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# Psychopedagogy of meaning and value, that is about the relationship between existential therapy and transactional analysis (part 6)[*]

## Abstract

The article discusses existential therapy and its possible connections with transactional analysis in its educational dimension.

**Keywords:** existential therapy, transactional analysis, educational transactional analysis.

> Man does not want to live at all costs, but all he wants is to live meaningfully[**].
> Victor Frankl, *Homo Patiens*, 1971

Existential psychology shows affinity to psychological humanistic approach in its many areas. These parallels are so clear that frequently these two trends are called by the same name of the humanistic-existential approach. Yet, existing differences consist mainly in the fact that whereas trends described as humanistic concentrate on various aspects of the Ego state structure and consequences deriving from it, existential trends focus more on the issues of values

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[*] The article is an excerpt of a bigger study by J. Jagieła (2018). *Edukacyjna analiza transakcyjna na tle innych orientacji psychopedagogicznych*. Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie.

[**] All translations – E. Haberko.

and sense of human life. Viewing critically both psychoanalysis and behaviour-ism, existential psychologists demonstrate their doubts also with regard to humanistic psychology. Especially the classical one by C. Rogers or A.H. Maslow. While they accuse psychoanalysis and behaviourism of treating people like objects, they think that in case of the humanistic approach although one intentionally wishes to attribute sense and dignity to a human being, at the same time they get closed in the narrowly understood and egotistic Ego state. They are isolated from the influence of the outside world and values existing there. The vision of the human being comprises solely someone who is egocentrically occupied with themselves and their acting motives. It is someone who seeks exclusively in themselves the justification for their development and their sense of existence. Such a way of thinking deprives a human being of responsibility for who they are and who they become as a result (Opoczyńska, 1999, p. 201).

## Philosophical foundations of existentialism

Existential psychology originates from and takes its inspiration from existential philosophy to a much larger extent than other theoretical approaches and orientations. Therefore, many times one can have an impression there are no clear boundaries between these two separate areas. Hence, for many people the status of this trend among other psychological ones is uncertain, unclear and vague. It can be proved by the fact that in some extensive, well-known modern lexical studies the term of existential psychology does not appear at all (cf. Colman, 2009).

As it is known, existential philosophy (Latin *existential* – existence) presents a vision of a human being as individual and unique, often tragic in their earthly existence. It emphasizes the feeling of permanent imperfection of human nature. Man is a being tragically lonely in the face of God (theistic version of existentialism) or in the face of enormous time and space (atheistic version). They strive for salvation (theistic variant) or they want to achieve inner peace that shall give them freedom (non-religious variant). They acknowledge the primacy of existence over essence, which comes down to the belief that man can be understood mainly by analysing their individual being in the world. It means that man is first alive and exists, and later on they are aware of their existence and attribute some sense to it. Thus, a human being has got freedom expressed in the possibility of choice and is not determined by their fate. Among the precursors and representatives of philosophical existentialism the following authors are usually mentioned: Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) in the agnostic trend, regarded also as a representative of phenomenology, atheist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). On the Christian side,

we find Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) and Paul Tillich (1886–1965), or Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), close to Christianity. Other representatives of the trend are mentioned too: Martin Buber (1887–1965), Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), Nicol Abbagnano (1901–1990) or Miguel de Unamuno (1918–1972). Existentialism, as a philosophical trend shares its origins with widely-understood humanism, philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, hermeneutics and personalism. Existential themes can be found in films and books, where protagonists have a free choice and full responsibility for their actions, which, at the same time, generates fear, sense of hopelessness and leads to extreme pessimism. Existentialism can also be found in psychology and pedagogy.

## Psychology and existential therapy

Existential psychology tries to primarily answer the question: "Who is man?", which other psychological trends tackle rarely or unwillingly, as Małgorzata Opoczyńska writes (Opoczyńska, 1999, pp. 10–11). In the opinion of representatives of this orientation, the aforesaid fundamental question shall be posed first, before a psychologist begins to get to know another human being, to understand them or initiate their therapy. It is a trend that was not formed thanks to one leader or a few precursors (like in case of psychoanalysis or behaviourism), but was born simultaneously in the twenties of the twentieth century thanks to many psychologists and psychiatrists in many European countries and in the United States. The most frequently mentioned names are: Eugéne Minkowski (1885–1972), Viktor Emil Gebsattel (1883–1976), and later on Ludwig Binswanger (1903–1990), Medard Boss (1903–1990), Frederik Johannes Buytendijk (1887–1974), or other distinguished authors such as Irving David Yalom (born in 1931), Viktor Emil Frankl (1905–1997) and Rollo May (1909–1994).

Antoni Kępiński (1918–1972) is considered to be a Polish representative of this trend in psychiatry, and to a large extent in psychology (Sikora, Trzópek, 1999, p. 79). The achievements of this author cannot be overestimated. Almost all his books were published posthumously, yet he is still known and present in memory of psychotherapists representing academic environment in Cracow.[1] A collection of articles and scientific studies published in various journals in 1972 under the title "The Rhythm of Life" ("Rytm Życia") (Kępiński, 1972) is an exception here as they were released in the last moments of the author's life. Books by Kępiński are still reissued and although they were written so many years ago,

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[1] A good example can be a collection of interviews conducted with a group of psychotherapists who began their professional career in the Psychiatry Clinic managed by A. Kępiński in the then Medical Academy in Cracow. M. Werszka (2013). *Psychoterapia to jest moja partia polityczna*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Różnica.

they still enjoy considerable popularity. They are accompanied with studies devoted to the author's achievements (e.g. Murawski, 1983; Jakubik, Masłowski, 1981; Maj, 2012), or selections of his aphorisms or constitutive terminology (Ryn, 1992, 2004). What is more, the author of this article is proud of devoting his first scientific article to the understanding of (artistic) work by Antoni Kępiński (Jagieła, 1985, pp. 5–12). An indefatigable propagator of this author's achievements, Zdzisław J. Ryn, wrote these words in a letter to the author of this article:

> Wydawnictwo Literackie keeps re-issuing the books by master Kępiński, there are new studies in the pipeline, e.g. *Essays on Auschwitz* [*Eseje oświęcimskie*] […]. In short, we do not celebrate consecutive anniversaries of Professor Kępiński's death, but anniversaries of His Resurrection![2]

Not much can be added here, except for the fact that some books, e.g. *The Self-portrait of a Man* (*Autoportret człowieka*) have been already re-issued seven times.

