

APPENDIX 2

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KITOKIE PROJEKTAI-APPROACH TO HUMAN NATURE

This chapter has been developed by the team of “kitokie projektai” (namely by A.Deltuva, V.Keturakis, E.Lapinskas, R.Aleliūnaitė-Kliokmane) as their effort to describe their approach to human nature. They knew that their approach is influenced a lot by Humanistic and Existential psychology as well as by Buddhist psychology and Gestalt therapy. But yet it is important to see what aspects from these approaches “have landed” in their minds. They found it useful to do it since it has a crucial influence to methodological choices one makes in the field of education or in any other work with people. It is not a scientific article, neither is it a list of recommendations to practitioners. One can take it as a poetry or philosophy or just a flow of thoughts. It is a condensed text without the effort to make it easier to understand for the reader. Sorry for that.

We decided to add it here as the appendix. We decided to add it because it might give a better sense to the reader of where the idea of inner readiness comes from; what kind of thinking it is based on. But it is just added as the appendix, because it is not discussed with all the team of the Reflect project; so it is not necessarily agreed by all the team.

THE HUMAN BEING HAS A NEED TO EXPLAIN WHAT AFFECTS THEM (THEIR EXPERIENCE). THIS LEADS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EFFORT OF MEANING-MAKING.

Meaning-making takes place when we identify for ourselves in a particular context what is most important for us and we give it a name. In terms of Gestalt psychology, we link a figure to the background, an event to the context.

In order to comprehend, to give meaning to the phenomena, a person desires to come to a standstill, to a pause. Imagine yourself swinging on a swing. Then you are unable to grasp the phenomena taking place around you. If everything is moving in the background, it is very difficult to perceive the figure. In order to search for the meaning – to give a name to the figure – a pause is needed. Background is necessary for meaning-making. Without a context, the meaning is sort of “stuck”, it loses clarity. As if losing connection with reality.

The example of an interview with a Tibetan in London. In one interview, the Tibetan living in London was asked to comment on the self-immolation of monks in Tibet. He was asked to say what he thought about them. He responded: “I don’t have any thoughts”. Everyone got indignant, especially his wife – how come you have no thoughts, when you are a Tibetan yourself; you’re important, so how can’t you give any opinion. Yet, he again declined to comment. He explained that he did not know the monks who burnt themselves; he knew neither their motives, nor what was happening there at the time, nor the way the monks arrived to this. Therefore, his comment would be empty talk.

We can give meaning to the phenomenon (event, thing, pronouncement...) only in a context. Otherwise, we can only make up stories, invent our own images of what we heard, saw or felt. The human mind is constantly attempting to identify a figure from the background or horizon (see below about unconscious intentionality). We are constantly looking (1) from a certain angle, from a certain point of reference, and (2) against certain background. Because of these two inevitable conditionalities, we are inevitably subjective. However, juxtaposing our perceived experience with that of another person, we come to know the reality in a broader scope, i.e. intersubjectively – having contrasted several subjective perspectives.

It is human to have a desire to attach meaning to the cause of one’s life. Existential psychology calls it giving meaning to life. We strive to give meaning to the entirety of life, to a certain period of life, to this day, to this moment.

BETWEEN US AND THE REALITY THERE ARE IMAGES WE HAVE CREATED

The desire to give meaning, when the human mind needs clarity, results in images. For example, we have a myriad of preconceived images (imagined ideas, prejudices, stereotypes) in interpersonal relationships. Training participants have a plenty of images about the trainers, the trainers too about the training participants.

Sometimes we treat the images rigidly – holding onto them tightly, we perceive that they are the reality, or try to “bring” the reality to the preconceived image. Sometimes, we deal with images flexibly – we quickly realise that the reality may also be different than we imagined, so we “launch” our image. The images can portray almost everything – another person, future, oneself, spiritual reality, life events (e.g. what is love). On the one hand, they give the impression of perspicuity, on the other hand they prevent me from experiencing the reality as it is at the moment or in that situation. For example, we meet a person who we have a strong (clear, unambiguous) preconceived image about. During our meeting, it turns out that what we are experiencing does not correspond to the preconceived image. What do we do then? If we have perceived the preconceived image as a reality, then it will be difficult to “let go of” such an image, because it will mean that my reality has collapsed. If we understand that the image is only a picture created by my own imagination, then it will be easier to change it.

