

Piotra Rudkouski

ANIÓŁ DOWGIRD'S PROBLEMS WITH REALITY

The main objective of this paper is the epistemological ideas of Anioł Dowgird (1776–1835), the prominent Enlightenment philosopher born in Mohilou (Mogilev) district (the east of Belarus). I start with sketching a general historical background of Dowgird's philosophy, which constitutes the first, smaller, part of the paper. In the second, larger part I try to indicate Dowgird's contribution to epistemological realism and point out some problematic moments in this stance.

*Deacon and Member of Ordo Praedicatorum, Church of Philip and Jacob,
Vilnius, Lithuania*
e-mail: petrus@dominikanie.pl

1. Unknown and Ignored (Some Remarks on the Historical Background of Dowgird's Philosophy)

E. Darashevich, a Belarusian historian of philosophy, stresses that Dowgird was the typical Enlightenment thinker [4]. This is true, if we consider him as one who believed in reason and tried to elaborate a new – alternative to the “old”, i.e. scholastic, method of solid cognition, and was prompt to use the philosophical ideas of “Modern Ages”. But Enlightenment philosophy was to a large extent a “liberation,” or even “revolutionary,” project. B. de Fontenelle, P. Bayle, J. O. de la Mettrie, A. C. Helvétius, Voltaire and almost all the encyclopedists were persistent fighters against the “ancient regime” in the broad sense of the expression, referring not only to monarchy or social unquality, but also to obscurantism, prejudices and backwardness (assotiated, as a rule, with the Christian religion).

Anioł Dowgird was neither a revolutionary, nor a political thinker. Among his Enlightenment precursors were rather “calm” philosophers, for example Etienne B. de Condillac, Christian Wolff, Thomas Reid and Dowgird's contemporary Joseph-Marie Degérando [8]. Dowgird was mostly interested in a problem which was very similar to that of Kant: *how is knowledge possible?* He was dealing with the problem of human cognition reality (*rze-*

czywistość poznań ludzkich) throughout all his life, producing a number of weighty analytic works to list some of them: “O loice, metafizyce i filozofii moralney rozprawa, na skutek konkursu ogłoszonego przez Cesarski Uniwersytet Wileński roku 1820 dnia 1 marca do katedry rzeczonych przedmiotów, napisana przez x. Anioła Dowgirda, S. P. magistra św. teologii” (“Treatise on Logic, Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy, Written by Anioł Dawgird, Priest from the Piary Congregation and Master of Saint Theology, March 1st, 1820, for the Competition for Chair of Named Subjects, Announced by Imperatory Vilna University”) edited in Vilna in 1821, “Wykład przyrodzonych myślenia prawideł czyli logika teoretyczna i praktyczna przez x. Anioła Dowgirda zgromadzenia xx. Piarów doktora św. teologii, członka, korespondenta królewsko-warszawskiego towarzystwa przyjaciół nauk, kapelana głównego seminaryum duchownego przy Cesarskim Uniwersytecie Wileńskim cz. I” (“Lecture on the Native Rules of Thinking, i.e. Theoretical and Practical Logic by Anioł Dowgird from the Piary Congregation, Doctor of Theology, Member and Correspondent of the Royal Warsaw Society of Friends of Sciences, Padre of the Main Priest Seminary, Attached to Imperatory Vilna University. Part I”), edited in Połack (today Belarus) in 1828, and “Rzeczywistość poznań ludzkich” (“On Human Cognition Reality”), published in the journal “Wizerunki i roztrząsania naukowe, t. 5” in 1839.

Born in Belarus, writing in Polish and teaching on both Belarusian and Lithuanian terrain, Dowgird is one of those who, like Copernicus or Kościuszko, belongs “to all and to none” alike. He belongs “to all” (i.e. to Poles, Belarusians, and Lithuanians) in the sense that representatives of each of these nations have the right to perceive his heritage as a part of the thesaurus of their own national heritage. But at the same time, Dowgird belongs “to none” in the sense of belonging to one’s nation. He was *nationless*, because the very idea of a national community was at its embryonic stage in the terrain of the former Grand Duchy of Litva in the first half of the 19th century and it is extremely incredible that Dowgird might be affected by this idea.

