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Constructing cultural identity as a challenge for international counselling

The proposed text provides an analysis of the concept of individual cultural identity from the perspective of a group's tradition, i.e. inherited culture and challenges related to heritage transmission under cultural change driven by political and social changes.

Keywords: cultural identity of an individual, transmission of cultural heritage, education for cultural development, cultural artifact

Individual cultural identity as a challenge for education and counselling

Treating the cultural identity of an individual as a task is as recent in the pedagogical, psychological or counselling considerations, as the concept of post-modern culture. It assumes that individual cultural identity is not developed as a result of the process of heritage transmission, but that it is a project which is to be accomplished by the subject. Consequently, the preparation of an individual for creating themselves as a cultural being – i.e. as a person who makes use of the symbolic world, finds in it the meanings of social world, the basis for constructing personal value system, shaping the attitude towards self, others and the world of values – is a function of their consciousness and not a result of the socialization process. The role of education lies in providing individuals with competencies that allow them to 'play the game of identity' (Bauman, 2012; Gromkowska-Melosik, Melosik, ed., 2012), which has always been important, but which has become even more important nowadays, at a time of increased migration movement, creating the dilemmas about the choice of cultural affiliation, attachment to tradition and the necessity to accept the values of the host country, including the essential adaptation to the values of the new culture.

A prerequisite for developing a practical approach to the realization of the 'individual cultural identity' project seems to be taking into careful consideration: the social phenomenon of individual cultural identity viewed from a methodological

perspective, and the educational process, which could be called 'education for cultural development'.

At present, we observe a wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the research and interpretation of the concept of individual cultural identity. This results in different definitions of cultural identity. However, it may be possible to find a common ground to which the researchers focusing on individual cultural identity refer.

In the work of Jerzy Nikitorowicz, the **individual's cultural identity** is analysed as the individual's attempts to separate what is one's own from what is foreign. It recognizes that the prerequisite for such separation process is understanding both the relationship with one's own group and the importance of the difference between self and outsiders. Therefore, Nikitorowicz writes: "identity is considered to be a kind of an individual's self-knowledge, their judgements, ideas and valuations" (Nikitorowicz, 2005, p. 61). In the work of Marian Golka and Hanna Mamzer, cultural identity of an individual is characterized through its attribute of processuality. This identity is shaped as a result of socio-cultural relations. It is faced with the demands of identity standard, but it is also active in relation to that standard. Processuality, as an attribute of cultural identity, creates room for the competition of a number of cultural identities that an individual may adopt, facing the demands of social realities (Mamzer, 2000). This theme can also be found in the considerations on identity by Aleksandra Kunce, who writes:

our identity is closer to difference than continuity and "sameness". We experience disorder, to which we cannot accustom ourselves even through alternate mental cycles of order and chaos, as the unpredictability and irregularity of the events in which we participate is constantly being revealed in front of us. It often happens even against the official institutional explanations of the world (Kunce, 2004, p. 84).

The author analyses individual identity by focusing of the aspect of its place within a culture offering personal security through cultivation, inheritance, placement and rooting. She claims that identity is not only a psychological but, above all, a cultural phenomenon, which gives the individual scripts for acting, thinking and feeling, i.e. a 'saviour context', allowing for the extrapolation of epistemological categories into the ontological area. She adds:

We are hopelessly cultural, rooted in little cultures, in our little claims, in our own moral practices (which are not infrequently treated as absolute), i.e. in a locum that has been meticulously built and culturally confirmed. Yet, this locum is continuously being dislocated (Kunce, 2004, p. 80).

The educational, counselling, therapeutic and rehabilitation challenges are related to the location imperative. The identity-related experience of an individual, as well as the memory constructed on their basis, constitute a mental locum which is

subject to reviews in the light of new experiences and competitive, or only parallel, cultural narratives available to an individual in the multicultural world. Following such reasoning, we tend to define the notion of identity via the category of relationship. In such an interpretation, identity would be a result of a certain relationship between two subjects or two phases of existence of the same subject, producing a new quality, i.e. an identity-related location. For identity, location is important, as it results from observing the difference. Observing the difference and making it meaningful formulates a new mental, emotional and motivational location, and determines a new quality of 'me-in-the-world' for the individual.