WE DON'T REFER TO ALL IMAGES, WE DON'T RELY ON THEM ALL.

We refer to images and rely on them. We need images. Otherwise we would not have anything to refer to. But when we create an image about something that somebody else has thought of somewhere, then we drift in the field of speculation.

It is fine to have images and refer to them, and probably it is even inevitable. However, for personal development it is important to learn to move beyond the existing image. Yes, we refer to the created images, but for educational purposes it is important for a moment not to rely on images. This means the ability to perceive one's image as the work of one's own mind, which is worth checking in a concrete situation of the moment. We learn not to refer to images to see the reality as it is.

Then we verify our images with another person. Our own reality is juxtaposed with the reality of another.

CONCERN REGARDING THE IMAGE (ESPECIALLY THAT OF ONE'S OWN SELF) IS ENCHAINING.

When we speak of persons who are concerned about their own images, we say that this person feels insecure or inferior. When we get overly concerned about the image, we become detached from reality – concerned about the images. Then, it may seem that such a person is cold, cocky, inattentive, neither interested in others, nor willing to create a more intimate connection with them. In fact, the person may want to build relationships, yet fail to show attentiveness as a result of anxiety related to one's image. As the person was worried about how he or she looked like, they were not interested in how their interlocutor lived, felt or what one felt.

WHAT IS REALITY?

Reality explained by phenomenology. In general, we can classify reality into the material (objective) and that of consciousness (subjective). Phenomenology presents us with a peculiar and acceptable approach to what reality is. This is an excerpt on the phenomenological approach to reality from the thesis of Artūras Deltuva:

“Phenomenology proposes to reject the question of what is real, what is unreal, and to explore the content of consciousness as it is. The content of consciousness (expressions) is described refraining from preconceived assumptions about the nature of reality (subjectivity and objectivity, materiality and ideality).”

It is believed that because of the intentionality inherent to consciousness, description of the content or the structure of expressions of the consciousness can be equated to the account of reality. This is due to the

noematic-noetic acts characteristic to consciousness. Since the activities of consciousness – the so called noesis – correspond to the essence of noema (what is perceived). It's as if the consciousness "covers" the phenomenon and "takes" the form of the phenomenon experienced.

Through intentional acts of perception, we learn about the world, which is essentially perceptible. Yet, the intentional acts of perception used as the means of diverting to the outer phenomena are regularly affected by other intentional acts, called a specific somatic experiencing or based on our own developed images. Since somatic experiencing and our developed images are different, then every act of cognition is unique. Thus, each experience is unique and thus revealing the essence of a specific reality.

In addition to intentionality another key concept of phenomenology is the essence (Eidos) or in Lithuanian literature also referred to as "esmėžiūra" or "ability to see the essence" [Šliogeris]. "Esmėžiūra" or the ability to see the essence refers to the ability to see the essence of the phenomenon entering into the realm of consciousness. "Esmėžiūra" is accessible by every conscious being, and is used in everyday life, being open to the world. "Esmėžiūra" used in the two contradictory meanings. Sometimes it is associated with intuition as the ability to consolidate a number of processes in the present moment. "I feel", "I remember" and "I imagine" merge into one present moment and this is how the meaning and essence of the overall content are perceived. Sometimes "esmėžiūra" is understood as the ability, by means of certain efforts, to identify or simply to see the most invariable value of phenomenon. It is sometimes familiar to the concept used in statistics – the average - however not because of the frequency of repetitions, but because of its permanence of essentiality, stability. That is, if the most recurrent feature is statistically considered the essential one, in phenomenology the feature which the the phenomenon ceases to exist without will be considered as essential; it is no longer recognised by the same name. Accordingly, data will be generalised based on the essence rather than on the frequency of repetition. It lives in the reality of consciousness.

