

Z W A R S Z T A T U H U M A N I S T Ó W

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THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE WAY TO BECOMING
A PSYCHOTHERAPIST

INTRODUCTION

Many people worldwide face at some point a certain career and personal dilemma over the choice of the theoretical psychotherapeutic approach on their way to becoming a psychotherapist. According to the Amazon reviewers of the book *Contemporary Models of Psychotherapy: A Comparative Analysis*, the current number of recognized therapeutic approaches probably stands at over 400. The authors of the mentioned book, Don Ford and Hugh Urban, managed to group the approaches into eight families, “basing on their underlying metaphysical and existing logical assumptions: psychoanalytic; object relations, self-psychology, and interpersonal; humanistic/existential; behavioral; cognitive; cognitive-behavioral and skill training; behavioral medicine and health; and eclectic integrative.” As the reviewers further wrote, the therapists rather rarely adhere to only one approach, “they borrow freely from «whatever works»,” which is often motivated commercially or economically, and not necessarily by the concern for the efficacy or ethical grounds of the treatment. Still, choosing the theoretical approach for one’s later practice may also be an illuminating and exciting experience.

Going through descriptions of different therapeutic schools and methods involves encountering different approaches towards human nature and ethics of human relations. Often without even knowing it, a psychotherapy student faces vital philosophic issues such as: the self-determination and essence of a human being, the purpose of existence, the ambiguity of different phenomena, the use of power in relation to another being. Moreover, as Zofia Rosińska puts it: “therapeutic systems are enrooted in the culture. They reflect and form the culture at the same time.”¹ This implies that students’ choices of different approaches may reflect their conscious or unconscious will to maintain the views and values of the culture which they live in. On the other hand, their choices, studies and discussions may also be a form of a polemic with the ruling customs and values.

¹ Zofia Rosińska, *Z dziejów psychoterapii: między paternalizmem a partnerstwem*, in: *Psychoterapia i kultura. Celebrowanie urazu czy leczenie duszy*, eds. Zofia Rosińska, Elżbieta Olender-Dmowska, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo 69 1997, p. 259. All texts originally in Polish were translated into English by the author.

In this paper, I would like to briefly present the adventure of exploring one's own approach towards human relations and nature on the way to becoming a psychotherapist. It becomes an intellectual adventure if someone explores the assumptions underlying different approaches and practices. Yet, I see it not only as an adventure, but also as an ethical challenge. I personally favor a perspective of making an endless effort of recognizing the assumptions underlying different practices as the only way for not falling into potentially violent and impervious convictions. According to some interpreters, this stays in accord with what Michel Foucault would make out of his analysis. As the authors from the virtual "Academy for the Psychoanalytic Arts" put it, for Foucault:

"A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest." Moreover, for Foucault, the work of the critical intellectual is "to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and institutions..."²

Further the authors note:

Foucauldian critique is not directed to the quest for any transcendental bases of human thought or action, but rather to separating out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.³

In this paper, I will refer to several authors reflecting upon the role of psychotherapy in defining identity, some of them referring to the thoughts of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Many practicing and theorizing psychotherapists refer to the works of the two in their reflections about the Identity and the Other. To some, it is of special concern to understand the role of power in the psychotherapeutic relation. The thoughts of the two philosophers inspire a new, careful insight into the therapist's role in the postmodern society.⁴

ONE PATIENT AND MANY IDENTITIES

I will confine myself to discussing four main families of approaches in psychotherapy: psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral therapy, humanistic/existential and the postmodern narrative approach.

Beginning with psychoanalysis, we cannot speak of one coherent psychoanalytic system. Several theories have been derived from the main original Freudian

² Alan Milchman, Alan Rosenberg, *A Foucauldian Analysis of Psychoanalysis: A Discipline that 'Disciplines'*, Academy for the Psychoanalytic Arts, 2015. Web. Accessed 29 May 2015.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ In this place the reader might expect a mention of the writings of Jacques Lacan or Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. This essay points to possibly less obvious postmodernist inspirations for the psychotherapeutic thought.

concepts. Yet, according to Robbins, there are some main common features of this approach.⁵ Firstly, all psychoanalytic theories assume the existence of unconscious motives and drives, and those are supposed to significantly impact a human being. The concept of unconsciousness is strongly connected with the concept of defense mechanisms, which eliminate certain contents from the conscious mind. Secondly, these theories assume that a human being's life can be described by developmental stages that occur one after another, like psychosexual stages of development. Thirdly, they stress the importance of intertwining biological, social, interpersonal and instinctual influences on human life. All these theories acknowledge the priority of the mind structures which were formed in childhood. They influence all future interactions, thereby it is said to be a deterministic understanding of human actions.

