

Archive of critical psychology in Slovakia

Item 1:

DEVELOPMENTALISM

Rex and Wendy Stainton Rogers

29 March 1994, Bratislava, Slovak Academy of Sciences

With this text we would like to contribute to the transparency of the forming process of foundations for critical psychology in Slovakia. There were just a few international scholars to visit Slovakia in the early 1990s with a relevant message. The most important of them were Rex and Wendy Stainton Rogers, hot UK „warriors“ and enlightened missionaries in this scholarly field. At one of their first visits to the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, they gave the following lecture. The text is a transcript from an audio-cassette by computerized AI software otter.ai, reviewed by Paul Stenner and Gabriel Bianchi. Please, read the text as a historical document.

Rex Stainton Rogers died in 1999. When asking Wendy Stainton Rogers for permit to make the text public, she responded:

You are of course free to publish the manuscript. I will not make any trouble if you do. April 25, 2023, Wendy Stainton Rogers in an email to Gabriel Bianchi.

So thank you, Wendy! And Rex! And here is the text.

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

civilization, critical, development, England, children, image, knowledge, people, psychologists, psychology, sexual consent, sexual intercourse, sexuality, students, teach, traditional, university, years,

Rex:

We teach in two universities in the south of England. One is a university, which, I expect, you're used to, in other words, where people lecture, and when students sit, I hope ask questions, when they don't understand. It's called the University of Reading. It's in a large town, half the population, perhaps a bit more, of Bratislava, to the west of London. And that's where I teach. And I teach areas in the area of human socialization. How we become social. Wendy teaches at the Open University (OU), which is a very different kind of institution, because it is designed primarily both for teaching adults, and for the teaching people that study at home. So when I go to Wendy's university, there are no students. It's lovely.

Wendy:

Yes, we make a joke that no student is allowed at the university. This is because we have 142,000 students. And if they all came on the same day, we would have a problem. But in fact, they are alive and they do come but not 142,000 all at the same time. The Open University was set up 25 years ago, to open educational opportunity. And so it is genuinely open. I think in this 25 year history, six people have been turned away, because they were so difficult we couldn't teach them. But Rex and I have taught in mental hospitals and it's very interesting to teach somebody who is in a secure hospital for being so mad, they are very

dangerous. And then you teach them psychology, very interesting. I have taught nuns in closed borders, who cannot come out of the nunnery, and so on, and the student at OU gets material in the post, and by television, and by radio, and they study at home, and then they do their assignments. And they send them off, and the tutors mock them and send them back and they want help via telephone. So the idea is that you can study on a Saturday. I don't know if anybody does study on a Saturday, but you can. So that's my area of work. I am a psychologist, and Rex and I, we have been married 19 years on Saturday. And we survived writing a book together. So I do some psychology with Rex. But most of my work is in the area of child welfare. And so I teach in the area, for example, of children and the law. And I teach social workers about how to deal with children who are being mistreated, and so on. So it's for people who work in institutions to look after children. But using the same technique, so the students don't come to the university, but we send our materials to the students, or very often we make materials which then go to the trainers and the trainers use them all over the country. So we have two different jobs, and they are nicely far apart in the day. So we have too many arguments. Today, my job is to put the...

Rex:

... we will probably change a little bit what we are planning to do today. To make this, I hope, a little bit easier for you to follow. So I will probably change things a little bit as we go along. I want to begin by explaining some things that have been happening in particular in Western Europe in the last seven or so years. A group of people have come together who are mostly psychologists, and they have said what we want to do is not to take all the old ideas from the past and just teach them again. We want to look at them. And we want to learn to look at them critically, possibly to be prepared to throw them all away and perhaps start again or perhaps do something different. Now, I've got two labels up here. The group that I'm most associated with call themselves critical social psychologists. So they are concerned to look at what is being taught in the universities and social psychology and to say, where is all this knowledge come from? What sort of knowledge is it? What is it actually telling us about people? Is it actually telling us about people? If we look instead at the area that is focused upon the child, in Great Britain, and in North America, this area is normally called developmental psychology. It is not usually called Child Psychology, but developmental psychology. It is supposed to be about some mysterious thing called human development. And we are saying: What if we had an empty Developmental psychology? What if we ask ourselves questions about what does it mean to develop? What do we actually say, when we're saying that people develop? And I'll return to that. For now, that's fine. Okay. So sometimes when I teach in England, teaching in England is quite informal, and it's quite common for me to use a lot of humor, and jokes, and so on, there's very little point in my doing that, because if you find my English difficult here, you will find it much more difficult to understand my jokes. The students in England, mostly, don't understand my jokes, I will not use too many jokes today. But I may begin a session with students, usually many more, perhaps it's the first year over 200 students, and in the second year, when people decide what degree they really want to do, perhaps 120-140 students, and I will perhaps begin by saying, I want to have a look at this word, develop. And I'll go in the class and I'll say, what sorts of things develop, what does this word develop mean to you? People will say things like, well, organisms develop. If I have a butterfly, it doesn't begin as a butterfly. It begins as an egg. And then that egg changes into a caterpillar and then that caterpillar will begin to form a carapace over its body and it will hang, like a pupae. And then, one day, the pupae will split and the butterfly will do that and it will pump fluid into its wings. And will fly away.

