

# Peter Tavel

---

## Intercultural dialogue and meaning of life as a stable value nowadays = Dialog międzykulturowy i sens życia jako wartość stabilna i aktualna

---

Edukacja Elementarna w Teorii i Praktyce : kwartalnik dla nauczycieli nr 3-4, 66-70

---

2010

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.



Doc. Ing. Mgr. Peter Tavel, Ph.D.  
Univerzita Palackého  
Olomouc/Czech Republic

## **INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND MEANING OF LIFE AS A STABLE VALUE NOWADAYS**

### **DIALOG MIĘDZYKULTUROWY I SENS ŻYCIA JAKO WARTOŚĆ STABILNA I AKTUALNA**

Europe faces a period of big changes in political, economic, cultural and spiritual field. Gillesen perceives it even as a breakthrough (Gillesen, 1993, p. 7). The process and endeavor to reach unity and rapprochement on various levels cannot be overlooked. Number of differences, leading to conflicts and tensions, arises on the surface. Confrontation and dialogue on the level of values and education occur in this process. When attempting to find what unites people, various key questions rise. We ask, for instance, which values we can abandon or change in the multicultural environment and which should remain unchanged in spite of the global environment. Many attempts to formulate the global ethical principle exist (Slavkovský, 2001, p. 37–38). We approach the question „What a man is” and other basic, existential questions, one of which is the notion of meaning of life.

Studies show that perception of values, attitudes, ideological courses and cultural schemes differ among cultures (Průcha, 2001, p. 167–171). Historically, there is no value status quo of the society. Values are closely related to interests of humankind. In early fifties CH. W. Morris, for example, conducted a research in which he formulated the problem of distinct ways of life, typical for various philosophical, ethical and spiritual teachings all over the world (Bakalář, 1989, p. 239). Different cultures and ways of thinking clash each other at present and the question of „Why people of other culture praise different values than we do?” rises naturally. Reflections lead to social structure, hierarchy of values, needs and interests. We can say, therefore, that a man in multicultural society experiences changeability of its values (Mistrík *et al.*, 1999, p. 160).

We ask to what extent that changeability of values affects the meaning of human life. V. E. Frankl points out that meaning of life does not depend on values because it is related to a unique and unrepeatable situation in which an individual is positioned. Sensual universals related to humanity of man, named values, exist above the unique and unrepeatable situation. Thanks to more or less generally valid values, moral or ethical principles which crystallized in human society in the course of history, human beings experience relief on the one hand but on the



other hand this relief is connected with conflict. It is not a conflict of conscience because the voice of conscience is always clear; the conflicting character dwells inside values. Contrary to a unique, unrepeatable sense of particular situation, sensual universals which do not apply only to a unique, unrepeatable person in a unique and unrepeatable situation but cover a broad area of recurring, typical situations in which fields are often intertwined, create values. The conflict then lays in situations in which a man has to choose from contradictory values and principles and it is a matter of conscience to act freely but in a responsible manner. If conscience is systematically repressed, conformism or totalitarianism occur in dependence on whether social values are generalized, exaggeratedly offered or imposed. It is necessary to add, however, that conflicting character of values may often be seeming. Possible overlap of fields of validity of values may be seeming; that happens as a result of loss of certain dimension, when a value is seen without a relevant context and differentiation on hierarchical level, similarly to superimposition of projection of plans of two bodies which in space do not touch one another at all (Frankl, 1979, p. 238-239).

Clash of cultures requires dialogue, understanding and tolerance, in the area of conscience in particular (Pospíšil, 2001). V. E. Frankl points out that conscience is an intuitive ability which particularly belongs to human phenomena because it takes part in man's human situation and it is subject to man's finitude and fallibility. Human beings should have, in spite of the uncertainty, the courage to obey conscience (Frankl, 1985/1994, p. 56/58). Conscience may drive a human being incorrectly, in addition, a human being cannot know, till the end of his or her life, whether he or she has led a meaningful or erroneous life. J. Hargašová points out that knowledge of meaning of life constantly intensify and changes during the lifetime. Meaning of life represents a synthesis of two sides of human existence, unity of subject and object, unity of I and the world. A human being can reach different stages of this integration during the course of life. Understanding of I and the world as a joint process is a prerequisite for that. A human being gains knowledge about him/herself through the outside world and about the outside world through him/herself. Gradual integration of oneself and the world leads to realization of the meaning of life for oneself and oneself for the life (Kudláčová, 1999, p.19).

