

PSYCHOTHERAPY: ADAPTATION OR WALKING TOGETHER? (A ROADSIDE CONVERSATION)

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The article concerns psychotherapeutic work in the perspective of existential approach. Two trends are discerned in modern psychotherapy regardless of the known division into different schools – the adaptation therapy, and the one viewing a person in the context of his Personal being in the world. Therapy here is understood as the Way of mutual personal growth of both the therapist and the client. Distinction is singled out as one of the central points in forming the meanings, essential for both the normal development of a child and in psychotherapy, and remaining significant for spiritual growth in adults.

Keywords: anthropology, personal identity, existentialism, existential psychotherapy, the structure of conscientiousness, distinction as ability, phenomenology, education development, educating medium.

doi: 10.3846/coactivity.2010.27

Introduction

The article concerns the experience of psychotherapeutic work in the perspective of existential approach. There could easily be discerned in the modern psychotherapy two trends, leaving aside the subtleties of countless approaches. And the difference between these two trends is due rather to each particular therapist's personal ways than to his adhering to any of the existing schools.

The first trend may provisionally be called the adaptation therapy, as the primary task here is viewed as helping a person to adapt to the real situation he has at the given moment. This is not – let's repeat it – connected with this or that particular school, though of course, some of them are more likely to insist on adaptation in its most rigid form, as if accommodating a person to the existing society, which may be badly morbid in many respects.

The second trend views a person in the context of his/her Personal being in the world. Therapy here is understood as an Encounter, as walking together along the Way of personal growth of both the therapist and the client. Here belong Medard Boss' approach called Dasain-analysis, Ernesto Spinelli's phenomenological-existential therapy, Fyodor Vasiliuk's "understanding therapy", to name only a few. The choice of existential foundations depends on a therapist's readiness to accept the challenge of existence, on his being aware of his own situation as crucial.

As we belong to the existential-phenomenological trend, the therapy of Walking Together, we shall explain this approach through the experience of differences, of making distinctions. The very process of making

distinctions is going to be our central point here.

Let us go into more detail about the key points able to highlight the difference between the said trends in a most vivid way.

The therapy aim

Adaptation therapy is aimed at giving the client a practical means of solving his/her particular situation or problem.

The other trend views psychotherapy (healing the soul) as striving towards the original existential wholeness or fullness of being. As Medard Boss felicitously formulates, here lies the original contradiction between the therapist's and the client's positions. He says that when a psychiatrist looks upon his patients through his experience of the *Dasain*-analysis "...he will of course ask (as doctors throughout the world always do): 'Well, Mr Mayer, well, Frau Muller, what's your complaint, what do you lack?' And of course, he will get from them whatever else but an adequate answer to his question. They would rather mention what they do have, than what they really lack. They would, for example, say: 'I've got a headache, or I've broken my leg, or I've got this or that *idée fixe*, etc'" (Boss 1979: 68).

The main purpose of adaptation therapy is to adjust the client to the situation, not to transform the latter. Its motto is: "Change your attitude – and life will be better!" No creative activity.

An existential therapist, – A. Ulanovsky demonstrates, – helps his client to change his future, to develop his personality according to his views and wishes. This practically means offering a client a means to understand his life as a task (Улановский 2003).

Attitude to suffering and critical existential situations

Adaptation therapy views liberating a man from suffering as one of its main aims. This is

achieved by various means – through "broadening of the conscience", gaining more knowledge, changing the correlation of the figure and the background, as well as through integration, awareness, responsibility, and other undoubtedly good and useful things. As S. A. Smirnov views it, if anything goes wrong, we should "investigate the question, analyze it, and everything will click into place. It is not even a kind of prophylaxis of the soul, but simply a correction of psychological state, aimed at "feeling OK". Thousands of coaches are busy with this exactly, independently of their schools and approaches. And here lies the difference between the psychology of secret and that of mystery, as A. A. Puzyrey used to say" (Смирнов 2008: 15).

The therapy of Walking Together presupposes support in facing and going through the critical points of human existence. It has the courage to go through great anguish.

Fyodor Vasiliuk views the aim of therapy as transforming torment into suffering (Василиук 2005). The latter, in his understanding, differs from the overwhelming and impenetrable blackness of torment in that it is filled with existential meaning. This does not imply dolorism of any kind. It simply means that we are aware of the tragedy of existence and are ready to be present with the client in his suffering. E. Spinelli comes to the conclusion that in psychotherapy it is not clever breakthroughs that bring success, nor it is such qualities as care and respect, so necessary for a therapist, but it is rather due to the awareness of our common impotence and uncertainty in the face of the "desperate dilemmas of human existence that we have to accept together with the client" (Spinelli 2001: 10).

The therapist's position

The adaptation therapy presupposes a certain hierarchy in the therapist–client relationships. The therapist's position is undoubtedly the one of power, confidence and strength. The degree of his power may fluctuate from a very

authoritative one (in classical psychoanalysis) to a milder and lighter one, as in the humanistic approach.