Now, here is an interesting story. The first journal that was published in psychoanalysis by Freud was called *Imago* - that is the fully formed butterfly, something that has developed. And in Britain there is an organization for psychologists (I don't belong to it) called the British Psychological Society. And for their image, they use the image of the psyche. And the psyche is shown as a body with wings, right? A beautiful being. So from the very beginning, we're drawn into the idea of what it means to develop. Species development as well. This is the distinction between the development of an individual organism and the development of a species. Ontology and phylogeny. Species makes us think of Darwin. And Darwin was one of many people starting in about 1870s to look at babies. And what they started to do, was to record down in their diaries what my baby does. When my baby is three days old, this is what it does. It probably craps into its diapers, because babies, when they're little don't do very much. But later, it will appear to begin to follow things with his eyes. And I write this all down. Darwin did this. But Darwin is also famous, because Darwin gave us the theory of evolution, that things are changing, and developing in their environment. If you think of an image of something developed, you may be shown in a textbook a little animal, about this high, what is it, is it Eohippus or something? It's not a horse, but one day it's, or generations later it will be a horse. Yes. Or we see something that isn't quite yet an elephant, it's an animal, maybe it has a little nose but it hasn't got a great trunk like an elephant. So we have the idea that things are there to develop. And one of the famous ones that develops is of course, human beings. Yes. Once upon a time, because this is a story. Yes, in England, when you read the stories of children, it always begins once upon a time. So once upon a time, we were little things there, in the outdoors - homo habilis - handyman. And gradually, there is a march of evolution. And somewhere along the line, we find these very heavy caveman. Very thick brows, a bit bent over, the Neanderthals. We use this in English and then we happen to the Slovak language, as an insult. Yes, we say to somebody, you Neanderthal, meaning you're not very progressive, it's an insult. And then eventually, in Europe, coincidentally, we find the emergence of new species again. Until eventually, we find homo sapiens. Homo sapiens – the thinking being - is the most evolved of them all. He stands upright. He's evolved. (a joke about Tyrannosaurus and an upright Tyrannosaurus Rex – referring to Rex himself and his name - standing more upright).

Here's something else that develops. I don't know if this works in the Slovak language. But in English, we use the same word for what happens when we process a photograph. And we put the photograph, after having taken a photograph, in a dark room in a chemical solution. That's called a developer. And we see the image gradually beginning to develop. And then we put it in a fixer, to make the image stable, right? So we see an image developing. And literally, it develops before your eyes, if you do it in a dish, enlargement, and as you shake the photograph in the dish with the developer, you actually see the image appearing in front of you. It develops.

Now, in the 19th century, when psychology began, as an independent science, in laboratories in Germany, a very common idea, which was held by Europeans, was something else that developed as well. And that was civilization. And so, there were societies that were civilized. Those were societies like Britain, Germany, the United States. There was societies that were less civilized societies, for example, that were less developed, less civilized. And then as we went down into the dark continent of Africa, we saw that which was non civilized, right, we saw the savage. And so the idea was that civilization too was something that develops. Here's another thing that develops, certainly in the way we use the word in English. We talk about Britain is a developed country. Whereas some countries are undeveloped or underdeveloped. Now, what I want to suggest to you is that in all of our

language, it is very clear that there is a process implied, of development. And it is the end of that process, the thing that finishes up, which is seen as being the thing that is good, right. So, it is good to have a developed economy. It is good to have civilization. It is good to be a homo sapiens, rather than a Neanderthal. And now, my question is, what develops in a child? And what are we saying, If we say that the child develops? And I think we're saying a number of things that are not necessarily things we should accept automatically. Now, this is the way we work, we begin with an idea, and then we begin to challenge that idea. And what I want to begin to do now is to challenge two ideas together. One is the idea of What is a child? And the other is the idea of What does it mean to develop? These may seem very obvious, but I don't think they are.