Antoni Kępiński devoted one of the chapters in the book *Fundamental Issues of Contemporary Psychiatry* (*Podstawowe zagadnienia współczesnej psychiatrii*) to existentialism as a psychological concept (Kępiński, 1978, pp. 111–118). He reviews opinions of several leading representatives of this trend and presents a phenomenological foundation of getting to know the patient in psychiatric practice, which, as he claims, comes down to observation, somehow "a vista," without preliminary assumptions, attitudes, prejudice and accepted theory. Thanks to such an approach, one can discover new, formerly unnoticeable details and phenomena. Man is to be examined as the whole of one's being. He refers to typical existential differentiation between essence (nature, substance) and existence (being, becoming), giving priority to the latter one. In the statement "I am," the subject "I" means the essence, whereas the predicate "am" characterizes the existence, which determines becoming, awareness, activity and right to decide. It is also linked with the awareness of death as the word "to be" is inadvertently accompanied with "not to be." Similarly, human will, fear and guilt are linked with the concept of existence, shaped into the word "am." However, man does not exist in vacuum, but is a being located in space and time. Their relations with the world are expressed in the logical, biological and determined way (*Umwelt*), socially with their norms, meanings and meetings with other people (*Mitwelt*). They cannot objectify, which specially regards a therapeutic relation. The last aspect of human existence in the world is the way of perceiving oneself and assessing how one is able to realize oneself in this world (*Eigenwelt*). Kępiński finishes his deliberations on existential psychiatry with the following statement:

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[2]   A letter of prof. Z.J. Ryn of 12 July 2004 r. in author's resources.

One can have many objections to the philosophical assumptions of existentialism, but it cannot be denied that it has contributed a lot to studying some psychopathological phenomena and has been helpful in debunking a false approach of a psychiatrist towards their patient – that of a subject towards an object (Kępiński, 1978, p. 118).

Referring to the aforesaid words, one can say that many reasons contributed to the emergence the existential movement. One of them was dissatisfaction of some psychologists with previously practised academic psychology, which did not perceive "man as such" any more. It was more focused on explaining phenomena than on their thorough understanding. On the other hand, getting to know an individual without the primacy of underlying assumptions and theory offered a common ground for possible relations with phenomenology and hermeneutics concentrated on methods aiming at approaching inner human experience. What we can get to know about another individual depends on a direct and open relation, its quality and engagement of both parties in this relation. This relation differs from reductionist and somehow uneven learning in life sciences, where the learning subject gathers knowledge about their studied object. In the case of the existential approach, this relation resembles the "parallel" arrangement, especially present in therapeutic relations. The learning subject (therapist) is geared towards gaining knowledge about their object (client), but simultaneously the very same object becomes the subject of their therapist's acquaintance. It was connected with the fact that "scientifically" and academically performed psychology provided few premises and clear suggestions for therapeutic practice. However, does existential psychology provide such premises? Rollo May states that "…the existential method can and should have a significant and far-reaching impact on practical therapy of patients, even though so far this method has not found its proper use" (May, 1989, p. 152). Yet, this judgement is not really true. And although, as it has already been mentioned, existential therapy does not have one founder and it has not tried to become a homogenous school of therapy, it is not devoid of its character, distinguishing it from other trends of psychological counselling. "On the contrary," like Małgorzata Opoczyńska writes, "it is exactly due to that fact that this approach is clearly and fundamentally different from other therapeutic schools and as such constitutes an alternative for their views concerning objectives and methods of "healing" people" (Opoczyńska, 1999, p. 193).

One of leading representatives of existential therapy, who undoubtedly is Irvin D. Yalom (born in 1931), similarly to other representatives of this option, regarded the aforesaid trend as ambiguous and not rooted. In his fundamental work, *Existential Psychotherapy*, he writes about it in this way:

Existential psychotherapy is a homeless child. It does not really "belong" anywhere. It does not have its territory, its formal school, its institution; it is not well-perceived in better academic institutions. There is no association devoted to it, no scientific journal

(its few feeble offspring were annihilated in their childhood), stable family or founding fathers. It does though have genealogy – a few cousins and friends of the family dispersed all over the world, partly in the Old World, and partly in America (Yalom, 2008, pp. 21–22).

He also remarks that despite its ambiguity and lack of uniform subject rooting, many experienced therapists, regardless of which school they represent, use many aspects of existential approach in their practice (Yalom, 2008, p. 12). He defines this trend in the simplest way possible: "Existential psychotherapy is a dynamic therapeutic approach focused on worries regarding existence" (Yalom, 2009, p. 19). Dynamism means here rooting in Freudian understanding of contradictory mental forces, and he adds what he finds the most important aspect: "…these contradictory forces act at various levels of consciousness; in fact some of them are completely unconscious" (Yalom, 2009, p. 20). Let us notice that Yalom's reference to unconsciousness is slightly different than this of numerous representatives of this trend, who remain more distanced in their attitude to unconsciousness. Writing about relations between psychotherapy and religion, Yalom notices several links, though at the same time he is convinced that they are complex and full of tension. They have the same worries, deal with human despair, confession is after all a tête-à-tête relation, like in a psychotherapeutic surgery, where one explores their inner self, forgives themselves and others, and being a psychotherapist is not only a profession but a kind of vocation. "And yet," the author writes, "it is still true that the most important convictions and the most fundamental practical approaches of psychotherapy and religious consolation are often quite contradictory" (Yalom, 2009, p. 9). Yalom also claims that, similarly to other representatives of the humanistic and existential trend, therapy should not concentrate on theory but on relation. Existential issues have a significant impact on the nature of this relation. Finally, thinking about the sense of human life, reflection that Victor E. Frankl finds so familiar, he states that it is plague of all beings capable of thinking.

