

Volume 14 Issue 4
4 / 2 0 1 6
tamarajournal.com



Learning Organizing Through Paradoxes: A tribute to Andrzej Zawislak

Aleksander Chrostowski

University of Warsaw, Poland
cypek@kozminski.edu.pl

Przemyslaw Hensel

University of Warsaw, Poland
phensel@uw.edu.pl

Monika Kostera

Durham University, UK
The Jagiellonian University, Poland
Linnaeus University, Sweden, Poland
monkoster@gmail.com

Keywords

Systems
Paradoxes
Organizational learning
Academic-practitioner gap

Abstract

This paper is intended as a tribute to Andrzej Zawislak, one of the precursors of systems approach to organization theory in Poland. More specifically, we highlight four recurring themes in his work: bridging academic-practitioner gap by studying systemic paradoxes, theorizing about organizations as complex human systems, reflection on the role of university in its social context, and scepticism towards rationality of social science. We believe that Zawislak's unique voice deserves to be heard and may serve as a fruitful starting point for theorizing about organizations.

Introduction

Andrzej Zawislak was a friend, colleague and mentor for the three of us. His untimely demise brought an abrupt end to his fascinating and original teaching and theorizing on organizations and organizing. The loss truly cannot be repaired, but we believe that his inheritance as a great Polish thinker is considerable and can be used as inspiration as well as source of ideas for generations of social scientists. In the following pages we provide an outline of Zawislak's work with an intent to familiarize the Western audience with the uniqueness of his thought, thus contributing to decolonization of the organization theory from the thus far dominating West-centric perspective.

Zawislak was, in the 1970s and 1980s, one of the precursors of the systems approach to organization theory in Poland, and in his later work, he developed some of his initial ideas in challenging and highly interesting directions. In this paper, we would like to highlight and follow one of such lines of thought, to consider the implications of Zawislak's ideas for the

conceptualization of organizational learning as a dynamic and paradoxical activity, firmly placed within a systemic tradition. The point we make in this text is to show the importance for Polish (and hopefully not just Polish) organization theory of Zawiślak's four main contributions to knowledge: bridging academic-practitioner gap by studying systemic paradoxes, theorizing about organizations as complex human systems, reflection on the role of university in its social context, and scepticism towards the rationality of social science.

As a starting point, we would like to briefly sketch Zawiślak's general epistemologic worldview, which was informed by the theory of human systems (see e.g. Koźmiński & Zawiślak, 1979). Organizations can be conceived of as complex, dynamic systems, where different parts play different functional roles and are connected with each other in multifaceted and non-trivial ways, producing non-deterministic synergetic effects (Ackoff, 1999; Koźmiński & Zawiślak, 1979; Zawiślak, 1985). Organizational systems, as all human systems, are open, exchanging resources and information with the environment (Katz & Kahn, 1969). They are conceptualized as living and organic by authors who often extensively use organismic and biologic metaphors (Morgan, 1986). Such systems are capable of self-regulation (Ashby, 1969) and, like living organisms, more or less compelled to adapt to their environments (Emery & Trist, 1969a), through, among other processes, active learning (Argyris, 1982). Organizations are, furthermore, seen as socio-technical systems (Emery & Trist, 1969b) which grow „by processes of internal elaborations” (p. 282), „achieve a quasi-stationary equilibrium” with a continuous ‘throughput’ despite a considerable range of external changes” (p. 282): an adaptive process by which organizations learn. Phases of the organization's developmental cycle are its “life stages”, and, through adaption and learning, the organization can achieve a state of dynamic equilibrium (Gościński, 1989). The main goal of organizations seen in this manner is, as in the case of all living systems, to survive (Obłój, 1987). Learning makes it possible for organizations to evolve and survive in a complex and turbulent environment (Morgan, 1986).

However, many mainstream systems theorists of the 70s and 80s (notably excluding Zawiślak), viewed organizations as organisms ruled by biological and evolutionary laws. Within such a perspective, systemic learning processes appear to be either governed by a convergent set of rules, or, at least, resulting in mimetic effects, creating “populations” within an “ecology” (Hannan & Freeman, 1977). Originality, inspiration and direct experience, so central to human learning, seem to be out of such picture, when it comes to deep structural aspects of organizing.