[Wendy and Rex discuss the next slide] Perhaps, before I move to the next slide, I should give you also one or two pointers to the way we work. We work in a way that I think is not usual to see happening in a classroom very often. In England what is happening is the teacher is saying to the students „here is some knowledge, here are some things to know“. And the students are writing them down. And then one day, we will have an examination. And we will see if you can write down on what the teacher just wrote on there. If we do this, we are perpetuating a form of knowledge. But it may not be always particularly useful knowledge. Because I want to suggest knowledge changes according to its context. I don't mean knowledge develops, I mean, it is actually fundamentally different. Here in Slovakia, you've had a very good chance to experience how knowledge can change. One minute there is perhaps a syllabus, which is informed in part by dialectical materialism. You're taught how to understand certain things through the eye of Marxist analysis, of a particular form of Marxist analysis, which was bestowed upon you by the kind people in the Kremlin sometime ago. But every form of knowledge is also a form of politics. There is no knowledge that is free of politics. The knowledge that we have had in the West, where we thought of course, we had civilization. You thought we had propaganda. We had civilization. No we've all had propaganda, that cannot be anything else. And of course, what you're having now is propaganda, as well. I want to make it reflective, I want you to know, that I know. And I want you to know that I know that it is propaganda. It's just different. Because it's different. It may make you look at other things differently. This is what I like. Here are some of the ways that we've worked as critical psychologists, the first one, you probably recognize, without any trouble at all, because it was a technique that was developed under dialectical materialism. This technique was developed in Soviet Union: agitprop. And now, I want to give you an example of how we would use agitprop. But to do that, I need to ask a question, because I don't know the answer to this question. Though, I think I can imagine what it's like. So let me know do you have in Slovakia conscription - where the government says to young men, usually, but not to young women – it doesn't say it to young women because they're not ‚developed‘ enough you see - says it to young men: for, is it two years?, you must join the army. One year? [audience member]. Ok so for just one year you must join the army. And during that time, certain nasty things happened to me. For example, all the time, other people tell you what to do. They make you wear a uniform. You are subject often to punishments that are not democratic, you are not tried in a court, it is what we call an arbitrary punishment. If the sergeant doesn't like you, he just makes your life a misery. You have no power they have all the power. And if you're lucky, you're paid a little bit of money to do it, not very much. Just perhaps enough to get home at a weekend. So in Slovakia that happens to men for one year. Throughout the civilized world this happens to children for 10 or 11 years of their life. For 10 or 11 years of their lives children are conscripted into a great

educational army. And they suffer in just the same way. Of course, it's much fairer, because we apply it just as much to women as men, there is no sex discrimination in the great army of the school. And here are some of the things certainly that have happened in Britain until very recently. Some of them still happen. In Britain, it still happens, you often have to wear a uniform. And when you turn up to school, your teacher may say to you, Rogers – your tie is not straight. Rogers, your hair is too long, get your hair cut! There you go. And, they go and...

Wendy:

Can I stop you there. I always remember the day, we were called into our daughter's school, because she had a mohican, right, and we were going along to be told by the teacher that this was a ridiculous hairstyle. And he [Rex] walks in.... [Rex's hair is long with a plaited pony tail, so a joke]. And the teacher goes [covers here mouth]...

Rex:

Now, if you or when you get perhaps a little older in school, and you start to see school as a form of arbitrary authority, and I did, and you start a fight against that arbitrary authority, then, what will often be said to you is, 'you don't know any better'. You haven't grown up yet. When you grow up a bit more, then you'll understand why all this is necessary. Well, I never did understand. I left school when I was 15. It was a happiest day of my life. Do we suddenly acquire understanding when we leave school? I wonder. But I don't think so. Now, here are some other things that we can do. That will also perhaps say to us, the idea of development and the idea of children is a lot more difficult than we think it is. Social history. Here is a piece of social history, which is interesting. If the boy and the girl – I've chosen this example deliberately. If a boy or girl decide that they'd like to have sexual intercourse. As I understand, if they are in Slovakia, if you are 15 then the law says, you can. That's interesting somehow, when you're 14, there's something, the matter - you're not developed enough. And then something wonderful happens at 15. I don't know what it is. But something wonderful happens at 15 and suddenly, you're allowed to have sexual intercourse. However, if you lived in Spain, that would happen at 12. Perhaps it is the hot weather that makes the difference? [Question from audience – what about Great Britain?]. Great Britain is of course colder, isn't it? [laughter at the joke]. Great Britain is a colder country, so in England, it is 16 but only for a boy and a girl. For boy and a boy, it's now eighteen, until a month ago it was twenty one. While in some parts of the United States, the age is eighteen. You have to be 18 years of age before you can legally have sexual intercourse in many of the states of the United States, unless you're married. So if you're married, somehow, you're much more developed, so you can have sexual intercourse. If not, then it's against the law. So now here's something very interesting. One of the things that we learn when we learn about civilization, is one of the benefits of civilization – is that it makes us much healthier. These poor savages, are ill all the time, with terrible diseases and their growth is stunted – they don't grow up properly. Whereas we grow up. So you are to assume that if we went back into history, we would find that these people that didn't grow up properly had older ages for people to get married or to have sex. But that's not the case. So in Roman law, the age of sexual consent for a girl was 12. And for a boy was 14. But they didn't just do it by age alone. They have a bit of developmentalism in it. So if there were really any doubts, they had to have a look underneath the toga to make sure that things were developing properly. And if they were, then, this is funny isn't it... I'll tell you about somewhere else, where people have a look under the toga. Not a lot of people know this.

