

DOI: 10.15290/rtk.2018.17.2.12

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## Expanding the Boundaries of Self: Self-Realization, Transgression, and Creative Competence

This article examines the issue of personal experience with regard to creative development. Humanistic-existential psychology emphasizes the individual's ability to cross the boundaries of experience. The question remains, however, whether transgressive action is conducive to self-realization. This study considers results of research on the determinants of creative competence with regard to creative behaviors and transgressive actions. According to Koziellecki, transgression as a determinant of creative competencies means the ability to think and act innovatively, creatively, deliberately, and in a manner oriented toward a particular goal that lies beyond what seems possible (Koziellecki, 2007). From a transgressive perspective, creative competencies entail not only the ability to take transgressive action in both task-oriented situations and in different areas of life, but also the ability to expand one's personal developmental resources.

**Key words:** creative development, self-realization, creative attitude, transgressive behaviors.

### Introduction

When perceived as a metaneed that is identified with self-actualization, self-realization means using the subjective possibilities in one's specific living conditions better. Creativity is the fundamental means to continually express oneself and to effectively realize oneself. Man brings about the meaning of his existence through creative acts of

expression. Subjective creative attributes are the determinants of creative competences. The creative character of competences emphasizes the humanistic paradigm adopted in this study and creates the space for a broad understanding of creative development which, according to humanistic assumptions, is considered a subject's set of competences that are conducive to helping it achieve self-realization. From a transgressive perspective, an active person who creatively transforms his environment and himself demonstrates creative competences. While a boundary acts as a barrier and divides, it also "broadens the boundaries of one's own 'I' to transgression and creative competence" through self-realization.

## Self-Realization and the Actualization of Potentiality

Self-actualization means [...] transcending the needs that arise due to a lack of something. This state, which can be called metamotivated or unmotivated [...] is one of being rather than seeking. It can be considered a synonym for self, being 'authentic,' for fully being a person. This process of growing is the process of becoming a person (Abraham Maslow, 1986).

Kierkegaard introduced the term "self-realization" into the humanities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The term was understood according to deeply existential convention to mean a category of human existence that is opposed to a feeling of transience and emptiness in the face of death. In psychology, Kurt Goldstein used the term "self-realization" as an overarching motive that controls human activity that is oriented toward achieving one's potential possibilities. Other motives derive from self-realization. Viktor Frankl developed a very interesting approach to self-realization in terms of personal development.<sup>1</sup> He asserted that having a sense of meaning in one's life is a key to the development of an individual, whose formation is the basic reason for human action. The process of **self-actualization** that is connected with fulfilling one's interior qualities is linked to the process of **self-transcendence**. Holistic (organismic) concepts recognize self-realization as a process that expresses the personality's healthy functioning, which constitutes a coherent and integral system. The motive to **realize one's individual potential** is fundamental and regulates an individual's functioning and development.<sup>2</sup> The works of Abraham Maslow are significant

<sup>1</sup> V. E. Frankl, *Wola sensu. Założenia i zastosowanie logoterapii*, Warsaw 1971.

<sup>2</sup> E. Fromm, *Serce człowieka: jego niezwykła zdolność do dobra i zła*, Warsaw 1989; K. Obuchowski, *Adaptacja twórcza*. Warsaw 1985; K. Obuchowski, *Człowiek*

achievements in the development of humanistic ideas.<sup>3</sup> According to Maslow, self-realization is transcending the needs that arise due to a lack of something. This state of being (rather than of seeking) is a synonym for self, for being “authentic,” for being a person, for being fully human. This state reveals the human tendency to integrate dichotomies into a whole. This tendency indicates internal transformation (maturation), which occurs when that which had been formerly perceived as conflicting and antagonistic is perceived as that which reconciles contradictions into a synergistic whole on the level [...] of the heart and head, the reason and instinct, cognition and will [...], since it expresses these same things and comes to these same conclusions.<sup>4</sup> Maslow associated the concept of self-realization with the concept of mental health, with the hierarchy of needs, as well as with the idea of **creative development**. He acknowledged that, when it is based on **the motivation to grow**, striving for self-realization is the attribute of a healthy and creatively developing personality. Self-realization is the process of actualizing one’s potential abilities and achieving a sense of satisfaction in the process. According to Abraham Maslow, the process of healthy development takes place in a constant sequence of events that involve free choice and that the individual must face throughout his entire life. Maslow believed that we will never understand human life if we do not take into account our highest aspirations. Human development, self-realization, striving for health, seeking one’s identity and autonomy, and the desire for perfection must be unconditionally accepted as a common to everyone and universally sought out.<sup>5</sup>

### *Homo transgressivus*

Humanistic and existential psychology emphasizes that the individual’s ability to transcend his current state and objectively existing reality is an aspect of human existence.<sup>6</sup> These states of “trans” or “going beyond” (transcendence, auto-transcendence) are particular

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*intencjonalny*, Warsaw 1993; Z. Pietrasiński, *Ekspansja pięknych umysłów. Nowy renesans i ożywcza autokreacja*, Warsaw 2008.