It has also been pointed out by some systems thinkers that it is essential that *change agents*, original and unique to an organization's collective experience and culture, provoke individual kicks for change (Morgan, 1989, p. 249), to ensure that an original and directed process of learning for change is underway in the organization (Argyris, 1982). Learning is, clearly not only adaptation, but, on most advanced levels, a creative endeavour – there is an extensive body of literature dedicated to such learning concerning feedback loops, inputs, outputs and throughputs of information, knowledge and wisdom (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Bateson, 1972; Morgan, 1986; Sterman, 2005; Tosey, 2005). However, a question arises about how (and, indeed, whether) organizations can learn about organizing itself: is there really a biologicistic “law” determining the organizing principle, the deeper structure pertaining to mode, ownership, participation, etc; or are there “populations” of organizations, or species which “naturally” frame the processes of organizing as such? In other words, is this intrinsic aspect bound to remain adaptive and fall into the traps of imitation? The work of Andrzej Zawiślak helps to point to an interesting direction of thought: how, firmly placed within a systemic framework, organizations still can make use of original and unique learning processes pertaining to organizing itself.

As a point of departure, let us propose an approach to organizational systems slightly different from the 70s and 80s mainstream systems theory, yet faithful to its origins. The organismic metaphor which lies at the root of most of the traditional systems theory has been criticized from many standpoints: it is said to depict organizations and their environments as too concrete, that the assumption of „functional unity” and (static) equilibrium is not only misleading but highly normative. It has also been pointed out that the metaphor has the ability of becoming an ideology (Morgan, 1986). However, going back to the original idea of interconnected dynamic systems (Bateson, 1979), it is possible to conceive of organizations and their environments as systems not necessarily in a narrow biologicistic sense, but in a broader, ecosystemic one, where the ecosystem is comprised of natural phenomena and also of culture and spirit. We regard the following systems ideas as central for our reasoning: the idea of the interrelatedness of the „parts” of the system, the embedding in the context, the crucial role of the „flow” of activity, including learning processes. Furthermore, ours is a process oriented systems approach, based on Karl Weick's notion of the processes of organizing (Weick, 1979).

The reflection on Zawiślak's contribution has to take into account the social realities within which he worked as they shaped both his interests and the form of his work. The centrally planned communist economy of '70 and '80 consistently proved to be inefficient. Such inefficiencies were to a considerable extent caused by problems of coordination between various organizational units within that vast system. Hence it is hardly surprising that Zawiślak got enamored with the

systemic approach that envisions relationships within the system rather than its constitutive elements as sources of challenges. It is also not surprising that his work on systems garnered considerable attention among scholars and practitioners alike since it was seen as a promising avenue of research that might allow solving aforementioned problems of managerial practice.

At the same time, the fact that Poland was controlled by an authoritarian regime constituted a considerable obstacle for proponents of the systemic approach. While identifying specific deficiencies of state-owned enterprises was permitted, a systemic critique on a micro- and meso-level were usually too much to stomach for mainstream academia. Zawiaślak's solution to this predicament was both ingenious and contributing to the popularization of his work. Ostensibly, his intent was to criticize the deficiencies of big capitalist (mostly American) corporations in hope that socialist managers would learn from their Western counterparts and avoid similar traps. Implicitly, the edge of his critique was obviously directed at all the current and potential issues and dysfunctionalities and transcended far a focus only on the local and particular. He escaped the so then common trap on Polish (and other East European) organizational theorists: a concentration on the "practical" in search of short-term solutions to theoretically limited problems.

Organizations as dynamic systems

The systems approach, based on Gregory Bateson's (1972; 1979) idea of systems coexisting in an extended and complex ecology of relationships, and on the General Systems Theory of Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1976) has been, for several decades of the last century, one of the dominating perspectives within organization science. Currently it is regaining interest among social scientists: classics such as books by R.L Ackoff are published anew (1999; 2010) and new books and articles rooted in the systems approach have begun to appear dedicated to topics ranging from management consulting (Kostera, 2013, Chrostowski & Jemielniak, 2011), to university management (Leja, 2013), to media management (Nierenberg, 2011), to organizational learning (Tosey, 2005), multifunctionality (Roth, 2014), and to proposing a broad frame work for theorizing within social sciences today (Jaworska-Witkowska & Witkowski, 2016), as well as directions for macro-social and political change (Roth, 2015).

