

## **Emotional cognition based on Antoni Kępiński's work**

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### **Summary**

The aim of this paper is to define the role of emotions in decision-making mechanisms in the concept of information metabolism – an original research project of the Polish psychiatrist Antoni Kępiński. Emotions constitute a subjective (first-person) expression of the subject's relation to his or her environment, resulting from the basic principles defined as biological laws; decisions made on the basis of emotional process and current body states are the foundation for information processing. This postulate anticipates further neurobiological research and has been referred to in Antonio Damasio's work. Determination of a biological role of emotions enables identification of their place in a psychotherapeutic process described by information metabolism. Emotions through their relational dimension constitute the genesis of the meaning of an individual life. Thanks to the definition of the emotional process as a source of connections between an individual and their world, whose aim is the choice of a possibly most optimal procedure, emotions may be treated as a basis for the situation of understanding. The notion of understanding used in this context in relation to the views of Kępiński relates in a substantial part to the subjective individual experiences and is theoretically juxtaposed with the notion of explaining. The proposal of interpretation of the model of Kępiński's psychiatry, based on understanding resulting from the emotional process, displays many common elements with various ways of approaching the psychiatric theories, e.g. biological psychiatry or post-psychiatry.

**Key words:** psychotherapy, emotions, Antoni Kępiński

### **Introduction**

The books of Antoni Kępiński (1918-1972), a Polish psychiatrist and professor of medicine, have since their publication been the subject of a keen interest, going far beyond psychiatry [1]. The texts, which were originally intended to be included in a textbook of psychiatry [2] have a characteristic structure, illustrating the main idea of Kępiński's intellectual work, which in the field of psychiatry was the relation between the subjective world of human experiences and the objective sphere of their description.

The division into the subjective and objective sphere is the basic axis of this paper. An elaborate phenomenological description of individual mental disorders, in which the basic element is a first-person experience of a human being living through his or her life situation, is to bring closer the subjective phenomena. Objectivity for Kępiński is a third-person narrative – “measurable and verifiable” [3], typical of the natural sciences method. The area of psychiatry, especially in the clinical aspect – therapeutic contact with the patient, is a special place of the synthesis of both attitudes. An attempt to determine the relation between the subjective and objective layer was largely supported by the concept of information metabolism. This idea serves as a conceptual grid that brings together views from various levels of research, from practical clinical observations to considerations approximating metaphysics. Taking into account the controversy it aroused [1], it is worth noting that Kępiński’s publications clearly show a change in the way the description of the psyche is delineated through informational metabolism – from treating it mainly as a sum of reflexes derived from neuronal functions to the understanding of mental phenomena as a relatively autonomous sphere which is in constant informative interaction with the environment. The concept of information metabolism is therefore rather a search for language to express views on subtle issues of emotional-rational relations and is marked by the history of its development. It is not a ready-made descriptive tool. The lack of historical perspective has often led to its interpretation departing from the author’s idea, expressed in source texts [4]. On the other hand, the most important gist of this concept is connected rather with its anthropological assumptions than with the model of information metabolism itself, which concerns the exchange of information with the environment in the mechanism of signal reception, emotional and rational analysis and the creation of a reaction called: functional structure or model of reality. It is only the consideration on the genesis of an emotional phase, on relations between rationality and emotionality, etc., that gives depth to the psyche structure described by information metabolism.

This paper refers to the role that was assigned to emotional processes in Antoni Kępiński’s work. Emotions constitute a kind of subjectivity language, that has an evolutionary genesis and determines life-significant choices for an individual. Reconstruction of an emotional process within an information metabolism make it possible to refer the views of Kępiński to research from the field of cognitive science. Thanks to this, a new perspective arises, in which general assumptions of information metabolism find justification in exact science. The final stage is to use the conducted analyses of emotionality to determine the conditions of functioning of the therapeutic relationship in psychiatry, where therapeutic contact becomes a way of understanding the patient based on the emotional process.