One of the most recognisable trends of existential psychotherapy is logotherapy developed by Victor E. Frankl (1905–1997). Its founder saw an opportunity of psychological help in searching the sense of life, role of freedom, responsibility and love in becoming oneself. Realising oneself via values such as: creativity, experiencing different things and acceptance of suffering, which are inseparably linked with human existence. According to Frankl, man is unity, not only mental and physical one, but the spiritual dimension of human existence should be also taken into account. All that constitutes unity in diversity, which does not equal dividing anything. The author believes that spirituality is not identical to consciousness, and spiritual unconsciousness is also religious unconsciousness. And although some of Frankl's deliberations are of a religious nature, interpreters of his approach believe that he thought that religion should

not be combined with psychotherapy (Sikora, Trzópek, 1999, p. 153). This distinction comes down to one statement: "psychotherapy aims at healing the soul, religion aims at soul's salvation" ( Frankl, 1978, p. 77). Let us give the floor to the very founder of logotherapy, who makes it more precise, writing as follows: "When our patient has got a solid foothold in religion, there are no contraindications to use their religious beliefs for therapeutic purposes, drawing from their spiritual resources" (Frankl, 2009, p. 117). Thus, it is not accidental that in some Catholic environments that approach other schools or trends of psychotherapy with a certain distance and criticism, Frankl's achievements are received with acceptance and acknowledgement. In Poland, Frankl's concept was propagated by, among all, rev. K. Popielski, professor of the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), privately a friend of the founder of logotherapy and its Polish version, nootherapy, and a form of psychological-pastoral counselling (Popielski, 1989, 1992, 1997).

Situations leading to lack of possibility to realise oneself spiritually in the area of values and a decreasing sense of purpose in life cause neurosis which Frankl called noogenic. "Noogenic neurosis," as this author writes, "is not the result of contradictory drives and impulses, but rather derives from existential issues. Among the latter ones an important role is played by frustration of will to meaning" (Frankl, 2009, p. 154). Logotherapy as a suggested form of psychological assistance is not to replace psychotherapy but to complete it. In this way, Frankl clearly broadens the meaning of psychotherapy, which becomes for him "practical" philosophy whose aim is not only healing a sick individual but "leading them to the truth" (Frankl, 1998, p. 16). It might seem that Frankl cares more about helping people experiencing existential void than about treating the sick (Frankl, 2010, p. 111). Thus, sometimes, like Aleksander Nelicki does, this concept is defined as "metaclinical" (Nelicki, 1999, pp. 177–194), i. e. going beyond narrow and intentional removing reasons and symptoms of human problems, but reaching the depths of one's sense of life.

Viktor E. Frankl developed several therapeutic techniques, among all, the technique of paradoxical intervention and de-reflection. In case of paradoxical intervention, it is about persuading the patient to experience situations causing fear, which leads to decreasing mental strain.[3] On the other hand, de-reflection is to change the direction of destructive thoughts. The therapy process also includes Socratic dialogue, which especially concentrates on the patient's system of values. Yet, Frankl thought that psychotherapy cannot be equated with a task, where a psychotherapist, like a skilled technician, fixes another wrongly operating human being. Techniques, though helpful at times, play a supporting role

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[3] It can be said that Frankl follows Democritus, who recommended to "Do what you are afraid of".

here, atmosphere that the therapist brings into the meeting is of an utmost importance because the therapist cannot objectify the patient as in this way they objectify themselves. Therefore, a good therapist is a person whose help comes from the inside of their person. Frankl claims that logotherapy as a method of existential analysis can be a therapy for everyone.

Frankl's aloofness from himself and his concept, and his sense of humour can be well illustrated by an excerpt from one of his books.[4] He describes a situation when someone addressed him with a question if he was a psychoanalyst and how his concept differed from psychoanalysis. At the beginning, Frankl asked this person to explain first of all how they understood the concept of psychoanalysis. The guest, interested in logotherapy, answered as follows: "During psychoanalysis a patient has to lie on the couch and tell their therapist about things they often don't feel like talking about." Frankl responded to it in this way: "In this case, during logotherapy, a patient has to sit straight and listen to things they do not feel like listening to" (Frankl, 2009, pp. 149–150). There is a grain of truth in this anecdote, but it is a bit far from a real value and usefulness of this concept and fundamental differences that separate it from psychoanalysis. One of the main assumptions of logotherapy says that a man's main goal, like Frankl writes, is neither aspiration for pleasure nor avoidance of pain, but looking for sense in one's life. That is why we are even ready to suffer, of course on the condition that we give some sense to our suffering. Man is to look for the sense of life beyond themselves, "we are to answer and not to ask and the very life is a question" (Frankl, 1998, p. 133). Thus, logotherapy is above all to become a therapy that allows us to uncover the sense of life of a person seeking help.

Comparing the three consecutive concepts represented by Freud, Adler and Frankl, one can frequently notice how they are reflected in the process of human ontological development. The period of childhood would refer to Freud, growing up with the desire of power to Adler, and mature striving for giving one's life some sense would be linked in Frankl's case with complete adulthood (Sikora, Trzópek, 1999, p. 148). Frankl himself confirms this remark quoting Peter R. Hofstätter: "Each of three mental instances has found its psychotherapeutic advocate, id – in Freud, ego – in Adler, and superego in C.G Jung, R. Allers and V. Frankl" (Frankl, 1971, p. 23). Further on he ads: "Putting psychoanalytical jargon aside, treating it as usual *façon de parler*, one has to completely agree with it" (Frankl, 1971, p. 23). Therefore, following the same reasoning and referring to transactional analysis it can be said that Freud embodies the interests of the Child ego state, Adler – the Adult ego state, and Frankl – the Parent ego state.

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4    Let us add here that the book was sold in over 12 million copies; it can clearly show in how many world countries people seek an answer to the niggling question about the sense of life.

One should mention one more representative of the existential approach, i.e. Rollo May (1909–1994). Existential psychologists do not want to, as May says, link psychology with a certain philosophy, but they want to be aware of ontological reasons for their actions (e.g. therapeutic ones), which are otherwise somehow suspended in the air and cannot have any lasting significance (May, 1989, p. 152). In his studies, May focuses mainly on the issue of fear, which he treats in many cases as a developmental factor, and he devotes a lot of place to the feeling of love. Constructive fear helps one face dangerous situations. In case of destructive fear of a neurotic nature, which is responsible for inner anxiety, the situation is opposite. May writes that "It is characterized by limited consciousness, loss of orientation; and when such a state lasts longer, there emerges a feeling of depersonalisation and apathy" (May, 1989, p. 50). In case of love, he distinguished its five types: *libido* (as a biological demonstration of gender), *eros* (mental desire of unity with the loved one), *philia*[5] (intimate closeness between people devoid of sexuality), *agape* (unconditional love expressed with care about a given person) and *manic* (impulses and emotions driven by love). And although in May's opinion sexuality should not be separated from love, love is the aim of worthy human life, contrary to sexual desire which is egoistic in nature.

