

Book Reviews

Editor: Yoram Barak

Experiences of Depression: Theoretical, Clinical, and Research Perspectives

By Sidney J. Blatt

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Hardcover, ISBN: 1-59147-095-1, 372 pp., \$49.95

Depression may be the most common serious illness seen by primary care physicians and mental health clinicians today. Depression is a major public health problem, still increasing in incidence. Depression incurs both direct (public health money) as well as indirect (e.g., time lost from work) costs totaling billions of dollars per year. The cost in human anguish is immeasurable. Roughly 15% of patients with a major depressive disorder eventually commit suicide, resulting in many deaths every year. Appropriate treatments could help the majority of those with severe depression, but unfortunately, not everyone with depression seeks help. Without treatment, symptoms can last weeks, months, years, or even a lifetime. In our depressogenic era, mental health practitioners can turn to Sidney J. Blatt's stimulating expertise to facilitate their clinical efforts.

Blatt, one of the leading psychoanalytic researchers of our time, has written a lucid guide for clinicians interested in understanding depression and improving their therapeutic treatment of it. Blatt elucidates the psychological and interpersonal worlds and the life experiences that contribute to the specific nature of depressive experiences. *Experiences of Depression* efficiently leads the reader, via a constructive dialectic integration of theory, research, and therapeutic implications, to an understanding of Blatt's integration of his theory concepts with therapeutic practice and therapeutic changes.

In *Experiences of Depression*, Blatt unites nearly thirty years of distinguished psychiatric practice and research, during which he has written prolifically. Integrating psychoanalytic ego psychology with developmental-cognitive theory, Blatt proposed a model

that characterizes personality development as a dialectical interweaving between development of *interpersonal relatedness* (the capacity to establish increasingly mature, reciprocal, and satisfying interpersonal relationships) and *self-definition* (the development of a realistic, essentially positive, and increasingly integrated self-definition and self-identity). An adequate balance between the developments of these two capabilities contributes to an evolving identity and self-sufficiency that in turn facilitates the establishment of stable interpersonal relationships. However, excessive emphasis on only one of these dimensions has been found to predispose individuals to depression. Beginning with case studies of two depressed patients in long-term treatment, the book demonstrates the value of considering the psychological dimensions of depression. Blatt identifies two types of depression that, despite a common set of symptoms, have distinct roots. Overemphasis on the relatedness dimension is characterized by excessive preoccupation with the availability of love, nurturance, and support, a heightened need for closeness and interpersonal support, and vulnerability to feelings of interpersonal loss. Blatt termed this type of depression *anaclitic depression*. Exaggerated stress on self-definition is associated with harsh standards, heightened strivings for mastery and achievement, a marked need for acknowledgment, and vulnerability to feelings of failure. Blatt termed this type of depression *introjective depression*.

Blatt argues that recognizing these fundamentally different depressive experiences has important clinical implications. According to Blatt, an individual's self-definition and relatedness capabilities develop primarily in the context of early interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the core aim of Blatt's suggestions for treatment goals is to enable patients to appreciate and understand, as fully as possible, how their early interpersonal experiences contribute to impairment in their capacities to develop satisfactory interpersonal relations and a realistic and affective sense of self, as well as the multiple ways in

which these impairments are currently being experienced and expressed. Integrating four theoretical perspectives (psychodynamic ego psychology, developmental-cognitive theory, and attachment and object relations theories), Blatt presents his therapeutic techniques for both the introjective and anaclitic types of depressed patients, essentially directed toward exploration of early and current life experiences related to these basic impairments. The processes of therapeutic change in self-critical and dependent individuals are comprehensively presented. The clinical examples and empirical findings regarding treatment and therapeutic change should inspire both practitioners and researchers.

Reading this book is amply rewarding because it is a sterling model of integration of theory, clinical insight and practice and research exploring the nature of depression and the life experiences that contribute to its emergence. For physicians seeking professional renewal who might benefit from being reminded about experiences of depression, and certainly for psychiatrists, this book can be kept close by for daily inspiration.

Avi Besser, PhD

The Unconscious in Science and in Psychoanalysis

by Yehoyakim Stein

The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2005, Jerusalem. ISBN Number: 965-493-226-1, pp. 182

Stein's book, "The Unconscious in Science and in Psychoanalysis," is an intellectually challenging read that encourages all-encompassing and creative thinking as is the book's focus. The book presents the association between psychoanalysis and the meta-sciences including philosophy, sociology, history and the irrational elements.

The psychoanalysis of science has two meanings: first — the search for the dream beyond the objective (subjective, irrational, creative processes); second — the epistemological obstacles of science. Psychoanalysis examines factors that are conscious and unconscious, cognitive and emotive underlying the basis of scientific processes. The subjectivity of science is not unique to isolated scientists but is rather an integral

part of the discipline and the cause of unconscious lacunas that systematically undermine the product of scientific investigation. Locating these lacunas and exposing the suppressed may enable the development of novel ideas.