A human being does not know, as V. E. Frankl points out, whether his/her conscience succumbed to a delusion or whether conscience of the other was right but possible wrongfulness of conscience does not mean that truth does not exist. Although nobody knows whether it is him or her and not the other who knows the truth, only one truth can exist (Frankl, 1988, p. 71–72).

Awareness of fallibility of conscience and uncertainty brings tolerance and humility. Tolerance does not mean indifference but respect to belief of the one who believes in something else, although it does not mean identification with that belief (Frankl, 1985/1994, p. 56/58). V. E. Frankl perceives tolerance in relation to



humility as the will to confront one's own belief with belief of the other while recognizing one's own dignity, as well as dignity of the other, the ability not to merely accept the others but also to understand them and be positive towards the others' approach to life. V. E. Frankl approaches human beings from the point of view of human rights and not from the point of view of the „right to hear the truth”. P. Hlavatý points out that the difficult coping with today's religious tensions, national and racial disputes requires a real acceptance of plurality while such acceptance may not mean a loss of own identity (Hlavatý, 1994, p. 173).

Attempts to give an authoritative answer, when one culture imposes the meaning and values on other culture, may occur in the dialogue about meaning of life. V. E. Frankl points out that eventual imposition of meaning may lead to moralization; one should not impose meaning neither on a member of a different culture, nor on any person in general. V. E. Frankl insists that morality will undergo an ontological, existential and phenomenological process. Moralizing will sooner or later disappear and morality will undergo an ontological process. Good and bad will cease to be perceived as what should be and should not be done but the good will turn to be supportive of the meaning and bad will hinder fulfillment of that meaning. Man is the author of his own decisions – the good ones as well as the bad one. He bears all the responsibility for making them, regardless of who he is, when and where he lives, and to which culture he belongs (Šarníková, 2006, s. 227).

Morality will undergo an existential process. Values cannot be learned, they have to be lived. It is impossible to give meaning of life to somebody (except for an example of the other). There is no intellectual answer to the question of the last human suffering and life; there is only an existential answer. Socrates, who attracted his peers not only by his intellect but primarily by his way of life and power of personal example he had been giving them, has historically confirmed this answer (Porubjak, 2006, p. 15–18).

V. E. Frankl says that morality will undergo a phenomenological process. Human beings are searching for the meaning and finding it in three ways: meaning is found in creation of something, experience of something or in desperate situation and suffering. Human life is a chain of situations in which a human being is placed in order to cope with them. These situations have a meaning and relate to this human being only. The original self-understanding tells this human being that he or she must make all his/her efforts to find and discover the meaning of life. Phenomenology makes no value judgments on facts but rather establishes value experience of human beings. Help can be then offered only in terms of bare presentation of possibilities of finding the meaning life, elaborated by phenomenology (Frankl, 1972/1994, p. 28–31/18–20).

The purpose of the dialog in multicultural society is to bring new view and more light to the problem instead of presenting something to the other from the point of view of „god's sight” as if it was dictated from above. It does not mean



giving a human being from other culture something from outside but rather to help him/her to purify his/her own sight<sup>1</sup> but the one must want it. In spite of the fact that it is impossible to supply the meaning, other person's testimony that life has a meaning under all circumstances, suffering notwithstanding, is helpful when searching for the meaning of life (Frankl, 1971/1998, p. 183-184/20).

## CONCLUSION

Necessity of meaning of human life is independent of value changes in the intercultural dialogue. Meaning of life is related to a unique and unrepeatable situation in which an individual is placed. Meaning of life may bring new views and more light to the problem in the intercultural dialogue about meaning of life.