When they elect a pope, they also have to have a look under the toga. Because a pope has to be a whole man to make sure they have to have a little feel underneath and make sure that he's all there. Because you can't have man that isn't all there as a pope. So we begin to look into social history. Here's another piece of social history, some of which didn't happen that far from here during the time of the Crusades. This is another interesting example of an idea of development. Christian Europe had an idea that it was better than anybody else, because it felt it was more civilized. But, unfortunately, Jerusalem was in the hands of some very uncivilized people. They were Islamic, Arabic, and so on, so time after time, Britain and Europe tried to capture Jerusalem, we sent there waves of soldiers to try to capture Jerusalem back to Christianity. And during one of these periods, two young boys one I think was 14, one I think was 13, started something called the Children's Crusade, and then made an army of young people through Europe in an attempt to get to the Holy Land, and to recapture Jerusalem. And nobody at that time said: „You can't do that, you're not developed enough, you're only 14“. When the universities began, in Europe, there were no age restrictions formed at which age you could go to university, some people were 14, some people were 13. This idea that there are certain magical times in your life, is something that arose in history. It isn't natural, it came to us through history. And so we must study social history, and so we must study alternative history, we must try to find out what we can, about what children were like, in the past. And this is very difficult to do. Because most people did not write about children, we have very little history of children to follow. What we can find suggest to us that at different historical points, and at different points in the world, ideas of what children are, were very, very diverse. There are two ways we can see how this varies.

During one of its many periods of religious persecution, Europe picked on various small religious sects that had broken away most from the Catholic Church and the Protestant church and made their lives extremely miserable. These people went to the United States and Canada, where they settled, one of the groups is called the Amish. They lived a simple 17th century rural life in the midst of present day North America.

There's a movie called Witness with Harrison Ford. It stars Harrison Ford. It is about an Amish community. If you are brought up in an Amish community where the people work on the land, then they see you as ceasing to be a child very early, by the ages of two or three, you are expected to begin to work in the community, to begin to do work on the farm. If any of you grew up on a farm, you might have done the same thing yourself. You might have been involved at quite an early age, maybe in helping to cut the hay. Maybe it's helping to pick the eggs from the chickens, or what you would have been given to work, to do. So this is a different idea about childhood. And even in our own society, we have very funny ideas about what children can do. When we were walking through the old town in Bratislava, today, Gabriel said that there is a tradition, that this is a street where Mozart played. If a young person can do very good work, if a young person can play the piano we say, this child is a prodigy. If you are able to play the piano very well, or compose music or be a good gymnast, then we say they must have something special, because of course children can't normally do that. So we have to put a special label and we say this child is a prodigy. So if you're able to play the piano very well, seven or eight [years old], then you're not a normal child, but something abnormal. Good, that is a child prodigy. Very good. But it only applies to certain things. If you become good at doing certain other things, for instance if you become good at picking the tourists pockets, then you become a juvenile delinquent. But again, it's something special your marked off, as something unusual.

There is a lot in what I've said so far, which is about how we come to do the sort of work that we do. But it is also possible for us to do research within this tradition. That isn't just to do with a different kind of theory. But it's also to do with doing a different kind of research. And the sort of research that we do is to do exactly what I've just been talking about, go and ask people what they think children are, what do they think childhood is for? What should we be doing with children? Now, the sort of reason that we might do this research is that we become very interested in some strange things, we think they are very strange things, that people do with children. In the standard developmental story, the child is born in some kind of primitive, or savage condition, most theories of child development tell us how the child goes through different stages of development. One of the best known developmental theories in Western Europe, in Piaget's theory – and I'm being careful here because there are other traditions that you may know, for example, you may know more about Vygotsky, than you do about Piaget. Maybe you know nothing about it. But in the Piaget's theory of childhood, he actually says the child goes through different stages, and at different stages in life, their intelligence changes, but it doesn't change continuously. They don't just get brighter, and brighter and brighter. That's what we call the accountant story, it's like having money in a savings account, right? Every day your money earns a little bit of interest. Every day, your intelligence gains a little bit interest. It's not like that. In Piaget's story, we have a story, which is exactly like this. What Piaget says is that the child is born into a state just like an animal, a very primitive animal. So the baby to Piaget is like, the sort of thing that he first studied. Because, another diversion. One very interesting thing about psychology is: most famous psychologists were not psychologists. For example Piaget was not a psychologist, he actually was a zoologist. More specifically, Piaget began his life studying what we call in English mussels, little bivalves, two shells, right? And if you boil them up with a bit of wine and a bit of garlic, onions, and some herbs, that's a beautiful thing to eat. A mussel, two shells, symmetrical. Now the newborn baby for Piaget has intelligence that's like that of a bivalve or of an octopus. It only has what Piaget calls sensory-motor intelligence. And that lasts for a period and then the egg begins to change, the baby's intelligence begins to change from sensory-motor into pre-operational intelligence. Then somewhere about the age of seven, the child's intelligence suddenly changes again into something called concrete operations. In concrete operations, the child can reason, Piaget tells us, but not reason theoretically, not reason about reason itself. And finally, when we have some time in our teens, we get full or abstract operations, we can theorize about theory. Of course, when psychologists went out and looked at some of those savage tribes in the world, they found in some parts of the world, they never get formal operations, they are not developed enough. But we do. Because we're very developed. Therefore, we've taken the job of looking at different theories of child development, and retelling them as what we think they are - different kinds of stories. Piaget's particular story is only really concerned with the child in terms of them having an organ of intelligence, which he thinks about, just like any other organ, it's something that enables us to do things. You know our hand enables us to do things in the same way as our growing organ of Intelligence enables us to do things. That's predominantly what Piaget is interested in, not only, but predominantly it is this organ of intelligence. But other psychologists have assumed that the interesting thing about children is not their growing intelligence at all. Freud had an even more interesting idea about children. What Freud thought was most interesting about children was their growing sexuality. And Freud had his idea that children were born as a great buzzing mass of sexuality. And this moved around the body in very mysterious ways. So, the first place, that all this sexuality settles is in your mouth. That can

