

Qualitative Methods in the Professional Diagnosis

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Edited by Henryk Jarosiewicz



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Introduction

Henryk Jarosiewicz

(Editor)

From its birth, psychology, as a field of Aristotle's rational philosophy, places itself between the humanities and natural history. In *On the Soul* Aristotle writes as follows: "Holding as we do that, while knowledge of any kind is a thing to be honored and prized, one kind of it may, either by reason of its greater exactness or of a higher dignity and greater wonderfulness in its objects, be more honorable and precious than another, on both accounts we should naturally be led to place in the front rank the study of the soul. The knowledge of the soul admittedly contributes greatly to the advance of truth in general, and, above all, to our understanding of Nature".

Does psychology enrich natural history today too? Answering briefly, we should probably say that psychology may enrich natural history unless it becomes impoverished itself. Psychology may become similar to natural sciences in terms of both the research method and the vision of man.

The collection of texts presented to the Reader is a record of searches done by career development professionals in order to meet demands imposed by the contemporary market. The contemporary market is a hi-tech world where mathematical positivism reigns supreme, while everything subjective, that is personal, is gradually losing its position. We can no longer find flavors of food we know from our childhood, we no longer have time for ourselves and our families, and as there are no stores selling friends – as Saint-Exupery pointed out – we have no friends.

In this situation even if psychology does not enrich natural history, it definitely enriches contemporary man's life. And it enriches it in particular when as empirical science dating back to works written by F. Brentano (1838 - 1917) it refers to personal experience.

We believe that psychology retains its humanistic values when it preserves its method and subject. Qualitative methods referring to the world of feelings and introspection are characterized by "higher dignity" (Aristotle) compared to experimental procedures. Besides, compared with natural sciences, in qualitative methods it is still the subject that is "a thing more honorable and precious". To put it briefly, in those methods the subject is got to know as a subject, i.e. the cause of its own existence and actions. It is a subject who is an "actor" in his/her own life. Can he/she be one in his/her professional career?

Two first texts in the volume titled *Qualitative Methods in Professional Diagnosis* are a dialogue between a teacher and a psychologist about qualitative methods. Both go toward a similar direction, which can be described as follows: from a thinking subject to a subject planning his/her life. An article written by **Professor Bożena Wojtasik** entitled *Qualitative methods for career development professionals* is a reflection on application of the biographic method in counseling. Advantages of this method emerge in connection with the main aim of career development professional's work: it is not about defining characteristics of a person, but about defining relations in which the person desires to live. Narrative, i.e. a story of one's life, is to be a method of 'diagnosing' understanding of oneself and the world by the client.

A text written by **Henryk Jarosiewicz, PhD** entitled *Qualitative methods in psychological diagnosis* is aimed at proving that the term 'projection techniques' is too narrow to cover the wide spectrum of qualitative methods of psychological diagnosis. It transfers the main focus from projection to planning. In fact the analysis focuses on creative imagination. Qualitative methods, that is a thing about imagination. In the article the author proposed a model of a person understood as an active and sensitive subject. It is a dynamic subject, a subject who – using his/her imagination – creates his/her life, including professional one. It is not so much 'I think, therefore I am' as 'I imagine, therefore I am'.

Qualitative methods are in fact methods of examining subject's expression in the form of a narrative, planning his/her own life. And so, does contemporary counseling is becoming ever closer to a peculiar 'therapeutic culture' (A. Giddens), except that it does not apply 'hard' diagnostic methods, but instead soft, qualitative ones?

We can point to two reasons behind this thesis. First of all, more and more clients are looking not only for professional, but also personal advice. Secondly, ever more often in the client-counselor relation the clients feel to be the subjects, which requires switching from directive methods to dialogue.

In psychological practice, dealing with various experiences is more important than dealing with lack of knowledge. Generally available knowledge has gone 'cheap', while in the world of omnipresent competition the 'price' of contact and understanding is going up. The point of departure in work of a psychologist who considers himself/herself a personal counselor is a client's complaint and not his/her search for information. As Professor Kulczycki wrote, during the whole life from time to time each person experiences something bad, is helpless, entangled in a maze of matters, experiences existential void. He/She feels sadness of different intensity, desperate fear, attacks of anger, despair and envy, guilty and hopelessness. And even it is not so bad every day, such emotions seize us in critical moments of our lives. Frequently at the beginning of our professional careers. And therefore the author adds that it seems justified to assume that behind our patients' experiences and behaviors there are certain personal problems they cannot solve on their own, despite bigger or smaller efforts.