Showing positive aspects of the aforesaid existential trend in psychology, one cannot ignore the fact that also this orientation, like other ones, attracts criticism. Putting aside this obvious statement that academic psychology accuses it of not being scientific enough, talking about some authors identifying themselves with existentialism, it is said that their categories seem to have some shortcomings. For example, it is said that they do not define fundamental existential terms which the whole concept relies on. Several terms (e.g. being, freedom, subjectivity, etc.) are most often explained one with the help of another, thus not referring to any internal reference systems.[6] Therefore, like in case of Rollo May's views, despite declared relations with existential philosophy, existential psychology is not completely rooted in it, and frequent references to terms close to existentialism only illusorily "make an impression of dealing with human reality" (Sikora, Trzópek, 1999, p. 139).

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[5] This term shall be used by the author later on in another publication in the context of integrated personality. Jagieła, J. (2013). *Integracja osobowości jako wartość edukacyjna. Perspektywa edukacyjnej analizy transakcyjnej*. In: A. Gofron, K. Motyl (eds.), *Podstawy edukacji. Sfera wartości i zasad – konstruowanie przedmiotu*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls", pp. 119–139.

[6] This mistake is described in methodology as *ignotum per ignotum* (the unknown by the more unknown).

## Existential psychopedagogy

It is difficult to find examples showing a clear use of the existential approach (e.g. logotherapy) during school lessons. However, it seems that, like it was said before, existential therapy should not replace other directions, solutions or corrective methods, but constitute their foundation and completion, and the existential orientation does not have to dominate and eliminate other ways of acting but can provide them with an axiological direction and foundation. At the same time, if Frankl's achievements shall be associated with the issues of values and discovering the sense of one's own life, it is difficult to imagine a teacher, head teacher or a therapist to completely ignore the aforesaid issues. It can seem even more important because, as we can reasonably suppose, some students or participants of therapeutic meetings have smaller or bigger deficits in the normative area of the Parent ego state. Therefore, a teacher can create, without any pressure and imposing anything, a fantastic opportunity for children and teenagers to discover values and look for sense of their own existence. And although Frankl did not devote much attention to teaching and educating, his achievements constitute an important inspiration for other authors to undertake steps in this area. As far as the logotherapy author's interest in educational issues is concerned, the concept was already formed in secondary school, when he got interested in social work, questions of help for social outcasts, started working with failed suicide attempt minor victims, people who had lost any sense in life. Being only 21 years old, like Jan T. Michalski says, in his publications he postulated establishment of school therapy centres for teenagers. After ten years of therapeutic practice he stated that teenager's mental issues derived from lack of sexual education, family conflicts, school and economical difficulties and personality disorders (Michalski, 2011, p. 26). Other researchers of Frankl's works appreciate the value of this concept in the educational aspect, mainly in its multidimensional character, which offers a possibility to overcome contemporary existential crises of a young man, caused by losing their sense and purpose of life, at the same time giving hope for solving many educational problems deriving from negligence of spiritual needs (Wolicki, 2007, pp. 9–10). J. Wiśniewska claims that the logotherapeutic concept of education is unique and efficient because logotherapy makes attempts to meet the basic human need, which is striving to determine the sense of one's life. Realising the aforesaid aim is a way to overcome existential void and frustration, which often destroys a contemporary man and does not let them enjoy mental health, development and maturity (Wiśniewska, 2013). Also foreign authors perceive the value of logotherapy in its pedagogical aspect, seeing its special usefulness in discovering the sense of life by children and teenagers (Heinelt, 1986, p. 78). Many articles dealing with pedagogical aspects of logotherapy were published in an international review

*The International Forum for Logotherapy*. Logotherapy provides foundations for pedagogical anthropology, claims Karl Dienelt (Dienelt, 1955, 1970, 1979). Further on, Joan Carles Melich remarks that logotherapy builds philosophical and anthropological foundations for the theory of pedagogy (Melich, 1993, p. 72). In Bernard R. Dansard's view, logotherapy offers means that support education. He notices how important logotherapy is in pedagogy (Dansard, 1993, pp. 89–96). Ludwig Kerstiens wants pedagogy to be open to sense (Kerstiens, 1978, p. 85). In the opinion of E. Lukas, logotherapeutic education is based on three pillars: free will, will to live and sense of life. Logotherapy can support the development of young people, can favour finding and developing their full life potential (Lukas, 1989). According to W. Kurz, Frankl's theories showing will to live and sense of life are particularly useful in creating the concept of religious education (Kurz, 1989, p. 237). Similarly, A.G. Wirth even shows that logotherapy and its image of a man can be a source of spiritual strength for teachers and students (Wirth, 1979, p. 237). Hans Nobert Hoppe claims that the system of logotherapeutic education must treat a man as a creature equipped with their spiritual dimension, freedom, responsibility, capability of self-transcendence. He suggests transferring fundamental ideas of logotherapy into the educational practice based on the integral vision of logotherapeutic education that also takes adults into account (Hoppe, 1989). Also L. Tarner (Tarner, 1994) offers a proposition of integral pedagogy understood in this way. On the other hand, H. Frank suggests that pedagogical work should be geared towards the future, make one sensitive to possibilities of finding sense, and should not limit itself to conveying knowledge. Children and teenagers have to learn in their families and at school to discover will to meaning and sense of life (Frank, 1994). Concluding, one can quote an opinion of B.Z. Hirsch, who states that logotherapy is orientated towards the future, prepares for dealing with problems that young people might encounter in the future, and the practice of logotherapy might prove useful in counselling available at school (Hirsch, 1995). This short review of foreign authors shows us that Viktor E. Frankl's concept constitutes a constant inspiration for teachers and educators, who find an important pedagogical message in it.

In Polish pedagogy, the existential trend was represented most comprehensively by Janusz Tarnowski (1919–2012). He expressed his view writing that

> Among various trends nowadays gaining more and more significance, there is existential philosophy, which focuses its interests on an individual and sense (or no sense) of their life. As this direction of research cannot be unfamiliar to Christian pedagogy, its confrontation with existentialism is inevitable (Tarnawski, 1974, p. 1; 1982, p. 5).

