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**Habilitation colloquium of Alicja Czerkawska,
Faculty of Education, University of Lower Silesia,
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On 21 October, 2014, the Faculty of Education Board, University of Lower Silesia, convened for a special session – the concluding stanza of Dr Alicja Czerkawska's habilitation procedure. The referees were Professor Dr hab. Olga Czerniawska (University of Humanities and Economics, Łódź), Dr hab. Katarzyna Popiołek, Professor at the University of Humanities and Social Sciences, Katowice, Dr hab. Elżbieta Siarkiewicz, Professor at the University of Lower Silesia, and Professor Dr hab. Piotr Oleś (Catholic University of Lublin). The session was chaired by Dr Mirosława Nowak-Dziemianowicz, Professor at the University of Lower Silesia and Dean of the Faculty of Education. Dr Alicja Czerkawska is a lecturer at the Faculty of Education, founding member and President of the Naukowe Towarzystwo Poradczawcze (Counselling Association). Her research focuses on counselling theory and practice. She has written widely on the subject, including her PhD dissertation supervised by Dr hab. Bożeny Wojtasik, Professor at the University of Lower Silesia. Her major authored and edited publications are the monographic study titled *Poradnictwo egzystencjalne (Existential Counselling)* (Wydawnictwo Naukowe DSW, Wrocław 2013,), which was her habilitation book; *Etyczny wymiar poradnictwa zawodowego (The Ethical Dimension of Vocational Counselling)*, co-authored with Andrzej Czerkawski (Biblioteka Doradcy Zawodowego, KOWEziU, Warszawa 2005); and *Podstawy pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej – skrypt dla studentów pracy socjalnej (The Foundations of Psychological and Educational Help: A Primer for Social Work Students)* (Wydawnictwo Naukowe DSW, Wrocław 2009), a collected volume she edited. Dr Czerkawska has also authored several book chapters and papers in peer-reviewed journals. In the academic circles, she also enjoys the reputation of a highly qualified and certified therapist and existential counsellor involved with the NEST (New Experience for Survivors of Trauma – Group Counselling Programme). Reviewing Dr Czerkawska's work, research output and the referees' assessments, the Faculty Board unanimously decided in a secret ballot to accept her answers to the referees' questions and admit her to the further stage of the

procedure, i.e. the habilitation lecture. Out of the topics submitted by Dr Czerkawska, the assembled scholars selected “Types of Boundaries in Counselling.” The lecture qualified as an original contribution to counselling studies as Dr Czerkawska outlined her own, novel definition of boundaries:

- ▶ A boundary as a line demarcating counselling as distinct from other phenomena in the world, and defining the scope and extent of counselling at the same time. To draw this line, Dr Czerkawska claimed, the following questions must be addressed: What falls under counselling and what does not? What is the irreducible core of counselling? What does counselling neighbour or intersect with? Dr Czerkawska added that counselling tended to be confused with psychotherapy, guidance, spiritual (religious) help, mediation, coaching and mentoring.
- ▶ A boundary as a line separating particular forms and kinds of counselling. Dr Czerkawska observed that several kinds of counselling could be differentiated, which calls for defining their distinctive features and reflecting on the forms and structures of counselling provision.
- ▶ A boundary as instituted by the level of both the counselee’s and the counsellor’s capacities and mental, as well as physical, constraints revealed in the counselling situation and measured on the scale of minimum-to-maximum engagement in collaborative effort.

Dr Czerkawska referred also to another possible framework of division, accounting for physical and symbolic boundaries in counselling. She defined the former as:

- ▶ The time as bound up with direct counselling, which takes place in real time, in the „here and now,” on the one hand, and mediated counselling, delayed in time, as noticed by Bożena Wojtasik, on the other;
- ▶ The physical space as bound up with direct (e.g. face-to-face) counselling, on the one hand, and remote counselling – counselling as mediated by the media, on the other. The concepts were introduced into counselling studies by Bożena Wojtasik, Daria Zielińska-Pękał and Edyta Zierkiewicz;
- ▶ The body as bound up with individual physiques placed in particular spatial arrangements, which either protect or intrude on the personal space of the actors in the counselling situation.

Dr Czerkawska insisted that the category of symbolic boundaries in the social world is instituted by culture, that is, language, human mentality, beliefs, value systems, social norms, behaviour patterns, customs, rituals, art, knowledge, etc. She added that those chiefly symbolic boundaries produced the primary or secondary meanings of ideas (cultural entities) generated, reproduced and redefined in the social and individual worlds. The meanings they are invested with facilitate understanding, describing and presenting external phenomena and the individual’s

capacity for self-realisation. In counselling, a symbolic boundary is provided by a conventional, socially established or individually imposed point of reference (association, intention, argument, set of beliefs, motive, feeling, sense, experience), which prompts one to single out the kind of and/or select the area of counselling one needs, to interpret and to make sense of it or to reveal one's level of capacity and constraints in the counselling situation. Further, Dr Czerkawska cited two examples of boundary divisions encountered in counselling, defined either as a social phenomenon or a helping relationship. In counselling as a social phenomenon, boundaries divide it, demarcating psychological-pedagogical counselling, medical counselling, formal (specialised) vs. informal (non-specialised) counselling, directive-dialogical-liberal counselling, life counselling, biodromal counselling, biographical counselling, narrative counselling, family counselling, vocational counselling, career counselling, educational-vocational counselling, mediated counselling, existential counselling and counselling-on-the-threshold. In counselling as an interpersonal relationship, boundaries can be divided into: boundaries of re-building the inner world, boundaries of reconstructing life-histories, boundaries of using replacement behaviours, boundaries of understanding and agreement, boundaries of intimacy, boundaries of trust, boundaries of engagement, boundaries of interfering with the human psyche, boundaries of transgression, boundaries of amenability to influence, boundaries of mental endurance, boundaries of adaptation to change, boundaries of efficacy/effectiveness, boundaries of competence (knowledge, skills), boundaries of the predictability of the counselling process, boundaries of flexible thinking and action, boundaries of awareness of self-limits (and possibilities to affect them). Each of the above requires a separate discussion and additional classifications. In conclusion, Dr Czerkawska emphasised that boundaries were rarely addressed in the counselling and psychotherapeutic literature. As a rule, they were tackled indirectly as an implied part of other issues. She added also that to her knowledge there was no single publication on counselling devoted exclusively to boundaries. Only in the psychological literature could she find a few studies on personal boundaries.

After the lecture, the referees and members of the Faculty Board asked Dr Czerkawska questions, and she answered, explaining problem issues with considerable expertise.

The Faculty Board of the Faculty of Education, University of Lower Silesia, expressed no reservation about the whole proceedings and, based on the legal regulations in force, decided to confer the social studies degree of *doctor habilitatus* in education sciences on Dr Alicja Czerkawska in recognition of her knowledge and professional capability. The circle of Polish counselling researchers has a new member with the *doctor habilitatus* status.

Congratulations, Professor Czerkawska. We wait for your new papers and books.

Translated from Polish by Patrycja Poniatowska