Concerning the reception of Dowgird’s intellectual heritage, we have to acknowledge that in the case of Belarus it was a rather miserable reception. The above cited monograph of Doroshevich (written in Russian) is still the only work on Dowgird’s attainment in Belarus. At the present moment, none of Dowgird’s works have been translated in Belarusian, whereas Lithuanians got a perfect translation of his main works two years ago [1], [2], [3] thanks to the famous historian of philosophy, professor Romanas Plečkaitis. This translation serves me as the main resource of Dowgird’s thought, as I have no access to his original, Polish, books or manuscripts.

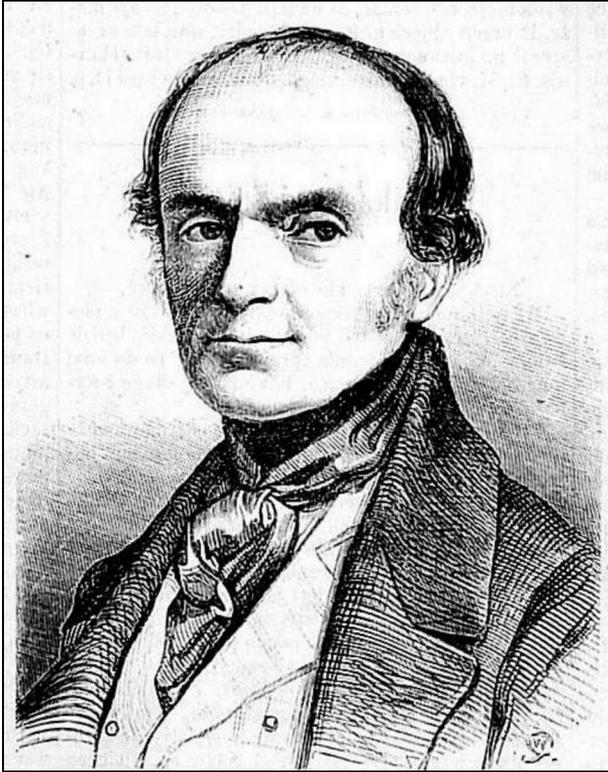


Figure 1. Portrait of Józef Gołuchowski. Lithography

“Aniol Dowgird as an Unknown Philosopher” is the title of the monograph written by S. Kaczmarek [7], the Polish researcher of Dowgird’s heritage. We could safely paraphrase this expression as: *Dowgird is an ignored philosopher*, as he, while being highly appreciated in narrow circles of professional philosophers, was never popular among students as well as philosophy amateurs. This priest from the Piary Congregation was too “cold” and “dry” for the young Vilna public, as Vilna youth at that time were looking for the “deep” and “hot” ideas, rather than for scrupulous analysis and scientific research. There was a spirit of a fight for freedom and liberation within Vilna University (officially called ‘Imperatory’) at the beginning of the 19th century.

In the meantime Józef Gołuchowski, the talented young Polish philosopher, finished his studies at Erlangen University and became famous due to his work “Die Philosophie in ihrem Verhältniss zum Leben ganzer Völker und einzelner Menschen” (On the Role of Philosophy in the Life of Nations and Individuals), published in 1822. The very title of this treatise

was attractive enough and even intriguing; it seemed to carry out the deepest aspirations of many enlightened young men, inhabiting the terrain of the former Grand Duchy of Litva and Poland Korona. In October, 1823, Gołuchowski began lecturing philosophy at the Vilna University and it was a resounding success. Since the lectures were open to all those willing, they gathered a multitude of educated inhabitants from Vilna. After Heinrich Abicht, the extremely unpopular professor of philosophy from 1804 to 1816 and Anioł Dowgird, the “dry” and “too scientific” philosopher lecturing from 1818 to 1823, this new professor with his ideas of the “spirit of nation” and “human freedom” was exactly whom the generation of philomathes and philarhetes especially needed. But in a few months the Russian authorities ordered a close to Gołuchowski’s lectures, and a bit later Gołuchowski was forbidden completely. As a result, Dowgird returned to the chair of philosophy and continued lecturing till the university was closed down by the tsarist government in 1832. Undoubtedly, for Dowgird it was an extremely uncomfortable situation. Romanas Plečkaitis described very well the plight: “His situation was difficult: the eloquent, famous, original and popular among students as well as among the whole public, professor was replaced by an ineloquent (according to witnesses of contemporaries), stammering difficult sentences, got old too quickly, person” [10]

