Remark: On the Dominant Status of the Psychosocial Approach and Holistic Understanding of the Client in Patristic Anthropology

Piebilde: par psiholoģiskās pieejas dominējošo statusu un klienta holistisko izpratni patristiskajā antropoloģijā

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The article invites to discuss approach to the client's personality in social work practice. The dominance of psychology in the social work discourse has led towards reduction of personality characteristics lacking spiritual dimension. Psychology treats clients as individuals striving for satisfaction of physical needs, the concept developed in Marxism at the end of the 19th century. It doesn't cover holistic approach of human personality which requires respect to the process of transformation of personality, which is described in Patristic anthropology as deification. The author advocates for anthropological approach to clients along with the problem-oriented concept in social work.

Key words: personality, individual, *imago Dei*, psychology, Patristic anthropology.

The psychosocial framework is a central model in social work practice to, as social workers put it, "restore, preserve and promote a client's personal and social functioning." This approach has firmly entered social work practice, and rarely does anyone doubt and question effectiveness of the mentioned approach in working with a client. Although in foreign theoretical literature there are opinions that "more research is needed when evaluating the psychosocial framework of social work" (Goldstein, 1995).

As it is known, psychology has a long past and a very recent history. The birth date of psychology as a science is 1979, when Wilhelm Wundt at the University of Leipzig organized the world's first laboratory for experimental psychology. Until then, psychology was a part of philosophy and dealt with issues of philosophical practice in relation to man. Psychological science needed to justify its existence as an independent branch of science, which would conduct its research following the exact, objective, method-based model of natural sciences. It is not for nothing that physiologists, medical doctors, neuropathologists, psychiatrists were among the first psychologists. Therefore, equipment in the psychology research laboratories at the end of the 19th

century did not differ much from that intended for physiologists. It is not for nothing that the First World Congress of Psychologists, which was organized in Paris in 1889 by a Polish philosopher, psychologist and medical doctor Julian Ohorovich, was devoted to the topic "physiological psychology".

In the early or classical stage of psychology, psychology had nothing to do with the manifestations of human social, spiritual or even individual life and their research.

In the classical or natural science period of the development of psychology, its object was the properties and manifestations of highly organized matter - the brain. The center of research was the measurements of the psychic or psyche manifestations of a living nature, its processes, states, reactions, etc.

The next stage could be called the neoclassical stage of psychology, whose father was Sigmund Freud. It demonstrated a paradigm shift in the direction of the phenomenology of psychic manifestations. An attempt to look into the reality of human phenomenology was born, however, the logic of research remained the previous one – it was the cause-effect logic that prevailed during classical psychology. Two branches were formed in the world of scientific psychology: humanistic psychology, which focused on the "human situation" (E. Fromm) and cultural-historical psychology, which focused on human action, activities (A. Leontyev).

The psychological science of the 21st century seeks to understand human reality, consequently the transformation of the phenomenon of the psyche into the phenomenon of psychology has taken place. It is served by systems of signs and symbols as systems of knowledge about man, but it is not a holistic study of man himself or his soul. At the center of the postclassical psychology is the question: what is a person from the perspective of an internal observer? Man is examined in the context of his natural and social environment, where crises, poverty and other pathological, psychological and social manifestations of injustice can be identified. A social worker has a duty to organize the client's life within the framework of some possible or imaginary "norm". However, the criteria for the norm when evaluating the client's situation from the bio-psycho-social perspective are quite vague, socially pragmatic and subject to the social worker's subjective understanding of the client's problem and its normalization. For example, when thinking about sexual violence against a child, social workers in Latvia are lead into the discussion about "whether it is better to leave the child in the family" - what would be the norm? There are much less discussions about a child himself or parents involved in the problem.

As a basis for harmonizing the client's life socially and individually, "client needs" are emphasized. The specificity of the client's needs is determined by sphere of his/her social activity, first of all - employment and awareness. Needs are the determining states of the human organism, personality, group, society, which express dependence on objective conditions and serve as a source for various types of activities. On the one hand, there is the client's personality, on the other, the context of the social environment. In between, there are contradicting interrelationships between the two that create different needs. As we know from sociology, contradictions will never be resolved, therefore satisfaction of needs is an endless process providing practical and sustainable effects.

