Clinical Seminar: Working from a Two-Person Psychology

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I. Overview of Course and Introduction to the Interpersonal School of Psychoanalysis

A. Overview of course

1. Brief review of the origins and history of the Interpersonal School
2. Basic tenets of Interpersonal Psychoanalysis

D. Scheduling of case presentations

Readings: Fiscalini, John (1995-1996) “The Interpersonally Unique.” The Review of Interpersonal Psychoanalysis, William Alanson White Institute, 1 (1): 5-8.

Levenson, Edgar (1995-1996) “A Monopedal Presentation of Interpersonal Psychoanalysis.” The Review of Interpersonal Psychoanalysis, William Alanson White Institute, 1: 1-4.

1. Psychoanalytic Data: The Detailed Inquiry
2. Levenson’s algorithm for psychoanalysis
3. Omission as an interpersonal process vs. repression as an intrapsychic process
4. The detailed inquiry: Deconstructing the patient’s story
5. Tolerating uncertainty as opposed to making sense out of the data
6. How the detailed inquiry leads to the recreation (in the transference – countertransference matrix) of the very problems under discussion

Readings: Levenson, Edgar (1981) “Facts or Fantasies: On the Nature of Psychoanalytic Data.” Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 17 (3): 486-501.

Levenson, Edgar (1988) “The Pursuit of the Particular: On the Psychoanalytic Inquiry.” Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 24 (1): 1-16.

III. The Concept of Transference from an Interpersonal Perspective

A. Transference seen as a way of minimizing anxiety and preventing a loss of self- esteem

1. Transference as regressive vs. transference as a quest for survival
2. Transference as distortion versus transference as real
3. Transference as being co-constructed by both the analysand and the analyst

Singer, Erwin (1965) Key Concepts in Psychotherapy, New York: Basic

Books, Inc., Publishers. Chapter 11: “The Concept of Transference”, pp. 249-289.

1. The Concept of Transference from a Phenomenological Perspective
2. Transference as organizing activity (and how this concept encourages an unwavering inquiry into the patient’s subjective experience)
3. The relationship between transference and resistance
4. Is resolution of the transference possible?

Readings: Stolorow, R., Brandchaft, B., and Atwood, G. (1987) Psychoanalytic Treatment: An Intersubjective Approach, Hillsdale, New Jersey: The Analytic Press. Chapter 3: “Transference – The Organization of Experience” (Written in collaboration with Lachmann, F.), pp. 28-46.

1. Existentialism and Phenomenology
2. The underlying philosophical values of existentialism and phenomenology as related to the therapeutic process
3. The poles of victimization and responsibility
4. Does the relationship cure?
5. Therapist presence
6. Existential versus neurotic anxiety

Readings: Basescu, Sabert (1988). The Therapeutic Process. Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 24, 121-125.

Basescu, Sabert (1962). Human Nature and Psychotherapy: An Existential View. Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, 2(2), 149-157.

VI. Countertransference and Self-disclosure

1. Countertransference seen as a way of minimizing anxiety
2. The analyst’s resistance to countertransference responses
3. Dealing with countertransference in constructive ways
4. Self-revelation vs. deliberate self-disclosure
5. The dangers of self-disclosure
6. Self-disclosure used constructively to enhance the progress of an analysis

Readings: Ehrenberg, Darlene (1992) The Intimate Edge: Extending the Reach of Psychoanalytic Interaction, New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 7: “Constructive use of Countertransference.”

Aron, Lewis (1996) A Meeting of Minds: Mutuality in Psychoanalysis, Hillsdale, New Jersey: The Analytic Press. Chapter 8: “On Knowing and Being Known: Theoretical and Technical Considerations Regarding Self-Disclosure”, pp. 221-253.

VII. The Mysteries of the Psychoanalytic Process

A. Beyond metapsychology: the curative aspects and the mysteries of the psychoanalytic process

B. The role of interpretation

C. Harmonic variations within a therapy session (e.g., enacting what is being talked about)

D. Succeeding by failing: the importance of failing the patient’s expectations for a magical cure

E. The significance of surprise and spontaneity in the psychoanalytic process

Readings: Bromberg, Philip (2000) “Potholes on the Royal Road: Or is it an Abyss?” Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 36 (1): 5-28.

Levenson, Edgar (1994) “The Uses of Disorder: Chaos Theory and Psychoanalysis.” Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 30: 691 - 707.

VIII. The Concept of the Unconscious from an Interpersonal Perspective

A. Dissociation vs. Repression: enacting and living out dissociated experience - “dissociated repetitious patterns of internalized relational configurations” - in a two-person interactive system (as opposed to the archeological model of repression)

B. The inevitability of the analyst’s unwitting participation in the patient’s relational world and the subsequent examination

C. Unformulated and unarticulated interpersonal configurations as mutually enacted in the here-and-now experience of the transference-countertransference matrix

Readings: Hirsch, Irwin (1994) “Dissociation and the Interpersonal Self.” Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 30: 777 - 799.

Hirsch, Irwin and Roth, Judith (1995) “Changing Conceptions of Unconscious.” Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 31: 263 - 276.

1. The Dissociative Model of the Unconscious in Relation to Masochism and Sadism
2. Masochism: The lack of will and agency, and the dissociation from rage and aggression
3. The masochist seen as an individual that seeks suffering versus the masochist seen as an individual that is subject to or vulnerable to suffering
4. Sadism: The dissociation from vulnerability, attachment, and dependency

Readings: Howell, Elizabeth F. (1996) “Dissociation in Masochism and Psychopathic Sadism.” Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 32: 427-453.

X. Clinical Use of Dreams from an Interpersonal Perspective

1. Dreams as revealing as opposed to concealing: the metaphorical and imagistic language of dreams

B. Dream images as being too precise for words and being able to move beyond the constraints of language and speak the unspeakable

Readings: Blechner, Mark J. (1998) “The Analysis and Creation of Dream Meaning: Interpersonal, Intrapsychic, and Neurobiological Perspectives.” Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 34: 181 - 194.

XI. The Present Moment

1. The present moment from a phenomenological perspective
2. The “world in a grain of sand” perspective
3. Role of consciousness and implicit knowledge
4. Role of intersubjectivity and moments of meeting
5. Impact of this perspective on clinical treatment: Role of meaning versus the role of deepening lived experience

Readings: Stern, Daniel N. (2004). The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life. New York: W. W. Norton & Company: 2004. Chapter 1: “The Problem of ‘Now’”, pp. 3-22; Chapter 9: “The Present Moment and Psychotherapy”, pp. 135-148; Chapter 13: “Therapeutic Change: A Summary and Some General Clinical Implications,” pp. 219-227.