These are, in short, the reasons why, if we use Plečkaitis’ words, “the Vilna epistemology school theoretician” was not only an “unknown”, but also an *ignored* philosopher. But at the same time, Dowgird’s contribution to philosophy, as well as to scientific methodology, seems to be much more significant and substantive than that of Gołuchowski or other representatives of “mesianistic philosophizing”. The philosophy of the latter was created for the “heart” rather than for reason, while that of the former was utterly analytic and rationalist. The first type of philosophy could be labelled “prophetic”, while the second one, represented by Dowgird, “scientific” (here, I beg the pardon of those convinced that philosophy can never be scientific in the restricted sense).

2. Dowgird’s Humbled Conceit

“The main purpose of my philosophical inquiry, whose overall content and general features are presented in this treatise, is to explore two things. Firstly, my purpose is to explain substantive reasons why sceptics doubt the true reality of our cognition and idealists deny its possibility at all. Secondly, I aim to show that our knowledge about the things existing beyond our

mind follow from some innate rules of the mind and that all the arguments seemingly supporting doubt about our knowledge or even yielding denial of it are fully meaningless”, as Dowgird writes in “On Logic, Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy...” [1].

So, the task is clear: to prove the existence of real correspondence between the content of our mind and the realm of things beyond our mind. It leads to polemics with a pleiad of sceptics. Throughout the whole history of philosophy, sceptics were (and still are) forming a strong intellectual party (Dowgird would say “sect”). But the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment era gave rise to the party (in Dowgird’s words “sect”) of “new idealists” too, an intellectual movement that originated from both empiricism and rationalism. It was the radical, Berkeley, whose empiricism gave the first solid premise for idealism. According to Berkeley, the world is to be reduced to the realm of subjective impressions (‘*esse*’ means ‘*percipi*’). Note, this *radical empiristic* claim was fused with the *entirely transempiric* claim that there exists the Great Perceiver, Absolute, that incessantly gives existence to the world by way of perceiving it. Only one step was needed to make the conclusion that Berkeley’s Absolute is nothing but the *imaginatory power* of the human person and that *esse* depends in fact on the *imaginare* of human beings.

The other resource of idealism was the Kantian critique of human knowledge (critique of pure reason). Kant himself was neither a sympathizer of idealism nor much more adherent of sceptical strategy. But, his analysis of human cognition forced him to make some compromises with both sceptics and idealists. The Königsberg philosopher made compromises with sceptics in the sense that he admitted that in the course of cognition we can never be sure whether we perceive adequately *things in se*. “Things in themselves” (Dinge an sich) remain inaccessible to us forever. Kant made a bias toward idealists too, claiming that our mind and senses are not passive in the process of cognition, but to some extent they do “shape” and “mould” information coming from the external world. So, only one step was needed to begin claiming that the whole world is nothing but ME: Kantian “phenomena” are nothing, but solely MY internal subjective entities. Those who were bolder, like Hegel, Fichte or Schelling, decided to go even further: they made a series of “revelations,” endorsing that Kantian “things in themselves” were disclosed (for Hegel, for example, it was the “Absolute Spirit”). If there is no access to the objective reality in *se*, subsequently, there is no reason to refrain from constructing a wholly optional, arbitrary, *own* world. *Anything goes*, Feyerabend’s device, can be ascribed to a pleiad of idealists of the nineteenth century.

Anioł Dowgird was aware that idealist or sceptic philosophy is a high-way for both anarchism and arbitralism in epistemology. Thus, he began to eagerly fight against these “strange and inconsistent” philosophies from a realistic standpoint. “There exist some innate rules of the mind, which order us to treat sensations we possess as corresponding to a reality beyond us” [3] – this is the kind of refrain incessantly repeated by Dowgird.

The heart of realism really captured Crispin Wright, the contemporary analytic philosopher. According to him, realism is a kind of fusion of humbleness and conceit. Realism claims *humbly* that mankind deals with the objective world, existing independently from ego cognoscens, and having lots of characteristics which may flee human consciousness. At the same time, realism *proudly* presumes that human beings are situated in a somewhat privileged situation, allowing them to obtain true knowledge about the world and, to some extent, to understand it adequately [13].