He made a dialogue and a meeting central concepts of his vision of education for peace, and he devoted popular science publications to them. An example can be a book *How to Educate?* (*Jak wychowywać?*) (Tarnawski, 1993). Janusz Tarnawski also noticed aspects of existential pedagogy in the achievements

of Janusz Korczak (1878 or 1879–1942). He associated it with Korczak's under-standing of a dialogue, which was close to his, and which was expressed in part-ner-like relations between adults and a child who is already treated like a man and is not to become a man sometime in the future. One type of dialogue he wrote about in the context of Korczak's pedagogy was an existential dialogue, which was linked with three situations: guilt, joy and suffering, and speaking more precisely with co-guilt, co-joy and co-suffering of an adult with a child. The realization of the dialogue understood in such a way, i.e. the one between a responsible adult and children is best expressed in well-known circumstances of Korczak's death, which Tarnawski writes about in the following way: "The de-cision of fraternizing with children at the moment of death was so to speak in advance organically integrated with intense, existential connection with them" (Tarnawski, 1990, pp. 81–86). Therefore, concluding, one might try to find rela-tions between the existential approach and transactional analysis in its educa-tional context.

## Existential aspects of transactional analysis

In his book *Existential Psychotherapy* (2008), Irvin D. Yalom, referring to four (like he calls them) human "final worries" (death, freedom, isolation and sense), looks critically at transactional analysis in the context of human freedom and decisions. As he writes, it is difficult to imagine freedom of deciding about one-self without free will and without the right to choose accompanying the possi-bility to make a decision. At this point, he lists and discusses five types of human decisions (rational, volitional, drifting, impulsive and based on changing one's point of view), distinguished by a transactionalist, William James (Yalom, 2008, p. 324). In this way, he critically refers to known transactional early-childhood script decisions. He questions the awareness of decisions made by a child and placing them in real time, decisions that later impact their unconscious script, personality variables and repetitive interpersonal relations. Irving D. Yalom's doubts also concern the process of re-decision, in which a therapist comes back to this moment with a suggestion of taking a rational decision from their point of view this time. The problem, the author writes, lies in the fact that it might happen that it concerns completely different decisions (as we might guess from the text); other reservations concern the fact that the client is allegedly forced to work on unconsciousness forces with the help of consciousness. "In this rad-ical opinion on taking decisions there is no place for the subtlety of the develop-mental process," Yalom writes (Yalom, 2008, p. 325). He also claims that the structure of one's character is not a consequence of a single, even crucial deci-sion, but constitutes the outcome of many choices, which develop throughout

one's lifetime. What is more, a man, thanks to their will, can accept or reject offered solutions.

Not entering into a polemic about this view, it is still worth asking only one, it seems, crucial question: does that power of free will also regard a child at an early stage of its development, i.e. when the most important traits of its mental state and character are being formed? It is also difficult to deny the fact that the dynamics of developmental changes differs depending on a stage of this development. What else is psychoanalysis and this inside but revealing with the help of consciousness what can be found in the area of unconsciousness (psychoanalysis is sometimes defined in the shortest way possible as "studying irrational phenomena with the help of the rational method"). Thus, should not consciousness be the last instance man relies on?

Let us put a full stop here. We began to look for relations connecting psychology and existential psychotherapy with TA by criticizing the latter one, whereas it is interesting to notice with how much reverence and awareness of meaning Eric Berne approached existential issues in his concept. They occupy a few pages in this book *Principles of Group Treatment.* In the chapter devoted to existential analysis Berne writes as follows: "TA shares with existential analysis a big respect and interest in such personality features as honesty, sincerity, integrity and autonomy and very touching manifestations of social meetings and closeness" (Berne, 1966, p. 305). Further on, he thinks about the role and meaning of *self*. He writes that "*Self* in its existential sense is recognized and appreciated by transactional analysis. It is experienced as an ego state with a lot of free energy. This energy allowing to feel "the real self" can occur at a given time, one by one in the Parent, Adult and Child ego state" (Berne, 1966, p. 305). He claims that control over *Self* is attributed more to poets, philosophers or theologians than psychotherapists.

> A TA patient learns to control free energy, increase it and transfer their "real *Self*" between different ego states as acts of their will. They learn autonomy and develop their sincerity. It is paradoxical that a person capable of controlling their *Self* should be described in the philosophical and existential context but not with the help of TA notions. It creates opportunities for philosophers, theologians, poets for cooperation with psychotherapists and reflecting upon the meaning of these basic values (Berne, 1966, p. 305).

There is also a reflection on the question of psychological games, or a racket.[7]

> Games by definition – Berne writes – are perceived from an existential point of view as evil. A TA ideal are interpersonal relationships devoid of games. But, on the other hand,

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7   Racket is a pattern of unconscious script behaviours being a source of cheating and manipulating the environment, thus making a given person experience negative substitute feelings, [in:] Jagieła, J. (2012). *Słownik analizy transakcyjnej*. Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo AJD, pp. 168–169.

games provide socially interesting ways of time structuring. Thus, everyone takes their independent decision which games they choose and how often they play them and in whose company – so as to maintain one's identity and sincerity. One may also abandon games (Berne, 1966, p. 307).

Thus, Berne notices the insignificance and insidiousness of psychological games in interpersonal relations, but, with contrariness and inquisitiveness typical of a researcher, he notices their interesting aspect as a psychological form of spending leisure time. Games are accompanied with racket that still requires further analysis:

> The question of a relation between such feelings as the sense of guilt, being hurt, fear or inadequacy is not completely answered in TA. The critical point is transferring these feelings from the Child to the Adult ego state (Berne, 1966, p. 307).

The script aspect, remaining in the area of important research of TA, has got its existential dimension as well. Reflecting on it does not always bring positive conclusions. Berne writes about it as follows:

> Nearly whole human activity is programmed to pursue and fulfil the early-child script, hence the feeling of autonomy is almost always an illusion. This illusion causes suffering of the human race as it happens that consciousness, sincerity, creativity and intimacy are possible only to few lucky ones. For the rest of the human race other people seem to be mainly objects of manipulation. They have to be invited, persuaded, seduced or forced to play appropriate roles, strengthen the protagonist's position and fulfil the script (Berne, 1966, p. 310).

Existential optimism occurs when someone is consciously capable of getting rid of one's script and undertaken games, and meets a person similar to themselves.