The cultural identity of an individual in educational, therapeutic, or counselling systems should be subject to a cross-cultural narrative. Identification patterns available in the social reality are not only – as it was the case in the traditional culture – just given or assigned to individuals. Individuals do not repeat these patterns in subsequent generations, do not recreate them, but determine the image of self in relation to others. The result of those relations, understood as a certain type of social experiences, is a state of recognizing one's own image as constant, i.e. identical. In the social context, this means not only categorization, but also ethics. To become the individual's identity, the chosen image must be recognized by others not only in epistemological, but also in ontological dimension. The essence of an individual's cultural identity is not located in similarity, but in difference.

Zygmunt Bauman may have been right when he said that an individual becomes aware of having an identity, or experiences the need to have or choose one, when something that used to be clear and obvious in their field of perception is no longer so (Bauman, 2001). Therefore, it seems that while considering identity-related categories, it is worth turning to the work of Martin Buber and his category of 'in-betweenness'. He wrote:

'In-between' is not a kind of auxiliary construction, but a real place and a medium of interpersonal action. 'In-between' has not attracted adequate attention, as – contrary to individual soul and the environment – it does not show a simple continuity, but it constitutes itself depending on human encounters, each time anew; thus, naturally, what happens to the human being has been incorporated in the continuous elements, in the soul, in the world (Buber, 1993, p. 129).

Insofar as in the individual's order the cultural identity is an ontological challenge, in the collective order it is functional and thus descriptive, i.e. useful to classify similarities and differences between people. Such approach to the issue of identity can be found in the work of Paweł Boski: "Cultural identity assumes the existence of an external area of symbolism and values that is independent of an individual; it is a human relationship towards these elements in the form of subjective knowledge/competencies and affective cathexis (attachment), and behavioral competencies" (Boski, 2009, p. 473). Cultural symbols here are expressive markers

of affiliation. In the process of constructing cultural identity we are being acculturated to them. We become familiar with their power by entering in contact with them in various social situations. We are led to comprehend them consciously or by discovering their power in coincidental events. As Boski writes, “To a large extent, the transmission of symbolic identity takes place under the intentional process of teaching and experiencing within the public discourse of a given country” (Boski, 2009, p. 549). The axiological identity – as Boski names it – i.e. daily practices and internalised values, constitute the individual order of cultural identity. It empowers the identity of an individual towards the declared symbolic realm. It is a space where an individual’s cultural identity, which is presumably of declaratory nature, becomes the field of existence. The transmission of this order, as Boski claims, “takes place via processes whose collective name is socialization. Within it, the role of reflection is limited; we are in the area of intuitive culture and incidental learning driven by mechanisms of modelling, as well as punishment and reward” (Boski, 2009, p. 550).

To conclude, we should note that in the light of the theories referred to above, there are certain conditions shaping cultural identity of individuals. There are also attempts to determine the requirements set for this process:

- 1) For it to be a social phenomenon, it may be analyzed up to the horizons of cultural identity of the groups with which the individual identifies. It is realized via the tradition of introducing (socialization) an individual to the realm of meanings and senses of a culture.
- 2) Self-awareness and cognitive potential of an individual are relevant to identity development. Hence, these are competencies that allow the individual to find his or her way in the world of codes belonging to the culture the individual identifies with, i.e. recognizes as their own.

Fulfilling these requirements by an individual, becoming aware of the necessity and possibility to meet them, as well as of the related difficulties, may in practice become the topic of a conversation held between counsellor-counselee, educator-student, therapist-patient. A justification for this statement can be found in relevant literature.