Another classification of psychoanalytic theories distinguishes four main "psychologies".⁶ The first one would be the basic Freudian drive theory. The drives are fundamentally of biological provenience, yet they gain psychological representations. Secondly, they develop according to the developmental stages, yet this process is interrupted by individual life courses, and the drives are being endlessly modified, molded and reshaped due to different defense mechanisms. Most importantly, there are certain main permanent desires which are prone to modifications, yet they continue to substantially influence a human's life. Certain desires are perceived by the subject as dangerous or impossible to fulfill and around those desires some defense mechanisms appear and conflicts arise. In the second main psychoanalytical approach, the "psychology of ego," still close to Freud's original concepts, the emphasis is put on the aspect of adaptation due to the functioning of a regulatory ego (amongst id and superego) and of defense mechanisms. A person is influenced by the deficits in the ego development. Moving further from Freud's original ideas, the main assumption of the third approach – the "object relations theory" – is that a person is fundamentally oriented not towards pleasure, but a relation with a human object. This fundamental need used to be and still is of adaptive importance. The fourth main paradigm, the "self-psychology," perceives the human childhood as a process of developing the narcissist self, in which two main tasks are to be completed: developing an adequate sense of self-esteem and an adequate perception of other objects. This may be interrupted by unsympathetic parents, who do not correspond appropriately – on a level of optimal frustration – to the child's needs.

All this may cause some confusion in the reader's mind. It seems like endless speculations about the human inner life. There are no clear scientific answers, no certain solutions and effects. This is what the "Behavioral Manifesto" from 1913 by John Watson referred to; he proposed that not the consciousness should be the object of psychologists' interest, but the behavior, for a human's mind is an inaccessible "black box".⁷

Currently, according to research, the combination of the behavioral and cognitive approach proves to have the best efficacy in reducing symptoms of

⁵ Charles J. Gelso, Jeffrey A. Hayes, *Relacja terapeutyczna*, trans. Olena Waśkiewicz, Monika Rucińska, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne 2004, p. 161.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 170.

⁷ *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki*, ed. Jan Strelau, vol. 1, 2nd ed., Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne 2008, p. 43.

many psychic disorders.⁸ The cognitive view is that the human functioning is based on the cognitive content – what people think – and on the cognitive process – how people think. A therapist can rationally influence his patient's thinking, for example through a convincing debate in which someone's logical mistakes will be proven.⁹

In the second half of the 20th century, a new approach emerged as a counter-reaction to the flourishing and dominating paradigms of psychoanalysis and behaviorism – the existential/humanistic psychology. This movement sprang from the phenomenological and existential inspirations – an anti-essentialist approach towards human nature, emphasizing the uniqueness of each individual, proposing to look at the world from each person's perspective and bringing up the questions of the human ability to make choices, take responsibility, create oneself and be autonomous.¹⁰ Carl Rogers, the main representative of the humanistic approach, stated that positive features prevail in each human being and that everyone strives for self-actualization, which means fulfilling one's potential. Victor Frankl, the main representative of the existential approach, stated that what makes a human is striving towards a higher purpose, a need for transcending oneself.¹¹

Finally, the postmodernist perspectives try to answer the postmodern challenges addressed at the concepts of psychotherapy, human identity and interpersonal relations. Different postmodernist approaches contest the view about the possibility of defining a human being, describing him or her coherently and totally. A theory of human identity may only narrow and shade the complex reality of the patient. Some of these therapies are based on the constructivist view in which the language creates the reality. In the most popular narrative therapy, the goal is to enable a person to tell their story and enrich it by certain omitted aspects. Postmodern therapists pay attention particularly to the role of power in the therapeutic (and interpersonal) relationships. In the Foucauldian spirit they notice that those who have power participate in the dominant discourse and attach a certain meaning to reality. Each human being should have a right to maintain or add their own discourse and their perspective should not be excluded.¹²