In the therapy of Walking Together, according to E. Spinelli "Psychotherapist is "attendant" – one who walks beside you and, through being with you, illuminates not just your world, but all worlds as well" (Spinelli 2001: 20).

Distinctions and discernment

In the second part of our paper we shall dwell on one of the important things of the existential-phenomenological psychotherapy and partly pedagogy – the experience of discernment and distinctions.

Making distinctions is viewed as one of the basic concepts in modern philosophy and is described in detail in Derrida, Molchanov, and other scholars.

V. I. Molchanov views the ability to discern distinctions as a necessary feature of non-aggressive consciousness (Молчанов 2004).

J. Derrida views distinctions and discernment (the distinction between these seems of primary importance for our further work) as basic philosophic categories, rooted in metaphysical layer. "Discernment remains for us a metaphysical name; and all the names it might be given in our language are metaphysical, as all names are". He analyzes the relationship between "the discernment as expectation" and "the discernment as separation" (Derrida 1978: 34).

There is a question that still remains open: Where do they exist, to what world do they belong – these mysterious things, distinctions and discernment? To the world of our consciousness? Such view seems to be closer to V. I. Molchanov's interpretation. Derrida places discernment into the space of "the unuttered". He considers it to be "more ancient" than the being itself, having no name at all in our language. "There is no name for such things" – the sentence should be understood in a direct, trivial way. Such "unuttered things" are not something "ineffable" that no name is able to approach:

God, for example. This realm of "the unuttered" is a kind of game resulting in nominal results – either relatively integral or atomic structures that are called names, some strings of replacing names, involving such nominal results as "discernment" itself. However, Derrida, following in this Heidegger, leaves us the hope to reach "the unuttered" – as "Being / speaks / always and everywhere / through / every / language" (Derrida 1978: 51).

It is discernment exactly in the language and through the language that we are basing our practical work upon.

Of course, we understand that each author uses the notion 'distinction' in his special way, in a specific meaning not quite similar to that of the others. But to go into all those details will obviously exceed the volume of this report. Here we shall simply note that we are using the term in the meaning very close to that of Sokolowski's usage.

R. Sokolowski points out the following typical traits of distinctions present in our everyday life:

- Distinctions are made in a state of uncertainty and in imagination.
- Distinctions are beyond the limits of judgments and propositions.
- Distinctions are unities of identity and difference, belonging to one and the same qualitative kind.
- Distinctions constitute being. To make distinctions means to make things visible.
- Only after the distinction has been made it becomes possible to single out what was not discernible before (Sokolowski 1979).

It is of principal importance for us that the very ability to make distinctions and be aware of this experience of making distinctions constitutes an integral part of both psychotherapy and education.

Let us explain this using some examples.

A woman comes for a therapeutic session with the complaint she is unable to establish good contact with her teenager son. The more she applies, as she sees it, her attention and care, the more her son drifts apart from her.

She is afraid that in case she lets him out of her control she would lose him forever.

As the therapy proceeds, she comes to understand that she had mixed two different things – care as control and care as participation in the other's being, the care for the soul. Her controlling "care" had been for her a way to avoid her own inner problems, she comes to realize that without caring (as M. Foucault uses the term) for her own soul she won't be able to establish authentic relations with her son either.

Distinctions (the very ability to make them) prove to be a means of positive restructuring the conscience (and more than that, the structure of self) when challenged by being. Psychic reality is not something stable and existing by itself. Coming to a consultation, the client, in a collaboration with the therapist, seeks for his own ways of structuring and restructuring it. F. Vasiliuk, paraphrasing L. S. Vygotsky, calls this work a psychotechnique.

In our psychotherapeutic work we notice very often that the problem voiced by a client may be rather remotely and indirectly connected with his real existential situation. The real problem seems to be the loss of the private inner area of an individual – the area where he can be true to himself. In our everyday cares and constant preoccupation with our social roles, we are, to a very large extent, alienated from our "inner self". We speak and act not on behalf of it, we do not give it the floor for days, we make it starve, and thus our inner self dies quietly within us.

Another area of our scientific interest is pedagogical work with the ability to make distinctions, the experience of which allows us to view distinction as a special ability, normally starting to develop from very early years.

Communicational conflict as a source of aid in mental development of preschool children

A.-N. Perret-Clermont sees as the most important point in the intellectual development

of children the moment when a child starts to understand and make clear to himself the latent foundations implicitly present in the situation designed by the adult. She considers socio-cognitive conflicts to be the main source of intellectual growth. The conflict makes a participant coordinate his actions with those of other participants, which involves him into the decentration process putting him against different points of view, he is able to admit not without certain cognitive reconstruction (Perret-Clermont 1981).

This approach changes the very idea of the place and role of psychological experiment in the educational practice. It is not just an independent investigation with results absolutely detached from actual education and upbringing children, but its organic part determining the next step in its development.

What takes place in such experiment is "a specific exchange of understandings and positional coordinating between the adult and the child" (Perret-Clermont 1981: 98). This means an experiment has to do with the form of a child's interaction with the adult and other children, and not merely with a child himself.