<sup>3</sup> A. H. Maslow, *W stronę psychologii istnienia*, Warsaw – Poznan 2004.

<sup>4</sup> A. H. Maslow, *Motywacja i osobowość*. Warsaw 1990.

<sup>5</sup> A. H. Maslow, *Motywacja...*, op. cit., pg. 13.

<sup>6</sup> M. Opoczyńska, *Wprowadzenie do psychologii egzystencjalnej*, Cracow 1999; A. Galdowa, *Powszechność i wyjątek*, Cracow 2000.

to man and demonstrate his unique abilities.<sup>7</sup> The transgressive concept of man, which focuses on change and development, assumes that human behavior is intentional, autonomous, goal-oriented, and strives to go beyond man's abilities.<sup>8</sup> Just as in the concept of creativity, this concept promotes a new understanding of the human being as an active and creative person who forms and influences both his surroundings and himself. Development enables transgressive actions, which are the opposite of the protective behaviors that seek to conserve and maintain the *status quo* and give an individual a sense of stability and security. "Almost every modern person has an intellectual and praxeological ability to create if not historical then at least psychological transgression to a greater or lesser degree. No one has ever failed to take advantage of the generative mind that he has received from nature, society, and culture."<sup>9</sup> According to Jozef Koziellecki, as a transgressive being—*homo transgressivus*, man is able to transcend material, social, and symbolic boundaries. This article distinguishes four directions in which transgressive actions can be directed: 1) autcreative activity, which is concentrated on the self-development and self-realization of one's abilities; 2) creative activity, which consists in creating new, unconventional mental and imaginative constructions; 3) activity directed toward people, which aims to broaden the scope of one's personal freedom, gain power, and control others; and 4) practical activity, which aims to increase the production of material goods.

## Transgressive and Creative Actions

Transgressions are **innovative** and **creative** activities. They allow a person to go beyond the boundaries of the way that he presently functions and, thereby, gain new areas of activity or create new values. Transgressiveness is revealed in the form of man's activities directed

<sup>7</sup> A.H. Maslow, 1986/2004; C.R. Rogers, *Uczenie się, jakbyć wolnym*, in K. Jankowski (ed.), *Przełom w psychologii, wybór tekstów*, Warsaw 1978, pgs. 289-301; C.R. Rogers, *Sposób bycia*, Poznan 2002; C.R. Rogers, *O stawianiu się osobą*, Poznan 2002; M. Straś-Romanowska, (ed.), *Na tropach psychologii jako nauki humanistycznej*, Warsaw-Wroclaw 1995; M. Straś-Romanowska, *Rozwój człowieka a rozwój osobowy*, "Studia Psychologica" 2002, 3, pgs. 91-104.

<sup>8</sup> J. Koziellecki, *Koncepcja transgresyjna człowieka. Analiza psychologiczna*, Warsaw 1987; J. Koziellecki, *Psychotransgresjonizm. Nowy kierunek psychologii*, Warsaw 2001.

<sup>9</sup> J. Koziellecki, *Spółczesność transgresyjna. Szansa i ryzyko*, Warsaw 2004, pg. 71

toward things, people, symbols, and himself.<sup>10</sup> Competences in transgression include an ability to engage in transgressive activities in different areas of life.<sup>11</sup> Transgressions can be associated with different aims. When transgressions are directed toward things, they aim to increase material goods, expand territories, and possess new things. Human involvement in economics, politics, polytechnics lead to these new things. Transgressions that are directed toward symbols elevate the level of a civilization's development; in other words, through creative acts, man enriches his knowledge about the world and contributes to the development of the sciences, culture, art, and religion. The essence of transgression directed toward another is to gain power, dominate a group, and create new social orders and political systems. From a positive perspective, an individual can use these transgressions to improve social relationships, whereas, from a negative perspective, an individual can use them to manipulate those people over whom he has power. Transgressions directed toward each other enrich man's development and experience—his achievements and abilities, and they lead to personal changes and improvements. Koziellecki writes that: "Transgressive actions—in short, transgressions—are those actions by which man consciously transcends heretofore material, social, and symbolic boundaries. Transgressive activity makes it possible for man to transform reality. Consequently, new discoveries occur, new interventions arise, and new works of art and virtual realms are created, original political structures are formed, and obsolete structures disappear. Transcending the boundaries in which the individual works is like another act of creating—or at least broadening—the world."<sup>12</sup>

## Do Transgressive Actions Promote Self-Realization?

The hubris need plays a central role in motivating an individual to do things that exceed his own capabilities. This need is made up of positive emotions such as hope, joy, or pride, and, above all, mechanisms such as self-valorization, self-presentation, and increasing one's own competences, which serve to continually confirm and increase one's

<sup>10</sup> J. Koziellecki, *Koncepcja transgresyjna człowieka. Analiza psychologiczna*, Warsaw 1987.

