Self & SOCIETY

reviews

Dual relationships and therapy

Editors: Arnold A Lazarus and Ofer Zur

Springer, 2002

This brilliant and timely book challenges the general belief that in psychotherapy all dual relationships are forbidden. Twenty-seven different writers are marshalled by the editors into a nine-part diatribe against too rigid a doctrine of multiple relationships.

The editors, in Chapter 1 entitled 'Six arguments against dual relationships and their rebuttals', make an important distinction between boundary violations and boundary crossings. Boundary violations are harmful and usually follow from an exploitative motive. Boundary crossings come from a desire to help in sometimes unorthodox ways. And they say that in a culture of risk management there is a real danger that both of these will be conflated together. However, it is important to keep them apart, and to keep on insisting that many boundary crossings are not only legitimate but also often advisable.

One of the important rebuttals is where they deal with the argument that any boundary crossing whatsoever automatically opens up a 'slippery slope' that may lead to sexual misdemeanours. They point out that no one has ever given any evidence to support this assertion.

Many people seem now to agree that in certain circumstances, such as in small communities, military service (where the therapist will eat in the officers' mess), special groups (such as the deaf, blind, etc.) and so forth, dual or multiple relationships will be frequent. But even in the most common urban settings, all these authors agree that boundary crossing is sometimes advisable. A good statement from Karl Tomm says:

'In my view, it is not duality that constitutes the ethical problem; it is a therapist's personal propensity and readiness to exploit clients that is central. Having a second relationship with the client only provides another avenue for exploitation to take place, if a therapist or client already happens to be so inclined. Duality *per se* does not create or encourage exploitation.' What is important, he and others in this book contend, is power rather than rules as such.

A therapist who wishes to minimize rather than to maximise power over the client will often find that ordinary human action will result, possibly leading to some kind of boundary crossing. What are these boundary crossings? In Martin Williams' chapter he reports research saying that the commonest are: telling a client you are angry with him or her; using self-disclosure as a therapy technique; having a client address you by your first name; hugging a client; kissing a client; accepting a client's gift; asking favours from clients; lending money to a client; and inviting clients to a party or social

event. Another research study found these three actions to be not uncommon: disclosed details of current personal stresses to a client; went out to eat with a client after a session; and accepted a client's invitation to a special occasion. Deleterious results were not reported for any of these boundary crossings.

One of the interesting points made in this book is that therapists of the younger generation are more censorious of all these types of activities than those of older generations. It is suggested that the reason for this is that many of the older therapists came up from training courses, or in some cases a patchwork of trainings, which did not emphasise such things. Younger therapists, on the other hand, have usually been through training courses that emphasised ethical requirements much more.

A legal chapter by Bruce Ebert goes into fine detail, and one of the points he makes is that people should not be disciplined according to vague provisions. It is a basic principle of law that people must know exactly what they are supposed to have done, and exactly why this is unethical. Many of the existing rules in psychotherapy are imprecise and overbroad. This means that for many examples of dual relationships it is unclear as to whether they are unethical or not. He gives eighteen examples, of which the first three are: (a) socializing with a patient may or may not be unethical; (b) socializing with an ex-patient is probably not prohibited; (c) bartering with a patient whereby goods offered by the patient are given in exchange for psychotherapy may not be unethical. This kind of vagueness is a problem for anyone administering ethical complaints. That this is no idle possibility is confirmed in a chilling chapter by Richard Saunders, entitled 'Can Boards of Examiners constitute the ultimate, harmful multiple relationship?' He explains, with a wealth of detail, that people handling ethical complaints can be grossly unfair, to the detriment of the person complained against; and if they are, there is no appeal and no possibility of correction, other than by expensive legal action. Again his examples are all American, but his argument is that unfairness is built into the very bones of most ethical hearings, by the very fact that a multiple relationship is involved: the examiners are also colleagues.

Alan Scheflin makes a very important point when he says that 'Several contributors to this book have explicitly emphasized the importance of <u>not</u> pursuing dual relationships with highly dependent, borderline, histrionic, antisocial, and other seriously disturbed individuals.' There is clearly a whole range of dangers here, and I have personally had some experience of this. There is clearly a case for keeping much more strictly to correct protocol and clear boundaries with such people, not only for the benefit of the client but also for one's own peace of mind.