Cultural identity of an individual – interrupted continuation of a discourse

Nowadays, researchers highlight an identity characteristics that they describe as liquidity. They also emphasize, as mentioned above, that cultural identity in a modern system of culture is not a result of inheritance, but an existential challenge. Within culture, the ever-existing identity-related mechanics has been called into question, which is mentioned by Tomasz Szkudlarek and Zbyszko Melosik:

In the past each age and each society had their dominant type of identity, the way of creating 'the self' and its social interactions, which, during the social practices, was normalized and raised to a 'universal' status. It then became the starting point, the identity matrix we have already mentioned (Melosik, Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 47).

In the past, it was assumed that for the cultural identity of an individual to be constructed, it needed to refer to a matrix, whereas in the present, we assume that there is a direct relationship between an individual and culture, without the mediation of any such matrix. The mechanics of the identity creation process is completely different. To support this statement, one could refer to the work of Zygmunt Bauman and his concept of four types of relationships that obtain between individuals and culture, i.e. the construction of the cultural identity of individuals.

In *Legislators and Interpreters*, the author describes the perspective for change in human culture leading to reformulating the mechanics of the emergence of cultural identity of individuals. He believes that the fundamental ideas of post-modernity can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Knowledge as the universal and unique good of humanity has been contested in favour of splitting it into segments created by irrational and arbitrary assumptions, which remain in a deterministic or only coincidental relation to partly closed systems of traditions and historical experiences. The author describes this process as: "the general structure of a modern society, together with its embedded cult of education, the cult of truth, science and reasonableness (as well as the respect for the authority of those who embodied these values) guaranteed the existence of a mechanism through which potential threats to judgments expressed by the elites could be absorbed and thus neutralized. It is this authority which has been called into question, it found itself at the heart of the theory, but as a problem and not as a presupposition, because in practice it turned out to be ineffective" (Bauman, 1998, p. 178).
- (b) The tasks of philosophy and social sciences are changing from defining to interpreting, without referring to a specific *genius loci*, without claims to universalism. The objectives of social sciences evolve towards seeking meanings, making 'others' understood and making oneself understood. Consequently, the cross-cultural perspective is becoming a standard.
- (c) Changes also take place within tradition, i.e. the frame of reference, the grammar of culture itself, speaking in classical terms. According to the new grammar, the assumption concerning the existence of incontestable and unfailing truths, a universal approach to humanity are regarded as outright mistaken. Not absolute wisdom, but a community is a source of the social reality of a human being.

'Community' is absolutely the central term of the self-aware post-modern philosophy and social sciences. It has replaced reason and universal truth,

together with the method leading to them. It is in the community, and not in the universal progress of humanity where the intellectuals intend to seek a safe point of reference for their professional role” (Bauman, 1998, p. 188).

In the dynamic social reality, in which change is constant, and movement is obvious, with cultural transformations, the individual’s cultural identity – as the researchers claim – is evolving. The researchers propose that identity be analyzed from the perspective of innovatively defined communities, disregarding the perspective of traditional collective identities.

Zygmunt Bauman outlined one of the first typologies of contemporary collective identities. The personality patterns of a postmodern human being, as he calls them, are based on the assumptions of changeability and nomadism as characteristics of contemporary culture, whereas mobility and movement are seen as the meaning (Mróz, 2014). The four types of cultural identity of individuals are: the stroller, the tourist, the vagabond, and the player (Bauman, 1994). The author presents these patterns in a descriptive way, but it is still possible to read the ethics within each type. The *stroller* relate their identity to the crowd, so their characteristics is anonymity. This relationship and the constituting characteristics resulting from it for the cultural identity of an individual is important. A stroller is – as the author writes – “omnividant but not seen, hidden in the crowd but not belonging to it” (Bauman, 1994, p. 24). It is thus a person without rooting, who does not need rooting. The consequences include not engaging in relationships and a life based on speculations. As for the motives for action, the stroller is driven by advertisement and media coverage, in the categories of meaning, he or she lacks references and thinking patterns which would organize reflection. She/he is reactive, sensitive to own pleasure, without realizing that “the access to the delights of yesterday’s stroller was obtained by the new type of stroller for the price of being deprived of freedom” (Bauman, 1994 p. 24). There is no community, there is a crowd, as a collective identity providing reference points. Another type presented in *Two Sketches On Post-modern Morality* is the *tourist*. The community, to which he/she relates social experiences and creates identity is home. The game of identity which the tourist plays is a game of impressions and the need for the exotic. Seeking the difference between the daily reality of home and the life of a tourist who buys impressions, tourists invest in their own surprises and excitement. The cultural identity of a tourist is constructed upon the excitement of household members at the trophies that he/she won (pictures, videos, souvenirs). Another type is the *vagabond*. The cultural identity of the vagabond is based on negation. The problem is that the vagabond is fully aware of what he escapes from, but does not know what he is aiming at. He/she does not have a specific aim, as what counts is the pleasure of wandering and temptation itself: “Hence the world which the vagabond wanders reveals itself as a collection of opportunities; each opportunity is good, none is worth missing” (Bauman, 1994, p. 30). The vagabond negates the group of reference as crucial for