Psychotherapy students at the University of Warsaw take an obligatory course in which they receive a written story of one person's life, behavior and symptoms, and in the lectures they describe the functioning of this person in terms of a specific therapeutic paradigm. No therapeutic intervention is brought into account at that stage. I have observed that many students try to decide which approach suits them most, depending on different criteria: which theory seems to fit their vision of human nature best or which one appears to be most explanatory and reasonable, which one is the simplest and most elegant or seems the least unfitted, or which one gives the patient space to define himself in the richest way and which one allows to grasp the problematic issue in two sentences.

⁸ *Psychoterapia. Integracja*, eds. Lidia Grzesiuk, Hubert Suszek, Warszawa: Eneteia 2010.

⁹ Richard J. Gerrig, Philip G. Zimbardo, *Psychologia i życie*, trans. Józef Radzicki et al., 3rd ed., Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2009, p. 514.

¹⁰ *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki*, p. 57.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

¹² Szymon Chrzastowski, Bogdan de Barbaro, *Postmodernistyczne inspiracje w psychoterapii*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego 2011.

For instance, the humanistic or existential approaches may correspond with the anti-essentialist or anti-deterministic attitudes towards describing human nature. Yet, it can be questioned to what extent the humanistic/existential movement may be characterized as anti-essentialist, since it demanded that a human being possess such inherent abilities as creativity, love, autonomy, identity, health, and responsibility. Acknowledging this approach allows to assume that all human beings possess positive resources, that they are essentially good and likable.

To show another example, choosing a purely cognitive approach might correspond with someone's conviction that humans are inherently rational beings with a need for cognitive coherence – this is a widely disputed view. The therapeutic change is supposed to be achieved by discussing the consciously accessible psychic content. Both within the cognitive and behavioral approaches, it is commonly regarded to be pointless (ineffective) to assume the existence of any sort of “deeper,” inaccessible motives or feelings. An interesting theoretical question to ask here would be – do the cognitive/behavioral approaches correspond to the views of those who treat the mental inner life as an irresolvable mystery (a pragmatic approach), or rather to the views perceiving humans as holding no mystery at all, as to-be-solved biological puzzles (a naturalistic approach that could lead to nihilism)?

Choosing the behaviorist paradigm may also correspond with a need to formulate a concise, simple and explanatory theory of the mind and behavior. Watson claimed that all human behavior could be justified by the concept of adaptation. The authors of a textbook for psychology students compare Watson's views to those of David Hume as they both wished to attain the simplest truths about human nature.¹³ In the same textbook, the authors fairly notice that Watson's approach – eliminating even the reflection about the ways of human perception and impression – would have seemed absurd to the 17th-century philosopher, John Locke, whose view was that all the content of mind comes from experience and knowledge.¹⁴

Furthermore, the behaviorist perspective is supposed to be neutral, it tells “how to change behavior and not who should change it, which behavior, why and when it should be changed”.¹⁵ Rosińska points out the assumptions lying behind the behavioral perspective: the belief that a human being can solve every problem, a technocratic conviction that the effectiveness is a priority regardless of the means.¹⁶ She also asks what the trust of the therapist towards a patient, who is supposed to know what he needs, stands on – when the therapist notices that a patient's desires are the source of his pain, he discusses them, suggests, and eventually influences his thinking. Current interpretations of behaviorists' role are also presented as an extension of the enlightenment type of humanism, according to which the human dignity lies upon reason.

¹³ *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki*, p. 47.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Zofia Rosińska, *Z dziejów psychoterapii...*, p. 260.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 260–261.

Leaving aside the specified approaches, it may be helpful to delineate, after Przemysław Bursztyka,¹⁷ two main extreme approaches towards understanding human identity, which antagonize the theorists and practitioners:

- 1) continuing the traditional philosophy of mind with the ideal of a rational, self-constituting being, having a defined and determined nature;
- 2) the deconstructive perspective, criticizing classic concepts of subjectivism, emphasizing all that is unique, writing out the human being to endless “bundles of discourses,” turning it into an effect of a game of some indistinct, dim forces.