The proposed way of understanding of the psychiatric issues, especially the psychotherapeutic ones in the works of Kępiński, is a new approach to this subject. It allows for an outlook on the emotional contact with the patient as a mechanism used for the formation of the space for understanding filled with interconnected facts, whose meaning is individual, yet conceivable for the mutual communication. The justification of

the emotional understanding of another person relies on one hand on the analysis of the biological bases of emotions conducted by Kępiński, on the other on the consonance of his concept with contemporary cognitive research. Another research step, which surpasses the frames of this article, may be utilisation of the findings made in here to analyse specific notions on the manner of conduct of psychiatry. There is a significant likelihood that such research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the works of Kępiński, which are classical in the Polish psychiatric tradition, and at the same time its outcomes have a chance to be included in a discussion which is not only historical.

The importance of information metabolism as an anthropological structure was emphasized by Józef Tischner [5] and Anna Tylikowska [6], who exposed subjective experience as a derivative of mood-emotional colouration, and also by Józef Maciuszek [7]. The role of emotions in Kępiński's work in relation to Max Scheler's phenomenology was described by Marek Pyka [8], whereas Andrzej Kapusta [9] postulated that the research on this subject should refer to embodied cognition. Thus, there is a trend in literature concerning Kępiński, which emphasizes the role of emotional process in the work of the author of *Melancholia*.

### **Emotions in the model of information metabolism**

Kępiński's deliberations were based on the fundamental category, which ultimately determines any standard of conduct and constitutes a criterion for valuation. This category is life, defined as the process of opposing disorder, i.e. the tendency to increase entropy of a system, which results from the second principle of thermodynamics. The definition of life was adopted in line with Erwin Schrödinger [10] and is still one of the fundamental principles of the natural sciences [11]. Its main consequence for Kępiński is a statement that life is a process of building that needs both individual and social effort. Kępiński's argumentation in many places refers to life as a category that regulates the way of conduct, and even gives value to the choices made. An example of a dominating presence of life's elementary rules is the concept of anxiety, which in the phenomenological analysis presents a multitude of ways in which it can be experienced; however, in its essence, every manifestation of anxiety comes down to a fundamental fear of death, understood as the destruction of order and increase in entropy [12]. Kępiński also differentiated the so-called natural morality based on the necessity of striving for increase in order (of a system, e.g. body, society). The realisation of this necessity results in (biological) good, while the total increase in entropy would be an evil in this biological scheme. Hence the research on the importance of the value system in psychiatry and the statement that mental dysfunction may in some situations be a punishment for neglecting this basic rule. Kępiński underlined at the same time that a psychiatrist cannot be the patient's judge. Research on the importance of morality in psychiatry is of a philosophical rather than clinical nature here, although its consequence is a project to analyse personality disorders in terms of moral order disorders, the so-called axiological psychiatry [13; cf. 5]. The mechanism of entropy

reduction is perhaps the search for the sufficient ration of life. Leibniz's question: "Why is there something rather than nothing?" is an expression of a complicated philosophical discussion, in which one of the answers a human mind can afford at all, is to define the *raison d'être* of existence as the realisation of good [14], which Keępiński's work seems to follow.

The rules of life are specified by two biological laws: the first – preservation of one's own life and the second – preservation of the species. The first law assumes a struggle with the environment or an escape, which causes the individual to adopt a negative attitude towards it, called the "from" attitude. The second biological law defining the imperative of the species' survival requires the individual to get closer to his or her environment, so the "to" attitude, in which the organism establishes contact with the world, is typical for this law. By implementing the second biological law, one's own energy is spent to give birth and raise offspring, but thanks to this, the entropy of the system (family, population, etc.) decreases. The full implementation of the "to" attitude is presented differently in Keępiński's texts, as it may be a sexual act [15], raising offspring and even creating a system of culture as an expression of the tendency to organize one's own world [16]. According to Keępiński, the biological laws remain with each other in a dialectic relationship. They are opposite to each other and both must be realised in individual life in order for it to survive; however, since the mechanism of the first biological law is destruction, the rules of the second law should prevail.