<sup>11</sup> I. Pufal-Struzik (ed.), *O przekraczaniu granic własnych ograniczeń – z perspektyw psychotransgresjonizmu*, Cracow 2008; M. Wróblewska, *Predyspozycje do zachowań transgresyjnych a wskaźniki jakości życia*, in I. Siudem, M. Stencel (eds.), *Zrozumieć człowieka – zrozumieć świat*, Lublin 2013, pgs.11-31.

<sup>12</sup> J.Koziellecki, *Koncepcja transgresyjna człowieka. Analiza psychologiczna*, Warsaw 1987.

value.<sup>13</sup> What role does transgressive behavior play in the need for the self-realization that Rogers and Maslow understand in the spirit of humanistic psychology as striving to realize one's innate potential to develop? Transgression does not guarantee that an individual will fully realize himself. Rather, transgressions that open an individual are a necessary for him to achieve the goals that he has set for himself. Awareness of the risk of and responsibility for the future results of choices made can incline an individual to either act defensively in a given semantic context (**transgression as the "alienation of the I"**), or to initiate new possibilities and overcome his limitations (**transgression as the "syntonization of the I"**). Transcending one's own limitations and weaknesses is an important factor that influences the scope and quality of an individual's subjective self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-acceptance. It is the psychological foundation of being ready to engage in creative and self-realizing activities. Transgression that leads to the **syntonization of the "I"** opens an individual up to new contexts. It makes him reflect on and reevaluate his own world of meanings and senses (*logos*), to accept a point of view, and to understand matters that are relevant to him. In turn, this leads to an individual's interior transformation, which provides him with a new understanding of values (accepting new values) and enables him to engage in new (modified) activities directed at these values.<sup>14</sup>

**Personal transgression** occurs along with creative transgression. In personal transgression, completely new and heretofore unknown possibilities in which an individual can function and initiate change in some area of his life appear. Changes are important and valuable primarily from a given individual's point of view and so that he can function better. According to Koziński's theory, many personal and social needs give rise to specific activities that manifest various **transgressions**.<sup>15</sup> One can assume that hope is included in the hierarchy of transgressive activities. This hope stimulates and sustains expansive

<sup>13</sup> J. Koziński, *Psychotransgresjonizm. Nowy kierunek psychologii*, Warsaw 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> K. Obuchowski, *Człowiek intencjonalny*, Warsaw 1993; K. Obuchowski, *Od przedmiotu do podmiotu*. Bydgoszcz 2002; T. Giza, *Procesy samokształtowania jako działania transgresyjne człowieka*, in I. Pufal-Struzik (ed.), *O przekraczaniu granic własnych ograniczeń – z perspektywy psychotransgresjonizmu*, Cracow 2008, pgs. 49-59; S. Popek, *Człowiek jako jednostka twórcza*, Lublin 2001; I. Pufal-Struzik (ed.), *O przekraczaniu granic własnych ograniczeń – z perspektyw psychotransgresjonizmu*, Cracow 2008; B. Bartosz, A. Keplinger, M. Straś-Romanowska (eds.), *Transgresje – innowacje – twórczość*, Wrocław 2011.

and creative pursuits. Hope specifically comes into play with particular transgressive activities whose likelihood of being achieved is minimal because they involve great difficulty and risk. According to Koziński, **hope** determines the direction of human activity. In this sense, hope is multidimensional cognitive structure, the main element of which is the individual's conviction that he will likely achieve the important goal in the future. **Active hope** plays a particular role here, since it expresses an individual's conviction that it is very possible for him to achieve his goal. In this case, the individual's strong motivation, ability to perform tasks, and actions themselves are helpful. General hope gives a person an overall sense that his life has meaning, which makes it easier for him to realize his individual goals. An individual's greatest source of satisfaction can be "transcending the existing system," meaning an individual's involvement in completely new activities, transcending limits, coming to know the limits of his own abilities, and exploring the unknown. A person's satisfaction with life is connected with the fulfillment of his own needs and achieving the goals that he has set out for himself and believes to be valuable.<sup>16</sup>

## A Creative Attitude and Types of Creative Behaviors

Creativity tests man in how active and "intense" he can be—how far he can demonstrate his existence in the world so that what he leaves behind will last<sup>17</sup>.

