

ANETT MÁRIA TRÓBERT

A LIFE IN THE SERVICE OF MENTAL HEALTH

ITTZÉS, G., ed. (2013) *Cura mentis – salus populi: Mentálhigiéné a társadalom szolgálatában: Ünnepi kötet Tomcsányi Teodóra 70. születésnapjára: Festschrift für Tomcsányi Teodóra zum 70. Geburtstag* (Budapest: Semmelweis Egyetem EKK Mentálhigiéné Intézet) 572 pp., 23 cm, ISBN 978-963-9129-95-5, 3980 Ft.

To celebrate Professor Teodóra Tomcsányi's seventieth birthday in 2013, the Institute of Mental Health published a Hungarian–German bilingual volume in the interdisciplinary library series under the title of *Cura mentis – salus populi* with a subtitle that can be translated as 'mental health in the service of society'. In his foreword the editor, Gábor Ittész, outlines the individual chapters in the context of Professor Tomcsányi's work. The structure of the book reflects the diversity of her oeuvre, in which a firm grounding in theory, practice-oriented professional work, the transfer of theoretical and empirical knowledge through various forms of training, and a commitment to research form an integral whole and appear as a service to mental health on a social scale.

The studies represent great diversity in terms of themes and genres. That is the result of a conscious decision on the part of the editor to reflect the multifaceted nature of the dedicatee's career over a lifetime. The main structural units are devoted to *scholarship, practice, teaching and research*. Taken together, their subordinate sections, each containing three to four papers, provide an overview of the main stages of Tomcsányi's professional career and give an impression of the richness of her oeuvre. In this review I will present the volume under four keywords, borrowed from concepts that run through the studies. These concepts are central not only to the book but also to the dedicatee's work and include *dialogue, integration, value and personality*.

As I first leafed through the book, I had the feeling of finding myself in the midst of an open *dialogue* in which values of Tomcsányi's oeuvre appear, both explicitly and implicitly. One such value is dialogue itself. The theoretical studies themselves emerge from a dialogue. Questioning our views, placing them in a broader context, accepting the viewpoints and different views of others, and openness to development are all preconditions for dialogue. With their critique of Israël's attack on Freud, Patrick Luyten and Jozef Corveleyn (31–52) point to openness and self-criticism as some of the essential elements of a scholarly attitude. Susanne Heine (53–68) also adopts this approach in his examination of Freud's hostility to religion. Grete Leutz (69–78) describes the ways, different but not mutually exclusive, in which the same therapeutic tool was used in practice by Freud and Moreno. She presents this as an example of the further development and transformation of theories, which is also

an important part of dialogue. In Ferenc Patsch's reflection on the philosophy of religion (116–29), dialogue and cooperation appear as possible conditions for a new, relational approach to truth. Besides stressing the points of contact between different trends in psychotherapy, Dóra Perczel Forintos (165–72) shows how the schools enrich each other.

In addition to papers on psychology in part four (research), we come across encounters between psychology and sociology in the context of religiousness, inter-religious dialogue and family studies. Since dialogue is a fundamental reality in the independent discipline of mental health, but one that has to face many difficulties, the book should have offered a presentation of the current challenges of scholarly dialogue, counterbalanced with available good examples. That, however, is missing from the book.

On Teodóra Tomcsányi's view the connection between theory and practice is not linear. It is a spiral continuously integrating the elements of training and research. In renewal and development it is just as important to return to the sources as it is to be open to new theories and experience. The dynamic unity of theory and practice can be seen in the papers on psychotherapy. Krisztina Csáky-Pallavicini and Piroska Milák (189–202), for example, provide insight into an extended application of the psychodrama method in a new framework. But it is not only in terms of theory and practice that the volume emphasises *integration*. It is also the basis of an approach to mental health reflected in several studies. In an earlier article Teodóra TOMCSÁNYI defined mental health as a concept with psychosocial, sociocultural and political-economic aspects that can be interpreted as an internal equilibrium process (2003, 20). Mental health requires the power of integration not merely because of its complexity but also because of the ambivalence of its internal and internalising contents. As Endre J. Nagy puts it in the volume, 'it is the dynamic unity of opposites that gives the personality its strength or a healthy personality' (98, my trans.).¹ Since the training of mental health professionals requires an interdisciplinary dialogue, educational programs in the field provide a forum for integrating different branches of learning. This is well illustrated in the contributions of Hanneke Meulink-Korf (385–400), Andreas Wittrahm (401–16), Karl Heinz Ladenhauf (153–62) and in the joint study by Gábor Török and Máté Joób (417–29).