It is a well-known fact that a child tackles a rather different task from what has been given to him by an adult, that is, he slips away from the logic, preset for him.

Thus, Michael Cole, describing his methods in working with children having difficulty learning to read, notes that such difficulties do not necessarily come from a child's inability to understand the text. The incomprehension may lie in the fact that the child's relations with the world lack coordination and, hence, he simply fails to understand how the text relates to the reality. The main thing, in M. Cole's opinion, is to state, discussing it with the child, what exactly is difficult for him to understand – which may be continued in the discussion with other children, comparing different points of view. "The discussion should develop for the child as a part of a dialogue with his future" (Koyul 1989: 28).

Distinction as ability

Our experiment has demonstrated the role of communicative conflict and of the principally different points of view for the development of a child's thinking. A special object of the transforming action in the communicative conflict has been revealed and described as distinction. Its coming to existence allows to pass from an immediate involvement in the communicative conflict to the mental foundations producing it, and as a consequence, to solve the conflict as such. The child now does not only understand what is being said, but pays attention to how, in what form it is being said, starts to grasp the very form of the discourse.

In the opinion of R. Sokolowski, Y. V. Gromyko, this is exactly what the distinction allows to do, for the distinction is the main logical unit organizing discourse in a communication (Sokolowski 1979; Gromyko 1993).

What conditions does a child need to make distinction the subject of his purposeful actions? It is clear enough that in most cases a child uses distinctions unconsciously, as they are integrated, "imprinted" into the very structure of speech. It becomes necessary to single out distinctions when a situation of misunderstanding, contradiction or conflict arises.

Such distinction itself, being singled out, restructures the situation completely, making clear what was not seen before, and as a result, leading to mutual understanding.

Demonstration by experiment

In our experiment we arranged a situation concealing a contradiction, through which the preschool children were to grasp a new distinction. A contradiction between the old for the children and the new knowledge was hidden in the situation. Thus, children are likely to consider it a fact that "a fur-coat warms"; but in the experiment the snowball covered with a fur-coat did not melt, as contrasted to the one left in the room uncovered. That produced a

great surprise. Two mutually exclusive opinions were presented: 1) "a fur-coat warms" and 2) "a fur-coat cools".

It was very difficult for preschoolers to embrace the contradiction. Some preferred to avoid it, saying they were having a headache. Others argued defending one of the points of view. And there were still others who tried to change the conditions: "Maybe, the sun is cool today?"

Finally, there was at least one child who said: "Listen! I've got it! A fur-coat does not give out warmth, it **KEEPS** it!" – thus, introducing, in fact, a new distinction.

Conclusions

1. Three stages of forming the distinction ability have been demonstrated in this work. First children neither see nor feel the very situation of communicative contradiction or conflict: they simply have no means to understand their experience. Next, they try to solve a contradiction by "pressing the situation through", able to retain no more than one point of view. And finally, at the third stage, able to retain opposite points of view simultaneously, they can pass to a new level, creating a new (for them) distinction, solving the communicative conflict.
2. The ability to differentiate between points of view, to define the contradiction, and also to find an appropriate distinction, as well as the ability to translate their vision into discourse – all these belong, as a rule, to different children; so, making distinctions, in the preschool age, is likely to be collectively distributed.
3. A child first notices communication as a subject of his activity only when he becomes able to distract his attention from physical things and starts seeing and feeling the "ruptures" – the contradictions in his relations with other people.
4. Distinction grows to become personally adopted by a child as he uses it, with spontaneity and awareness, in his real life.

5. During the developing experiment, pre-schoolers may pass from one communicative level to another, as, for example, from clinging to one single position to retaining two opposite positions simultaneously. However, the newly acquired knowledge may occur unstable. All this allows us to single out the distinction as one of the central moments in the process of forming the meanings, essential for both the normal development of a child and in psychotherapy, and remaining significant for spiritual growth in adults.

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PSICHOTERAPIJA: ADAPTACIJA AR VAIKŠČIOJIMAS DRAUGE? (PAKELĖS POKALBIAI)

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Straipsnyje psichoterapija traktuojama iš egzistencinės perspektyvos. Modernioje psichoterapijoje, be žinomo skyrimo į skirtingas mokyklas, išskiriamos dvi kryptys: adaptacinė terapija ir kita terapija, traktuojanti žmogų jo asmeninės būties pasaulio kontekste. Pastaruoju atveju terapija suprantama kaip terapeuto ir kliento abipusio asmeninio augimo kelias. Ši distinkcija išskiriama kaip vienas kertinių momentų formuojant reikšmes, kurios yra esminės tiek normaliai vaiko raidai psichoterapijoje, tiek suaugusiojo asmens dvasiniam tobulėjimui.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: antropologija, asmeninis tapatumas, egzistencializmas, egzistencinė psichoterapija, sąmonės struktūra, distinkcija kaip gebėjimas, fenomenologija, ugdymo raida, ugdymo aplinka.

Įteikta 2010-04-02, priimta 2010-06-22