known in the spheres of intelligence between the wars are relatively less known at present than in the past.

The comments of Taylor with relation to the approach of the majority of students to the way of studying and their contact with subject-related literature are surprisingly accurate at present as they were 100 years ago in the Jagiellonian University. It would seem that the situation is equally bad. It is worth noting that Taylor himself was a demanding academic teacher. He did not apply “preferential treatment” and required diligent work, conscientiousness and a high level of involvement from undergraduate students and PhD students. Indeed, he devoted a lot of time to this. In current times of mass education and widespread evaluation of teachers by students, it is certainly more difficult to set high requirements. Nevertheless, Taylor would probably urge us not to give up on this.

## 7. Conclusion

Professor Edward Taylor was one of the most outstanding Polish economists, creator of the *Poznań School of Economics* as well as the *Poznań School of Treasury and Tax Law*. He was also an initiator of scientific life by actively participating in the difficult process of creating an independent Polish state from three separate systems and educated in the regions of three different territorial divisions. These three systems were not only incompatible – to borrow a phrase from the language of IT – but also poor and underdeveloped in every aspect. His patriotism and feeling of civic duty forced him to become involved in a multitude of fields simultaneously, not only in a scientific, didactic and publishing sense, but also in creating the state, also in an organizational, social, political and journalistic sense

through practical activities particularly associated with cooperative activity and crediting. As he was a very talented, universal, creative and hardworking man, he carried out work which could have been allocated to several hardworking people.

Deliberations on the subject of our hero are not of a historical and closed nature alone. Almost 30 years have passed since the times of PRL and now over half of the population do not know those times. Due to the fact that they did not experience this on a personal basis, the majority of Polish people do not know and do not understand why *spontaneous order* is better than *purposeful order* that is established by politicians and bureaucrats, nor why an open society is better than a closed society, nor why an excessively “strong” centrally ruling party signifies inefficiency, weakening of the activities of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in society. They do not know that a substantively good centrally planned system is impossible and that creativity and development require economic freedom, as well as freedom for citizens, universities, the media, art and generally speaking everything.

Edward Taylor fought for freedom since of the school years in the underground youth organizations before the first world war, when Poland did not exist as a free state. Post that war – as many the others patriots – he acted to rebuild Poland, its economy, institutions and educate the society, demoralized by totalitarian and authoritarian ideologies. His love of freedom and rationality prompted him to promote a liberal (or pro-freedom) economy and a modern state. His twenty years of efforts have failed. From 1926, authoritarian rule, centralization and nationalization were introduced in Poland – which did not bring good results anywhere. Until 1938 inclusive, the DGP level from 1914, was not higher, than 25 years earlier. It shows the falsehood of the ideology and policies of the that government and its political base. From 1939 on Poland was imposed by totalitarian systems – Nazism and then communism – for a total of 50 years.

For 25 years (1990–2015), Poland was building liberal democracy, a market economy, and joined the European Union and NATO. The country seemed to have experienced great success in its new path.. But liberal democracy is seriously threatened in our country also now. The problem is populism, which is a “soft version” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarianism. The problem is also the authority which refers to the roots of Solidarity, but which builds its own despotism, breaking the law and good customs.

Society was divided into three equal parts: supporters and opponents of the new ruling camp, and indifferent people. Some of those indifferent have already left the country.

We will have to answer the question why such a large part of society is afraid of their own freedom and responsibility, preferring to trust populists who promise a lot and give away money. We already know that the titanic work of enlightened individuals – such as Taylor and many people from

1989–2014 years – and their rational arguments are not enough. We know that cynical and demagogical populists striving for authoritarian power are dangerous – especially in a society where there are too many infantile and corrupt people. We know that the ochlocracy and the dictatorship of the majority are pathologies of democracy – dangerous at any age. We also know, however, that they always end in a fall – unfortunately painful.

Today, the time for populism is particularly badly chosen, because we have to tighten our belts and save the planet, not indulge in consumerism (especially for “empty money”).

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Translated by Patrick Curran.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibidem; Tomczak refers to *Wspomnienia Ekonomisty* by Edward Taylor.
- <sup>3</sup> At present at universities Polish assistants are most frequently not present either, which significantly worsens the standards and efficiency of the work of professors. This gap is only partially filled by PhD students at some universities who most frequently do not receive any remuneration for their work. With regard to the contact of students with a professor, in present times it is generally speaking not much better. Likewise, not much has improved (if at all) in terms of studying subject-related literature by students as it is to my knowledge still very bad, while the impact of lecturers in terms of changing this state of affairs is ineffective.

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