So, our perceived reality is cognisable, and what we perceive is our reality. According to Heidegger: in the absence of any consciousness that became aware of the tree, the tree would not exist to the human race.

Or an example of one Icelander: A lonely man used to live in a very remote place in Iceland. There was no telephone connection; in winter, roads would become impassable, so for some 6-8 months a person must live in complete isolation from the outside world. We asked him: "Why do you live here, regardless of all this inconvenience?" He replied that "if I didn't live here, there would be no human mind to witness this beauty. This beauty would be lost to humanity. And now it is perceived by at least one person and it becomes part of human reality". He's chosen to witness the beauty of this material reality. And it is indeed beautiful there. But I thought that old man's approach even more beautiful than the beauty of nature.

People can choose what they pay attention to and are responsible for. Each time, we choose what to focus on: what kind of music to listen to, what people communicate to and so on. This way, we give a chance to that particular reality. We can understand in a very broad sense – we are responsible for what we believe in, which activities we dedicate our time to – and also very concretely. For example, when choosing what concerts we go to, we assert what music is acceptable and necessary, or when deciding what films we watch or what products we eat, this way we encourage other people to create precisely just those. This way we create the opportunity for them to be. Noticing what others who are around us create, we give that piece a chance to exist. While one person's work does not settle in the mind of another, that work will not be noticed, it will not exist. That is why we encourage noticing each other during our seminars. This helps us not only to learn something from each other, but also to invite each other to be.

Meanwhile, when dedicating attention to some things, we do not direct it to other things. For instance, if we went to a concert, then we maybe failed to go to a football match. Or another example: if the manager is only talking himself at the staff meeting, telling others how they should work, but is not listening to how they are dealing with the work now, or what prevents them from working in the way the manager wants them to. Thus, by failing to dedicate attention you don't give a chance for that thing to exist. In the second example, the manager does not give a chance for a mutual understanding between the employee and himself to develop, just as he does not give the chance for the employees' opinion to exist.

WE CAN ALSO CHOOSE THE “WATCHING” METHOD – ARE WE STRENGTHENING OUR PRECONCEIVED IMAGES OR ARE WE SEEKING TO LEARN THE REALITY IMPARTIALLY?

We choose not only what we perceive, but also how we perceive. We can perceive in the manner enabling us to collect data for confirmation of our preconceived images, or we can seek to enable ourselves to notice reality as it is through direct experience, noticing the reality **impartially**.

We can either “adapt” the way we view reality to a preconceived image, or to understand that this is our image and to verify it against reality. As has already been mentioned, the images emerge about other people, the future, the past, the world and about ourselves. In all cases it is a temporary and false image. And it is worth checking whether it corresponds to reality. If we cannot comprehend visual temporality and conditionality, our image becomes rigid in its use, and we perceive it as a reality. If we perceive the image as temporary, variable, we can verify it against reality and we become flexible.

OUR MIND LONGS FOR STABILITY, WHILE WE REPRESENT A CHANGING WORLD

We want things to be clear. And even better if things were always clear, once and for all. We all share a need for clarity and stability. Probably it is an innate longing for clarity and stability, maybe even a desire. We want to have a stable image about many things – about our belongings, about the people around us, the life truths, experiences, and above all, about ourselves. But all this is changing. Sooner or later, we find our body is changing, as well as the others around us. Then, we search for something that does not change: maybe for values; maybe for a spiritual life; maybe for a meaning that won't change. We are searching for something that does not change and it is equated to what is real. We equate “invariable” to “real”, and “real” things are sought for. That is the way we seek to defend ourselves against the changing reality. That is, we are trying to do the impossible. The longer we defend ourselves against the changing reality (e. g. the changing body), the harder it is to survive the crisis, when we realise the inevitable change. We tend to create the illusion of stability. So, we wish to build a wonderful life and to maintain the desired state. Yet, it is impossible. Anguish emerges there. The stronger we hold on to what we want to keep, the greater is the anguish. Help comes from the perception of change, the perception that things are changing. But... we do not want, because it is contrary to the longing for stability.