There is a particularly helpful chapter by Russ Llewellyn on multiple relations in the Christian church. He makes the point that 'familiarity with clients outside the office is likely to speed up the clinical process by facilitating faster development of trust and making clinical interventions more relevant and effective.' And he gives a number of detailed examples of this from his own work. He also quotes an interesting observation that 'If you want learning to generalise the least, then see

a person the same hour of the week in the same place'! This is challenging indeed.

The later chapters are more specialised, dealing with small communities, military camps ('The ultimate client is the military or DOD and **not** the actual person who is sitting in the office.'), counselling on a university campus, special groups such as the deaf or lesbians, and special activities such as matchmaking or bartering.

Miriam Greenspan presents a feminist position, where she says that the whole distance model, where 'the less the therapist contaminates the therapeutic process with his presence, the better', is suspect as masculine and patriarchal. 'It is not about detached neutrality', she says, 'it is about passionate but trustworthy engagement.'

At the end there is an appendix which summarises the key points, and a second appendix which gives guidelines to nonsexual dual relationships in psychotherapy. At a time when statutory registration is coming closer and closer, this material seems more than ever necessary, so that we can be warned in advance of what may be urged upon us by those who want strict boundaries and tight control.

John Rowan

Emotions and Needs

Dawn Freshwater and Chris Robertson – part of the series *Core Concepts in Psychotherapy* Edited by Michael Jacobs

Open University Press, £17.99

The idea of a series with the title *Core Concepts in Therapy* contains a possible implicit paradox. It could, given the title, be supposed that there are a finite number of concepts which form the basis of the discipline, which need to be understood before the student or junior practitioner moves on to explore the finer and more obscure aspects. In my experience as a trainer, there is always at least one trainee in a class who *does* see things like this and has a habit of *insisting* that the core concepts are explained in 'simple language' before they will allow the trainer to move on to the next part of his/her discourse.

The paradox is that, whilst psychotherapy is undoubtedly founded on core concepts, hence the popularity and success of this series, they are not always where either the training or practice begins. Clients bring us the obscure, confusing and complex aspects of their lives. The art, and it *is* an art as well as a science, of psychotherapy lies in sustaining the complexity of the client material without succumbing to the temptation to impose a linear order upon it. The underlying beauty which is the client's 'Core Concept' is then free to emerge form the apparent chaos of the presenting material.

This temptation also exists when writing about psychotherapy, particularly when writing about core concepts. It is tempting to define the concepts, deriving them from, or reducing them to, first principles before going on to explore them.

Robertson and Freshwater wisely resist that temptation, but, in doing so, challenge the reader by beginning with the complexity and paradox and ending with the simplicity of the core concepts which, by then, can be clearly understood without the need for linear definition.

Robertson and Freshwater explicitly use the development of a therapeutic relationship and, parallel with it, the development of an individual psyche, as a vehicle for their exploration of emotions and needs. The subtlety is that their exploration, like psychotherapy itself, begins with the complexity and ends with the simplicity.

From the beginning of the book, the non-linearity of the psychotherapeutic process is emphasised; particularly by the use of a wheel-like developmental model of psychic development rather than the more familiar linear hierarchical model notably used by Wilber and Rowan (See Rowan 1993 p 120-121).

The first chapter concludes with an acknowledgement of the plurality of approaches to emotion and need. The authors announce their intention to use their exploration of emotion and need to differentiate between, and at the same time to validate, the major contemporary modalities of therapy.

Chapters two, three and four each focus on a developmental stage of the therapy and the maturational process of the psyche in parallel. Chapter Two is entitled 'Emotional Sources' and, once again, the authors eschew the possibility of synthesising the different therapeutic modalities' accounts as to the origin of emotion. They prefer to see the difference in approach as symptomatic of the complexity of the subject. Nevertheless, the emphasis here is on the client's early relationships and the psychodynamic modality, which concerns itself with the clients' internal world, is emphasised.

