

Transgressive concept of a man

The term *transgression* is defined in different contexts.

In geology *transgression* is the spreading of the sea over land as evidenced by the deposition of marine strata over terrestrial strata. In genetics it means a peculiar case of heterosis - the increase in growth, size, fecundity, function or other characters in hybrids over those of the parents.

Kozielecki (1987) who transposes this term into psychological ground, speaks about intentional and deliberate overcoming of physical, social or symbolic boundaries. The concept of psychological *transgression* is devoted to the importance of the role that crossing personal boundaries and subverting limitations play in everyone's life. From this standpoint, a man is a self-directed, expansive creature who intentionally crosses the *boundaries* understood as demarcation lines separating who he is and what he owns, from who he may become.

Kozielecki (1987, 1997) outlines four worlds of transgression wherein the exceeding boundaries can be taken towards:

1. material objects - territorial expansion in the physical world,
2. other people - expanding the control over other people but also altruism and extension of individual freedom,
3. symbols - intellectual expansion; going beyond the information given, development of knowledge about the world
4. oneself - the world of self-creation, self-development, unlocking one's potential, coping with one's weaknesses.

Transgressions thus may be of different kinds: psychological or historical, individual or collective, constructive or destructive, but also, in other level, it can be creative or inventive and expansions (e.g. material, interpersonal, intellectual).

The human being is assumed to be able to carry both the *telic* (goal-oriented) and *autotelic* (intrinsically rewarded) actions. In the former, he acts in pursuit of a variety of goals and creates new values that satisfy his needs. In the latter kind of actions, the goal is less important than the satisfaction and pleasure simply coming from carrying out activities. Moreover, regarding autotelic actions indicated by high level of involvement, Kozielecki states that *goals emerge from activity* not conversely, because goals in this case have no distinguished status. The author notices that goal-oriented activities become exhausting and boring in a short time, hence when the motivational tension relieves and the goal is achieved, a person ends up the task and refuses further actions. On the contrary, those who are totally committed to some kind of activity, do not feel tired. They may experience what Csikszentmihalyi (1991) describes as *flow*. Kozielecki (1997) emphasizes that thanks to the commitment we become more self-governing instead of being just human – robots.

However, from the viewpoint of transgressionism, another distinction is of higher importance. Kozielecki (1987, 1997) focuses on two kinds of actions that entities undertake: *protective* - designed for the maintenance of the *status quo* and *transgressive* ones – exceeding the boundaries and enabling the development of personality. The juxtaposition of these two types of human activity is presented in the table below.

Protective actions	Transgressive actions
play key role in adaptation and survival	satisfy higher needs of human beings
are regulated by the needs of deficit	are regulated by the needs of growth
are undertaken to maintain the status-quo	are orientated toward a meaningful change
other-directed; depend more on changing the external environment	inner-directed; depend on the components of personality (e.g., creativity, knowledge, motivation, courage, perseverance)
are necessary “I know I have to”	are possible “I know I am able to”
repeatable and planned	non-recurring and rather spontaneous
often predictable	harder to predict
accompanied by negative emotions, especially fear	accompanied by positive affective experiences, especially hope
performed similarly to following an algorithm	inherently heuristic, fallible, underspecified

Table 1: Protective actions vs. transgressive actions

Kozielecki puts forward the view that personality is equipped with a kind of internal *comparator* (a part of human’s will), which allows comparing plans with achieved state of affairs. It is also the comparator that decides whether to stop the action or continue. The salient feature of the protective actions is that they are directed by the *principle of negative feedback* – reaching the goal (namely restoring or maintaining the status quo) ends up the activity taken by a man. On the contrary, transgression is directed by the *principle of positive feedback* which works reversely: not only isn’t the motivation reduced, but also it is sustained or even increases during the activity. The notion of *affective reallocation* is introduced to name the positive correlation between adaptation and negative emotions on the one hand, and between transgression and positive affective experiences on the other. *Hope* may serve as a good example of such a positive experience. It is defined as a multidimensional cognitive structure, in which the central factor is the belief that in the future one will be offered the good (achieve an important objective), and the degree of certainty, or probability, is stated (Kozielecki, 2006).

These two kinds of behavior exposed briefly above, differ also in terms of the motivation involved. Two kinds of human’s motivation are distinguished by Kozielecki (1987): *homeostatic* – a typical motivation for protective actions, (however, sometimes transgressions could also be stimulated by this kind of motivation) and *heterostatic* – a specific motivation for transgressive actions. The former arises if and only if in human’s brain there are two independent information at one time: one concerning the desired state of affairs (S) and the second one, involving the actual state (A). When the comparator ascertains the existence of discrepancy $D(S,A)$, the organism engages in behaviors designed to reduce the psychological imbalance. To get back to homeostasis, considered as a preferable state, a man undertakes actions intended either to dismantle the deficits or to remove the excess. This process leads to satisfaction and relief.

Homeostatic theory focuses on the maintenance of the internal physiological environment. However this theory doesn’t describe all human’s behaviors adequately. It is not sufficient, for instance, to explain why people sometimes explore their environment and intentionally seek for arousal disrupting the equilibrium. What underlies human’s motivation in this case is the driving force of growth. The discrepancy $D(L,A)$ between the level of aspiration (L) and the actual state (A) evokes internal tension that leads to actions oriented on growth and satisfaction. However, a man seen as an insatiable creature can never reduce $D(L,A)$ completely. This discrepancy exists permanently. The role of the comparator is then twofold: it detects the

existence of D(S,A) and evaluates the extent and the content of persisting D(L,A). Overall, then, we can state that homeostatic motivation serves to minimize annoyance, whereas the role of heterostatic motivation is to maximize the pleasure.

There are two specific types of the heterostatic motivation that lead to transgression. The first one, which has been coined by Koziellecki, is the *hubristic motivation*, “conceived as a cluster of motives that make people assert and enhance their self-worth” (Koziellecki, 1987, p. 177). It is the major driving force of transgression. *Hubris* (also: *hybris*) is a term derived from Greek literature and philosophy. In the past it meant pride, insolence and arrogance, but here it is deprived of pejorative meanings. Transgressive concept of man takes into account that every human being has the desire, at some point, to be distinct from others, to be important, to shine the spotlight on others. The hubristic motivation manifests itself as striving for superiority or striving towards perfection. It is insatiable, very affective, sated with egocentric and hedonistic drives.

The second type of the driving force specific for transgression, is *cognitive motivation*. It is nonegoistic instinct to master and competence, governed by the principle of growth. It can be stimulated by the novelty or complexity of the subject, uncertainty or lack of information, as well as by the cognitive conflict raised when two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas or values are held at the same time, or when existing beliefs are confronted by some new directly contradicting information.

“By a mathematical cognitive transgression we mean crossing – by an individual or by a scientific community – of a previously non-traversable limit of own mathematical knowledge or of a previous barrier of deep-rooted convictions” (Semadeni, 2015, p. 27).

Affective transgression in the learning of mathematics (short: affective transgression) is an intentional process of overcoming personal affective barriers that preclude one’s mathematical growth and development. The process is a psychological, individual and constructive transgression toward oneself. If affective transgressions intervene in the structure of affect they may reverse persisting negative emotional, attitudinal patterns or challenge the existing belief systems.

References

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