Wright’s characteristics of realism may be successfully applied to the viewpoint of Dowgird. In the case of his “humbleness,” he does not seem to feel somewhat “guilty”. Have you got any reason to hold that the world does exist independently from our mind? *Yes. This is the common-sense belief*, Dowgird could answer. “The men, guided by nothing but their native reason, do trust witnesses of their sensations so much that they would be prone to consider somebody to be rather ill-minded man, who would claim that the material world, revealed through the sensations, is but illusion, or dream, or fancy” [3]. The problem of the existence of an external world is specific to *homo philosophans*, whereas at the level of “common sense” it is but a pseudoproblem. Let us not consider them to be superior to all men, believing firmly in the things-beyond-mind! – in such a way we can interpret Dowgird’s standpoint. It consists of the device: *Let’s be humble!*

The common sense argument (“humbleness argument”) might be fully acceptable, if, however, a little problem did not appear in connection with it. The problem lies in the *intuitivity* of this argument. It does not seem to provide any verificational or falsificational procedure to justify itself. Moreover, it seems that any effort to construct such a procedure would be failed, because the sentence “Each man, guided by common sense, believes in the world-beyond-mind” obviously contains the *circulum vitiosum* fallacy. To identify one who believes in world existence (independent from one’s mind) means to identify one who is guided by common sense and vice versa. In my childhood, I sometimes dealt with the dilemma: does the world surrounding me really exist or is it solely *my imagined world*? Why am I, me, and others, others? What does it mean to be “me” and to be “others”? What is the difference between the first and the second? Is there any difference

there at all? I can assure you that it was not obvious to me whatsoever that the world beyond me really exists. (Much later, when I began to study philosophy, I was indeed surprised to find out that there were a lot of philosophers seriously dealing with the same dilemma.) One of my friends told me one day that he had had quite similar dilemmas in his childhood. The question arises here: could these, our childish dilemmas, serve as a falsifier for the common sense argument? I think, it would be an exaggeration to treat them as elements of a theory-testing procedure. The common sense argument is but an *intuitive assumption*, a counterpart of the appeal "Let us be humble!"

Whilst appealing to common sense seemed to be somehow excusable as a solution to the problem of the existence of the world outside us, the same approach to the "reality of cognition" problem would be a kind of dogmatism, if not naiveness. Note, sceptics suspect realists of two "crimes": i) that the latter does not differentiate between the senses' or intellect's data on the one hand and these things in themselves on the second, and ii) that realists naively believe that the possessing these data entirely suffices to be sure that one possesses an adequate knowledge about related things, too. In both cases, realists appear to be naive or/and dogmatic.

Dowgird tried to avoid both dogmatism and naiveness as long as he could. For this purpose, he constructed a sophisticated reasoning, applying mainly Locke's, Condillac's and Degérando's epistemological views. Here, I shall try to reconstruct this reasoning.

1. *No human doubts the fact, that (s)he possesses a faculty to have sensation (sensibilitas, sensus, facultas sentiendi)* [1].

It is obvious that to possess a sensation does not automatically mean to possess true information. Sceptics agree that sensations indeed have a place in our consciousness, but insist that i) *they may be bad reporters* and ii) *there is no means with which we could reasonably distinguish "bad" reporters from "fair"*. Realists, in this case Dawgird, accept the first part of the sceptics claim, but do not agree with the second. For them, *there exist such means with which one can correctly distinguish "true" reports from "false" ones*.

Here, Dowgird states the following:

2. *There exist three sorts of errors: errors of senses (illusions), errors of imagination and reason's errors* [3];

3. *There are two methods of correction for errors: i) experience and ii) analysis*¹.

¹ Dowgird explicitly states that mistakes of "senses" (illusions) are removable by way of either experience, or analysis [3], but I think that these (and only these) methods are relevant for other kinds of mistakes, though Dowgird does not say this explicitly.

First of all, let us explicitly formulate an underlying assumption (2). The assumption is that there are three potential sources of knowledge: senses, imagination and reason. Here, one question naturally arises: Which of them is fundamental? Dowgird rejects imagination at once, for it is the “place” of the subjective modelling of the world, where some references to real world are not even intended. (Nevertheless, Dowgird firmly stresses the usefulness of imagination in various cases of human activity, see [2]) Thus, reason and senses are at stake.