One of the problems with the pluralistic approach to therapy is that it is not always possible to be democratic, in the sense of giving each therapeutic modality an equal weight. This is clearly impossible because an author will always use the language and assumptions of his/her own modality to express the pluralistic approach. In the case of *Emotions and Needs*, the overarching theory which contains the pluralistic exploration is unquestionably transpersonal and the authors make use of the myth of Eros and Psyche to form yet another parallel developmental strand.

Having explored the sources of emotion and need, the authors focus, in the next chapter, on the interpersonal expression of these, both in the therapeutic relationship and in the 'real world'. Their emphasis, in this chapter, is on humanistic approaches, with the social context of therapy receiving the attention it rarely gets, but always deserves. In spite of the cyclic diagrams, and the authors' protestations to the contrary, there is still a sense of linear progress in their account of development. We all acknowledge that the wheel goes round, but are surprisingly resistant to allowing it to do so!

Having made a relationship with the world that **is,** the next developmental segment of the wheel is concerned with the client's relationship with the world that **could be.** Having individuated and discovered a personal identity, the next stage is to let go of that individuality and to move towards a sense of connectedness. The

subtle differentiation here is between a prepersonal, unfulfilled desire for merger and a heartfelt longing to be part of a whole. This, as the authors emphasise, requires special skill and understanding on the part of the therapist. The difficulty, which Robertson and Freshwater seem to ignore, is that, in the present time, there is a tendency to want to move directly from the prepersonal stage to the transpersonal. However, perhaps their references to the involvement of the heart and the possibility of conscious desire could be read as addressing this tendency.

Chapter five is what is known in music as a recapitulation where themes, which have been stated and explored, are restated, but in keys which resolve rather than exacerbate the drama between them. The themes of the book are similarly restated, with suggestions for future development, but no solutions are offered to the paradoxes and confusions encountered in earlier chapters.

I would encourage readers to pursue this book to the last chapter, containing their confusion until the end.

Geoff Lamb

Geoff Lamb is a psychotherapist in private practice and reviews editor of this forum. To avoid this section becoming a vehicle for Geoff's narcissism, please get in touch with him with suggestions for books you'd like to review or visit the AHP(B) website to see a list of books which are available to be reviewed!

Forgiveness is a Choice

Robert D. Enright

APA Lifetools, 2001. £10.99

Based on work at the University of Wisconsin, Enright has produced a book which aims to help people work through anger at others and free themselves of the anger frustration and depression that accompanies deep hurt.

The process he advocates is based on the idea that the individual can express, mainly through the written word and use of a journal, the intense feelings held back through the complicated and costly use of denial, minimilisation and other learnt techniques that prevent healthy resolution of the problem.

Enright guides the reader through the various stages with a clarity and compassion that is commendable. His work reflects other research studies in that it is based on findings that indicate true resolution of anger issues has to be based on the acknowledgement and expression of a variety of feelings – a determination to forgive without this, will result in psychological and physical problems.

The first section of the book defines forgiveness and the consequences both of forgiving and not forgiving. Part two guides the reader through the process of

uncovering the anger, deciding to forgive and beginning the work on this, and finally discovering the sense of release that comes from this self-work. The final section includes an important chapter on helping children forgive, and explores questions asked about the process. Enright stresses that change does not always go in accordance with the book – we may have to re-visit stages when we realise we have not truly reconciled that part of the process for example - but he does have a skill to clarify and re-assure the reader that makes it hard to avoid participating on other than a genuine and involved way. Neither does he avoid exploring in the closing chapters the fact that in being a forgiver we may also need to consider where we ourselves need forgiveness.

Although he stresses at the outset that the object of the work is to benefit the forgiver to reach a 'place of peace and relief' the initial chapters barely engaged me. I suspect this was partly because, despite his earlier claim, I was not clear who Enright was there to help – the forgiver or the 'forgiven' which left me unclear whether there was an implicit Christian element at work here. Also, Enright gives examples of successful case models before he has defined the method, and this level of optimism may put off the reader. In contrast, the later chapters where the reader is guided through the stages in a clear and caring way provided a good balance between emotion and reason.