In its deeper essence, such approach to the problems of the client's needs is hedonic and based on Marxism, which formulated the law of "ever-growing needs". Karl Marx wrote: "Satisfaction of the first needs leads to new and new needs. Especially if the needs are based on material considerations." (Маркс, 1955). Long before Marxism, the anthropological and theological school in the 4th century Antioch (Syria, one

of the largest educational centers in the ancient world) opposed this approach by developing an interdisciplinary approach to the client, combining anthropological, philosophical, metaphysical, social, biological and theological knowledge. "Are the needs of the client expressed by the number of horses in the stable, by how many horses he owns and by what carriage he moves? Or is a man judged by the line of camels in his herd? And what if the client owns nothing? How will you view him? How will you describe him, how will you understand him? - Everyone thinks of the stomach as the deepest, most unfillable place in the body – and that's all? What will you eat, what will you drink, how will you dress your stomach? If someone doesn't know how to do it, he's a stranger, because he doesn't know how to do it like each of you, he is a stranger and simply marginal... That's why a poor person shouldn't be judged negatively. The worse is the one who desires a lot of things and begins to evaluate the other person according to the possibilities of satisfying needs, according to his own attitude towards things, seeing in the client nothing more than an object standing on the sidelines with few things." (John Chrysostom, 1994).

Patristic anthropology provides complete knowledge of human nature, emphasizing the fact that every person, every client carries within himself the "image and likeness of God", *imago Dei*. The "image" is given to people, but the "likeness" is a task, an opportunity, set by God. In the course of life, the image is as if pushed aside, forgotten, erased. Recovery of the dignified state of personality covers the whole person, his/her Spirit, soul and body, and is called *theosis* in Greek (transl. as "deification"). It is a process of recovering the likeness of God, which guarantees the restoration of all personality resources for complete individual and social functioning.

The prominent Russian surgeon and Orthodox bishop st. Luka Voyno-Yasenetsky (1877-1961) wrote: "Animals also have a soul. The soul comprises all our impressions and external perception. The soul is made up of our thoughts, desires, inclinations. All this is also for animals. If a man lives only with these desires, and not with a higher threshold of needs, he should properly be called a carnal man. If a person is considered a body-soul dimeric [i.e., dichotomic] being, then scientific psychology has lost the inner part of the soul. Lost is the Spirit. It must be stated that the soul in the science of psychology has become the psyche – a reduced space from which its metaphysical dimension has been removed." (Войно-Ясенецкий, 2013).

True, it did not happen with malicious intent, but as a "payment" for the entrance of the psychological science into the corpus of other natural sciences of the 19th century. Psychology has abstracted itself from the metaphysical dimension of man, and thus from the personality. Further, the approach to man develops as if there was no metaphysical dimension to man at all. First, the concept of "soul" disappeared from the lexicon of psychologists, replacing it with the concept of "psyche". Now the concept of "personality" is replaced by the concept of "individual". In psychology, personality is understood as "a unique set of psychological characteristics that influence an individual's behavior in various situations", measuring such phenomena as intelligence, abilities, attitudes. Moreover, in the treatment of people, the term "individual" is consistently used to denote the client's personality, dividing it into the following separate concepts: openness, awareness, extroversion, agreeableness, neuroses. It should be noted that an individual represents an estate, the essence of which is described by quantity (for example, a wolf is an individual from a pack); if the client is called an individual, i.e., he/she is treated as an animal living in a herd, although each personality may have different characteristics or features. However, historically, in the European tradition of human perception, dating back even before the 19th century, when the science of psychology was born, a person was understood as a personality,

which includes freedom to choose, sovereignty, the difference of his "I" from others, independence and authority, orientation to inner values. The backbone of personality is self-awareness and spirit, but the individual has no self-awareness (Лосский, 2015; Carver, Scheier, 2011).

The bio-psycho-social approach to the client in social work ignores personality as a fundamental ontological principle. The dominant discourse of psychology and sociology reduces the content of personality to one of its levels, understanding it as "a set of behaviors and ways of thinking that presuppose individual differences." Psychology does not provide a single definition of personality, but hypothetically constructs a set of functions and behavioral manifestations that are "different and unique to each individual". Due to such an approach, the process of depersonalization of the client and the development of anti-anthropological trends is unfolding in front of our eyes, in which the theme of the client's personality, which has laid the foundation of European humanitarian professions, is pushed aside.

