

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Rector Magnificus, Distinguished Members of the Senate, Dear Colleagues, Dear Friends,

It is a profound honor to receive the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from Eötvös Loránd University. This distinction is especially meaningful to me because in 1895 it was awarded here to Wilhelm Wundt, the founder of modern scientific psychology.

I mention Wundt not only because one of his students trained the advisor of the advisor of the advisor of my own advisor - making him, in a sense, my academic great-great-great-grandfather. I mention him above all because he was the first to establish psychology as an experimental science, recognizing experimentation as the fundamental method of scientific discovery in our field.

Eleven years ago, when I worked as a visiting professor at University of Leipzig, my office was next to Wundt's former laboratory. There one could still see the remarkable instruments he designed himself for what were among the very first experimental psychophysiological studies. There was also the high desk at which he wrote his monumental work, *Völkerpsychologie*, a ten-volume exploration of how culture, language, customs, and social norms shape the human mind.

These two aspects - experimentation and the study of the individual within their cultural and social context - capture what I see as the essence of social psychology.

On the one hand, experimentation allows us not only to describe, but to explain human behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. This tradition of rigorous experimental work has survived strongly in Polish psychology, distinguishing it within the former Eastern Bloc and aligning it closely with American psychology, which was also profoundly shaped by Wundt's intellectual legacy. In my own research - whether on post-genocide reconciliation, antisemitic prejudice, conspiracy theories, or hate speech - I have consistently relied on experimental methods to move beyond description toward causal explanation.

On the other hand, Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* reminds us that human beings must be studied within the societies in which they live. Like my teachers - Maria Lewicka, Janusz Grzelak, and Mirosław Kofta - I have always believed that social psychology should be a universal science of human nature, but also a science rooted in a specific society. It should be a science not only about people in general, but also about Poles in Poland. This, I believe, is part of our responsibility toward the societies we study.

Often, the results of such research confront societies with knowledge they are not always ready to accept. Yet such knowledge can deepen understanding of our own tendencies and behaviors. By studying the mechanisms underlying populism, the spread of hate speech, prejudice, or the distortion of history, we may publish in the best scientific journals. But when we speak publicly about these same mechanisms, we may also face courtrooms or political pressure - especially when those in power rely on such phenomena.

In pursuing these topics, I have always felt strong affinity to my Hungarian colleagues, who have shown courage in addressing them. I am thinking in particular of Péter Krekó, Anna Kende, Zsolt Szabo, Mónika Kovács, Ildikó Barna from ELTE, as well as András Kovács and Luca Várady from Central European University, and Sara Bigazzi and Orsolya Vincze from University of Pécs. It is a privilege for me to have them among my frequent collaborators.

During the World War I, at a time when Europe was engulfed by nationalism and Poland was partitioned, Wilhelm Wundt - in one of his few political writings - clearly spoke in favor of Poland's independence. He also saw a free Poland as a future safeguard for Europe against Russia. He was perhaps among the first to express the vision that, after the war, continental Europe might be reborn as a federation of nations living together in peace, and that free nations might one day choose to form something akin to the United States of America: the United States of Europe. Although Wundt's vision still meets resistance in many countries today, his ideas continue to inspire people around the continent. This emotion is particularly visible in today's Hungary.

Thank you very much.