

ALPE's Argentine Delegation, as organizer of the 2nd World Congress of Existential Therapy has developed an interview with a series of questions to leading representatives of Existential Therapy in the world. ALPE will post this interview in their page.

Esta entrevista carece de traducción porque el entrevistado envió solo la versión en inglés.

Name: Dmitry Leontiev
Country: Russia
City: Moscow

Why did you decide to be an Existential Therapist?

I am researcher and university professor, rather than therapist. When I learned about existential psychology in my early professional career, I appreciated the importance of this approach for psychological theory and research and since then it is at the center of my work in the academia. Gradually I have elaborated on this basis my own form of enlightenment practice that I do not classify as psychotherapy.

How far is E.T. developed in your country?

It is now quite competitive among other schools of psychotherapy. Russia has strong existentialist roots of its own (Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Berdyaev, Bakhtin a.o.), that is why we are sensitive to existentialist ideas. Victor Frankl who visited our country twice is still a very influential author.

In many countries the existential approach is a minority one, it happens the same on your own country? If so, what do you believe existential therapists fail in and what could they do to reverse this situation? If not, what do you think the reasons are?

This situation cannot be reverted, because existentialist way of thinking suggests appreciation of complexity and tolerance for uncertainty, while most humans including psychology professionals hate uncertainty and prefer to follow formal guidelines. This is why it will always stay the approach for the minority, for the growing edge.



What problems does an Existential Therapist face as to the social conflicts existing in their respective countries?

One of the key issues in our country is the deficit of personal autonomy, a too overwhelming power of social communities and institutions over individuals. An important thing into which existential therapists in our country can contribute a lot is strengthening inner center, autonomy and authenticity, supporting personal choice and self-determination as the key strategy that can help a person not to be a victim of social processes.

What are the basic ideas of Existentialism that you take into account in your professional practice?

Existentialism is a holistic worldview that seems extremely relevant for the dynamic world of our days. It contains a system of intertwined ideas, and the key one seems to be the incomplete determinism in

human actions, the reality of possibilities that come true only by virtue of the person's decision and self-investment. This idea now finds support in the new ontology of complex self-organized systems in natural sciences elaborated by Ilya Prigogine and others

Who is the author that influenced you the most and why?

I was happy to meet in person more than once Viktor Frankl and Jim Bugental, to translate the lectures of the former and to study at 2-week courses with the latter. Both influences me a lot not only in professional matters.

What would you say to students of Psychology who choose to be therapists?

It is a lifelong task – learning to be a therapist.

What future do you see for the ET in your country and in the global context?

The future depends on our efforts, it does not come by itself. It is up to us.

What are your expectations regarding the Second World Congress?

Having this congress in Latin America is a very good idea, and it must be something I cannot predict. I expect to face something unexpected.