The subjective equivalent of life (energy metabolism) is survival (information metabolism) treated as a first-person phenomenon. The difference between the two is that in the process of life, the flow of energy is what counts, while survival is related to information-coding symbolic operations, where not the amount of energy but the quality of the symbol is important. This entails a not fully defined relationship between the material energy metabolism, that is related to the body, and the informative "spirit" founded notwithstanding on bodily processes. According to Paweł Bankiewicz [17], this view, in relation to the philosophy of mind, is an example of substance monism and dualism of properties. The subjective equivalent of orientation attitudes resulting from biological laws are pleasant and unpleasant as well as positive and negative emotions (emotions and feelings in Keępiński's work were usually treated synonymously). Pleasant and unpleasant feelings are connected with the realisation of biological laws; their mechanism is based on the arrangement of reward and punishment. Pleasure is felt when a biological need is realised, while unpleasant feelings appear when it is not satisfied. Positive and negative feelings concern their effects on the body functioning in such a way that the occurrence of positive feelings has beneficial effects on the energy and information metabolism, whereas negative feelings have destructive effects [16].

Typical for the first biological law, the "from" attitude in subjective experience triggers feelings of aggression and anxiety which have a deep biological justification in a situation of struggle for survival, but at the same time these feelings are negative through their destructive effect on the physical and mental state of the body. The "from"

attitude is characterised by Kępiński as egoistic, enclosing the individual in his own psychosomatic structure and thus making it impossible to make contact, and through irradiation of these feelings, i.e. transferring them from the circumstances that cause them to other life situations, the world interpreted by the individual becomes unfriendly. The fulfilment of the first biological law brings a sense of satisfaction, which, however, is short-lived. This is due to the body's constant needs and potential constant threat to life. Therefore, relatively quickly, after the well-being that the actions to secure one's own existence have brought about, there is a return of anxiety or a desire to acquire new elements of the environment.

The "to" attitude, which is characteristic of the second biological law, concerns the situation of getting closer to the environment, making contact with it. For Kępiński, this was a condition to enter into a reproductive relationship, since one has to establish direct contact with a sexual partner. The implementation of the second biological law requires the expenditure of one's own energy (increase in entropy) in order to give birth and raise offspring. The principles of this law, along with the subjective way of experiencing the "to" attitude, which is love (in various aspects) in an atmosphere of freedom, contain an altruistic relation to the environment and are oriented towards the construction of the surrounding world (decrease in the overall entropy of the system). Therefore, the implementation of the second biological law gives space for the development of information metabolism through openness to the environment, willingness to know it and to interact with it [16].

Information metabolism can be divided into two phases: the first – mood-emotional, and the second – rational, although in reality its course is comprehensive and is always composed of both phases (in various proportions). In the first phase, the decision process depends on current mood-emotional colouration. Mood is an internal state of the body – a resultant of biochemical processes and a certain constitutive factor which Kępiński called life dynamics. The dynamics has its hypothetical foundation in basic metabolic processes; it determines the change in the way of experiencing in youth or old age, but also e.g. in excitement states or depression. On the other hand, emotions express the relation to the environment; they are directed outwards. On the basis of the colouration, a subconscious choice of a "from" or "to" orientation attitude follows. The main feature of mood-emotional colouration is the lack of time and space boundaries, consisting in assignment of one's colouration to surroundings and projecting it onto the experience of time (past and future). Depending on the colouration, the structure of the experience called space-time continuum expands or shrinks and is light or dark. In this case, space-time refers to the subjective experience of one's situation in the world. Reactions of the first phase of informational metabolism are felt as a weave of mysterious forces and the power of subconscious mechanisms, which are not influenced. However, this phase is characterised by an internal order, resulting from the closeness between subconscious processes and the rhythm of nature. The surrounding world, especially animated nature, shows the dynamics recorded in the first phase of information metabolism. According to Kępiński, people are equipped

with evolutionary cognitive mechanisms, which were primarily adaptive, on the basis of which it is possible to assess the direct significance of a given life situation [16].