> A person freed from their script can see the world from a different perspective (or rather the old and long-forgotten one). A sincere relation takes place when such a person freed from games meets another, similar person. Such a meeting is probably the highest form of relation, which existentialists call an *encounter*. In TA terminology, an *encounter* is preparation for the relation of closeness and intimacy (Berne, 1966, p. 310).

Finally, referring to Berne, let us quote what he said about therapeutic issues both in the context of existential analysis and transactional analysis. It is worth doing as the aforesaid book has not been translated into Polish. This observation shows one of key psychopathological issues, where depression meets despair and anger, though constituting separate components. What does Berne think about it?

> TA, similarly to existential analysis, differentiates the terms of depression and despair. Depression is the outcome of a dialogue between the Parent and the Child ego states, and despair is the result of therapeutic failure or interrupting a game or a script. Then, the patient tries to reconstruct the game and this leads to anger and frustration as the therapist tries to prevent it (Berne, 1966, p. 311).

However, an extract in which the author refers to human disappointment, which happens when one gets rid of early-child illusions, is especially worth our attention.

> Disappointment is different from depression and despair. The original script protocol formed in early childhood contains elements of magic, is developed at an archaic level. It might be the reason of failure in therapy. The patent has to live in the world without Santa Claus, one has to confront various existential problems, necessity of choice, absurdity. One has to confront the illusion of the script. Then, the main feeling is disappointment and a lot depends on the therapists competencies. It might be the therapist's last existential task – separate disappointment from anger (Berne, 1966, p. 311).

For a therapist it is a great existential challenge as illusions are obstacles and adversities on the path of one's development. In his brilliant book (one has to appreciate it despite its controversial criticism of TA), The Gift of Therapy (Yalom, 2003, p. 1), Irvin D. Yalom, formulates, first and foremost, a clear and explicit recommendation for young therapists: "Remove obstacles from the path of development." This development is often limited or hindered because of various mental disorders. Being at the beginning of his own professional career, he adopted this directive, which changed his approach to psychotherapy forever. It freed him from the compulsion of taking many steps which, in this perspective, turned out unnecessary. It made him realise that "…I just have to recognize and remove obstacles. The rest shall come on its own thanks to self-realisation forces operating in a given patient" (Yalom, 2003, p. 1). These disorders can be understood as a certain illusion (Latin *illuso* – scorn, joke, illusion), a given person finds themselves in. As an illusion is nothing else but "[…] an erroneous presentation of a reality fragment" (Podsiad, Więckowski, 1983, p. 148). Using the language of contemporary pop-culture, one may have an impression that patients in need of therapy live in a kind of Matrix.[8] Let us point out that in the Wachowskis' film, people lived in the world created by a computer programme giving an impression of authentic reality. It is similar in case of mental disorders. It should be emphasized here that this world is not completely distorted, falsified and entirely false, it does not create new facts or it does not deny them, but deforms them in a peculiar way, changes the perspective and redrafts. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in case of neurosis. In such a case, the patient can describe their symptoms and is partially able to differentiate themselves from the object (contrary to the case of psychosis or borderline disorders) and as a result, to a certain extent, stays in touch with reality. Only their Feeling-Self is affected, Watching-Self does not suffer, hence a neurotic patient is not completely disoriented. The so-called *stupiditas neurotica*[9] can be a good example

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8    *Matrix* – an American movie of 1999, directed by Larry and Andy Wachowski.

9    *Stupiditas neurotica* – also called "neurotic stupor" consists in demonstrating a lower than usual intellectual level in challenging situations.

here. In *The Little Prince*, the character of a lamplighter represents a person suffering from neurosis. He keeps extinguishing and relighting the lamp-post, blindly following orders, although there is no need to do that as the planet does not move in the same way it used to (De Saint-Exeupéry, 1992, p. 44). A person under the influence of their script functions in a similar way. In case of psychoses, illusoriness takes the most dramatic form of delusions and hallucinations. On the other hand, particular personality adaptations, which constitute a significant area of TA studies (Joines, Steward, 2002; Ware, 1983, pp. 11–19), create a different image of illusions depending on their character typology. For a schizoid person it will be an illusion of their own existential safety in danger. A paranoid person creates their own, closed world in a similar way, based on lack of trust in their surroundings. A person demonstrating moral issues does not distinguish their and other's needs, and a symbiotic person lives in their constant dependence on others. A narcissistic individual, on the other hand, constantly defends their feeling of importance and tries to prove their worth to an indifferent world. Masochistic people are trapped by their sacrifice and freedom, whereas histrionic people immaturely long for love and take great care of their own attractiveness. A person suffering from OCPD render to the illusion of excellence, exaggerated perfection and strict discipline. One may sometimes have an impression that all those illusions let people live, or function, more precisely, as change is regarded as something impossible or dangerous. In his book *Droga donikąd*, Józef Mackiewicz writes similarly to Berne:

> Human nature due to its imperfection is not capable of learning absolute truth. In these circumstances a lie in a mental dimension is as natural as, let us say, the presence of air, water, etc., which we cannot survive without in a physical dimension (Mackiewicz, 2011, p. 298).

It is a sad existential conclusion in the context of human life. However, is it completely true in its pessimism and a tragic nature of human fate? Does it not create an opportunity for education and correcting students' and charges' existential approaches towards themselves, others and the surrounding world?

Existential themes occur in transactional analysis also in the context of frequently mentioned existential positions, alternatively called life positions. They clearly refer to the well-know relation I-You, which we find in Martin Buber's works (Buber, 1992). However, this relation is shown from a slightly different perspective and it acquires a bigger significance. We also find parallels to the characteristic of the human approach "from" and "to" described by A. Kępiński:

> Basic emotional approaches ("to" and "from" – I love and hate) can be realized only in relation to another human being […]. That is why this attitude towards another person contains hidden ambivalence (I love and I hate). That is why another person decreases anxiety and evokes it at the same time (Ryn, ed. 1992, p. 69).

It is an issue which has been attracting researchers' attention for a long time. They have shown how important it is in developing individual and social identity, or in shaping an individual's self-knowledge, their readiness to engage in others' matters, and developing a defensive approach in the conditions when one's identity is threatened (Jarymowicz, ed., 1988).