Creativity is a complex process that is conditioned by personal and environmental factors, their mutual diffusion, and individual configuration. Those who support a humanistic vision of creativity<sup>18</sup> emphasize the importance of the relationship between the creative personality and the person's tendency toward self-realization. Humanistic psychologists who believe that an individual's self-fulfillment is an important aim of development introduced the concept of "creative attitude."<sup>19</sup> Someone with a creative personality is open to experiences, has an ability to tolerate ambiguity, and exhibits fewer defense mechanisms. From a humanistic perspective, being creative entails being conscious of one's own predispositions to create and courageously

<sup>16</sup> J. Koziński, *Psychologia nadziei*, Warsaw 2006.

<sup>17</sup> M. Gołaszewska, *Zarys estetyki*. Warsaw 1986

<sup>18</sup> See E. Nęcka, *Psychologia twórczości*, Gdansk 2001.

<sup>19</sup> E. Fromm E., *Ucieczka od wolności*, Warsaw 1978; E. Fromm, *Mieć czy być*, Poznan 1999; A. H. Maslow *Motywacja...*, op. cit.

taking advantage of one's potential. Curiosity is necessary for a creative attitude, which is understood as an ability to see, understand, and react. Curiosity is the ability to focus on the present and experience oneself as a causative subject.<sup>20</sup> According to this approach, a creative attitude does not necessarily lead to the creation of material products and works that are novel, original, or useful. Rather, a creative attitude is manifested in man's developmental activity exhibited through his tendency to "ennoble" his own person. A contemporary understanding of a creative attitude is connected with an individual's characteristics, including his curiosity, ability to focus on the tasks and actions he carries out, his experience of himself, and acceptance of the conflicts and tensions that are associated with his emotional and social cognitive functioning. According to Stanislaw Popek, these characteristics have two dimensions: cognitive and characterological. The cognitive dimension involves algorithmic and heuristic behavior, while the characterological dimension pertains to the personality's structures and is defined by conformist or nonconformist behavior. A creative attitude is the configuration of nonconformist traits and heuristic behaviors. Its opposite is a system of conformist and algorithmic behavior (imitative attitude).<sup>21</sup> The concept of creative styles of behavior that are based on the results of this study made it possible to characterize the attributes of each of the five styles: 1) **approbation of life** (self-direction, abiding by personal values, and effectiveness); 2) a **strong ego** (self-knowledge, self-approval, one's own coherent value system, autonomy, stability, and perseverance); 3) **self-realization** (establishing long-term ambitious tasks for oneself and the ability to implement them, satisfaction in taking on challenges, and consistently fulfilling tasks); 4) **flexible cognitive structures** (creatively formulating problems, elasticity in establishing problem-solving strategies, originality, and innovation); 5) **internal self-direction** (the ability to resist group and environmental pressure, effectively implementing one's own tasks despite external pressure and failures).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Fromm E., *Postawa twórcza*, in M. Malicka, *Twórczość, czyli droga w nieznanne*, Warsaw 1989, pgs.59-69

<sup>21</sup> S. Popek, *Kwestionariusz Twórczego Zachowania KANH*, Lublin 2000.

<sup>22</sup> A. Strzałecki, *Psychologia twórczości. Między tradycją a ponowoczesnością*, Warsaw 2003; A. Strzałecki, *Style twórczego zachowania się w przedsiębiorstwie*, in A. Strzałecki, A. Lizurej (ed.), *Innowacyjna przedsiębiorczość. Teorie. Badania. Zastosowanie praktyczne. Perspektywa psychologiczna*, Warsaw 2011, pgs. 119-154.

## From Adaptation to Transgressive Actions and Creative Competences

The concept of “limitedness” in references to man’s capabilities and experience can have **sensory and creative** (many different interpretations) as well as **heuristic** (open to seeking new interpretations) potential because a limit is that which closes off and separates but also opens up a new kind of perspective on experience.