Information metabolism is an external and relational process; externality means functioning in the information sphere belonging to the social world, but also in the common symbolic sphere within nature, which assumes the existence of the above-mentioned evolutionarily old processes of responding to the current state of the environment. The informational community with the animated world, typical of the first phase, is described by Kępiński as a pantheistic union with nature [13]. Therefore, experiences based on the colouration are perceived as direct and personal, as they relate to one's own body and its current relationship to the environment. On the basis of these mechanisms, Kępiński explained the phenomenon of intuition and direct transmission of emotional states. The emotional mechanisms of the first phase are also the basis for the universality of art, which is understood through emotional states, and its lasting value is achieved through similar emotional functioning of humanity throughout history [16].

The second phase includes distancing from the world and objectification of the situation. This is due to the qualitative development of the new cerebral cortex, which gives the possibility of various interpretations of a signal and thus – abstraction from directness. Then the construction of a time and space grid takes place, as well as the cause and effect ordering of the experimental data. The aim of this process is to decide on the way to proceed, i.e. to implement a selected functional structure, called the model of reality and being a comprehensive interpretation of oneself and the surrounding world [16]. However, the second phase of information metabolism works in isolation from concreteness. It realises functional structures that have proved their worth in relations with the outside world. The environment perceived through the rationality of this phase is partly its own construction of tried and tested models of reality, characterised by perseverance – schematic repetition of proven solutions. Therefore, the impact of the first phase is important, in which thanks to constant emotional adaptation to changing environmental conditions, it is possible to take a new look at a given issue. In the context of interpersonal contact, an important consequence of the mechanism of both phases is the way of relating to the surrounding world. In phase 1 – mood-emotional, the environment, including the other person, is treated subjectively (“horizontal contact”), while in the rational phase, what is learned becomes an object (“vertical contact”) [16].

### **Neurobiological background – Antonio Damasio**

Kępiński's views anticipate works in the field of cognitive science and place them at the centre of posterior reflections on the role of emotions and the somatic body in cognitive mechanisms. This is particularly true of the description of the psyche, which is in constant relationship with its environment, interpreting itself through emotions that subjectively express the attitude to its surroundings and the internal state of the body, defined as mood. Relationship with the environment is made in the mechanism of

emotional choice, because in this model it is the first phase of information metabolism (mood-emotional) that imposes an attitude to the world, and the rational phase orders the adopted orientation. There is a special similarity between the views of Kępiński and neurobiologist Antonio Damasio, whose books, aiming at a synthetic reflection on mental issues and written in a similar (popular science) style, have gained worldwide fame. The comparison of their works enables an analysis of common, basic assumptions, thanks to which Kępiński's concept, criticised for too much of the speculative and unverifiable [1], may gain new explanatory potential, and in some places even empirical confirmation.

In Damasio's work, the basic category of description of biological systems is homeostasis, i.e. the process of maintaining the stability of one's internal environment. The control of homeostasis is a life-significant imperative for the organism, concerning the individual survival, but also the continuity of the population [18]. In Damasio's concept, the division of emotions and feelings is extensive, in general: emotions are a combination of a simpler or more complex process of mental evaluation with accompanying dispositional reactions, mostly directed towards the proper body, which induce an "emotional state of the body", but also towards the brain itself, which leads to additional mental changes [19]. In turn, feelings are a mechanism for monitoring the states of body and mind in the course of emotions [18]. An important element in this system, analogous to Kępiński's views, is primary feelings, which are a current and emotion-independent monitoring of basic body functions. The own body is the primary object, which is mapped in the brain structures and is the basic reference for the brain states reflecting other relationships. According to Damasio, primary feelings are the basis of a sense of identity – the "I" which is created on an ongoing basis as a result of the work of different areas of the central nervous system. In Kępiński's concept there is a very similar assumption, concerning the mood-emotional colouration, which determines the first phase of information metabolism. In the structure of mood as a manifestation of life dynamics, Kępiński distinguished the constitutive layer, connected with the genetic condition of the intensity of life processes and the layer resulting from the current course of metabolic processes in relation to the biophysical conditions of the system and environment. The emotional component of colouration is, as for Damasio, the body's action directed outwards – a reaction to environmental conditions. Overall, the current mood-emotional colouration influences the decision-making process "to" or "from" in the first phase of information metabolism.