be good fun. If you have a sexuality in the mouth, you're oral, you have an oral sexuality, it's a stage of development, your oral sexuality. But most important about these kinds of theories is at every point, you have a challenge. You have to just as in a fairy story, go out and face a monster. The monster you face perhaps in the oral stage can be your own mother. Because this monster may not be feeding, you may not be satisfying the little animal properly. And so according to some of Freud's followers as adults, we go about with breasts on our minds all the time. It's not only about men, it happens to women as well apparently as they go about with breasts on their mind, and some of these are good breasts that feed nicely and some of them are bad breasts that don't feed properly. Some of them have bad breasts. Apparently, that would affect us for the rest of our lives, but not as much as the next one. The next one is what happens when all this energy moves from the mouth down somewhere else into the process of elimination. And so we have the anal stage. And according to Freud, all sorts of interesting things about adult life can be understood in terms of what we learned when we were first potty trained. When our parents first sat us down on a potty.

What is the most fascinating things about all these different stories is when you tell the stories, you realize what nonsense there are. What nonsense to suggest that the most important thing that we can study about people is that passage through the supposedly oral and anal stages. What nonsense to suggest, that what's the most interesting, the only interesting thing about a child is its own individual growing organ of intelligence, when anybody who looks at children will realize that the most important world of a child is a social world. It is essential. And if you're interested in what children can do, what their intelligence enables them to do, it would seem to me that the place to look for that is in what children do together, not what children do when they're being tested in the laboratory, by psychologists, because we're back to what is development for? What's it about? Who says that we should judge people by the quality of their intelligence? That's a very dangerous thing to do, indeed.

And now we begin to talk about the politics of developmental psychology. I want to talk a little bit about the history of intelligence testing. [Let's have a look at the overhead.] This is what we're suggesting: that an interest in young people, and I have no idea when you become a young person, or when you stop becoming one. I don't want to put times on that. I just want to say you have a concern for young people. Lets have time for another story. I want you to imagine a situation which could happen very easily in England. I don't know the laws in Slovakia, perhaps someone will tell me, but this scene could happen very easily in England. We have a judge and that judge comes to a trial where this judge is trying somebody who is accused of having murdered a child and we say, this is a terrible thing. Very good, bring this to court. And we're gonna judge. Now, I'm gonna put another interesting piece of information you may have assumed when I said judge - that the judge is a man. But this judge is a woman. This is an important part of our critical work, to break down assumptions about social categories. So just before she came into this court to try this child murder case, she had an abortion. But in English law an abortion is not murder, abortion is legal. It is a construction that we apply about when a child's life begins. And that's how English abortion law works. We assume that if we do an abortion early, then this is really not a child. And these are always social categories, always social definitions. And if you think that childhood must begin at birth, well, I would say to you, look at some societies where it doesn't. In some societies, you're a person before you're born. In some cultures, the ban on abortion, one of the grounds for banning it, is that you are the person before birth.

And there are other countries where you do not become a person until some time after you are born, a period after born, which you don't have to...

Wendy:

It's important to express the politics of this part. This particular example came after my husband got very angry about the books that have been written by Western psychologists about child abuse. And it was supposed to be an extra exploration of the mistreatment of children across the world. And he was describing in great detail the way in South America, in certain very poor countries, certain babies were about to die. In other words, the mothers would just hold them and starve them very gently, so that they would die, simply because the mother might have four or five more children. And this is a way of saying no, I can't feed that child. And this book was taking a very strong moral stance that we in the West are not infanticiders. We don't kill babies. And in South America, they do behave badly, because they're not developed. And my argument is, that certainly is a situation in Great Britain, we have the technology, we have the money to give women abortions, so that they can choose not to have a child. So it's not a civilized society, that has moral status, and the uncivilized society - in this society they kill children at this age, in that society they kill them at that age. And I'm not saying pro or anti abortion, I'm saying it's not right for Western people to start talking about another group of people, we have the moral high-ground - the politics.

