

**Book review. UMACNIANIE I ZDROWIENIE.  
DAĆ NADZIEJĘ. Ed.  
Andrzej Cechnicki i Anna Liberadzka.**

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, 2015, 231 pages

We can say with some pride that the Chair of Psychiatry of the Jagiellonian University of Krakow has played a major role in the history of Polish psychiatry. It is also difficult to find another Polish clinic whose resources and traditions would be richer when it comes to using psychiatry to develop and enhance its humanistic dimension and potential. A significant role in this process was played by Antoni Kępiński. Thanks to his work and especially the methods which he applied when treating and helping people, a discussion was held in Poland on what axiological psychiatry is, what the essence of encounter and dialogue with the patient is, how to learn and then treat the patient holistically taking into account the wide biopsychosocial context of diagnosis and therapy. Kępiński's works also apply to understanding and support which must be provided to those who have suffered a serious mental crisis. On their recovery from mental illness they must grapple with problems and obstacles associated not only with overcoming its direct psychopathological consequences but also with rebuilding relationships with other people and returning to responsibilities and social roles in their professional life or education.

It is obvious that the mentally ill need hope to recover. They need it too to wrestle with the everyday life, to look with optimism into the future, believing that it is possible, despite the experience of the crisis, to have a satisfying life, to return to their former social roles, such as those of a pupil, student, employee, spouse or parent.

Once again it is worth to recall Antoni Kępiński who has given the mental sufferer the special role of "a patient" and "a teacher". He believed that the professionals involved in their treatment cannot underestimate the importance of "first hand" knowledge from those who have suffered or are suffering and struggling with the stress of the recovery process. Everyone involved in providing assistance and support to those who have experienced the crisis should understand better the needs and expectations of the mentally ill. These expectations are addressed to those who treat, to the relevant institutions and to the wider community, less aware of the secrets of psychopathology who often respond with mistrust and anxiety when they come into contact with persons experiencing a mental crisis. We are unfortunately still at a period when effective prevention of stigma or stigmatization, social and structural

exclusion, increasing social distance to patients or limited access to many social roles are not always possible.

It is difficult to perceive the reviewed book in a different manner than with kindness. It contains a collection of over thirty chapters and articles whose authors analyze issues of hope for a better, fuller life and recovery from different perspectives. Individual texts also include a broader social context of hope, both in relationships with other people but also in education or at work.

The editors of the book made sure that hope was analyzed in all three aspects and also that the entire content of the book included the perspective of those who treat and help as well as those who themselves are struggling with the stress of the illness and their families who accompany them in the recovery process and support them.

The book on the process of growing stronger and recovering gives hope for what seems to be important and common for the ill and those who accompany them in their recovery. It is therefore both hope of recovery and of good relations, of studying and working and of solidarity in their progress. It is hard to overestimate the importance of the above perspective because it validates the belief that it is possible to have a good, satisfying life despite the experience of the illness. It is difficult not to notice the theme which concerns solidarity during the recovery process and, more specifically – cooperation in the triad: the ill – the family – professionals. Thus, the book shows three perspectives: the views of people with experience of mental illness, the views of representatives of families and the views of professionals.

All the chapters in the book are of a high standard and possess not just academic but also literary merits which further justifies the need and the significance of its publication.

A vast majority of the chapters from the reviewed book have already been published both in scientific journals (e.g., in *Psychiatria Polska* or *Dialog*) and in magazines published by the patients themselves or by their families (e.g., in *Dla Nas, Rodziny*). To a large extent, the articles in the book are the result of active participation of institutions such as the Krakow Association of Patients, Families and Professionals. At this point mention must be made of activities of individual authors in the organization of a national program against stigmatization and exclusion called “Schizophrenia – Open the Doors”. A considerable part of the lectures and reports delivered at seminars, conferences and symposia organized in the framework of this program or at the Krakow Community Psychiatry Forum may be found there. It must be emphasized that the selection of texts made by the two editors is perfectly legitimate because it captures the complexity and multifaceted issues constituting the main subject of the book. The fact that the book has been divided into three parts entitled “Hope for recovery”, “Hope for good relations” and “Hope for education and work” should also be praised. They organize the book and its chapters into more specific, narrower areas and issues that hope in the recovery process may be related to.

When reading the various chapters of the book it is impossible not to observe that what Antoni Kępiński called for almost half a century ago is still valid and clinically useful, and therefore timeless. In today’s world of constant change, lack of stability and relativity in terms of values, life goals we set ourselves and the ways in which we reach them, there is place for the method, lifestyle, work, and system of values pro-

moted and implemented on a daily basis by Kępiński. It may be concluded that what we describe today as the social context of psychiatry in the aspect of gaining strength and recovery has its direct source of inspiration in Kępiński's views.

An additional argument for the publication of the reviewed work is that it justifies well the need and the importance of measures supporting the process of gaining strength and recovery in psychiatric institutions in Poland. This applies, for example, to the urgent need for implementation of the National Program for Mental Health. The message of the book is the belief that psychiatry is on the threshold of radical changes, that it is time for patients to take more responsibility and that this is the time of cooperation for everyone. The reviewed work perfectly documents this particular process and convinces about its profound meaning.

The book edited by Andrzej Cechnicki and Anna Liberadzka is one which proposes an original perspective of looking at the recovery process of people experiencing mental crisis. Thanks to the reviewed work the reader gets an insightful and multifaceted image of the lives of people who struggle with a number of both subjective and more external social problems and difficulties on their way to recovery. It is an important and valuable book, it is helpful both in its cognitive and practical aspects, it corresponds perfectly with the best traditions of academic psychiatry in Krakow.

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