Kępiński did not analyse colouration in terms of its neuronal representations, as Damasio presented it in the case of primary feelings, nevertheless, both assumptions are similar in their essence: they assume the existence of states of the body which, in the process of perceiving oneself and the surrounding world, give biological meaning to a given relationship. The cognition of the external world is mediated by the states of the body, which are already an interactive response to external conditions and constitute a somatic redefinition of the body under these conditions. On their basis, decisions are made to choose the way of behaviour in the "from" and "to" orientation

attitude in Kepleński's model. In Damasio's concept, primary feelings representing states of the body (biochemical and interoceptive), also constitute the basis for higher feelings and emotions.

Damasio has conducted research on patients with ventromedial prefrontal cerebral cortex damage, whose normal function, along with other brain centres, is associated with experiencing emotions. The conclusion of these studies is that patients with disturbed mechanisms of emotional evaluation made decisions that were unfavourable for them in terms of their life interest. They decided on risky, socially unacceptable or financially unfavourable behaviours, despite the fact that they had the possibility of rational review of their behaviour, including predicting the effects [19]. On the basis of this research, Damasio formulated a thesis that the emotional mechanism of decision-making is an expression of the realisation of basic life values. Persons deprived of the possibility of emotional evaluation do not feel the need to act favourably for themselves. Therefore, a properly functioning emotional sphere is a system of monitoring against inappropriate events, which may be a threat to the body. The body and the brain work together in constant informational cooperation, the aim of which is individual and species survival, and the language of this is feelings and emotions. Such an approach to the somatic and mental sphere can be found in Damasio's works in many different places and, as a rule, is practically identical to the idea of Kepleński's information metabolism.

The imperative of preserved homeostasis, which Damasio called "the will to live", in the case of multicellular organisms is the sum of the aspirations of individual cells of an organism and manifests itself as an unconscious basic mechanism conditioning action by regulating life processes. Another manifestation of the "will to live" is also the self, being a subjective feeling of self [18]. The subjective relationship for Damasio results from the functioning of the nervous system. However, the basis for the work of the nervous system are dynamic body maps, which create a sense of identity and only on their basis is the overall mental process constructed. Body states mapped in neural structures are the primary feelings mentioned above. As for their character, Damasio introduced a significant hypothesis, stating that they are a dynamic unit concerning the somatic body: "The neurons responsible for transmitting signals to the brain about the inside of the body would be so closely related to the internal structures that transmitting the signal would not simply be a description of the body's condition, but literally an extension of the body. The neurons would mimic life so closely that they would be united with it" [18, pp. 268-269].

Monitoring the state of the body, as Damasio suspects, is connected to the body itself, which feels itself through its nervous structures. In doing so, he draws attention to the specific way in which the cells react, which, putting this term in quotation marks, he nevertheless calls a feel: "Moreover, certain aspects of cellular life bring to mind the existence of precursors to 'feels'. Single-cell organisms are 'sensitive' to dangerous stimuli. (...) Let us translate this situation into neurons, and perhaps we will discover a physical state whose modulation and amplification, through ever-increasing cellular

circuits, results in a proto-feeling, a worthy equivalent of proto-cognition that is created at the same level" [18, p. 269]. In Kępiński's concept, the state called experience, which is an expression of subjectivity, is common in all animated nature. What is more, belonging to the world of living organisms is connected with the existence of even minimal experience [20]. Kępiński presented his view in the form of an assumption, which, however, says a lot about his way of thinking. The presence of survival states in simple organisms still has the status of a hypothesis difficult to verify, although some forms of subjectivity are attributed e.g. to insects [21]. However, the example of an analysis of basic principles of the process of life, proposed by Kępiński and Damasio, shows the theoretical consequence of the considerations, which, starting from the findings of exact sciences, lead to a holistic way of thinking about life phenomena.

For Kępiński, "the order of life is not normative, but dynamic, and therefore above all, emotional" [20, p. 127]. Therefore, emotions (feelings) shape the system of values, constitute a way of expressing oneself in the environment due to one's needs, and result in the creation of regulatory social systems including culture, which is an expression of human condition. The way of emotional cognition of reality is called by him humanistic or animistic, because it concerns mechanisms conditioning humanity, but also present in the world of nature. It is a method that is primordial in relation to rationality, but it also has an established biological meaning, which results from the adaptive role of evaluating the environment.