In reality – everything is changing, but we live with the innate longing for stability. This is common to all people. We attach ourselves to the image of reality and survive the change in a different and individual manner. The effort to turn a blind eye on the change is manifested in an increasing fear from simple anxiety to clinical paranoia. We are experiencing a tension between the desire to maintain a stable image, a stable condition and the growing awareness of the changes. This is what we call **existential anxiety**.

The mind tends to operate in a dualistic manner, and duality is just another image. Examples of duality would include: separation of I from another; separation of the body from the soul, psyche and mind; separation of good from evil; separation of enemies from friends; separation of one's people from strangers and separation of normal from abnormal.

It is just that our mind tends to think in a dualistic pattern and form dualistic relationships. As long as we keep developing our relationships with others based on our own assumptions, i.e. preconceived images and follow them, we will not build a contact with others. Preconceived images have an isolating power. Isolation takes place between ourselves and others as well as inside us. That's how we stay isolated. We believe that we can choose one or another image, that I am the changing world, not that I live in the changing world. It's not me who displays certain features, but rather features exist and manifest in me.

A real meeting gives an opportunity to move beyond “I” and “Another”, and experience what is between us. For instance, somebody got in a quarrel. The first person says: “this happened because the other one was obstinate” while that person argues that it happened because the first one stubbornly persisted. While in fact that obstinacy manifested neither in the first nor in the other, but rather between us. We got into an obstinate mood. After all it's interesting why he was stubbornly persistent in communicating with me. I got stubbornly persistent in communicating with him. It is very interesting what happened between us, what both of us have created.

Although our mind would be more at ease, and would have a clearer picture if there was one or another type of truth, often it can be both: one and the other type of truth. Not “or... or”, but “and... and”. Not

“either you were obstinate, or I was obstinate”, but “both, you were obstinate, and I was obstinate”. Not “either I love you, or I am angry at you”, but “both, I love you, and I am angry at you”. So, our mind tends to organise experience by creating stable images, and providing us with the illusion of stability and continuity. This is one part of the abilities of body to adjust itself best, as much as it can, to adapt to the environment.

HUMANS HAVE AN INNATE ABILITY FOR SELF-REGULATION

Humans have an innate ability of body for self-regulation of the body, e.g. they can identify and choose what suits them best at this moment. There is no need to teach self-regulation, as it is an inborn knowledge that exists in everyone. Carl Ransom Rogers calls it wisdom of the body. Gestalt psychotherapy calls it the body's self-regulation.

But self-regulation can get weakened or even lost when the pleasure centre is stimulated. The pleasure centre is affected by a variety of simple or pleasant activities. For example when playing a very engaging and fun computer game, we can even forget to eat. There is a well-known experiment with a rat, when an electrode stimulating the pleasure centre was implanted in its brain. Rat was trained to activate an electrode connected with a low voltage power source by pressing the lever. From then on, the only thing she would do was to stimulate her pleasure centre, and she died of starvation since she stopped eating. A very sad and instructive story. By the way, we (human beings) are subjected to even more risks as we have many, and way more subtle, ways to experience pleasure; that includes thinking habits (pleasant thoughts) as well as nice pictures, sounds, tastes, smells, experiences... For example, our body chooses how much and what kind of nutritional elements it requires: the body knows how much fat or carbohydrates it needs. But, research shows that taking, for instance, cream (fat) and sugar (carbohydrates) and mixing the two, they begin to intensely affect the pleasure centre and the body's ability to feel when it's already enough disappears. We get a likewise effect from pleasant crafts, praise, pleasant fantasies, films that bring pleasant sensations, music and so on. We have a myriad of pleasures. As such, they themselves are not bad (even very pleasing). The biggest problem is that pleasure experiences weaken the ability for self-regulation and other related experiences. It seems that in this way we reduce the ability to choose according to the criteria of meaning, not according to the criteria of pleasure i.e. we become less human and more rat like. Here's another example: an employee wants to implement a new accounting management method, but she cannot find time to do this. When we took a closer look, we discover why she cannot find the time: she occupies herself with all sorts of little, familiar to her, safe and therefore pleasant tasks. She could easily assign (delegate) these works to others, even lower paid employees (so, it would be very useful not only to herself, but also to the company!), but she does not do that i.e. she is engaged in pleasant activities, but is not doing what would make sense.