Apart from becoming anew an increasingly popular perspective, a systems view on organizations and society is also, and has been for long, a powerful inspiration for theorizing in social and organizational sciences. For example, it is informing a number of approaches such as the view of organizing as a network of dynamic inter-related processes (Weick, 1979), holistic organizational thinking and practice (Senge, 2006), holistic strategic consulting (Chrostowski & Jemielniak, 2011). Less directly but instrumentally, it serves as a broad frame of reference for a number of vital perspectives and ideas, such as processual organization theory (Hernes & Bakken, 2003), organizational self-recreation, or *autopoiesis* (Maturana & Varela, 1980; Luhmann, 1995), and perhaps particularly most notably, for actor network theory, as takes up some of its ideas of inter-related systems from the classic systems approach (Latour, 1987; Law & Hassard, 1999), becoming particularly useful with regard to complex social networks such as professions engaged in various organized settings (Ludwicki, 2008).

The considerable popularity of the systems approach among Polish scholars of management (such as, for example, the present authors) can be directly linked to contribution of Andrzej Zawiaślak and his massive impact as author, teacher and mentor.

The key characteristics of the systems approach are its focus on a holistic view and its interdisciplinarity. There is a tendency to regard phenomena in their broader contexts, from the point of view of different areas of knowledge (de Rosnay, 1982). This tendency is particularly clear in Batesonian thought. Gregory Bateson (1979) saw the surrounding world in terms of ecosystems, or complex cybernetic systems, having material, energetic, cultural and spiritual aspects. He emphasized how these aspects should be considered together and in their intricate relationships, in order to solve the many and increasingly serious problems facing humanity. A deep knowledge of human organizations requires respect for their natural dynamic interactions with their environments (Bateson, 1972). The world is a unity, and there are *steps to the ecology of mind* (Bateson, 1972) to be undertaken in order to learn how to navigate within it, respectfully interact with its flow, while building upon own unique experiences and seek new ideas and ways of being in the world.

This is a broad systemic vision, an absolute unity at the one end of the spectrum of systemic learning. The other is situational and problematizing, it is about polarizing and individuality. Yet this is not about atomization and fragmentation. It has been known since the times of Aristotle (2003) that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The relations between the parts are complex and non-trivial. The actions undertaken in one subsystem may have consequences for another subsystem which cannot be foreseen or controlled. The whole also has an influence on the parts, and different kinds of elements, also instable, are able to create a stable whole. Such a broad view is often serving as a general frame of reference

in many social theories, such as the ones addressed at the beginning of this section. It is the relationships and dynamics between the parts that are crucial for the system and its condition, not individual elements as such (Piotrowski, 2007).

Organizations as learning systems

The organizational learning approach was one of the major streams of 20th century organization theory. It recognized that organizations learn by inferring lessons from their own experiences and from experiences of others (Levitt & March, 1988). While the literature acknowledges that this process is marked by considerable challenges (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; Denrell, 2003; Levinthal & March, 1993; March, Sproull, & Tamuz, 1991) and points to the fact it is never perfect, it usually neglects the broader systemic and processual frames, both the conditions and implications, of the learning processes. This line of inquiry is taken up by the systemic approach to learning and organizing, and was further investigated by authors representing the learning organization turn from the 1990s and early 2000s. However, it can be traced in the works by Zawiślak appearing as early as 1973.

Some of the key ideas about systems learning were developed by Gregory Bateson (1972), who proposed several modes of learning. The first level consists of adaptation and generalization, or the most popular learning activities, as usually depicted by mainstream systems approach to organization studies. Deutero-learning is an advanced mode by which the organization learns to learn. On this level learning is contextualized and rules about how to learn more are developed. Bateson points out that an individual or a system can move up from the first to the second level by means of problematization and reflection, which Peter Senge (2006) later elaborated in his writings on the learning organization. Zawiślak's work, published simultaneously with some of Bateson's writings, covered similar ground although from a slightly different perspective. Zawiślak was particularly interested in paradoxes of centralization of control fundamental to functioning of big bureaucratic systems (Zawiślak, 1973) and their impact on organizational learning and decision making.

Following Herbert Simon (Simon, 1946) he was putting an emphasis on the conflicts between people, departments, levels of the organization, often due to different goals and priorities, often cause a multiplication of priorities, an explosion of claims to what kind of knowledge is valuable, important or even valid. It is difficult to resolve these differences and it can be challenging to produce criteria of validity. One method for extracting and grouping of knowledge from within potentially conflicting relationships is by focusing on what is crucial for the making of strategic decisions. For example, such is the role of key success factors (KSF) in the industry, understood as issues that determine buyer interest and impact a purchasing decision. A few of vital importance are to be selected, and it has to be kept in mind that they can change in time. These factors determine which competencies should be developed by the organization (Hammel & Prahalad 1990), and, consequently, which knowledge is to be considered important, worth to be accumulated on the organizational level and developed again on different levels. James March (1991) takes up another important aspect of learning related to the link between the participants and the organization, and the organization and its context. He discusses exploitative (or making use of existing models and methods) versus explorative (looking for new ways of approaching issues) learning, and shows how the former are more effective in short term processes, while the second is necessary for the long term development of organizations:

Organizations store knowledge in their procedures, norms, rules, and forms. They accumulate such knowledge over time, learning from their members. At the same time, individuals in an organization are socialized to organizational beliefs. Such mutual learning has implications for understanding and managing the trade-off between exploration and exploitation in organizations (March, 1991, p. 73).