One could rightly note that the question about the foundation for knowledge may be doubly interpreted. *Primo*, it may be a question of the *nature* of knowledge, *secundo*, it may refer to *some norms or rules* which enable getting proper knowledge. In connection with this, we can establish four possible standpoints as to the question of the basis of knowledge: i) genetical empiricism (Locke), ii) methodological empiricism (Bacon), iii) genetical rationalism (Cartesius), and iv) methodological rationalism (Plato).

On the nature of our knowledge, Dowgird writes: “We have already shown that our thought consists not just of sensations, but also of primordial [pierwszorzędne, pirmaelès] and relative concepts, which are attached to the sensations, but cannot be called sensations.” A bit later he notes that “our knowledge about external entities is not only a picture [vaizdinys] different from any sensation, but is also a result of some judgment born in our mind” [1]. We can see here that Dowgird situated himself on a “cross-road” of empiricism and rationalism; for him, there are two fundamental sources of our knowledge: *sensations* as well as “*native judgment (or judgments)*” of mind. But, on the second hand, he writes that “reasoning is a faculty unfolding latest”, where “latest” refers to the ontogenetic development of humans. “An infant is not able to reason, but we could not say that (s)he has no knowledge” [3]. It means that even when the “faculty of reasoning” is not yet developed, at least it is possible to gain partial knowledge.

For Descartes, as we know, the only thing one cannot doubt is the fact of *thinking* (of course, in the first person: *ego cogito*, I do think). But, in order to come to accept the existence of an external world, Cartesius was forced to employ the idea of God, risking blame for conceptual realism. Dowgird resigned from this strategy. Why? Firstly, because of his ontological nominalism he was convinced that there exist solely *individual* things in the world. General or abstract objects are only mental entities, they do not exist really [2]. Ontological nominalists cannot share the Cartesian approach for at least one reason: this approach accepts God’s existence solely in virtue of the presence of the idea of the Absolute *in mind*. Carte-

sius does not seem to differentiate between the mental and the real; this is the main reproach of nominalists addressed to rationalists of the Cartesian type.

Secondly, Cartesius' approach yields the conclusion that realistic attitude is justified exclusively by way of somewhat sophisticated reasoning. For Dowgird, this is a great exaggeration. He was sure that even a small child incessantly gains *true knowledge* about the world and Cartesius' sophistications are quite unnecessary here. The source of this knowledge is sensations only.

It is true that our sensations *may* deceive us. Here, Dowgird distinguishes between two sorts of sensation illusions: "... some of these illusions are removable by experience, while others can be revealed by analysis, or reasoning. The first illusions occur in some circumstances, the second are characteristic of all humans. ... Illusions of the first sort can be revealed and corrected many times, whereas illusions of the second sort can be disclosed and removed by way of some progress; only one who is able to think deeply and to move him/herself in to the realm of supra-sensual truths with the help of reasoning is also able to disclose it [the second kind of illusion]" [3].

Allow me to quote a bit larger passage from Dowgird in order to exemplify his framework for seeking *true* knowledge.

We have already seen that any opinion [mniemanie, numanomas spęsmas] consists of multiple judgments. I would like to pay particular attention to the first two. Firstly, there exist judgments generated by some real sensation, for instance, "I experience smelling a melon" or "I experience light changing" – such judgments are beyond reasonable doubt; we must not treat them as opinions. Look at another kind of judgment which is generated by some imagined sensation, for example: "Here is a melon in the room" or "Some material body of certain shape and of certain size is at some distance and is directed toward some point." This second kind of judgment is less certain and truthful [in Lithuanian transl.: "tikras" that means "certain", "truthful", "real"] than the first one, because, to speak the truth, it is opinion only. However, if we analyze this judgment, we can see that it is not simple, rather, composed [3].

"Judgments of the second type consist of a number of 'imagined informations' which are raised in our consciousness spontaneously on the basis of earlier experiences. We can have an impression of smelling, which reminds us of smelling a melon and we are prone to judge at once: here is the melon! Dowgird appeals not to hurry with this judgment. But what can we do? *We must look for additional experiences, which could confirm (or disconfirm) our 'first impression'*; such, in short, would be Dowgird's response" [3].

And here the field of manoeuvres opens itself to the sceptics. Since we decide to look for other, additional, experiences in order to check the “first impression,” we enter the road that leads to, not truth, but *regressus in infinitum*, because we must formulate every further impression in “first-person-mode” (if, of course, we further want to stand at the level of *judgment*, and not *opinion*).