It seems that there is a constant strive for describing a third path, a way out of these dichotomies. Bursztyka,¹⁸ who formulated the above two perspectives on subjectivity, worked out his understanding of the proper third way:

- 3) a perspective resigning from idealistic attempts to construct an abstract Self, purified from all external influences, at the same time distancing itself from announcing the death of the subject. It is a perspective which sees that what belongs to me results from influence of what is outside of me. There is something beyond the horizon of consciousness, not revealing itself over time, but inaccessible, yet not to be ignored. The being is constituted by a difficult relation with the boundary of consciousness.

Interestingly, Bursztyka finds it possible to speak of a human being in such a way on the ground of psychoanalysis. The terms and topologies of the conscious and unconscious, the id, ego and superego enable speaking of these intricacies. A similar view can be found in the reflections of Andrzej Leder,¹⁹ who finds the Freudian language to be an exceptionally capacious symbolic system. In *The Teaching of Freud in the Time of Sein und Zeit*, he states: “The formal transformations of meanings, which psychoanalysis offers to describe, can lead to every observable structure of sense appearing in the human existence”.²⁰ Such usage of the psychoanalytical apparatus curiously seems to match the postulates of the postmodernist narrative therapeutic approach.

The approach which the future therapist chooses, or simply happens to train himself in, shapes his language and behavior through which he will express his own Self and his views on the Other. In different therapeutic schools, a person will encounter specific influences and views which will form his or her answers to the fundamental questions of being. What is expected from therapists, who are they supposed to become? Who do they become in relation to the patient?

ONE THERAPIST AND MANY IDENTITIES

Having said how the identity of patients can be described or theorized, I would like to take a look into the identity of a therapist. A lot of research has

¹⁷ Przemysław Bursztyka, *Subiektywność w okowach. O freudowskim (de)konstruowaniu podmiotu*, in: *Freud i nowoczesność*, eds. Zofia Rosińska, Joanna Michalik, Przemysław Bursztyka, Kraków: Universitas 2008.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Andrzej Leder, *Nauka Freuda w epoce “Sein und Zeit”*, Warszawa: Fundacja Aletheia 2007.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 56.

been conducted concerning the therapeutically effective and desired features of a therapist.²¹ Empathy, authenticity, commitment, respect for others, positive attitude, self-coherence, constant interest in the patient's condition, a sincere wish to help in distress, patience, warmth, giving support – all these are supposed to give a positive and significant effect in reducing psychic symptoms, according to several researches. Yet, in many cases it has been concluded that therapists' features show no impact on the effectiveness, if not combined with the patients' features.²² For example, one study²³ showed that the similarity of a patient and a therapist in such features as intuitive/sensual perception, thinking/feeling, introversion/extraversion, judging/observing – positively influences the effectiveness.

Rosenhan and Seligman state that the distinction between effective and ineffective therapists can be made not according to the methods and techniques they use but their features and convictions.²⁴ Whether the desired features should be present from the moment one begins their therapeutic training is not clearly stated. Different schools prefer specific characteristics of their candidates, one of them is for example “interested in people, able to sympathize, sensitive,” as these features may make the person “more mature” and make their commitment and sympathy towards others “more subtle”.²⁵ Concerning the mental health of a candidate, some authors state that people who have solved some of their emotional issues themselves may later on become better therapists than those who have not faced certain difficulties. Yet, the question whether going through one's own therapy influences effectiveness is unclear.²⁶

Interestingly, going through one's own therapy is a requirement for completing some psychotherapeutic trainings. Behavioral and cognitive therapies do not require that. On the other extreme, it is essential in the psychoanalytic approaches. Different requirements depend on the answer to the question whether the quality of the therapeutic relationship – positive feelings of acceptance and trust – influences the effects of the therapy. One's own therapy is supposed to prepare a therapist to face the client, by recognizing one's own problems and perspective, thus enabling to separate them from the client's issues. Originally, the psychoanalytical terms used to describe the intricacies of the therapist-patient relationship were transference and counter-transference – they were Freud's “discovery.” He stated that counter-transference would only interrupt the process of therapy, as it was seen as a therapist's subjective perspective, blurring the objective account of the patient's problems. Nowadays, in addition to that, counter-transference is often perceived as a useful tool in the therapeutic process, allowing to look closer into what the patient brings to the relation and how the therapist responds to it. The features enabling to control and use counter-transference positively listed by some authors are: integration of Self, handling one's own anxiety, cognitive abilities, sympathy and insightfulness.²⁷