The idea of the learning organization pertains to feedback loops, throughputs, inputs and outputs. It does not touch the organizing process itself, questions of structure, strategy, ownership form, democracy, participation, micropolitics and conflict. Bateson's (1972) systemic deutero-learning was proposed to take place through problematization and reflection. On the first level one finds qualifications, and on the second, knowledge. Senge's (2006) learning organization takes up how to develop knowledge, or deutero-learning, pertaining to intra- and extra-organizational relationships (for a critical reflection see also: Visser, 2007; Tosey, Visser & Saunders, 2011). However, what about learning organizing itself, deutero-learning about the processes of organizing? Paul Tosey (2005) explores the paradoxical consequences of the encounter of organizational politics and learning, and questioning the idea that learning states can be produced through intention and design. He anticipates (rightly so) the imminent demise of the learning organization, as there is no acknowledged way of dealing with the tension between discovery and accumulation of knowledge, between individual originality and experience and openness to change on systemic levels. In other words, there is no knowledge about how to

“manage” paradox and what, in fact, it would mean in practice or as an organizing principle to embrace it. It is here that Andrzej Zawiślak makes a contribution to our understanding of how this particular knowledge can be taken to new, original and non-imitative, beyond mimetic levels. By examining the paradoxical conditions and consequences of learning seen as a systemic activity he brings back this Socratic tradition into systemic thinking of organizations and organizing: this is how organizations can learn to organize better.

Andrzej Zawiślak’s and the learning through paradoxes

The contribution of Andrzej Zawiślak was of a particular kind, at least if seen from the Western tradition of organization studies. The standard academic paper in our area of study, increasingly confined by a straightjacket of formulaic research (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013; Daft & Lewin, 1990), is usually constructed around a typical structure: neatly outlining “antecedents”, “covariates”, and “consequences” that allow filling “the research gap.” This view of scholarship maintains that we learn something about organizations if we can show causal connection between A and B. This, however, was not the Zawiślak’s goal. Unlike most scholars in our area, he understood (social) science as a continuous process of discovery by the formulation of paradoxes.

Paradox, by definition, encompasses several, usually two, contradictory claims, that all seem to be true. While tracing casual connections is obviously useful (if not always possible), pointing to paradoxes has its advantages too. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, paradoxes are two-level claims: at the pedestrian level they tell us something about organizations but also, at a higher level, signal that our claims are problematic and that our understanding of the studied issue is insufficient. Hence, each paradox invites two kinds of questions: “which claim is true?” but more importantly also: “why was the paradox not resolved yet?” Answering these questions may point to some important insights: either the tension described in the paradox is unavoidable (for instance, like the academic-practitioner divide studied by Bartunek and Rynes (2014) or the adopted methods of inquiry are insufficient for solving the paradox.

Secondly, paradoxes are conceptually both attractive and discomfoting, thus have the ability to focus human attention for extended periods of time. While a true (Socratic) paradox can never be solved, *apparent* paradoxes, when studied thoroughly, can lead to important scientific break-throughs. To give an example, Ronald Coase was captivated by the following paradox: economic activity can be coordinated purely through market transactions and firms are not needed for that purpose. And yet firms do exist. Why? Asking this question led him to formulation of the transaction costs theory (Coase, 1998). In a similar vein, Karl Weick (2003) shows how the architecture of Frank Gehry produces a mental paradox which opens the managerial mind. Gehry’s architecture is about balancing on the border of what is possible to express and what defies all attempts at definition. This tension creates a very dynamic space which teaches how to manage paradoxes, how to live with irreconcilable differences and both respect them and not become overwhelmed by them: “that’s precisely what it means to coordinate variability, complexity, and effectiveness” (Weick, 2003, p. 96).