My main concern is that some people may be put off, indeed affronted, by the title and fail to read further. The first impression I got glancing at the cover was that this was more a religious rather than a scientifically based approach. In reality, *Forgiveness is a Choice* is a very readable, well-structured book, substantiated by research findings that suggest it is an important and constructive way to address the heavy personal cost of depression and repressed anger. It deserves to be widely read and applied.

Anon.

Foundations Of Morality: An Investigation Into The Origins And Purpose Of Moral Concepts

George Frankl

Open Gate Press, 2000.

'Foundations of Morality' displays great erudition and scholarship so some familiarity with Frankl's previous work is necessary to fully appreciate its significance.

Frankl analyses the crisis of civilisation in the tradition of Horkheimer's and Adorno's 'Dialectic of Enlightenment', but goes beyond their pessimism to give a

psychoanalytic interpretation of the malaise at its heart.

Technological progress has brought humankind many benefits, but also to the point of civilisational disaster. The advances in the natural sciences have become a model for the development of the individual in the machine and computer age. The past glorification of Gods and Kings has given way to scepticism and the emotional needs underpinning the absolute state are now viewed as irrational. The great revolt against the moral and social certainties of past traditions has evolved into a society increasingly devoid of morality: a society caught in hyperspace and living precariously on the knife edge of the present:

'we have undermined the old belief but we have not created new goals and purposes to replace them.'

However, the Enlightenment has turned on itself. Reason is increasingly replaced by relativism and reduced to instrumental rationality: the manipulation of people and things for the goals adopted by the industrial/cybernetic society.

Following two world wars, rebel psychology became integrated into western culture and the desire to shock and disturb was integrated into the advertising and audio-visual media.. Some of those generations who were disinherited of their youthful hopes hung onto the coat tails of psychoanalysis, and at the same time gave up all belief in religion and faith in human progress.

'As the culture of the Enlightenment, this divinity of reason and science, has betrayed itself and betrayed our faith in it, we turn against it with anger and are determined to prove that its premises have been worthless. We defy its rules and mock its pretensions as it has made a mockery of our hopes. A cult of cynicism has emerged, and a belief which rejects all belief, a cynicism which is an act of revenge against the God who has failed us- so we lower our gaze to the here and now with nothing beyond, and cut ourselves off from the past and the future.'

With the decline of the social superego the 'breakthrough of the repressed can take many forms.' Frankl examines the implications for the psyche: 'where Freud hoped that "where id was there shall ego be"; now we find that where ego was there shall be id.' This shows the basis of the coming crisis in psychotherapy itself.

Prevalent today, Frankl argues, is the 'regressive identity seeking' which reactivates 'the "lower instincts"'. We may mention three manifestations: the liberation of narcissism from its cultural restraints, the emergence into dominance of greed, and, on a more primitive level, of sadistic-destructive aggression.' One only has to reflect on the problems of hooliganism, delinquency and rising violent crime to appreciate the contemporary relevance of this book.

Frankl observes:

'This sense of alienation from the norms and traditions of the past and from any ideological purpose affects not only the working class…., but is shared by a growing section of the population who are disenchanted with the ideals and expectations of our own culture.'

Regressive revolt is expressed in the transgression of basic social rules:

'a defiance of what used to be considered "civilised manners" has become the norm, particularly among the young, in the way they dress, behave and the persona they

adopt. In the arts we see an explosion of angry, violent and sadistic imagery, which is designed to offend and outrage the innate perceptions of reality and insult good taste; disruptive, disharmonious, infantile sounds of rage masquerade as music, and jagged, aggressive, spastic movements in dance.'

In a society of 'instant gratification' there is a growing symbiosis between the capitalist and the delinquent in their greedy hedonism. The increase in violent crime is based, not on deprivation, but 'the personal discharge of anger and violence', indicating a growing social pathology.