On the other hand, the threat of losing this pleasure causes fear. Fear also reduces the ability for self-regulation. Self-regulation gets disrupted in the moment of insecurity. There is a story of how the soldiers of the Soviet army started eating a lot and very unhealthily. It is terrible when all pleasures are lost. Self-regulation gets lost completely.

Sometimes the two mechanisms work simultaneously – the self-regulation and the desire for pleasure, or the fear of losing the pleasure. The ability for self-regulation, the innate wisdom of the body, is affected by the desire to meet certain images that are important to us.

WE HAVE A DESIRE TO MEET THE STANDARDS (THE “GOOD” IMAGES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO US)

We are simultaneously influenced by two inborn mechanisms – the self-regulating mechanism that says, “trust in the need and do what you want”, and the other mechanism that says, “you have to be good and a good man does otherwise.” According to Rogers (and we agree with him in this respect), the desire to receive positive evaluation is inborn, and the habits of positively assessed response and behaviour, which pay off, sets of such behavioural habits are individual and are formed during life. Gestalt psychotherapists refer to such types of behaviour as creative adjustment. One gets adjusted through self-created images of “good behaviour” images, and if some behaviour, which is adjustive and pays off, recurs, such adjustive behaviour turns into a habit (normal reaction, behavioural pattern, feature of character, in Buddhist psychology – Sankhara). The standard of good behaviour appears when trying to respect the real or imagi-

nary expectation of “significant others”. We adjust to the environment in the best way, which suits that specific moment. One stops listening to one’s body, and adjusts based on expectation. This becomes the image of good behaviour. However, situations change, yet the habit remains. In a new situation, I would like to behave in a different manner already, but the image of “good behaviour”, the habit, tells me to do otherwise – as I am used to. This causes tension between the two mechanisms: the wisdom of the body and once useful behavioural habit that helped to remain or be “good”.

WE ARE SOCIAL BEINGS

We have the need to adjust and stay in contact with others (we are social beings) and the need to keep our self-support (autonomy/uniqueness). Sometimes we manage to maintain a balance between these two needs, sometimes we fall into extremes.

Interpersonal relationships help for self-regulation, in particular, they help to adjust our existing images; the other person’s perspective helps to see the picture differently and perceive our images, which we make reference to at that moment. However, it then all depends on how we listen to others. Are we listening in order to gather more evidence to reinforce our image (for instance, about ourselves) or to compare different ways of seeing things, different perspectives? It is difficult for the person to become aware of their own images alone. When we hear and experience a different perspective, we can radically change our existing images. Also, through the other person’s perspective we can understand the rigidity of our own image. Example: Two colleagues have to go to work. The wife of one of them becomes ill. He calls his colleague to tell him that he’s taking his wife to a doctor and will get to work only late in the evening. The other colleague says “do you really need to come over here at all? Maybe we can find another colleague, who could replace you?” In fact, the second colleague helped the first one understand his impulse – to go to work – as automaticity. When hearing another perspective of colleague, we become aware of our images, which make reference to, and we can re-think whether we want to continue appealing to those images. Without experiencing another person’s image, perspective, attitude, we do not feel our own image, our own perspective, our own attitude. Own image is so customary to us that we even fail to notice it. As the saying goes: the fish will be the last to discover water.

In a relationship, we also tend to think in dualistic manner. First of all, we see a human being through a pre-formed visual prism. I am on my pole with my image about another person. Another one has their pole about me. As long as we remain in our own created assumptions about one other, we are on different poles.

Relation occurs by having stepped beyond duality to what is happening now in between us. Often, this meeting takes place when there is a certain level of tension as a result of obscurity or negative images of each other. But if tension is already present, it is already here and now, between us and this is how we get into contact. Preconceived images have an isolating power, and if we adhere to them, if I am convinced by them, I do not see what is happening between us and in me, I’m not interested and I remain in self-imposed isolation. During a real meeting, we forget “I” and “Another”, and move on to what is “between us”, what is inter-subjective (not just intra-subjective). “People can actually meet only in emptiness” (Šliogeris). We meet when we move beyond preconceptions.