A psychologist tries to find the source of such emotions and experiences, simultaneously observing client's behavior. Frequently he/she reaches for qualitative meth-

ods, projection tests, drawing tests, etc. No wonder then that despite frequent lack of adequate explanation of mechanisms of qualitative research techniques they develop rapidly.

In *Qualitative Methods in Professional Diagnosis*, qualitative research techniques are not discussed in depth, because it was not the aim of the volume. What we wanted to achieve was to signal this important and future topic rather than to exhaust it. And it is about the legitimacy of application of methods examining experiences in the case of diagnosis of activity on the labor market.

In recent years we have witnessed the appearance of new methods to be applied by career development professionals. *The need for creating Polish tools examining students' professional predispositions* by Professor Henryk Skłodowski starts with fundamental questions: 'Can man be treated like an object —like a tool? And maybe man should be the most important subject, a value in itself? Professor's deep thought points to axiological sources of learning more about a man as the most certain and humanistic in their development.

The above-mentioned issues appear also in a text written by **Agnieszka Lipińska-Grobelny, PhD** and **Beata Ścierwicka, PhD** entitled *Subjective determinants of approaches to psychological tests*, which legitimately discerns specific approaches to psychological tests in subjective determinants.

In her publication entitled *Perspectives and directions of career development in Lower Silesia compared to Poland and the European Union*, **Jolanta Kowal, PhD**, presents perspectives and directions of career development in Lower Silesia compared to Poland and the European Union. She depicts the most sought after and highly regarded professions in Poland, presents perspectives for craftsmen, professions of the future, points to the most important competences, for graduates of various faculties, mainly humane.

In January 2011 Wrocław hosted a conference devoted to qualitative methods in professional diagnosis during which a new method was presented. A Film Vocational Predispositions Test (Test Skłonności Zawodowych). The film test alludes to the Vocational Picture Test created by Martin Achtnich, which has been applied for years. Basic assumptions of this method are presented in H. Jarosiewicz's article and **Martin Achtnich's text** entitled *Vocational Picture Test (VPT). A Projective Method for the Clarification of Vocational Preferences. Its Application in Vocational and Career Counseling*. Achtnich's method is a multiple-choice test; the respondent chooses vocational relations that meet his/her vocational predispositions.

Another multiple-choice test is the Lüscher's test described by **Jagoda Stompór-Świdorska, PhD** in *Possibilities of application of the Lüscher's test in career counseling and personnel selection*. The comparison of the two methods: the Achtnich's test and the Lüscher's test is very interesting as they both examine subject's sensitivity but on a different level. In the Lüscher's test we deal with direct sensual experience of a color, i.e. certain energy. Depending on the respondent's sensitivity, it is a measurable phenomenon: color is subjected to a subjective opinion: depending on

how much the subject likes it. In the Achnich's test the test material ('stimulus') are images presenting situations at work, photos, intentionally black and white in order to eliminate impact of energy and leave just the content. The respondent chooses too; it is about situations he/she likes and does not like. There is no sensual sensitivity. The subject of diagnosis are vocational predispositions understood as man's sensitivity to professional relations he/she likes. Relations are what attracts us.

Sensitivity is more than just a value 'detector'. Experiencing values frequently decreases stress and increases integration of functioning. **Professor Malgorzata Anna Basińska in *Standards of behavior and experience at work AVEM* by Uwe Schaarchmidt and Anders Fischer – a method to examine burnout, handling stress or overall functioning at work?**" examines the relationship between experiences and behaviors. The AVEM method should not be limited to examination of professional burnout and handling stress as its diagnostic potential is much bigger and allows for describing overall functioning at work.

At the end of this summary of articles presented in *Qualitative Methods in Professional Diagnosis*, we need to add that qualitative methods also require an adequate research atmosphere. An atmosphere which in the Polish psychological thought is connected with the so-called Lviv School. Representatives of this School starting with its founder Professor K. Twardowski through W. Witwicki, M. Kreutz and M. Kulczycki based their reasoning on a deepened anthropological vision of a human being.

Professor Ryszard Stachowski in his *History of Contemporary Psychological Thought* points out that history is a story about basic ideas and concepts. It is a highly enlightening narrative. The history of modern psychology shows that no matter how far we move away from subject's experiences to examine his/her behavior, all findings reached with the 'glass and eye' method become meaningful in relation to 'I' itself. And any technology becomes clear by referring to the philosophical anthropology of man.