Following the approach of patristic anthropology, human reality cannot be "exhausted" by its current context in mere material existence, be it environment or family, or simple "needs". Every person experiences the so-called a reality of desires that is stronger than the surrounding household. Every social work client feels out of place for some reason, someone who has been hurt by life. Patristic anthropology designates the reality towards which a person unconsciously strives with the word "personality". Personality is something that is not in accordance with one's bio-psycho-social nature, personality is what a person is according to the design of God the Creator, thus the embodiment of God's image and likeness. Personality is a holistic wholeness of Spirit, soul and body, which every person strives to embody. The person feels the desire to transform into a PERSONALITY.

Personality is an ontologically meaningful and ontologically sovereign human condition. The personality is characterized by energetic self-movement, the ability to actively and diversely assert itself. Personality is realized through deification or gr. Theosis, personality is not a person who comes "from nature", but what a person aspires to and wants to become according to God's call. Therefore, in the practice of social work, two states of the client should be distinguished: on the one hand, the client as a person in his presence here, on the other – the client as a personality, as a possibility to implement the so-called fundamental human urge. Every person, every client is given the image and likeness of God as an opportunity, as a challenge to be accepted and realized in ontological fullness of the personality. Considering the creation of man in the likeness of God, it must be borne in mind that God is also a Personality. A person's relationship with God should be an "I-Thou" relationship. Prominent Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky (1903 – 1958, Germany) writes: "Personality is not something created [given]. Personality is the beginning of the Divine, the manifestation of God Himself in every human being, [a process]" (Лосский, 2000). Personality is the ontological vocation of a human being.

In the psychological approach, man has a static nature and is denied ontological depth and direction. In the patristic anthropology personality is the possible person who perceives the transformation, and the personality is formed by the possible anthropological changes. It also directly applies to the client of social work. Personality is the state that the client in all kinds of crises longs for. It is an opportunity for his social, spiritual, soul and body harmonization. For the professional, it is a "task of reciprocity", which the client cannot carry out without cooperation with the professional, because he/she may not be aware of the metaphysical potential of his personality: in this sense, the client's life is fragmented.

The social worker needs knowledge of patristic anthropological about the client as a whole of Spirit, soul and body for the benefit of the client's spiritual growth. One must be able to discern the differences between the energies of the God's blessing and the forces of evil that anthropologically operate in human consciousness as destruction. Knowledge of anthropology gives an opportunity to distinguish the activity of the Holy Spirit from the processes of demonic possession in a person, which cannot be analyzed with bio-psycho-social understanding of the client and psychological methods (Larchet, 1992). Anthropological knowledge can be used as a point of intervention for effective work with the client, guiding him on the path of deification. Social worker without a knowledge of patristic anthropology is like a warlord who does not know the art of war, or a butcher who thinks he is a surgeon. Such a specialist does not know the frame of human mental normality and strength, does not know the real causes of crises, failures, diseases.

Spiritual nature of man is the degree of his deification, which is proportionally dependent on the understanding of God. This understanding forms motives of a person's external behavior, reveals norms of human virtue, their existence or absence. Anthropological understanding of man as a spiritual being is a basic factor in caritative social work at European Christian Academy. Why can't a unified understanding of the client as a holistic being – Spirit, soul and body – be the basic approach for effective work with the client also in a problem-oriented social work?

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un klienta holistisko izpratni patristiskajā antropoloģijā

Raksts aicina diskutēt par pieeju klienta personībai sociālā darba praksē. Psiholoģijas dominance sociālā darba diskursā ir novedusi pie personības raksturojuma reducēšanas, izņemot no tās ārā garīgo dimensiju. Psiholoģija klientu uztver kā indivīdu, kas cenšas apmierināt savas fiziskās vajadzības, kā to iedibināja marksisma ideoloģija 19. gadsimta beigās. Šāda pieeja neparedz holistisku pieeju, kas aicina respektēt personības transformācijas procesa iespēju, kas aprakstīta patristiskajā antropoloģijā (deifikācija). Autore iestājas par antropoloģisko pieeju klientam paralēli uz sociālo problēmu orientētajam sociālajam darbam.

Atslēgas vārdi: personība, indivīds, *imago Dei*, psiholoģija, patristiskā antropoloģija.

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