²¹ Charles J. Gelso, Jeffrey A. Hayes, *Relacja terapeutyczna*.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ *Psychoterapia. Badania i szkolenie*, ed. Lidia Grzesiuk, Warszawa: Eneteia 2006, p. 246.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Charles J. Gelso, Jeffrey A. Hayes, *Relacja terapeutyczna*, p. 106.

All this shows what is expected from future therapists. The way the researches were designed and conducted also reveals how human identity is perceived by many psychologists – as divisible into several categories and measurable. Still, as I have already mentioned, the expectations vary depending on different approaches.

A TRUTHFUL, EFFECTIVE OR ETHICAL IDENTITY

In accord with Rosenhan's and Seligman's observations, the researches show that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of various approaches.²⁸ Since they conclude that the features of the therapist are crucial for the effectiveness, we may infer that working with different approaches does not influence the personality of the therapist to such an extent as to give different outcomes. According to what criterion should someone choose their therapeutic perspective then? I have tried to distinguish three common criteria:

- criterion of truth – which view on human nature and relations appears to someone as objectively truthful;
- criterion of pragmatism – which perspective allows to achieve the biggest effectiveness in socially established terms;
- criterion of ethics – if a non-violent conduct is defined as ethical, which perspective enables recognizing the subjectivity of the Other.

These criteria, attitudes, and perspectives could also be treated as “concerns,” as in the excerpt cited by Milchman and Rosenberg, who discuss Foucault's diagnosis of the contemporary reality:

Foucault's “diagnosis that the increasing organization of everything is the central issue of our time is not in any way empirically demonstrable, but rather emerges as an interpretation. This interpretation grows out of pragmatic concerns and has pragmatic intent, and for that very reason can be contested by other interpretations growing out of other concerns.”²⁹

Similarly, I see the different therapeutic approaches as different interpretations with probably no reference to an absolute, abstract truth. At least in the field of psychotherapeutic practice, there seems to be no way for establishing such a concept of truth. Rather, “truth is perspectival and experiential”.³⁰ It is something that a practitioner of psychotherapy may experience. Yet, I do not turn to the purely pragmatic criterion as a result – it seems to me that it is crucial to go along with the ethical attitude, as outlined by Foucault. Although he used to keep off from being identified as an ethical writer, his views outline a certain ethical perspective (not necessarily pragmatic, as the above quote could suggest). Again, referring to what Milchman and Rosenberg (2015) notice in Foucault's views:

...Foucault contended “that systematic cruelty flows regularly from the thoughtlessness of aggressive conventionality, the transcendentalization of contingent identities, and the treatment

²⁸ *Psychoterapia. Badania i szkolenie*, p. 89.

²⁹ Alan Milchman, Alan Rosenberg, *A Foucauldian Analysis...*

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

of good/evil as a duality wired into the intrinsic order of things.” It is through “disrupting” our present practices and prevailing categories of thought, showing that they were historically created and contingent, not self-evident and necessary, that Foucault hoped to foster the critical distance needed to see the dangers inherent in them.³¹

It seems crucial to notice and be aware of the criteria or concerns which are the basis of one’s thinking and actions, which appear in the spectrum of a human being’s mind. Actually, they are rather not a matter of choice. They appear as an interaction of historical, social, biological and other factors. Noticing the concerns underlying one’s thinking and consequent choices of different therapeutic approaches and techniques is the critical intellectual work that has to be done in order to avoid the dangers inherent to these theories. It is a moral responsibility, and therefore it is ethics that should underlie what one believes to be true or efficient.