The regressive disintegration is tellingly expressed in the arts. Modernism as a movement wanted to utilise new forms and materials for expression, but got stuck in an attitude of defiance and revolt. This movement had its golden hour in the likes of Munch, Kokoschka, and Kandinsky, who placed expressionism on the side of the oppressed masses and expressed empathy through 'unrestrained self expression and spontaneity.' Andre Breton and surrealism promised 'to mobilise the powers of the unconscious in order to re-establish an equilibrium of all human faculties'; and:

'Chirico, Miro, Max Ernst and Dali presented a dream world where categories of time and space, of form and substance, are in abeyance: a juxtaposition of object relationships, of memories of things past appearing in things present, of indefinable tranquillity, and indefinable terror in a general breakdown of organised perceptions.'

In modern culture we see the reactivation of reverie processes, the fragmentation of the Ego, and schizophrenic perceptions and processes. The misunderstanding of therapy as the discharge of affect represents an unwitting collusion with the pathology:

'As the ego finds it increasingly difficult to integrate the manifold drives from the unconscious, the repressed breaks through its old boundaries and begins to dominate consciousness, we can in this way speak of the normalcy of madness.'

The myopic psychotherapist is increasingly like a fisherman who has waded out of his depth. Therapy, which takes the structure of society for granted, tends to reify intra-psychic processes.

Frankl locates a major source of the crisis of morality in the philosophy of the Vienna Circle of logical positivism (and linguistic analysis) and the movement known as 'postmodernism'. Although they started out as a radical movements, proclaiming the struggle against metaphysical obscurantism, logical positivism and linguistic philosophy reduced thought to the manipulation of things and denied the role of reason in penetrating the appearance of phenomena and grasping the underlying structures and relationships. This led to a sweeping relativism and a dismissal of the importance of universals. Ernst Mach, Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein, 'led the war upon the propositions of the Enlightenment' and produced a 'philosophical anti-philosophy'. Wittgenstein's ideas degenerated, according to Frankl, into a breathtaking mindlessness in which 'the mind only exists in so far as it is manifest in words'.

Whilst the Vienna Circle had the rationale of scientific progress, even if its results

were disappointing, the movement of 'postmodernism' has brought philosophy to its negation. While 'the main exponents of this movement Lacan, Derrida, Kristiva, Irigaray, Latour, Deleuze, and Guattari' have been exposed for their 'intellectual impostures,' and improbable contributions to psychoanalysis, Frankl's analysis shows that 'deconstructionism – far from being merely a more exacting and critical method of analysis – aims at the destruction of confidence in the pursuit of knowledge and meaning'. Thus 'this despair of reason reflects the horrifying encounter with human irrationality in our time.'

In essence:

'the deconstructionists thus undermine the higher faculties of our minds. They promote the destruction of our confidence as rational beings'.

For Frankl, these philosophers have lost their way; they are revealed as intellectual rabble-rousers and prophets of deceit. Their ability to distinguish 'between good and bad, true and false, right and wrong' which 'is the task of reason' becomes hopelessly confused.

Frankl argues that morality is a neurological necessity. The healthy mind needs it like the stomach needs a square meal three times a day. Its denial, he says, leads to psychopathologies such as we are witnessing in modern society.

Because the 'neurological processes of our brain, and in particular the frontal lobes, are determined not only by physiological but also by psychological processes', Frankl believes that culture has an important role to play in the creation or amelioration/ cure of these pathologies.

Frankl analyses the complex evolution of psychosocial processes. His analysis helps explain not only the hooligan, but also the incidence of 'very clever people who can make brilliant mathematical calculations for dictatorships,' yet 'lack any moral feelings by which to evaluate their actions and are indeed very stupid.' Indeed with the breakthrough of 'the repressed' we see the symptoms in psychosexual infantilism, perversions, paranoid nationalism, and war.

To resist these trends, Frankl argues, it will be necessary to reconstruct a rational morality, and combat the neglect of philosophy in psychology as something 'unscientific'. Frankl proposes a new humanism in education, psychotherapy and work as a prerequisite for the restoration of civilisational values and mental health. Psychotherapy is too often the final port of call before collapse. Pedagogy must be restored to its prominent position in childcare and education. All those concerned with mental health and the welfare of future generations will find this book invaluable.

George Frankl has made an original contribution to the urgent need for a rational morality to guide society safely into the twenty first century, so that, if it can avoid another major catastrophe, 'humanity can be born at last'.

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