A very interesting derivative is “what is between us”. According to the phenomenology there is neither the perceiver nor the perceived. There is the phenomenon of what is perceived (Noema) and perception (Noesis). Cognition occurs in a connection. If by staying in the dialogue we identify ourselves strongly with “my opinion”, “my feeling”, “my importance”, we fall into the state of duality. If I get focused on the content, which is born “between us”, it leads to simply enabling the phenomenon of perception without the “I”, without attachment to the image of “I”, “my opinion”, “the world in me”. We feel the presence in the status of non-connection, we experience it as a discomfort. Then we try to explain it to ourselves in the usual way. If we are self-critical then we explain it as negative with regard to ourselves, and if we are critical towards others, we explain it negatively with regard to others. Yet, in both cases we are in the status of non-connection with another person. We are in self-imposed isolation, in our images, rather than in the present reality. We are in the state of duality.

The move from self-isolation towards connection happens gradually by recognising and accepting affinity (when it’s a pleasure to meet) or by recognising and accepting diversity (often the meeting process is unpleasant). Regardless of whether the meeting takes place due to pleasant affinity or unpleasant diversity, it builds a connection, and then the exchange of receiving-giving starts between individuals. In fact, it seems that we have different habits that determine if we tend to meet through affinity or through diversity.

The ability to stay in relation to the other, is the ability to be in the “I-Thou” meeting of Martin Buber. If I tend to remain in my own images and tend to keep them unchanging, I avoid a meeting because the meeting makes me vulnerable, making my images vulnerable. I tend to stay in Buber’s “I-Thou” relationship. The move from “I-It” towards “I-Thou” is a natural movement. Just as the two states – the presence in the connection and the presence in the self-imposed isolation – are natural.

“I” IS THE FLOW OF CHANGING IMAGES

Warning: If you read further, you may get nervous.

“I” – is yet another image or a group of images. “I” cannot be perceived without the “Not-I.” Only in relation to what is “Not-I”, I can perceive “I”. In order to perceive “I”, there must be “Another”. It is not necessarily another person. It can be nature, things, a deity, an animal. Anything that is not “I”.

There is an evolution of “I”:

- a. I am the need. We are born with needs. The mind perceives its relationship with the environment through the satisfaction of needs. If the need is rejected, not recognised, then we feel that “I” is rejected, not recognised. The mind still does not retain stable images (according to D. Stern).
- b. I am the images that other people who are important to me have about me. The mind already begins to retain stable images, but shapes the images based on the reactions of others.
- c. I am NO (adolescence). When the mind is growing and developing, it gets separated from the mind of others. It needs to say NO. It strengthens the “I” image, which is separate from the image that people who are important to somebody have about them.
- d. I am the images of “I” unverified by my experience. This can be the time of rigid pictures. Of pictures that the mind creates during the NO period. The pictures can be very unstable, so one may desire to hold on to them firmly, perhaps even with a combative approach. We create some rational, sometimes ideal images about ourselves, about the world, and start concentrating others around them. We might become the “idealists.” This is the time of following ideas. Even a spiritual practice can thus far become only a feature to underline the “Ideal I”.
- e. I – beyond the images. The age of maturity. The mind starts realising that the body is changing, and so the character changes; death exists, it is also in me. This is the time when well-established images change, and sometimes collapse. Spiritual practice already helps to learn to see the true picture. One manages to see that “I” as the centre of the universe does not exist. It can be experienced as a great loss. Such a great picture about everything, including the “important I”, was created, and now it turns out, that “I” does not exist as such. This is only the flow of changing images – the flow of my own changing images about myself, others and the world, other people’s changing images about me, themselves and the world. Existential crisis is experienced. What we are building turns out to be of no importance – “I”, my works, statuses... And it’s not important, and it’s changing. We put so much effort into this! And it turned out to be a total bullshit!
- f. And what’s next

“I” IS THE FACT OF MEANINGLESSNESS.