This study’s outcomes<sup>23</sup> in the area of creative competences—the creative dimension of functioning in adulthood—adopt three basic strategies to implement creative subjective and transgressive resources. The first strategy is known as the **adaptive-conservative** strategy (where a restorative attitude and protective behaviors dominate) to implement creative competences. The second strategy is the **creative-transgressive** or **pro-innovative** strategy (creative attitude, transgressive behavior, and proactivity). The third strategy is the **integrated** strategy (**adaptive, conservative, and innovative**). At the heart of each of these strategies is a creative need that constitutes a developmental power and the dynamism behind every activity through which the individual realizes his potential.<sup>24</sup> The results of this research also prove that the subjectively creative traits that are expressed in a creative attitude co-exist with transgressive behaviors: **pro(creative) motivation to seek change, nonconformity, an orientation toward activity and overcoming difficulties, openly and courageously taking on new tasks, and innovation and acceptance of that which is novel**. The greater a person’s creative attitude and its components in the cognitive (heuristic behavior) and characterological (nonconformist orientation) spheres, the stronger are the associations that manifest transgression: an emphasis on dominating others, motivation to enrich team spirit, innovation in coming up with new solutions, and the courage to take on new tasks. The lower a person’s level of subjective creative traits (creative attitude), the weaker is his determination to realize his goals, (pro)creative motivation to seek change, nonconformity, orientation to act and overcome difficulties, and openness and courage in taking on new tasks (activity directed toward change). The traits of subjective nonconformity that are most strongly associated with transgressive behavior are: **dominance, activity, courage, spontaneity, consistency, originality, and high self-esteem**. According to the assumptions of

<sup>23</sup> M. Wróblewska, *Kompetencje twórcze w dorosłości*, Białystok 2015.

<sup>24</sup> A. H. Maslow, *Motywacja...*, op. cit.; K. Obuchowski, *Adaptacja twórcza*, Warsaw 1995; S. Popek, *Człowiek jako jednostka twórcza*, Lublin 2001.

the concept of transgression, man engages in protective activities as a part of his own activity. Man's protective actions seek to preserve his own existing boundaries and maintain everything that he has achieved through adaptation. The lower the level of his creative traits (creative attitude), the weaker his determination to achieve his goals, pro(creative) motivation to seek change, nonconformity, orientation toward activity and overcoming difficulties, and openness and courage in taking on new tasks (activity directed toward change). Conformism weakens an individual's deliberate behavior, his orientation to perform tasks, activity, and resolution to overcome difficulties. The lower a person's level of subjective creative traits (creative attitude), the weaker is his determination to realize his goals, pro(creative) motivation in seeking change, nonconformity, orientation to act and overcome difficulties, and openness and courage in taking on new tasks (activity directed toward change).<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

Individuals co-create every area in which they actively participate. This is a manifestation of **synergy** (a synergistic effect) wherein an individual reaps many benefits by skillfully bringing individual components into a whole. This article presents a view based on expanding the boundaries of the "I" through: **self realization, to transgression, and creative competences**, in order to characterize the behaviors of an active individual who is involved in making changes, initiating change, and the creative process. This concept corresponds to an understanding of man as a subject who, by actualizing his own interior potentialities in an active context, **becomes** who he is. In this way, this article proves that the concept of "limitedness" with regards to man's abilities and experiences can contain sensory and creative (meaning many different interpretations) and heuristic (open to seeking new interpretations) potential. Diversity and contradictions along with oppositions and dialectics confirm and demonstrate that the essence of the creative process is the "**search for diversity**" as well as the "**diversity of the search.**" This final reflection serves as a kind of "fastener" that brings everything together into a whole, or the emergence of the mechanisms of creative human adaptation and the expansion of the limits of the "I" in personal and social experiences.

<sup>25</sup> M. Wróblewska, *Kompetencje twórcze w dorosłości*, Białystok 2015.

## O POSZERZANIU GRANIC JA. SAMOREALIZACJA – TRANSGRESJA – KOMPETENCJE TWÓRCZE

Prezentowany artykuł dotyczy problematyki doświadczenia osobistego w aspekcie twórczego rozwoju. Psychologia humanistyczna i egzystencjalna podkreślają zdolność jednostki do przekraczania granic doświadczenia. Podjęto pytanie czy podejmowanie działań transgresyjnych sprzyja samorealizacji? Przedstawiono wyniki badań dotyczących wyznaczników kompetencji twórczych w aspekcie twórczych zachowań, twórczej postawy i działań transgresyjnych. Zdolność transgresji jako wyznacznik twórczych kompetencji – to innowacyjny, twórczy, zorientowany na cel sposób myślenia i działania, którego cechą jest wychodzenie poza możliwości (Kozielecki, 2007). Kompetencje twórcze w perspektywie transgresyjnej zawierają zdolności do transgresyjnych działań w sytuacjach zadaniowych i różnych dziedzinach życia, ale także zdolności do poszerzania osobistych zasobów rozwojowych.

Anthropology

**Słowa kluczowe:** twórczy rozwój, samorealizacja, twórcza postawa, działania transgresyjne.

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