We could try to defend Dowgird from a sceptic attack with the help of John Watkins’, the 20th-century philosopher of science, approach. The sentences “I am experiencing smelling a melon” or “I experience light changing” are what Watkins would call *autopsychologic reports* which may be treated as *explananda*. Sentences of the second type from the cited passage, such as “Here is a melon in the room” or “Some material body of certain shape and of certain size is at some distance and is directed toward some point” should be treated as *explanans* [11]. So, “Here is a melon in the room” would be a kind of *hypothetical explanation* for the autopsychologic report “I experience smelling a melon”.

Watkins’ solution is, undoubtedly, interesting enough, but not free from problems. The Polish philosopher of science, Adam Grobler, rightly remarked that the epistemological status of the “autopsychologic reports” is indeed not clear. Do I have any certainty about their infallibility? Both psychology (Grobler refers particularly to neopsychoanalysis of Fromm) and our own experience witness that it may often be problematic adequately to express what we in fact experience [6]. Besides this, it is dubious whether Dowgird himself would approve of Watkins’ approach². (Dowgird was convinced that sentences of the kind “Here is the melon in the room” (Watkins’ “1-level sentences”) should be of much more solid status, than the status of “hypothetical explanation” only.)

Maybe, we should try to choose a bit simpler approach to defend Dowgird from sceptics. I could simply endorse that I do not agree that there is no difference between the one who said: “Here is an apple in the room” after he had experienced smelling an apple and nothing more, and the one who said the same after he had experienced smelling an apple, and had seen the apple, and had touched it, and, perhaps, had bitten off a piece of this apple. Sceptics could respond that this is a case of the application of probabilistic logic, i.e. I have answered the question of *how to increase probability* of some judgments, instead to answer the question of *how to know* that the judgment is true. But if sceptics admit some relevance of the probabilistic

² It is dubious too that Dowgird would accept Grobler’s critique of Watkins.

logic (and it seems that in this case they do), it means that I have almost achieved my purpose. I am ready to agree with sceptics that we never reach absolute, hundred-percent certainty of what is true, but I insist that there is some process of verisimilitude in the realm of knowledge, and experience in this process plays a key role. Paraphrasing Adam Grobler's expression³: *One cure for science is more science; we could say: One cure for experience is more experience.*

Dowgird in his turn tries to position *empirical ground* under our knowledge. Following John Locke, he distinguished *primary* and *secondary* sensations (Locke, as we know, used the term "idea" for all sensations as well as for concepts, yielded by internal reflexive operations [9]). The first kind of sensation gives us information about the proprieties of such things as extent, shape, and motion, whereas the second gives us an impression of, for example, color, sound, odor or taste. It is note worthy to stress that these secondary sensations *do not inform* us, but solely *give impressions*. Color, *exempli gratia*, is produced by way of interaction between a thing (or group of things) and sight; color is not an objective propriety of a thing. "In fact, the sense of sight itself can never give us knowledge about features or relations of extent (either full, or not full), it is always based on sense of touch" [3]. Or else: "It seems to be doubtless whenever we judge the position, shape, size or quantity of some things on the base sense of sight or some other sense, barring the sense of touch, because our judgment is nothing but opinion" [3].

For what reason is touch so fundamental? "... It offers us concepts of external substances. Concepts of substance, by way of connecting with the sensation of imagined touch, offer us all other sensations. All these sensations constitute in us concepts of external substances as well as a concept of the thinking substance, i.e. the soul" [1].

Dowgird was affected not only by Locke's epistemological analysis, but also, and perhaps mostly, by Etienne Condillac. It was probably a fascination with "Condillac's statue" (a mental experiment, showing that only one sense would suffice to unfold all other abilities which are necessary for life), that stimulated Dowgird to create a conception of human knowledge with the primacy of "touch". From Locke and Hume, Dowgird learnt that our senses can deceive us (descriptions of many optical illusions could make an especially great impression). From Condillac, he learned that at least one sense is quiet reliable, namely touch. The next step was to construct a co-

³ To be more precise, this expression was *used* by Grobler in his "Metodologia nauk", but he, according to himself, does not remember who is the author of it.

herent conceptual scheme, which could incorporate two statements: i) our senses are fallible and ii) we can have *true* knowledge about the external world. Condillac's mental experiment with the animated statue served Dowgird as his main source of inspiration. For him, impressions of touch remain in our mind and transform themselves into relatively lasting concepts. With the help of these "touch-copies" we are able to "control" the activity of other senses.