The classification of existential positions was initiated by E. Berne when transactional analysis was being formed (Berne, 1962, pp. 10–23). He came back to it in one of his last books, making its meaning broader and more profound (Berne, 1998, pp. 115–127, 529). Other foreign authors, well-known in Poland, who dealt with TA also frequently referred to the aforementioned subject matter (e.g. Harris, 1987, pp. 56–70; Hay, 2010, pp. 65–90; James, Jongeward, 1994, pp. 62–64; Rogoll, 1989, pp. 47–49, and many others). Many Polish researchers did not ignore it either (e.g. Cichocka, Suchańska, 1989, p. 35; Cierpiałowka, Nowicka-Gawęcka, 1992, pp. 109–110; Jagieła, 1998, pp. V–VI and others).

Existential positions, putting it simply, are fundamental convictions of a given person about themselves and other people. The aforesaid four fundamental life positions[10] are formed and develop early in one's life, serving later on to justify one's behaviour and decisions, initiate certain games, or confirm a given script. They determine how one views fundamental values and builds their sense of life with regard to themselves and others. Three first life positions are of an unconscious and to a great extent emotional nature, developed by us and by others, whereas the last one (+,+) is a conscious choice of an adult person. Ted Novey describe that position as specifically understood "medicine", which solves 95% of problems psychotherapy clients suffer from (Novey, 1980, pp. 135–139). Nancy Porter is of a similar opinion when she explains in her article how we should understand the statement 'I am OK. and you are OK.' She writes:

> Let us say it clearly and simply. Each human being is precious and it has to be taken into account. That is what we say when we claim that I am OK. and you are OK. […] I am glad and moved that we managed to use such a simple language in transactional analysis to express our fundamental and very humanitarian existential approach, which ITAA members confirm every day in their actions (Porter, 1981, p. 117).

Apart from that we can add that this four-position fundamental interpretation has its more complex formula developed by many authors, e.g. besides four bilateral life positions, there are eight further positions, multilateral, unstable or redundant (marked with a symbol '?'). Many transactional analysts noticed in existential positions several contexts and themes worth more profound reflections and references to occurring problems, circumstances or groups of people.

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[10] Let us revise: I am not OK. – You are OK. (-, +); I am not OK. – You are not OK. (- , -); I am OK. – You are not OK. (+, -); I am OK. – You are OK. (+,+).

It is impossible to present a complete image of these inquiries, yet let us mention some authors and their studies.

Tony White, an Australian psychologist and supervisor, running his private therapeutic practice, summarises achievements of various authors, concerning existential positions, and proposes his own model, which he regards as more useful in psychological help (White, 1994, pp. 269–276; 1997, pp. 57–64). Thus, he proposes to use not four but seven life positions.[11] He concerns them crucial in clinical practice, though he admits in the conclusions of his articles that he might be accused of making the already existing theory too complicated.

On the other hand, Southey Swede compared all Eric Berne's opinions on life positions with those of other authors such as Franklin Ernst, Edgar Stuntz, William Greene, or Karen Horney (Swede, 1978, pp. 59–62). In the catalogue, recapitulating her findings, she lists every accepted position and its various aspects such as: ways of problem solving and using time, transactional games played and benefits and signs of recognition received thanks to them, typical script slogans, characteristic forms of activity, and finally, typical inner Child ego states.

Since Berne distinguished those particular existential positions, many authors have been trying to measure them with the help of standard tests and questionnaires. An article by Frederick D. Kramer, a member of the International Transactional Analysis Association, professor of psychology at Concordia College in Portland, Oregon, can be a good example (Kramer, 1978, pp. 166–168). In his publication he describes a test for measuring basic life positions. A tool consists of 40 simple statements based on a Likert scale, offering a possibility to respond to all of them within 10–15 minutes. It should be emphasized that the test, though very simplified in comparison to later solutions, meets strict psychometric standards with its high reliability and accuracy. The article presents and discusses interesting differences in levels of life positions noted in the research of cross-sectional age groups. The author also made an attempt to explain them and pointed to possible reasons of differences occurring between particular age groups.

Almost twenty five years later, another author, Frederick A. Boholst, comes back to the idea of developing a scale that would allow to study existential positions (Boholst, 2002, pp. 28–32). He makes his method subject to a thorough factor analysis, which allows him to acknowledge its considerable efficiency in clinical practice. However, he makes it clear that its use and standardization should have its local and cultural adaptations, and remarks that further research of his scale might shed light on developmental aspects of transactional analysis. Three years later, he addresses this issue again with two other authors, analysing, with the help of purely theoretical speculations, the questions of the so-

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[11]  1. (+,?), 2. (-,?), 3. (-,-), 4. (-, --), 5. (++,+), 6. (+,+), 7. (+, -).

called attachment and the separation-individualisation stage in an individual's development (Boholst, Boholst, Mende, 2005, pp. 62–67).

To a large extent, K. Harley also refers to existential positions and attachment when he shows relations between the achievements of Eric Berne and Melanie Klein. He suggests that the proposition of four existential positions with further amendments of this model would benefit from taking into account the perspective of early attachments. He tries to prove his statement by referring to a number of examples from his own clinical practice. He writes in the conclusion that

> Existential positions of transactional analysis provide a shortened description of developmental phases. Yet, Klein offers an inside in the quality and stages of this development. An inseparable element of Klein's developmental structure is his description of how psychopathology was formed, which has its implications in clinical treatment. Studying the correspondences between Berne and Klein, I offer getting our roots back, to add a deeper dimension to the theory and practice of transactional analysis (Harley, 2006, pp. 252–269).

When it comes to Fenita English, she analyses particular existential positions in their developmental context, referring frequently to Rene Spitz and to Melanie Klein and other representatives of the psychoanalytic object relations theory (English, 1975, pp. 416–419). This very author and her findings are quoted by a Swiss psychotherapist Jenni Hine, when she relates the significance of four life positions to couples therapy (Hinne, 1982, pp. 190–194). In her opinion, it is an underestimated tool which lets partners see features and shortcomings of their relation and prevent their difficult mutual references . She shows such situations using examples from her therapeutic sessions. This educative illustration of symptoms and presentation of their causes offers relief in experienced tension, opens up one's perception and focus on the situation "here and now", favours closeness and clearly accelerates the process of treatment.