### **Emotions as the basis of a therapeutic relationship**

Kępiński's considerations about the role of emotions were conducted in a psychiatric perspective. Their aim was to agree on a typical objective, i.e. naturalistic way of looking at a human being with a humanistic perspective, because, as he wrote, this aspect of the medical profession is "perhaps one of its most beautiful features" [20, p. 18]. Objectivity results from the function of the second phase of information metabolism, while the humanistic approach, which treats the other person subjectively, is typical for the first emotional phase. It is played out on a horizontal level, where the same competences of the other party are recognized [3]. According to Kępiński, the cognition of other people's emotional states is characterised by a high degree of adequacy. An example of this is the concurrence of observers with regard to their assessments of the emotional state of the person previously observed, as opposed to the differences observed in external characteristics. Of course, various mechanisms of falsification of these data are possible, but in clinical observation the classification of patients "at first glance" has an amazing value [3, p. 16], resulting primarily from knowledge acquired through emotional transmission. A special situation is the first-time meeting of the patient, having "high perceptual saturation". Then the frame of the understanding system is formed, which later, during discursive verification, is usually maintained. However, this does not change the fact that the cognitive process concerning the other person continues and significant modifications are possible during

its course. Actually, the psychiatrist is supposed to constantly search for “interpolation lines”, i.e. to permanently clarify his or her understanding of the patient, although it is impossible to get to know the patient as a whole [3].

The advantage of an objective attitude is the ability to abstract from the specific situation in which the active subject is immersed. This makes it possible to look at a given topic from a different perspective and define significant formal dependencies in it. On the other hand, it threatens the objectification of another person, which in psychiatric work must be constantly taken into account. An objective perspective gives the possibility of operationalising the object of cognition, which is connected with gaining power over it. This temptation to objectify and, as a consequence, to power, poses a risk of dehumanization of the patient, which, apart from its ethical significance, also has practical consequences. The objectivisation of the second phase of information metabolism takes place in the scheme “I act and observe the results of my own actions”, which leads to the creation of a theoretical-abstract conceptual structure to describe the patient, but results from a conclusion based on one’s own actions in relation to the subject of cognition. Thus, if the given conceptualisations turn out to be useful at some point in time, their repetitiveness and generalization occurs; as a consequence, the psychiatrist moves in the sphere of his own theoretical creations, in increasing detachment from the individual reality of the patient. It is important to continuously verify the hypotheses about another person in his or her direct understanding of cognition, in which the first phase of informational metabolism is involved. Finally, the objective treatment of the other party in question causes resistance, which makes the therapeutic process much more difficult or even impossible. To sum up with Kępiński’s words: “Psychiatry, which would be limited only to what is measurable and verifiable, would be a caricature of psychiatry. Under a scientific robe there would be emptiness. For the scientific purposes we would need to give up everything that constitutes a proper body of psychiatric knowledge, because the entire wealth of experiences of an ill person is neither measurable nor verifiable (verifiable in the sense of repetitiveness)” [3, pp. 15-16].

The therapist gets to know the patient by means of a specific method of psychiatry, which is the sensing of mental states [3] (not the phenomenological “tuning-in” that the “sensing” has been replaced with [5, 22]). For Kępiński, emotional transmission is an obvious information mechanism, created evolutionarily long before conceptual communication. Its special role in psychiatry results from the fact that it leads to expanding the possibilities of cognition of the subjective world of the patient’s experiences, which, to the extent that it can be known at all, is communicable more emotionally than conceptually. The experiencing of emotions is a dynamic process, in which there is a constant oscillation between attitudes of closeness and distance (“to” and “from”). The psychotherapist must still control his or her emotional reactions so as not to get too close to or far from the patient. The therapist must also not aggravate the patient’s insecurity and powerlessness, so the emotional work does not assume an equal exchange of information between the two parties in the sense of sharing with

the patient one's own spectrum of experiences. Kępiński recommended continuous monitoring of psychotherapy through an "ideal observer" – a rational mental structure, created mentally by the therapist. The "ideal observer" is a rational externalisation of oneself in the mechanism of the second phase of information metabolism. Thanks to this procedure, the therapist treats his own sensations objectively, as a material for analysis, while a defensive mechanism against excessive emotional involvement is also created [3].