Vincent Fish in his article “Clementis’s Hat: Foucault and the politics of psychotherapy” cites Foucault’s words particularly relevant to the psychotherapist’s role:

I see nothing wrong in the practice of a person who, knowing more than others in a specific game of truth, tells those others what to do, teaches them, and transmits knowledge and techniques to them. The problem in such practices where power – which is not in itself a bad thing – must inevitably come into play is knowing how to avoid ... domination effects.³²

The therapist has to be careful not to exclude the client’s discourse. Another way of looking at it is expressed in another article “Derrida and the deconstruction of power” by Glenn Lerner,³³ where it is stated that the therapist uses his power to pass it on to the client in order to enable his suppressed discourse to reveal itself. The therapeutic setting makes it possible to create a site where difference is tolerated and a client can develop his narrative. “The therapist has a power that is invested by society as a representative of technology and expertise, but the ethical stance towards the other balances this hierarchy, tempering the violence”.³⁴ It is marked by a typically Derridean paradox: “If a therapist takes a position, they silence the voice of the other, yet if they do not take a position, the already silent voice of the other remains silent and marginalized”.³⁵ And as the author notices: “How one adapts a position of power in order to deconstruct power is a paradox shared by both deconstruction and psychotherapy”.³⁶ Concerning the relationship between the therapist and the client during a session, the author states the following: “The therapist does not relate to the client in terms of a theory of the other, but as *strangely* other. ... The other is not merely the ‘socially constructed’ other, but *other*, with a different existence”.³⁷ The other, patient, is

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Vincent Fish, *Clementis’s Hat: Foucault and the Politics of Psychotherapy*, in: *Deconstructing Psychotherapy*, ed. Ian Parker, London: Sage Publications Ltd 1999, p. 67.

³³ Glenn Lerner, *Derrida and the Deconstruction of Power as Context and Topic in Therapy*, in: *Deconstructing Psychotherapy*.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 47.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 48.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 44.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 48.

neither subjected to a supposedly true idea of human nature, nor treated basing only on the occurring symptoms.

The postmodern approaches in psychotherapy find inspiration in the Foucauldian and Derridean thoughts and they seem to fulfill these ethical stances in the first place. Yet, some may ask what knowledge about the human being the postmodern therapeutic approach offers, without any coherent theory of the psychic. Even if we treat the psychoanalytical, behavioral, cognitive and humanistic theories as some sort of knowledge about the human being (even if socially or historically constructed), which the therapist shares with his client, maybe it is still possible to think critically of the basic assumptions, be aware of one's own concerns and discourses, keep away from absolutizing them. Some authors choose to solve this dilemma in a similar way: "In attempting to navigate between the shoals of essentialism and nominalism, preferences can be developed for categories which are understood in relation to ongoing sociohistorical dynamics, and are viewed as historically variable rather than foundational or essential"³⁸.

I think that many current teachings and manuals of the traditional main therapeutic approaches do not enable this. Yet, it is possible to develop all the existing schools in this direction, and in many cases this is being done. Psychoanalysis seems to be an exceptionally interesting example of this process, where several theorists develop the psychoanalytical symbolic apparatus to extend the understanding of the Self of the therapist and the client, of the Other, and of the intersubjectivity. Evolving the psychoanalytic theories in accord with the postmodern postulates appears promising. All this aims to broaden the human's symbolic capacity of interpreting the appearing reality and the capacity of communication.

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³⁸ Roger Lowe, Between the 'No Longer' and the 'Not Yet': Postmodernism as a Context for Critical Therapeutic Work, in: *Deconstructing Psychotherapy*, p. 79.

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THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE WAY TO BECOMING A PSYCHOTHERAPIST

Summary

This paper aims to recount a shared experience of some psychology students – an intellectual adventure of exploring one's own approach towards human relations and nature on the way to becoming a psychotherapist. To become practitioners, the students need to choose a certain psychotherapeutic training based on one of the main psychotherapeutic theoretical approaches. The following are mentioned in this paper: psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral therapy, humanistic/existential and the postmodern narrative approach. Exploring the assumptions underlying different modalities and practices is also considered here to be an ethical challenge. It is reckoned that the choice of a specific psychotherapeutic practice bound to a theory shapes the identity of the therapist and the patients, forms the language and behaviour through which the future therapist will express his own Self and influence the Other. Referring to postmodern inspirations, the author speaks in favour of making an endless effort of recognizing the assumptions underlying different practices – as the only way for not taking a potentially violent and impervious attitude in the relationship between the therapist and the patient.

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