Ultimately, paradoxes are great devices for garnering insight. When exposed to paradoxes individuals, at least some of them, at least some of the time, start to think, as has been known at least since the times of Socrates. The popularity of Zawiślak’s writings, not just among scholars but also among practitioners, can perhaps be linked to this inspiring effect. To give just one example: tons of ink were spilled to study the problem of work-life balance. Such publications usually end with suggestions on how such balance could be achieved. However, as it is a case with every implementation process, formulating recommendations on paper is much easier than following the wise advice in real life. Zawiślak’s solution to this challenge was different: rather than formulate straightforward guidelines on achieving work-life balance he would confront his students (ranging from undergraduate students to business tycoons, to ministers) with range of paradoxes apparently pitting success against happiness (Zawiślak, 2011). By undermining the taken for granted association between these two he was able to achieve a dual goal: at the more prosaic level he made people reflect on their lives, possibly leading them to positive change. At more advanced level he would use these paradoxes to tinker with the notion of “rationality”: are behaviors leading to success rational if they do not lead to happiness? Are behaviors leading to happiness rational if they do not lead to success? What is the true meaning of “rationality” then?

While a growing amount of literature points to the fact that managers seldom if ever use the results of scholarly studies in their practice (Kieser, Nicolai, & Seidl, 2015), it has been suggested that management theory is useful but in an indirect way (for extensive reflection on this issue, see Morgan, 1986). Rather than serving as guidelines for day-to-day decision making, it may be mobilized as a source of reflection that contributes to increased understanding of organizing (Astley & Zammuto, 1992). Andrzej Zawiślak’s contribution to knowledge shows that paradoxes are particularly useful tools for igniting such reflection processes thus allowing to partially bridge the divide between academics and practitioners. This seems to be a particularly important element of Zawiślak’s work: while the role of paradoxes in studying organizations

receives increasing attention of late (Duran, 2002; Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016; Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016, Weick, 2003), their usefulness for bridging scholars-practitioner gap seems to be largely forgotten in the Western mainstream literature.

The Perils of Learning

Andrzej Zawiaślak seemed to be wary about organizational learning and learning about organizations¹. Firstly, he appeared to believe that organizational learning can be dangerous. At the first blush, this may seem to be a peculiar statement: what can be wrong about learning? Indeed, it is hard to see any drawbacks of it if we adopt the central premise of the theory that portrays learning as an action necessary for survival. However, his experiences with Nazi and Stalinist regimes made him often to replace “survival” with “control.” This change of metaphors instantly highlights a different dimension of organizational learning. Some organizations do not simply strive to survive but learn in order to control its environment and perhaps the entire world, pushing their subjects into submission. In other words, he seemed to be strongly concerned with social consequences of knowledge on organizing acquired both by organizations and by the scholars. While we are often reminded that advances in physics, chemistry, and biology may bring not just improvement of living conditions but also grave dangers to the human kind, such reflection on the uses of the organization theory seems to be formulated with a rather faint voice. When this issue is addressed, the main thrust of critique seems to be directed at the corporate world, while the fact that formal organizations can be efficiently used for totalitarian purposes (Arendt, 1963), appears to be mostly forgotten, at least within the mainstream literature. So, paradoxical as it is, in his view students of organizations are defined by the following double bind: on one hand they should strive to understand the inner workings of organizations and their environments, on the other – they should be aware of consequences of obtaining such knowledge.

Secondly, he also liked to ponder the motivations that drive the researchers of organizations. What directs their attention, choice of problems, and adopted theoretical frames? Many theories propose various answers to that question, for instance, Marxists argued that membership in a social class plays a fundamental role, while institutionalists would suggest that that the prevailing institutional order shapes the research motives. He seemed to be dissatisfied with explanations that emphasize the link between the scholar and his or her environment, pointing to well-known examples of scientists and thinkers that pursued theories incompatible with their own social class, upbringing or institutional setting. Instead, he believed that in social sciences “scholars try to build a rational image of the world while being directed by the irrational motivation of own convictions, sympathies and injuries” (Zawiaślak, 2011, p. 49) that may or may not be linked to their environment. To put it differently, in his view, engaging in the study of the organization should be preceded by scholar’s attempt to understand his or her own motivations and idiosyncrasies. However, he also believed that such attempts are futile. Thus, he seemed to be convinced that one of the reasons we cannot understand organizations rests with the fact that we cannot fully understand ourselves.

In addition, being an *enfant terrible* of Polish organization studies, he frequently emphasized the social processes that work to the detriment of the development of social sciences. While he had hard words for scholars using “pompous”, “convoluted” but “empty language” to “restate the obvious”, he seemed to be even more irritated with their followers “hypnotized by the grandeur of the prominent scholars’ royal robes” (Zawiaślak, 2011, p. 59). To put it differently, he seemed to believe that it is not the supply side of the equation, but its demand side that allows all kinds of false prophets to prosper.