Apart from its cognitive function, diagnosis also has a therapeutic role. Its aim is for the patient to know himself. The old Greek *gnothi seauton* – "get to know yourself" is repeatedly quoted in Kępiński's texts. The process of gaining knowledge about oneself is a therapeutic element by becoming aware of the source of suffering [3]. The acquisition of knowledge by the patient, which Kępiński calls the widening of the field of consciousness, has a positive role in life, as it leads to individual development. However, a wider field of consciousness alone is not yet a full treatment. The knowledge of the building blocks of mental life is to lead to their survival, which should be characterised by high intensity. Survival is what has a therapeutic character [20]. Intense survival probably has in this concept a function defining the meaning of pathological relations and giving them new value. At the same time, Kępiński is skeptical about the opinion that in the process of psychotherapy, the therapist who can "change the patient" has a decisive influence; according to him, these are only projections of the therapists themselves [18, pp. 18-19]. Psychiatric practice is based on experience, which even is its essence: "For psychiatry is not so much a science as it is an experience, an experience that arises from the collision between oneself and the patient" [20, p. 112]. Psychiatry is a specific way of one's own development: "If it has previously been mentioned that psychiatric training is not only about deepening one's expertise, but that it is to some extent a school of character, it should be explained here that the most important thing is the emotional culture, which is acquired by getting to know each other and oneself more and more deeply" [3, p. 58]. Treating the emotional transmission as a viable therapeutic possibility, resulting from the essence of information metabolism, emotions are the workshop of psychiatric work.

In psychiatric treatment, one cannot only answer the question "why?", i.e. what mechanism led to a given condition or behaviour. It is, in fact, a technical way of thinking that dehumanizes the patient by treating him or her as someone deprived of the freedom of the cause and effect mechanism. The question "why?" is a classic expression of the subject's attitude towards an object and is applied in the methods of so-called objective psychiatry. However, the question "why?" identified by Kępiński with the scientific worldview has been questioned as speculative in positivist philosophy and its continuations; according to it, the only scientifically justified question is "how?" [23]. The rejection of the question "why?" by positivists resulted from the criticism of describing the world using empirically unverifiable metaphysical concepts. In fact, for the same reasons, Kępiński disagrees with the question "why?" in relation to human behaviour, because he sees this question as a pre-established theoretical construct,

mechanistically explaining the living organism, in its essence undetermined in its experiences (at least in the subjective sphere). The patient, with the help of a psychiatrist, is supposed to answer the question “what for?”, which concerns his worldview, preferences, plans and effects of the decisions made. A person has the freedom of choice (understood as a psychological fact), which must be respected [3]. Both questions “why?” and “how?” are based on causal inquiries, whereas the only authorized in psychiatry question “what for?” results from the reconstruction of sense by the patient in cooperation with the therapist. During the therapeutic contact, an analysis of key experiences that the patient has experienced in his life is made. The aim of this emotional-rational analysis is to achieve a proper mental structure, which Keipiński calls “the ideal patient” [3, p. 50]. What the proper mental structure means is decided by the patient with the help of a therapist during the psychotherapy process. Thus, there is no *a priori* assumed personal, social or cultural model that the patient should achieve during the treatment. The only goal is to reduce suffering, which concerns both the patient and his or her environment.

The role of emotional processes in information metabolism enables a new look at the widely discussed issue of the difference between explanation and understanding, reported by Andrzej Kapusta [24]. Explanation is typical for natural sciences and concerns the determination of cause-effect relationships. Understanding, on the other hand, is supposed to be a specific method of searching for the sense, specific for the humanities. The understanding may be comprehended as a conceptual linguistic process, but also its distinctiveness from rational thinking in relation to first-person phenomena is emphasized. For Hans Georg Gadamer, to understand is to discover meaning, which is always a meaning for the subject. A sense (given through culture, history, etc.) is constituted as an answer to one’s own questions; it is finding oneself in one’s own individual life situation [25]. Ernst Cassirer, on the other hand, has found the language of emotion present in every human activity. The difference between animals and humans is that a human being, apart from the language of emotions, also has the language of affirmatives, which gives an analogy between the first and second phase of information metabolism. Cassirer noted, based on the analysis of Blaise Pascal’s texts, that human behaviour according to causal (third-person) laws cannot be explained [26].