The role of *values* in mental health is indisputable. In addition to the environment, itself a complex reality, and personality factors, elements that are beyond the perceivable environment also play an important role in shaping and maintaining mental health. In his study Endre J. Nagy (81–101) points out that mental health itself is a value choice, raising numerous challenges in the postmodern age. The role of elements beyond the perceivable environment, such as spirituality, is also confirmed by research not only in mental health but also in physical well-being. In their article, Ferenc Túry and his colleagues (133–41) explore the deep connections

¹ Original text: 'maguknak az ellentéteknek a dinamikus egységes adja a személyiség erejét vagy az egészséges személyiséget'.

between food, life and spirituality. Timea Tésenyi's paper on spiritual counselling in hospitals (277–93) shows how important spirituality is in modern healing. It is a dynamically developing component with deep roots. Károly Varga (102–15) examines the connection between religion and mental health through the lens of spirituality and consciousness. As science becomes open to the values of spirituality and religion, persons who represent the churches and spirituality must enter into dialogue with science. An example of this can be found in the article by Dávid Németh (294–321) on the fruitful dialogue based on the values of logotherapy and pastoral care. If we interpret spirituality and religion as a dimension needed for people to unfold their potential, it follows that education must allow space for religious values. In this light Martin Jäggle (142–52) describes a German training model conceived in the context of religious diversity. Norbert Mette (337–59) examines the challenges of religious pedagogy in childhood. His findings and questions integrate the perspectives of the related disciplines and encourage further reflection.

Empirical research is an activity that both preserves and creates value. It explores phenomena that determine the quality of life and is one of the cornerstones of prevention and the promotion of mental health. This is clearly illustrated by the studies in part four on research. Eszter Hámori (445–60) shows that interviews can have a therapeutic effect for the interviewee because they contribute to self-reflection and the articulation of problems. The family is the most important place for the transmission and protection of values in all stages of life. Research by Katalin Horváth-Szabó and Beáta Dávid (534–50) throws light on the importance of family support among adolescents. Péter Török and András Ittész (514–33) draw attention to the possibilities of interfaith dialogue for the preservation of values from the perspective of family welfare. They have reviewed data collected over several decades. The study by Gábor Ittész and colleagues (495–513) describes how the salvation item of the widely used Rokeach Value Survey can serve as an indicator of religiosity. In view of the significance of the topic of spirituality and religion, and the pioneering work done in this direction by the dedicatee, one would have liked to see more space given in the book to the sociology of religion in Hungary.

The practice of empirical research teaches that, however important efforts to achieve objectivity are, the *personal* cannot be excluded from the scientific enquiry. For those in the helping professions the personal is a tool, and the connection with ourselves, self-knowledge and self-reflection are essential for professional work. This is why self-knowledge and psychodrama work are among the pillars of the pastoral care and mental health training programs established by Teodóra Tomcsányi. The studies in the section devoted to psychodrama present examples of the internal development that can be achieved through such work.

The volume reflects what I myself have learnt from Professor Tomcsányi: to blaze new trails you must know where you have come from and where you are going. Be bold in connecting dreams and reality, creating consciously. This jubilee publication is a collection that invites dialogue. Despite the diversity of its themes, it is a holistic, integrative work. It opens new perspectives for professional work in

mental health from its personal nature to its impact on society. It is worth returning again and again to this rich volume that encourages further reflection.

References

- TOMCSÁNYI, T. (2003) 'A mentálhigiéné jelenségvilága' in T. TOMCSÁNYI, F. GREZSA & I. JELENITS, eds., *Tanakodó* (Budapest: Semmelweis Egyetem TF, Párbeszéd (Dialógus) Alapítvány & HÍD Alapítvány) 16–45.