Also linked to the above, he was also greatly concerned with the authority science has gained in the society since the Enlightenment. The main problem with science rests with the fact that it is purportedly rational. While one can object to the authority of faith or to the orders issued by the leader, objections to the authority of reason are unthinkable. However, given his belief that the contents of scientific theories are to a considerable extent dictated by idiosyncratic preferences of researchers it is easy to see why he was concerned. The “scholars in royal robes” can use the authority of “objective” and “rational” science to pursue their own hubristic goals, perhaps with detrimental effects for the society.

¹ This section is based on the collected writings and public lectures of Andrzej Zawiaślak, represented mainly by the following work by the author: Zawiaślak, A.M. (1973, 1978, 1982, 1985, 2008, 2011, 2013) and by Koźmiński, A. K. and A. M. Zawiaślak (1979, 1982) if source not explicitly quoted.

Conclusions

In this paper we suggest that Andrzej Zawiślak's approach to organizational learning as paradoxical activity may bridge the gap between the holistic and the individualistic approaches to learning and organizing. Whereas it is worthwhile to keep a systemic view on organizations and their environments, where the whole is more than the sum of its parts, it is also worth considering that only radical (individuated) variance is able to bring creative strands of learning. Zawiślak's approach enables to develop deutero-learning about the processes of organizing. This has several implications, in terms of guidelines for thought and action, which we would like to briefly present as a conclusion.

Firstly, Zawiślak shows that learning by systemic paradoxes encourages reflection, but does not discourage from action, thus helping to bridge the divide between academics and practitioners. Systems thinking, in Peter Senge's famous proposition, was popular with practitioners but theoretically limited: it stopped short of developing viable methods for propagation of creative knowledge within organizational systems. It seems to us, that a paradoxical approach mastered and popularized by Zawiślak allows to partially fill the gap between knowledge and action.

Secondly, Zawiślak's Socratic, yet highly rational approach, points us in a direction that may be promising for the future of the university. In a time of crippling problems facing the university today, bringing all but a dissolution of the institution as we know it, one that stood for freedom of thought and source of wisdom and progressive change (for an overview, see Izak, Kostera & Zawadzki, 2017), such a proposition may be of massive value. A university, based on Zawiślak's ideas, can be a highly individualized and relationship oriented institution, while keeping in mind the systemic principles of requisite variety and synergy. Accumulation of knowledge does not need to be related to strategy or based on rules, it can happen as a bottom-up process, systemically driven by its own dynamics (self-regulation).

Thirdly, Zawiślak's ideas enable to see organizations as complex systems without the biological and deterministic metaphors. Andrzej Zawiślak's organizations are human systems, with a dynamic rationality, but individually free to pursue wisdom beyond linear reductionism. In other words, there does not have to be an immediate effect to a cause, no impact to link to learning processes, no obvious benefits. A return to learning for its own sake can be made, without fear of wastefulness and impeding irrationality.

Fourthly and finally, Zawiślak's paradoxical approach to learning can relinquish the hubris and the perhaps unfulfillable rationality claims of science, without imperiling the institution of science and the university. In Zawiślak's world of paradoxical rationality, it is only one regarding the dynamic equilibrium of the system that truly has the authority to set out the signposts of the vectors of change, not management, the strategist, not the market forces. Only by knowing that one does know nothing, a person or an organization can develop wisdom. For a person that means liberation; for an organization – learning about organizing itself.

References

- Ackoff, R. L. (1999). *Ackoff's Best: His classic writings on management*. New York: Wiley.
- Ackoff, R. L. (2010). *Systems Thinking for Curious Managers*. Axminster: Triarchy Press.
- Alvesson, M., & Gabriel, Y. (2013). Beyond Formulaic Research: In Praise of Greater Diversity in Organizational Research and Publications. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 12(2), 245-263.
- Arendt, H. (1963). *Eichmann in Jerusalem : A report on the banality of evil*. New York: Viking Press.
- Argote, L., & Miron-Spektor, E. (2011). Organizational Learning: From Experience to Knowledge. *Organization Science*, 22(5), 1123-1137.
- Argyris, C. (1982). *Reasoning, learning and action: Individual and organizational*. San Francisco, California: Josey-Bass.
- Argyris, Ch., & Schön, D. (1978). *Organizational Learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley.
- Aristotle (2003). *Metafizyka. (Metaphysics)*. Warszawa: De Agostini.
- Ashby, W. R. (1969). Adaptation in the multistable system. In F.E. Emery (Ed.) *Systems thinking*. Harmondsworth—Balitimore—Ringwood: Penguin, pp. 230-240.
- Astley, W. G., & Zammuto, R. F. (1992). Organization Science, Managers, and Language Games. *Organization Science*, 3(4), 443-460.
- Bartunek, J. M., & Rynes, S. L. (2014). Academics and Practitioners Are Alike and Unlike: The Paradoxes of Academic-Practitioner Relationships. *Journal of Management*, 40(5), 1181-1201.
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. London: Paladin.
- Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. Toronto: Bantam Books.