Two American educational psychology theorists, Marvin J. Fine and John P. Poggio, this time adopting not the psychoanalytic object relations theory but behavioural orientation, tried to attribute particular behaviours to given life positions (Fine, Poggio, 1977, pp. 250–356). They claim that the results prove the rightness of fundamental assumptions of transactional analysis formulated beforehand in an intuitive way.

John G. Allen and Dorothy Weeb from the Faculty of Psychology of the Northern Illinois University in DeKalb tried to link life positions of their researched subjects to administering signs of recognition and experiencing a positive mood (Allen, Webb, 1975, pp. 227–223). In the light of their research in a group of students, one could see a clear connection between a tendency to give positive strokes to oneself and others and experiencing positive emotions as far as people adopting the fourth, aforesaid, life position (+,+) were concerned. This life position is unanimously regarded by all transactional analysts

as the most optimal existential position. The editors of Transactional Analysis Journal, where this article was published, published the text despite several factual and methodological reservations (e.g. lack of taking into account negative signs of recognition in the research), admitting that the publication was inspiring and encouraging to conduct further studies in this area.

Charles H. Peterson shares the view of Eric Berne quoted in the book *Games People Play*, which says that due to a few ways of game classification, only a game based on existential positions can be called systematic and scientific (Peterson, 1976, pp. 381–383). Considering some game types, the author also points to the relation of a game type to an adopted existential orientation. He also remarks that the therapist's awareness of their patient's life position and their life position identified on the basis of psychological games played by them is crucial in defining at the beginning the patient's engagement level and energy they would be able to contribute to this therapy, and as a result, the change of their situation.

Three authors, Sandra S. Andrews, Diana C. Conrad and Marvin J. Fine, conducted a research with a sample of fifteen boys and the same number of girls in the last grade of college (Andrews, Fine, Conrad, 1977, pp. 357–360). It concerned the stability of a given adapted life position in comparison with other peers, school situations and family relations. This research proved that despite the view of Thomas A. Harris (Harris, 1987, pp. 56–70), these positions can change depending on places and circumstances. Thus, they are not deeply rooted and they are subject to change. However, it seems that the authors did not sufficiently take into account the subjects' developmental stage, which is, as we know, not very stable either as far as other personality traits are concerned. James H. Morrison reaches similar conclusions about the lack of stability of life positions and he states that conflict situations are an intermediate variable that can significantly influence one's behaviour regardless of originally adopted and declared life position (Morrison, 1978, pp. 250–254).

Maggie Hunt-Cohn, an American writer and poet permanently living in Georgia, notices an important relation between one's life position and loneliness (Hunt-Cohn, 1994, pp. 293–294). The feeling of loneliness is the result of lack of sufficient social contacts, a state that might impact both a child's development and the way older people function. It decreases one's self-esteem,[12] but also influences negative assessment of other people's value. The effects of loneliness can be noticed in elderly people residing in long-term care centres, for whom intensified social contacts might improve their functioning in the area of thinking processes and dealing with everyday activities. Understanding oneself and others is a factor that allows people to feel that they are OK. In other tests, links

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[12]  Self-esteem is called OKness in TA, whereas lack of it is called non-OKness.

between four life positions and the feeling of shame were studied. The subject matter was studied before by other researchers in the context of social control (English, 1994, pp. 24–28). Molly Cole comes back to the feeling of shame as a psychological phenomenon inseparably linked with the feeling of being or not being OK (Cole, 1998, pp. 152–156).

On the other hand, Charles McFarren shows correspondences between self-esteem and narcissism (McFarren, 1998, pp. 244–250). He is a certified transactional analyst, specialising in clinical practice, teacher, therapist and consultant in the area of organizational development. He lives and works in Bolivia, being a representative of several non-governmental organisations as well as an active member of the Methodist Church. He relates the question of narcissism to two personally studied examples. One of them was a leader of a destructive religious group, displaying all the characteristics of a sect, which one member of his family got engaged in. The author has no doubts writing, "When I consult professional literature, I have no doubts that many sect leaders are narcissists." The second analysed example are Bolivian political leaders using demagogy and manipulating big group of people by controlling radio, press and television. What links them can be described as "psycho-terror" used by them. Their approach is inseparably linked with their adopted life position (+, -) ambivalently moving around a seemingly contradictory position (-, +). It seems though that the author does not sufficiently notice this ambivalence that can be treated like a key to understanding narcissism and psychopathic attitudes. Concluding his text, he shares a moving reflection on how much it cost him in life to deal with narcissists and maintain his own existential position (+,+).

On the other hand, the reflections of Alan Jacobs might sound controversial. He criticises several former publications and postulates to separate separately studied and empirically described existential positions and their moral judgement. He considers such an approach unacceptable (Jacobs, 1997, pp. 197–206). It is difficult to share such an opinion when one can discern a broader, not strictly scientistic, point of view, like the author does. And one keeps analysing various aspects of human existence also in the context of loneliness, shame or others' damaging behaviour that clearly has ethical connotations.

The aforesaid results of research, inquiries and analyses presented in recent years in the journal devoted to TA confirm that existential issues are still present in authors' reflections and in research dealing with transactional analysis. It attracts their attention and still constitutes a source of creative inspiration. It can be also clearly noticed that each publication advances our understanding of existential aspects referring to us and other people, which were developed and are still being developed within the framework of transactional analysis. Nevertheless, educational issues do not attract the aforesaid authors' attention. It is Polish authors who significantly feel that gap and focus on the issue of existential

positions in the context of educational transactional analysis, especially rela-
tions between a teacher and their students. These are researchers mainly be-
longing to the Educational Transactional Analysis Research Team at Jan Dlugosz
University in Częstochowa (Gębuś, 1997, pp. 111–121; Góźdź, Wysocka, 2013,
pp. 69–86; Góźdź, Wysocka, 2014, pp. 95–116; Motyl, 2016, pp. 241–252). Thus,
one can hope that further publications and research of the authors belonging to
this group shall contribute to propagating this subject matter as a significant,
though not always noticed, issue of contemporary psychopedagogy.

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## Psychopedagogika sensu i wartości, czyli o związkach terapii egzystencjalnej z analizą transakcyjną (cz. 6)

### Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia terapię egzystencjalną oraz jej ewentualne związki z analizą transakcyjną w jej edukacyjnym wydaniu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** terapia egzystencjalna, analiza transakcyjna, edukacyjna analiza transakcyjna.