Undoubtedly, our "sceptics" could say a lot concerning this "contactive epistemology" of Dowgird. But, in order not to make this article too prolix, I will allow the sceptics to only make two general remarks, without explicating their content. The sceptics remarks would be the following: i) do we know that these "touch-copies" are not "deformed" in our mind to such a degree that they, instead of correcting possible errors, would rather support illusions produced by other senses and ii) in what way are touch impressions of one thing reliably applicable to other things (or even things of other kinds)?

However, here the sceptic is not needed at all. Dowgird himself, ending his spacious preface to the book, "Lecture on native rules of thinking...", notes that one of his main tasks is "to consider all possible rules, the system of which would be a reliable guide in seeking the truth in all spheres of human knowledge" and then confesses sincerely: "What about this purpose, *I'm not sure that I did it well enough*, or rather I'm aware how many defects this work can have" (cursive of mine – P. R.) [2].

So, Dowgird, even in his epistemological realism, is just *half-conceited*.

3. Conclusion

In spite all these defects, which Dowgird himself confesses in the preface to one of his books, and despite a number of his ideas being somewhat anachronic, it seems to me that this scholar from Mahilou (Mogilev) prepared a good enough framework for scientific rationality. The key elements of this framework are: i) experience, ii) intellectual analysis and iii) idea of truth.

Claiming that our mind has a conceptual scheme (partially innate, partially molded in the course of ontogenetic development), Dowgird appropriated to Kant (indeed, Dowgird called Kant an "ingenious thinker", but could not accept Kantian phenomenalism and deconstruction of classical proofs of God's existence). Analyzing our judgement about external reality, and stressing (of course, not without Locke's influence) that seem-

ingly simple statements are in fact composed, Dowgird was very close to the idea of a *theory-leadenness thesis*, which will explicitly be formulated later in twentieth-century methodological inquiries. Emphasizing the important role of imagination in our cognition, and at the same time postulating to confront “imaginational” judgment with experience data, i.e. to consequently check our claims, Dowgird seemed to anticipate falsificationist doctrine. Finally, Dowgird firmly highlighted that opinions (i.e. ungrounded, accidental beliefs) *are as inevitable as useful* and explained this in the category of conservation: opinions may serve human survival (though there was also an appeal to gradually replace opinions with solid, grounded and justified knowledge) [3]. Let me note that the latter view would constitute the core of evolutionary epistemology in the 20th century.

I think the case of Dowgird is relevant enough for the interpretation of the contemporary intellectual condition in Belarus. Note, the present moment in Belarus is very similar to that of “Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów” in the nineteenth century, and the intellectual atmosphere in Belarus today really reminds of the ‘philomathe era’ from the early 19th century. Dictatorship, dependence on Russia, intensive Rusification and other factors yielded great demand for the “prophetic” philosophy. (I used to define this state as “a chase for spirits and ideas”.) Hegelian idealism, nationalist romanticism, and utopian visions (for example, ecologic) became an overwhelming type of “philosophy” (if we take into consideration the non-Soviet philosophy) in the early and mid 1990s. It may be called an *idealistic* philosophical trend. But in the second half of the 1990s, romantic idealism was pushed aside by a series of new trends – postmodernism, new Marxism, various versions of relativism and so forth. This second trend (or rather set of trends) I call *conceited scepticism*. (Walancin Akudowicz’s book ‘Mianie niama’ (‘I don’t exist’), edited in 1995, may be considered the symbolic start of “conceited scepticism” as well as the most representative sample of it.)

This “hybrid” of romantic idealism and conceited scepticism (plus eclectic “Belarusian state ideology”) is dominant in Belarus nowadays. A tradition of scrupulous research, employing logic and respecting modern methodological standards, is not yet formed in this country in philosophical and humanistic areas. It is a “metaphysical thrill” or “post-metaphysical scoff”, that is still prevailing in these areas. And, perhaps Dowgird, this “uneloquent” and “stammering” scholar, may himself appear as the significant ‘Other’, able to introduce into Belarusian philosophy (as well as into social-humanistic sciences) principles of strict and analytic thinking.

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