- Bertalanffy, L. von (1976). *General Systems Theory: Foundations, development, applications*. New York: George Braziller.
- Chrostowski, A. & Jemielniak, D. (2011). *Skuteczne doradztwo strategiczne: Metoda Action Research w praktyce. (Effective Strategic Consulting: Action Research in Practice)*. Warszawa: Poltext.
- Coase, R. (1998). *The Firm, the Market and the Law*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Daft, R. L., & Lewin, A. Y. (1990). Can Organization Studies Begin to Break Out of the Normal Science Straitjacket? An Editorial Essay. *Organization Science*, 1(1), 1-9.
- De Rosnay, J. (1982). *Makroskop: Próba wizji globalnej. (The Macroscope)*. Warszawa: PIW.
- Denrell, J. (2003). Vicarious Learning, Undersampling of Failure, and the Myths of Management. *Organization Science*, 14(3), 227-243.
- Durant, R. (2002). Synchronicity: A Post-structuralist Guide to Creativity and Change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 15(5), 490-501.
- Emery, F. E. & Trist, E. L. (1969a). The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments. In F. E. Emery (Ed.) *Systems thinking*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 241-257.
- Emery, F.E. & Trist, E.L. (1969b). Socio-technical Systems. In: F.E. Emery (ed.) *Systems Thinking*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 281-296.
- Gościński, J. W. (1989). *Cykl życia organizacji. (The Organizational Life Cycle)*. Warszawa: PWE.
- Hannan, M.T. & Freeman J. (1977). The Population Ecology of Organizations. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5), 929-964.
- Hernes, T. & Bakken, T. (2003). (Eds.) *Autopoietic organization theory: Drawing on Niklas Luhmann's Social Systems Perspective*. Oslo: Abstrakt, Liber, Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Izak, M., Kostera, M. & Zawadzki, M. (2017). (Eds.) *The Future of University Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jaworska-Witkowska, M. & Witkowski L. (2016). (Eds.) *Humanistyczne wyzwania ekologii umysłu: Gregory Bateson w Polsce. (Humanistic Challenges of the Ecology of Mind: Gregory Bateson in Poland)*. Warszawa: Fundacja na Rzecz Myślenia im. Barbary Skargi.
- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1969). Common Characteristics of Open Systems. In F. E. Emery (Ed.) *Systems Thinking*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 86-104.
- Kieser, A., Nicolai, A., & Seidl, D. (2015). The Practical Relevance of Management Research: Turning the Debate on Relevance into a Rigorous Scientific Research Program. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 9(1), 143-233.
- Kostera, M. (2013). Wstęp, In M. Kostera (Ed.) *Doradztwo organizacyjne: Ujęcie systemowe. (Organizational Consulting: the Systemic Approach)*. Warszawa: Poltext, p. 25-36.
- Koźmiński, A. K. i Zawiślak, A. M. (1979). *Pewność i gra: Wstęp do teorii zachowań organizacyjnych. (Certainty and Game: Introduction to Theory of Organizational Behavior)*. Warszawa: PWE.
- Koźmiński, A. K. i Zawiślak, A. M. (1982). *O organizacji : dwugłos względnie uporządkowany. (On Organizations: a Relatively Orderly Duet)*. Warszawa: PWE.
- Latour, B. (1987). *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Law, J., & Hassard, J. (1999). (Eds.) *Actor Network Theory and After*. Oxford/ Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers/ The Sociological Review.
- Leja, K. (2013). *Zarządzanie uczelniami. Koncepcje i współczesne wyzwania. (Managing the Academy: Concepts and Contemporary Challenges)*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wolters Kluwer.
- Levinthal, D. A., & March, J. G. (1993). The Myopia of Learning. *Strategic Management Journal*, 14, 95-112.
- Levitt, B., & March, J. G. (1988). Organizational Learning. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 14, 319-340.
- Ludwicki, T. (2008). Krytyczne badania nad doradztwem organizacyjnym. (Critical Research on Organizational Consulting). In M. Kostera (Ed.) *Nowe kierunki w zarządzaniu. (New Directions in Management)*. Warszawa: WAIp, pp. 257-275.
- Luhman, N. (1995). *Social Systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- March, J. G. (1991). Exploration and Exploitation in Organizational Learning. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 71-87.
- March, J. G., Sproull, L. S., & Tamuz, M. (1991). Learning from Samples of One or Fewer. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 1-13.
- Maturana, H. R., & Varela, F. J. (1980). *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The realization of the living*. Holland: Reidel.
- Morgan, G. (1986). *Images of organization*. Newbury Park: SAGE.