Rex:

Okay, so that was a little aside. Now we go into, and what I want to bring back to now is, the claim that I want to make that traditional psychology is very political. At the beginning of the century, in France, a man called Alfred Binet was faced with the job by the French government of trying to find a fair means of working out those children in school, who might need special schooling, because they were born behind, they were what we might call or have called in England educationally sub-normal, children that are going to need special education. And so he developed a standardized procedure that can be used in any school, that tested school knowledge. And he said, there will be some children that you will identify that will be behind in this school. And so we can identify these children and give them special education. No problem with that. What happened is that material was taken to the United States, into Stanford University, one of the most famous universities in the United States, where they changed that into something called an intelligence test. And it was claimed then that it was measuring the intelligence of all people. Well you might say even then, what's the matter with measuring the intelligence people are born with? It's harmless, isn't it? Well no, it isn't. That psychological testing was used in many states in the United States. Children from poor families, often from deprived educational backgrounds were tested by psychologists, found to be of poor intelligence. And then it was decided that these people were undesirable in society. These people were a cost to society. So what we needed to do was to sterilize them so they couldn't reproduce. So these children that have been tested by psychologists were taken into institutions, around about 15 of them in the United States, and forcibly sterilized. And that legislation, which was written by, amongst others by psychologists, in several states in the United States, was subsequently found to be very useful by a rather undeveloped little man in Germany called Adolf Hitler, who used that as the basis of his own early sterilization legislation, and this happened in Nazi Germany, right at the very beginning, in 1933 and 1934 long before the Holocaust began. And he found no difficulty in finding psychologists that would do his work for him. In fact, dictators and authoritarians have never had any difficulty in finding professionals to do their work for

them. It used to happen in the old Soviet Union. What would go on would be this: there would be a political dissident who said, things are not very nice here in the Soviet Union, people are being jailed, the constitution is being broken, civil rights are being abused. And these people will be taken along by the political figures to a psychiatrist. And the psychiatrist would say, well, obviously, as we live in a happy socialist, new socialist state, this person is clearly deluded to think this, right? What we obviously must do is to lock them up in a psychiatric hospital, fill them full of drugs until they get better. So large numbers of dissidents in the Soviet Union were put into the Soviet Union psycho prisons, basically, because they opposed the political system. The medical profession, in the Soviet Union psychiatry, worked with that system. And just the same happened in Nazi Germany. Psychologists in Nazi Germany found no difficulty, in doing work, which discriminated and identified people who have Jewish life characteristics. There's a psychologist called Jaensch. He found a test that identified people that had undesirable social characteristics. And these undesirable social characteristics he suggested, were to be found by psychological tests in various groups of undesirable people: Jews, homosexuals, gypsies. And, of course, those are all the people who ended up later on in the concentration camps. Now, he also identified another character, who was a very good character, who was just the right person to live in Nazi Germany. The interesting part of the story is that at the end of the Second World War, another group of social scientists, found themselves doing some work in the United States. Many of these social scientists had left Germany to escape persecution. People like Theodor Adorno, who was part of the Frankfurt School and settled in New York. And they did a piece of research, which was designed to identify another character. But this character psychological test was designed to identify somebody who was a racist, who was sympathetic to fascism. Now what was fascinating the two tests do the same job: Jaentsch's test in Germany, and Adorno's authoritarian personality F test in the United States produce the same typology of people. The good guys and the bad guys. It's just in the two different cultures, the good guys and the bad guys were reversed. So what for Jaentsch was a nasty Jewish over aesthetic sort of homosexual disease, became in the United States, being a nice liberal who loved everybody and didn't have any prejudice. And the person in Nazi Germany who could think so beautifully clearly, and so on, became in the United States the person who was identified by the psychologist in US as having a disorder - they had an authoritarian personality, a proneness to see the world in terms of power, in terms of superior groups and inferior groups and so on. Now, the lesson that I want to draw from this is - when we have to return to children, we must always ask ourselves about any psychology that claims to tell us about children: What treatment, mistreatment, does this psychology justify? If you test the child's intelligence, ever, remember, certain times in some parts of the world that has been used to justify sterilizing children, so they will not reproduce their nasty lack of intelligence, for other generations. Just remember, we can give you some examples from Britain, that may also be illuminating. You have the idea from Freudian psychology, and from other forms of developmental psychology too, that the early years of a child's life are very, very important. What happens if something goes wrong? Well, so we had a time in Britain, when children social workers would look at a family and say: „this family is bad for that child. All the psychological evidence shows this kind of environment, this kind of upbringing is damaging to the child.“ Okay, so what did they do? In many cases, they took the child from the family. And of course, always in the real world, you then have to do something else, it's all very easy to have an identification of a problem – it is much more difficult to have a solution. What was their solution? They put these children into large children's homes.

And the result of that was that for many of the children, that went into large childrens' homes, instead of being abused and mistreated by their parents, they were abused and mistreated in children's homes instead. Life, in other words, is not simple. And any psychology, any developmental psychology that claims to offer a simple solution to simple problems is falling into a trap. It's a trap, which, partly, concerned thinking you know the answer, thinking – to go back to the slide, and I will tell you this, I think probably the last one, because I want to leave some time for some questions.