**Peter Tavel**

## Bibliography:

- Bakalář, E. *Psychobry*. 1. vyd. Praha: Mladá fronta, 1989. 292 s. ISBN 80-204-0079-6.
- Démuth, A. *Homo – anima cognoscens*. Bratislava: IRIS, 2003, 201 s. ISBN 80-89018-49-1.
- Frankl, V. E. *Ärztliche Seelsorge. Grundlagen der Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse*. Ungekürz. Aus. Wien: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH, 1985. 268 s. 1480-ISBN-3-596-42157-8. (Čes. vyd.: *Lékařská péče o duši. Základy logoterapie a existenciální analýzy*. Přel. V. Jochman. [2. vyd.] Brno: Cesta, 1994. 237 s. ISBN 80-85319-39-X.)
- Frankl, V. E. *Der Mensch vor der Frage nach dem Sinn. Eine Auswahl aus dem Gesamtwerk*. München Zürich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1979. 311 s. ISBN 3-492-02492-0.
- Frankl, V. E. *Der unbewusste Gott. Psychotherapie und Religion*. 7. Aufl. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH & Co., 1988. 130 s. ISBN 3-466-20302-3.
- Frankl, V. E. *Der Wille zum Sinn. Ausgewählte Vorträge über Logotherapie. Mit einem Beitrag von Elisabeth S. Lukas*. Bern-Stuttgart-Wien: Verlag Hans Huber, 1972. 294 s. ISBN 3-456-30526-5. (Čes. vyd.: *Vůle ke smyslu. Vybrané přednášky o logoterapii. S příspěvkem Elisabeth S. Lukasové*. Přel. V. Jochman. Brno: Cesta, 1994. 212 s. ISBN 80-85139-29-2.)
- Frankl, V. E. *Psychotherapie für den Laien. Rundfunkvorträge über Seelenheilkunde*. 2. Aufl. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1971. 185 s. Herderbücherei. Bd. 387. (Čes. vyd.: *Psychotherapie pro laiky*. Přel. V. Smékal. Brno: Cesta, 1998. 158 s. ISBN 80-85319-80-2.)
- Gillessen, G. a kol. *Europa fordert die Christen. Zur Problematik von Nation und Konfession*. Regensburg: Pustet, 1993. 154 s. ISBN 3-7917-1329-9.
- Hlavatý, P. Smysl dneška - přemítání s Viktorem Franklem. Recenze na Viktor E. Frankl: *Vůle ke smyslu*. *Prostor*, 1994, roč. 8, č. 29, s. 171–173 [173]
- Kudláčková, B. Mladý člověk a jeho hledání zmyslu života. In: *Vychovávateľ*, 1999, roč. 42, č. 5–6, s. 19–22.
- Místrík, E. A Kol. *Kultúra a multikultúrna výchova*. Bratislava: Iris, 1999. 347 s. ISBN 80-88778-81-6.
- POSPÍŠIL, J. Filosofické a teologické aspekty problematiky náboženské svobody. [online] *Paidagogos : časopis pro pedagogiku a související vědy*, 2001, roč. 1, č. 6. [akt. 11. 5. 2001], [cit. 31.10. 2006]. ISSN 1213-3809. On the internet: <<http://old.paidagogos.net>>.

<sup>1</sup> „By changing perspectives and their subjectively restricted opinions we eliminate subjectivity and restraint of one's optics and correct it by the others” (Démuth, 2003, p. 181).



- Porubjak, M. Xenofón a jeho obraz Sokrata. In: *Xenofón: Hostina, Sokratova obhajoba*. Prel. A. Kalaš. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2006, s. 11-29. ISBN 80-7149-890-4
- Průcha, J. *Multikulurní výchova. Teorie – prax – výskum*. Praha: ISV, 2001. 211 s. ISBN 80-85866-72-2.
- Slavkovský, A. *Ako žiť s alternatívami? Filozofický prístup*. In: Alternatívy v myslení, vo vede a v náboženstve. Ústav pre vzťahy štátu a cirkví, Bratislava 2001, s. 27-39 ISBN 80-968559-4-8
- Šarníková, G. *Etika aristotelizmu a tomizmu v práci J. Woronieckého alebo Budúcnosti v budúcnosti?* In: Dudinský, V., Lačný, M. *Medzi modernou a postmodernou II. Partikularita a univerzalita človeka a spoločnosti*. Prešov, Prešovská univerzita 2006, s. 227-234. ISBN 80-89215-05-X.

#### SUMMARY:

##### **Intercultural dialogue and meaning of life as a stable value nowadays**

The article emphasizes the fact that intercultural dialogue influences education. Europe faces this process nowadays and that has an impact on the notion of meaning of life. The article attempts to point out that the notion of meaning of life is a topical, stable problem also in the period of globalization and cultural clash. Although values have been changing throughout human history, meaning of human life is independent of these changes because it is connected to a unique and unrepeatable situation in which an individual is positioned.

**Key words:** meaning of life, education, multiculturalism, values.

#### STRESZCZENIE:

##### **Dialog międzykulturowy i sens życia jako wartość stabilna i aktualna**

Dialog międzykulturowy ma wpływ na wychowanie. Ten proces jest w Europie obecnie nieodwracalny. Wpływa on również na kwestię sensu życia. Artykuł ukazuje nam, że sens życia jest nawet w okresie globalizacji ciągle aktualnym problemem stabilnym. Chociaż wartości w trakcie historii ludzkości oraz wśród różnych kultur są odmienne, sens życia człowieka jest od tego niezależny, ponieważ jest związany z wyjątkową i niepowtarzalną sytuacją, w której człowiek się znajduje.

**Słowa kluczowe:** sens życia, wychowanie, multikultura, wartości.