The author does not hold the notion that the shoemaker has to go bare-foot, and hence he deals with the psychoanalysis of the psychoanalytic theory and tries to point out the existence of irrational factors underlying the development of the psychoanalytic domain.

He offers a system which enables psychoanalytic research of the psychoanalytic science by interpretative inspection of texts. As a guideline for the system, metaphors, scientific lapses, lacunas and scientific myths are used.

Stein focuses mainly on analyzing three categories of lacunas: The lacuna of the inner body which stems from primeval fears and anxieties; the lacuna of the post-traumatic dream which connects to the unconscious aim to avoid any impairment to the wholeness of the psychoanalytic theory of Freud; and the lacuna of the split psychoanalytic consciousness theory, which reflects the gap between the meta-analytic principles (what we wish to see) and the reality that we actually meet in the clinic.

The author refers to the inner body of women (the womb and especially the menstrual cycle) as representative of the inner body, and gives it a large space as representative of scientific lacunas.

The lacuna concerning the inner body stems from archaic fears, and the author examines his claims that the repression of the problem of the inner female body and of the menstrual cycle blocks the ability to probe the connection between the taboo of the menstrual period and the phenomenon of the taboo of incest, a connection crucial for its impact on the development of psychoanalytic thought.

Overlooking the difficulty of adapting nightmares, post-traumatic neurosis and post-traumatic repetitive dreams to the frame of the Freudian drive theory is a lacuna that blocks the scientific flow and causes a significant setback in understanding the dreams mechanism, mental trauma and anxiety, which are so critical to analytic theory.

"The dictatorship of the logos" is a phrase coined by Freud. Freud aimed at a harmonic science, assertively led by rationality and completely separated

from subjectivity. The efforts of psychoanalysis to be logical and rational even more than the biological sciences brought about also the formation of lacunas. The author selects two of those lacunas: ignoring the complementary idea and the setback in the development of the idea of countertransference.

The revolutionary part of psychoanalysis is the discovery of the unconscious. The counterrevolution is represented by the consciousness imposed onto the inner world. Understanding that we cannot step out of ourselves was clear enough to all fields of science but paradoxical to the science of psychoanalysis. This state of denying the subjectivity creates self paradox and developmental delay.

Stein points to the existence of a split between metapsychology (psychoanalytic concepts) and clinical psychology (psychoanalytic practice) due to the paradoxical relation between subjectivity and objectivity.

In Stein's book one can find provocative material side by side with ideas that have a strong scientific consensus. The book is designed for readers willing to invest time and effort in delving deeply into the world of psychoanalytic science.

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The First Idea: How symbols, language and intelligence evolved from our primate ancestors to modern humans

By Stanley I. Greenspan, MD, and Stuart G. Shanker, DPhil

*Cambridge, Mass., Da Capo Press, 2004,
504 pp. ISBN: 0306814498 Price: \$29*

Greenspan and Shanker address the monumental question of the origin of the first idea: how symbols, language and intelligence evolved from our primate ancestors. They synthesize a common theory of human development through a framework called functional/emotional development. They explain the evolution of symbolic knowledge in humans as a result of cultural learning with a crucial role assigned to emotions rather than genetic transmission. The authors of this book distance themselves from the modern generative theory of Chomsky and Piaget's

theory of cognitive development. Greenspan and Shanker have their own view of human development, a view that is based on fundamental notions like emotions and cultural practices. They believe that along with increased emotional communication there is an increase in symbolic thinking. The "engine of evolution," they advocate, is not found in the Darwinian principles of transmission of genetic information and survival of the fittest, but lies instead in culturally transmitted caregiving practices. They postulate that in order to develop symbols we must transform our basic emotions into a series of succeedingly more complex emotional signals. This begins in early life during an unusually long practice period and leads to evolvment of symbols, language and a variety of complex emotional and social skills.

The book is divided into four sections. The first is a long introduction. The second deals with longitudinal studies of human emotional development. The authors describe sixteen stages of emotional development in humans chronologically relating to biological development. They demonstrate how symbol formation during the course of human evolution results from a series of interactive stages of affective transformation, which they call functional/emotional developmental levels. In the third section the authors build a theory regarding language development. They describe the use of symbols in non-human primates; how emotional signaling links emotion to cognition and how primary emotions are transformed into interactive signals and patterns that are then symbolized. Section four tries to postulate how humans, in private and in groups, behave and what cultural and social processes gave origin to human history and what are the challenges that humanity faces now.

The main point about this work is the notion that emotions play a major role in the social development of human intelligence. It gives a fresh view of human evolution. It is quite a large volume and the reader should be fully alert and concentrated since it is not easy to comprehend. This book is most recommended to clinicians and researchers interested in the evolution of cognition.

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