The question “what for?” during psychotherapy aims to determine what is important in a patient’s individual life and therefore forms the basis for choices. According to Keipiński, the decisions made result primarily from the subject’s relationship with his or her environment, which is subjectively expressed in emotions. Thus, emotions in the concept of information metabolism are the basic mechanism of evaluation for the very process of life and constitute a specific language of subjectivity, which is characterised by relatively high possibilities of intersubjective communication. The understanding of the other person in psychiatry results from the general human competence of an emotional transmission of the experience states. The nature of information metabolism manifests itself in the form of relational, peculiar dialogue with the environment, for a human being mainly social, but also biological. Perceived information comes from

the environment, in information metabolism it is processed by giving it meaning and incorporating it into the narrative structure called the model of reality. In this process the main role has been assigned to emotions, hence the change that takes place in psychotherapy results from emotional redefinition.

It should be recalled once again that the course of information metabolism is comprehensive. Kępiński did not deny the value of rational thinking, seeing it as a typically human element, giving great cognitive and adaptive possibilities. He also did not believe that cognition of other people's mental states was fully possible. Especially border situations, examples of which are schizophrenic psychosis and the experiences of concentration camp prisoners, are impossible to understand for people who do not have such experiences. Finally, he realised that emotional mechanisms at different moments in social life become inadequate to the requirements of a technologically advanced civilization. He postulated the need for an "evolutionary leap", i.e. a qualitative change in the emotional mechanisms of man [16, p. 223]. Probably his vision of evolutionary development was based on shaping emotional attitudes, which are integrated with the needs of the organism and harmonize with rational life. This may result in their more effective adaptation to living conditions and promotion in the evolutionary process. This issue is also important for Damasio, who noted that the development of the social world and culture has placed completely new challenges before people, which may cause a change in the proportions of factors influencing life's important decisions. The sphere of culture and the progressing globalization of information exchange modify the evolutionary tendencies and the way the decision-making mechanisms based on emotions function [18, 27].

### Conclusions

The role of emotions in Kępiński's work is fundamental. They have their biological meaning as a factor regulating the process of life (entropy reduction). Along with mood, they are a subjective expression of life processes. Without entering into a complicated philosophical discussion about the ontological status of first-person phenomena, emotions provide Kępiński with an opportunity to communicate relatively efficiently the subjective states, which can be understood thanks to similar mechanisms of their processing and a reference to the common information universe of nature. Finally, giving meaning to individual life is achieved through an emotional process, which makes it possible to relate Kępiński's views to the humanistic way of using the notion of understanding, typical of the humanities (e.g. in Gadamer's work). Rationality is a typically human characteristic, but this 'human', for Kępiński is above all emotional. This is especially true of psychiatry, which was both the starting point of Kępiński's research and its aim.

It is worth noting that Kępiński's views fit into different, often distant currents of posterior psychiatry. This is because Kępiński carried out his inquiry without a top-down paradigm, although it is possible, of course, to show many sources of his concept.

The thesis about constructing during psychotherapy a certain ideal model of life by the patient with the help of a psychotherapist, who is open primarily to the individual world of the patient, and treating at the same time psychiatric theories and results of the so-called objective inquiries as only auxiliary, alongside an aversion to rigid psychiatric categories and to a sharp division into norms and pathologies, anticipate the demands of contemporary currents described as post-psychiatric [28]. At the same time, the constant reference to natural sciences, starting with neurobiology and with recognition of the role of the nervous system as the basis for mental phenomena (which, however, show a certain autonomy, although the ontological status of this relationship was not the subject of his research) and ending with the basic right to life, situates Kępiński's psychiatric thinking also within biological psychiatry [29].

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