

PUBLIC LECTURE EVALUATION

Masaryk University

Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Procedure field	General Psychology
Applicant	Mgr. Ivan Ropovik, PhD.
Lecture date	23 rd January 2026, 11:00 a.m.
Lecture topic	How naive empiricism hold back progress in psychology
Persons present (number)	16
Designated evaluators (board members)	prof. PhDr. Zbyněk Vybíral, Ph.D. prof. Mgr. Peter Halama, PhD. prof. PhDr. Matúš Šucha, Ph.D. (online) doc. PhDr. Bc. Iva Poláčková Šolcová, Ph.D. (online)

The habilitation lecture argued that psychology's progress is currently stifled by naive empiricism, the practice of relying on data without properly understanding the mechanisms that generated them. The public lecture was focused on some general meta-scientific questions in contemporary critical discourse in methodology. The lecture was structured into five parts: 1. The heyday of empiricism: pragmatism and the behaviorist peak inductivism ("Skinnerian heritage"); 2. The fragmentation of great psychological theories in post-behaviorism era ("fracturing into myriads of isolated mini-theories"); 3. Shift to effects as primary deliverables of psychological research ("limited research space" and limited sense of research); 4. The substitution of theoretical understanding with the focus on methods ("obsession with methodology"); and 5. Layers of causal misspecification arising from underdeveloped psychological theories. Fixing social problems by scientific methods in the past the traditional science pushed the psychology toward reductionism and self-discrediting stance. Author presented some scientific "curiosities" and obscure "discoveries".

The lecture emphasized the role of theory as a necessary step that generates predictions. A weak theory (sometimes "theoretical vacuum") leads to a causal misspecification problem across multiple interacting layers, leading us to errors in our models and understanding. Author mentioned three often emerging consequences: a) validity of measurement: unclear causal link from the attribute to the test scores; b) so called "fat-handedness" of interventions, and c) at the level of scientific infrastructure (e.g., "publication bias"). Some of contemporary concepts in methodology were mentioned; like replicability, robustness of data, generalization, meaning of p-value etc. One of the author's opinions pointed out that we are searching and sophisticating methodology tools in order to gain more certainty, but often we generate only "good answers to bad questions".

In the conclusion part the author underscored that mature science requires balancing experimental control with phenomenal authenticity. He tried to discuss (at least briefly) some

ways forward, including methods of pragmatic causal inference, non-naive evidence synthesis, and more qualitative research.

Discussion (lasted half of hour) was very productive in the sense of shaping further explanations and author's opinions, experiences and suggestions of some possible (and necessary) ways leading to deeper understanding in psychology. Discussion was very comprehensive and included further proper examples to the theme. Focus on the refinement and "sense" of psychological knowledge was a thread running through all parts the lecture.

Conclusion

The lecture delivered by Mgr. Ivan Ropovik, PhD., entitled *How naive empiricism hold back progress in psychology* and delivered as part of the habilitation procedure, **demonstrated** sufficient scholarly qualifications and pedagogical capabilities expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of General Psychology.

Date: 27th January 2026

prof. PhDr. Zbyněk Vybíral, Ph.D.