her or his identity, searches for meanings in the vacuum of sense, since meanings are forged in a relationship and the vagabond defies relationships. The last type is the *player*. In play there is neither necessity nor certainty: “in play, the world and the fate are soft” (Bauman, 1994, p. 34). The player plays in the world and against the world. The player does not build, does not plan, and competes with everyone who finds oneself within the range of their activities. Their life is a series of subsequent fights, competitions, matches, meetings, each of which constitutes a complete whole. Everything amounts to winning the prize and often depends on luck.

Bauman’s text was written the end of the 20th century. The author analyses cultural identities of individuals, relating them to the global culture. He sees identity building relationships above all via the mass media. Cultural personalities are immersed in global culture and are presented from this perspective. Have they withstood the test of time? Did the author’s observations and analyses proved to be right? They did have followers. They paved the way and left hints for other descriptions. Zbyszko Melosik and Tomasz Szkudlarek take up a similar challenge after fifteen years. Their typology of cultural identities of individuals is also based on the assumption of changeability of the contemporary world, yet the authors also consider the rooting elements.

They write:

In this world, in which mass media decisively influence our sense of ‘self’, values wander across the spectrum of meanings, change their *loci*, become embedded in continuously diverse contexts. It is a continuous and inevitable process, which progresses at high speed. Even so, the values are hard to separate from the places where they originated. We can say that, together with values, places also wander in time, revealing their forgotten stories, sometimes wandering in space, moving together with their migrating inhabitants; sometimes their sense is changed by newcomers. Places are not isolated. They touch and then the macro-located signs in them go beyond borders, thus going beyond themselves. The taste of food, the colour of roofs, the shape of clothes overlap with one another and change their meanings. Yet, this is only a seemingly free and unrestricted flow of fashions and fascination with otherness. There, we discover a certain logic of transitions, which is anything but innocent. Without attempts at describing it, we will not comprehend the strangeness of our lives, we will not be able to come up with educational strategies fitting the transformations taking place in ourselves (Melosik, Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 45).

Identity is treated as a social construction dependent on place and time. In analyses, the contemporary identity is characterized through precariousness, ambivalence and considered as dynamic. The types of cultural identities of individuals have the form of reflexion on the place, the time and the type of relationship leading to individual social experience and providing information that ‘they are themselves’. The framework of analysis is set by the globality – locality continuum. The

first two identities named *transparent global identity* and *every global identity* differ in terms of their relationship towards locality. In the first one, the individual is blind to the (local) cultural differences or defies their value. They admire only the cultural standards of the Western civilization and refer to its meanings in their activities. The only imagined way of social functioning is ‘the European lifestyle.’ Such an identity seems to be functional only in a big city, and the meanings come mainly from the professional area, the area of specialization, overlooking differences in local customs. Every global identity, on the other hand, is characterized by the blind acceptance of the local customs. “An individual is able to melt in the local milieu, acting in accordance with the codes of the local culture. An individual is able to live the cultural difference. Living in a given culture, they ‘temporarily become this culture’” (Melosik, Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 50).