When psychology began, in the 19th century, it began, I want to suggest to you, as a mission. Something which owed its roots to the enlightenment in the 18th century. Enlightenment thinking, enlightenment philosophy came to inform the beginnings of social science. Social science didn't really start until the end of the 18th century, until the age of revolutions, until the time of the French Revolution, until the time the Americans revolution. And suddenly people started to think that two things were possible: one, that it was possible to be scientific about people, and secondly, that by being scientific about people, we could make a better world. And in doing that, they also created something which we now find so familiar. The idea that we have problems in society, and that people can be social problems. We hear this, I don't know how well this translates. We hear this in English all the time. We have a social problem. This person has a personality problem. They have an interpersonal problem and have a developmental problem. They have a sexual problem. Now, every time we think about problems, we think scientifically, we think that problems perhaps have solutions. And I'm afraid that very often, those solutions may turn out to be worse than the diseases that they started to address in the first place. And so I believe that we need to approach these questions. The traditional procedures of science, I believe, are not appropriate to the consideration of certain kinds of human issue. Issues about how we should live our lives cannot be resolved by scientific method. The question of who is a more developed person than somebody else is not a scientific question. It is a question of values, of politics and morals and those can never be solved by scientific methods. Even not by the scientific methods of dialectical materialism. And secondly, that issues of fostering human betterment do not need to come to us from giving a scientific account. We do not need to take a scientific decision to be concerned with fostering many areas of human betterment. When we start to ask ourselves questions, like: do children have human rights? What do we think human rights are? What are some of the rights that we might enjoy as humans? We might enjoy, for example, the right to run our own lives, to make our own decisions, to vote, to choose our own sexual partner to do all sorts of things as well. Many of those of course are not rights that we think we should give to children, because we think that they can't exercise those rights. Although you might wonder whether they could be any worse at exercising those rights than anybody else. Because my last historical point, don't forget, until very recently, people in Western Europe thought that those black people that they colonized in Africa, were also incapable of exercising those rights, of running their own lives, of running their society, of voting themselves. Until the beginning of the 20th century, those countries also denied those rights to women, for the same reason, because they thought that women were incapable of exercising proper decision that women were incapable of voting sensibly, and so on. Well, if you now think we've changed our mind, and I think we have, we can also change our mind about how we position children in the world. But we did not change our mind because science came along and told us that women really could think properly. Indeed, much of silence at that time told us the opposite. The time women were not allowed to vote, the time black people were not allowed to vote in British colonies, French colonies, and so on in Africa, what the scientists were telling us was: it's because

women's brains were different. Because they were so disturbed by their hormones, that they really weren't able to think. That's what the scientists told us. And I wonder sometimes whether the scientists don't tell us the same stories about children, stories that justify the position we've actually put them in, in society in the same way as once we put women.

So, questions.

Question 1:

Your story? What is your story?

Rex:

I think what we want to say, is we don't ever tell only one story. That's the point. And I think the important point to recognize is everybody moves between different stories, just as we would, in my own life, for example, I have times when I tell stories, which are mad. Now, I'll give you an example. Let us say that, this evening, we go out, and we'd have a few beers or wine or something. And then tomorrow, I get up, and I'm in a strange room anyway, because I'm not at home, so I can't find anything. So I tried to get out of bed and knock something over on the floor. And then I go into the bathroom, and I try to put in contact lenses, then it falls on the floor and then I have to get a torch, then I become paranoid. I become somebody who thinks that I'm persecuted. That life is out to get me. I change my stories about my life, all the time. I think people do. And I think it's very important to recognize that we are changing our stories. I'll give you, I think, one of the best examples that I can think of, about how people change their stories about children. If you think about a child that's out shopping, with a parent, and maybe they see an older child, and that older child has a couple of ears pierced or something like that, and so the other child says I want my ears pierced, but her parent says: No, you're not old enough, when you're a year older maybe. So we say to the child one minute, you're not mature, you can't make good decisions. Now, then what happens next? We're in the shop and the people in the shop have made a nice little display and they've put all of their cans of peas in a pile. And somehow the child and the cans of peas come together and there is a big crash, and all the cans are on the floor. Now, what we don't say is, oh, that was a child. They can't think properly. It must have been an accident. We don't say that. We blame the child. We assume that if a child did that then it was their fault. They did it because they were being silly, mucking around. If it was an adult we don't think that. So from one minute to the next, we change our story.

Wendy:

Part of the problem is that it sounds very instructive to say that we have given up theory. But that is somewhat the case. Part of the reason we use the term stories is because if you turn from a developmental theory to a story of development, then I'm using the word story. The questions you ask are different. If you have a story, I don't know if you have stories that are the same as ours, if you have stories like Cinderella and Jack the dragon slayer, if you have those stories, the question: „Is it true?“ - is not a sensible story [question]. You're not telling this story to be true. You're telling it for two reasons.