- Nierenberg, B. (2011). *Zarządzanie mediami. (Media Management)*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Oblój, K. (1987). *Strategia przetrwania organizacji. (The Strategy of Organizational Survival)*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Piotrowski, W. (2007). Organizacje i zarządzanie – kierunki, koncepcje, punkty widzenia. (Organizing and managing – directions, concepts, points of view). In A. K. Koźmiński and W. Piotrowski (Eds.) *Zarządzanie: Teoria i praktyka, (Management: Theory and practice)*. Warszawa: PWN, pp. 615-765.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Hammel, G. (1990). *The Core Competence of the Corporation*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Co.
- Putnam, L. L., Fairhurst, G. T., & Banghart, S. (2016). Contradictions, Dialectics, and Paradoxes in Organizations: A Constitutive Approach. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 65-171. doi:10.1080/19416520.2016.1162421
- Roth, S. (2014). The Multifunctional Organization: Two Cases for a Critical Update for Research Programs in Management and Organization. *Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry*, 12(3), 37-54.
- Roth, S. (2015). Free economy! On 3628800 alternatives of and to capitalism. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, 27(2), 107-128.
- Schad, J., Lewis, M. W., Raisch, S., & Smith, W. K. (2016). Paradox Research in Management Science: Looking Back to Move Forward. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 5-64. doi:10.1080/19416520.2016.1162422
- Senge, P. (2006). *Piąta dyscyplina. (The Fifth Discipline)*. Kraków: Wolters Kluwer.
- Simon, H. A. (1946). The Proverbs of Administration. *Public Administration Review*, 6(1), 53-67.
- Sterman, J. D. (2000). *Business Dynamics: Systems Thinking and Modeling for a Complex World*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Tosey, P. (2005). The Hunting of the Learning Organization: A paradoxical Journey. *Management Learning*, 36(3), 335-352.
- Tosey, P., Visser M. & Saunders, M. N. K. (2011). The Origins and Conceptualizations of ‘Triple-Loop’ Learning: A Critical Review. *Management Learning*, 43(3), 291-307.
- Visser, M. (2007). Deutero-learning in Organizations: A review and reformulation. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 659-667.
- Weick, K. E. (1979). *The Social Psychology of Organizing*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.
- Weick, K. E. (2003). Organizational design and the Gehry experience. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 12(1), 93-97.
- Zawiślak, A. M. (1973). *Szkice o zarządzaniu. (Sketches on Management)*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Zawiślak, A. M. (1978). *Organizacja i planowanie : ujęcie systemowe. (Organizing and Planning: the Systemic Approach)*. Warsaw: PWE.
- Zawiślak, A. M. (1982). *Pułapy i pułapki zarządzania. (Achievements and Traps of Management)*. Warszawa: Iskry.
- Zawiślak, A. M. (1985). (Ed.) *System i metoda. (The System and the Method)*. Warszawa Wydawnictwo UW.
- Zawiślak, A. M. (2008). Politically Incorrect Remarks on Social Sciences. In A. Nowak & B. Glinka (Eds.) *Management: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*. Warsaw: Faculty of Management, University of Warsaw Press, pp. 22-38.
- Zawiślak, A. M. (2011). *O kwantach, rynkach i ekonomistach: Ikebana zdziwień i paradoksów. (On quanta, Markets, and Economists: Ikebana of Surprises and Paradoxes)*. Warszawa: Poltext.
- Zawiślak, A.M. (2013). Przedmowa (Preface). In: M. Kostera (Ed.) *Doradztwo organizacyjne: Ujęcie systemowe. (Organizational Consulting: the Systemic Approach)*. Warszawa: Poltext, pp. 11-24.