Two other types of cultural identities of individuals according to Melosik and Szkudlarek are *staged identity* and *authentic inauthenticity identity*. Neither believes in being rooted, both are committed to the ideology of consumerism and rely on media coverage for news. The *staged identity* does not construct meanings and cannot perceive differences, while the *authentic inauthenticity* admires them, yet “the status of difference is constructed and maintained with a full awareness of the fact that they are unfounded (one can simply ‘allow’ the difference to be meaningful). The difference thus becomes an absurd category” (Melosik, Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 51). Both of these identities are socially dysfunctional. The individuals live in a world lacking meaning or where meaning is illusory. Building relationships, making choices and ethical functioning of individuals are beyond the discourse. In consequence, as the authors write, “any commitment of an individual consists merely in ‘celebrating’ the affective ambiguity of imaginary concepts, which are ‘fascinating in their superficiality and lack of content’” (Melosik, Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 51).

Another identity is the identity of *culture supermarket*. The name encompasses innovative and hybrid forms of customs that are known in the culture, new contents under old names, or new names for old contents. “In the case of *supermarket*-type identity, people have a sense of freedom and believe that they are able to deliberately choose and construct their own identity from the available cultural sources” (Melosik, Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 52). This identity type is characterized by a certain discipline in absorbing cross-cultural norm, there is a certain obligation to construct hybrid (fragmentary, ambivalent) forms of behaviour, beliefs, knowledge and impressions. Cultural personalities of this type are fragmentary. Their leitmotiv is ambivalence, which concerns not only the description of behaviour, beliefs and thoughts, but also their ethics. The multitude of cultural perspectives that they want to contain within their identity results in the dispersion of value. The process of fragmentation leads to the development of another type of individual cultural identity. It is a *razor-type identity*, related to radicalism,

which means essentializing a specific form of difference as the basis for identity construction and cutting off from everything and everyone that 'does not fit'. That leads to the phenomenon of 'celebrating the difference', which is also called a separatist identity policy, which consists in characteristic 'sealing off' a specific form of identity. The temptation of fundamentalism reflects the following paradox: the age (and theory) of postmodernity, by deconstructing the metanarratives of the Enlightenment era, which often locked people in the identity trap (or cage), provokes the rise – or revival – of fundamentalist movements and ways of thinking. In this context, they become a certain antidote to the opacity of the world and the lack of cultural certainty. In the postmodern world, people and societies, by losing traditional 'signposts' and cultural certainty, turn to movements that promise Truth, Values and Knowledge, and which can be the source of a stable and consistent identity (Melosik, Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 55).

The quoted description of this type of identity feeds on myth and resentment. In contrast to the previous types of identity, this one is rooted in the past.

As a way to conclude considerations on the cultural identity of individuals, it should be stated that a marked effect of the ongoing cultural change is the change in tradition. The change of the framework of reference available to an individual, the change of life goals orientation and, finally, the change in the ways of selfactualization that we observe in the social activities of individuals, may be socially functional in the new grammar of culture. The phenomenon of cultural identity remains important and crucial for the survival of humans as cultural beings.

Stuart Hall said that in these new circumstances of culture, identity is not only liquid, but poses a constant challenge to the individual who is still seeking stability and roots, but cannot find them (Burszta, 2004, p. 37). In this way he describes the state of being socially lost in a culture, yet – what seems even more important from the pedagogical, psychological or counselling perspective – he also points to the effort that people make in order to deal with change. James Clifford, on the other hand, said that the 20th century identities no longer assume the continuity of a cult or a tradition. Everywhere, individuals or groups improvise local performances compiled from (re-)collected past, using alien media, symbols and languages (Clifford, 2000, p. 22). In this way he demonstrates that people are actively pursuing their needs, as they try to establish their personal relationship to the world, others and themselves in the new circumstances, not always caring about tradition or striving for stability.