One: The story is a parable that helps the child to learn what to do. Or, the stories are parables to tell the child about morals. We tell stories, either to tell people, to give them advice about how to live their lives, or we tell them to make a moral point. And what we would argue is that theories do not explain the world in any true or not true sense. What a theory does is either a theory justifies or warrants certain kinds of behavior, or it evokes an

ideology or both, often both. And so, developmental theory, the whole concept of child development, warrants treating children in a different way from treating adults. At times, the question then is, does it work? Is it practical? If you try and take a two year old and say, please, carry this large suitcase? or Would you like to decide on something? with a two year old, it doesn't work. Whereas the question might come with a 14 or 15 year old, it would be perfectly sensible. And so what we see ourselves as doing, is actually taking developmental theory, and not saying whether it's a true theory, but saying, what impact does that development theory have? In the area I spent much of my research doing is looking at how the child is treated by the law. When does the law allow a child to make a decision? When does the law prevent a child making a decision? When does the law say that the adults have the power? And when does the law say the child has the power? And what works and what doesn't work? And a different answer to your question, which I think might be underneath the question is a very good test for Rex and I of our theory is as parents. Because to be a parent of a child is a very difficult thing when we have a 13 year old daughter, who says I want to go out to like drink and have sex with my boyfriend. I won't tell you what we said because it's a long story...

Does somebody have a statement? Instead of asking a question, you might want to say something, not asking questions. „What you're saying is stupid, or I think what you're saying is interesting, or I disagree...“

Question 2:

May I have a remark? Rex, how to solve this problem: You declared in the last slide you really don't like science. How to do with psychological measurement, do you do some psychological measurement? How does it fit together?

Rex:

Okay, the question is two things, I think, how does it affect me as a psychologist? Do I ever do psychological measurements? And do I dislike science? And I think the first one I want to talk about is what sorts of things I think science is very good at doing. First of all, science is not a thing. Science is a human activity. There's nothing in science, that we have not made. So all the things that we might assume are out there in the world are to me things that have been made by human beings in their activities on the world. This is much more to say that gravity doesn't mean anything to anything in nature except human beings, only human beings think about gravity, only human beings think about mass and velocity, all the concepts that we use in science. Now to deal with certain kinds of questions, science, I think, is very effective. For example, if you have learnt some chemistry somewhere you may have learned about the relationship, say, between sodium and chlorine. Sodium, the metal, reacts very wildly, has to be kept away from air and water. And we think about chlorine. Chlorine, yellow gas, that also reacts very wildly. If you put sodium and chlorine together, you get a lot of activity. And you will produce sodium chloride, common salt. Now science is very good at telling us why this is. It says the reason these two things come together is because in the outer electron shell for sodium and chlorine, in one case 7 electrons in the outer shell, in the other case one electron in the outer shell. They come together, they share the shells, and both of them have 8 in the outer shell. We now have a theory that answers a lot of questions about why sodium and chlorine are very reactive, why they come together and why salt is something so different from sodium and chlorine. But if you look at the parallel question in psychology, I don't think we find the same thing. Many psychologists have asked themselves a question. How do we put together nature and nurture? [draws on board].

Sodium and chlorine is a very good place for a scientific theory. Nature and nurture, a very bad place for scientific theory. Why? Because when we think about nature, we might think, for example, about the genetic chemistry with which we were born. And if you thought about nurture, you might think about the environment in which we live. So am I, such an intelligent person, so well developed because of my genes? Or, because I read encyclopedias when I was a child? Well, it's a silly question. But it's even more: something that we can't answer. And it's very simple. We have no theory that tells us how the chemistry of genes mixes with the words in an encyclopaedia. We don't know, there's not a theory that can make any sense of that. Whereas here – we know why sodium and chlorine can mix together. And that's the difference between an area in which science can work effectively, and an area in which science produces nonsense, in my opinion. So I'm not anti-science and anti applying that kind of science to this kind of question. Second point, what do I think about psychological measurement? Well, the answer is, it all depends what it is that we think we're doing. If you think that psychological measurement is something that we can use which doesn't hurt anybody, I don't have a problem. So I don't know if you have them yet in Slovakia - very commonly read magazines for young people, particularly for young women. And if you have a little question, and it says „Are you really in love with your boyfriend?“, and then you also tick a box. That's a test. It's a psychological measure. It's also a piece of fun. But most of the time, it's harmless. That is not being used to classify, it is not being used to oppress, it's simply being used to provide some kind of passing function. And I have no objection to the idea of using testing practically. If you are running a school, and you have gotten a problem - that we were talking about earlier on in France to working out - if there are some children that need special education, and that's all you're doing testing, you know, working out different ways of educating, that's a practical problem. It's when it gets turned into something mysterious in your head. When the psychologist starts saying we're really measuring something inside your head: your intelligence, your personality, that I begin to become concerned. It is at that point that I think the divide comes. So, if our test is really getting used practically without creating some imaginary theory, I don't have much of a problem and I don't have a problem with science where science is doing the job that it's very good at. The science is very good at dealing with those kinds of questions. But to answer to understand *these* kinds of questions, it's not a job for science, the job here is a job for historians: When did people first start thinking about the world in this way? Why did they ask those questions and what were some of the consequences of people understanding the world in this way? And I don't think again, you really want to answer those sorts of questions here. You don't want to say you know what are the political consequences of thinking that sodium and chlorine react together. It's there that I want to draw the divide.

End