These theoretical statements seem to be fundamental for taking actions in the area of education, counselling and therapy. Research into the identity of persons finding themselves in a situation which forces changes of cultural identity may be particularly important. Outlining the limits of the research subject thus becomes a priority.

The American social anthropologist Gordon Mathews carried out such research focusing on cultural identity of individuals. The results of his large-scale, long-term research brought about a solution to identity structure, which, to some degree, encompasses both above mentioned positions. Mathews (2005) sees three distinct levels of cultural identity:

- ◆ self-evidence level; i.e. the shaping of an individual via a specific language and a collection of social practices conditioning the way in which we comprehend ourselves and the world. These are behaviours that are imposed on the individual by tradition and the group's customs, with which the individual identifies. The individual does not reflect on these as constituted and imposed – it is the permanent level of the structure of a person's cultural identity. It refers to the deep structures of collective mentality, encoded in the minds as a result of its long, centuries-old presence, updated in the process of the socio-political discourse.
- ◆ The medium level is named by the author *shikata-ga nai*, i.e. 'nothing can be done about it'. It signifies all that an individual is forced to do through the processes of social control. It seems important to take note of the author's comments – based on empirical evidence, he claims that this level of cultural shaping is significantly more important than scholars of culture used to admit. Human behaviour is not based on cherished beliefs from the first level [self-evident], but the majority result from submission to the pressures from the surrounding social world, given the high cost of defying it (Mathews, 2005, p. 32).
- ◆ The third level, the shallowest, comes into awareness when the 'self' feels that it has the freedom to choose ideas and concepts for life. What is done, is done by choice. It should be kept in mind, however, that this right to choose is not unlimited. According to Mathews, it depends on the society's affluence, on social ideology which controls the field of choice. It also depends on class, ethnic and gender affiliation, religious beliefs and citizenship, i.e. the fields of long-term duration.

The proposals for a theoretical approach to the cultural identity of an individual presented and compared above, are in line with the postmodern *liquid identity*, but each of them simultaneously relates this liquidity to tradition. Contemporary anthropology, or more broadly, the social sciences, are facing difficulties and paradoxes which result from presenting the cultural specificity of comprehending oneself as a person. These difficulties and struggles have different degree of impact on the elaboration of methods of educational work supporting the development of cultural identity of each individual.

Cultural identity of an individual – a new perspective

The second challenge mentioned in this article, which relates to the construction of cultural identity, involves considering the issue of **education for cultural development**. This encompasses education and assistance measures such like counselling or therapy that are put to use in cases when educational measures prove insufficient, inadequate, failed or late, and which are aimed at building and correcting significant relationships between an individual and culture. The traditional education offer, based on loyalty towards one's own group, and constructed upon the trust in the leadership of intellectuals, has become nonresponsive due to the reformulation of communication processes in cultures, and due to cultural pluralism. A new proposal in this respect consists in building the cultural identity processes of individuals on innovativeness, creativity and freedom with regard to the acts of cultural inheritance. It is based upon relationships to cultural artifacts. It involves training people to experience an encounter with cultural artifacts. In the categories of culture, it is an act of inheritance, which, nevertheless, in order to be complete or life-giving (term introduced by Lech Witkowski), i.e. constructing an ethical relationship of an individual to the world, must be rooted in tradition. Tradition is a guide to the contents of the culture of the moral order, it is the *grammar of culture* (term introduced by Jerzy Szacki). It is a system which allows individuals to order their cultural experiences within a moral perspective. Theoretical orientations of this field are set in the theory of culture (cf. the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Eduard Spranger, Sergiusz Hessen, Bogdan Suchodolski, Bogdan Nawroczyński, Florian Znaniecki). The pedagogical practice in this field includes analyses and considerations based on the canonical work of a given culture and their interpretations. Education for cultural development also involves interpretations of the meaning of customs, ceremonies and rituals of specific cultural groups. In the wake of cultural change, it is the tradition that poses a significant challenge. It is due to its impact and meaning that problems arise, which are then solved by cross- and intercultural counselling.

Instead of conclusion: group tradition and the inheritance of culture

An essential factor of a culture's duration is its transmission from generation to generation. Without the transmission there would be no continuity of behaviours allowing for the construction of individual cultural identity. Culture is available to individuals via artifacts created in it: material, behavioral, linguistic. The acts of cultural inheritance are social situations in which these artifacts are looked at in daily life. We use them every day, plan to teach about them, use them as arguments in public presentations and discussions, in art disciplines and politics. Acts of inheritance make sense and are a medium of values when they are set in a system of

transmission called 'tradition'. An artifact then acquires a communicative power, as it transmits intentions and builds the system of values of individuals, therefore satisfying the condition of an existing identity relationship between the individual and culture. Tradition belongs to the group, i.e. the group is a subject of tradition and traditions are constructed in groups. Tradition is something which we are obliged to rationally co-create. Tradition is not entitled to be set in stone. If treated in this way, it becomes a tool of symbolic violence (Brezinka, 2007). For ages, the transmission of culture took place in relatively separate systems – traditions, determined by the political system or a prevailing ideology (Misiejuk, 2013). Currently, the social standard of culture is moving towards cultural plurality and multiculturalism, and thus it seems that both the 'address' and the social status of culture change, and so does its role in shaping the identity of individuals rooted in a given culture, yet above all migrants: travellers, strollers, vagabonds. The ideas that could serve in the analysis of changes regarding tradition can be found in the work of Fernand Braudel. The outstanding historian of the French *Annales* school, in a textbook written as early as in the seventh decade of the 20th century, claimed that it was possible to distinguish in history the so-called structures of long term (or *longue durée*), which often determine and set out the trajectory of various processes and phenomena for entire centuries, also shaping dominant cultural patterns –

these structures are usually deeply set in time, they belong to the long term and have their own characteristic features. They shape the image of civilizations, give them personality. The civilisations guard them closely, considering them priceless values. These structures (...) usually exist beyond the consciousness of a huge mass of people (Braudel, 1999, pp. 291–302).

In the concept of cultural identity of individuals, they provide the framework for the interpretation of cultural artifacts of the deepest order in the identity structure. According to Mathews, they create the first level of the identity structure. In the system of societies they are subject to conceptualization, as normative and directive judgements, communicated via cultural social practices, protected and guarded within societies either in the form of customs and social rituals, or in the systems of cultural canon (Kmita, 1982, p. 86). Within the structure of identity, these social practices refer to the second level. Finally, there is the third level, the level of individual freedom, outlining the individual's possibilities to create, innovate and choose – these are the acts of cultural inheritance within individual, practical activities.

Clifford Geertz, who fully respects this thinking pattern, i.e. the effect of long term duration of a group, and of long history of its relationship to others, recommends that the acts of inheritance should consist in looking at the world occasional interventions in it (Geertz, 2000). This demands committed knowledge, based on rationalism on the one hand, and on the other – on the will to inherit. In the educational and assistance processes such like counselling, or corrective processes, such

as therapy and rehabilitation, this postulate seems to be crucial for the development of current and future practical solutions.

Cross-cultural counselling in the context of practice should therefore consider the process of cultural change, which creates communication situations in which the interlocutors refer to differently interpreted cultural fields. Cultural otherness of interlocutors in the acts of communication is revealed in the area of assumptions and presuppositions. The key constructs of difference concern: mentality, i.e. the thinking patterns, which are used by both counsellors and counselees, or the tradition to which the interlocutors refer when choosing communication symbols. Social strategies of constructing the cultural 'self' have changed. They are no longer based on the matrix of continuity of tradition, but on a complex process of choosing between multiple traditions. Counselling studies, in this context, provide the ability to mark the value transferred beyond tradition, and the awareness of various interpretations of the same communication symbol. In a system of enumerated differences, reading the speakers' intentions depends not only on communicative competencies of the speakers set in the context of one specific tradition, but also on their sensitivity in going beyond traditions.

Translated from Polish by Katarzyna Bondaruk-Augustyńczyk

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