

Book Reviews

Editor: Yoram Barak

Psychosemiosis as a Key to Body-Mind Continuum: The Reinforcement of Symbolization-Reflectiveness in Psychotherapy

by Matti Keinänen

New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2006, Hardcover, pp. 196. ISBN-1-59454-381-4

The book presents the psychosemiotic model as a key for understanding human development and psychotherapeutic treatment. The author describes a new way to conceptualize the development of symbolization-reflectiveness capacity in psychoanalytic psychotherapy and to show its curative factor in the psychoanalytic psychotherapy of patients suffering from a personality disorder.

The author argues that the human mind emerges and develops using a coding method of signs in mutual interaction with the significant others (usually in relation to parents of a child). The author developed a four-stage model according to Charles S. Peirce's sign terminology to study the psychosemiotic process and its evolution in the human mind.

In the psychosemiotic process the originally physical observation is transformed means of symbolic function to the psychic experience which leads to a functioning coherent continuum from the body to the mind. If the development of the psychosemiotic process is inhibited and/or disturbed, mental health disorders are the consequence. This process may be initiated again in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. The author based his model on a clinical study of the psychoanalytic psychotherapy with university students having borderline personality disorder.

A special interest for me was the ninth chapter, which deals with the advanced specialist level training program in psychodynamic individual therapy with an emphasis on borderline and psychotic-level disorders; as opposed to most existing training pro-

grams in individual psychotherapy which are directed mainly towards the treatment of patients with lesser psychopathology.

This is an interesting book, which is valuable especially for professionals who deal with psychodynamic psychotherapy theories and training programs.

Alex Aviv

Recovery from Schizophrenia. An International Perspective A Report from the WHO Collaborating Project. The International Study of Schizophrenia

Edited by Kim Hopper, Glyn Harrison, Alexander Janca and Norman Sartorius.

Cary, N.C.: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 369

This book is most special: it captures the reader's interest by delivering a universe of scientifically researched facts, asking a stream of questions, and challenging many accepted notions. It is about schizophrenia, a disorder that affects 20 million people worldwide, omitting no country. Precisely when the zeitgeist seems to have crowned biology as the sole breaking code and means of intervention, this book comes and widens the spectrum of inquiry, discourse and intervention.

Patients with schizophrenic disorders live beyond their first-ever contact with the psychiatric services and, most often, beyond the period of observation of clinicians and will move in and out of clinics and hospitals that care for them. What happens to these patients in the course of time? How well or poorly do they fare? Do they work? With whom do they live? Do they die prematurely, and from what causes? Is the psychosis visible over the years, or are there remissions?

Historically, knowledge about schizophrenic dis-

orders was built relying on mental hospital-based experience. Accordingly, the notion that schizophrenic disorders have a downhill course became accepted knowledge. Dementia praecox was named years ago based on these experiences. But is it always so? Are the course and outcome of the disorders as immutable as the incidence rate of hard-core schizophrenia seems to be? Are the different parameters of measure of the disorders that are applied to patients from Africa, Asia, Europe or the Americas uniform, or do the cultural microclimate or the social conditions influence the results of those measures? Nobody could have addressed these and other questions better than the World Health Organization Division of Mental Health led in the years when the studies were conducted by Dr. Norman Sartorius, working in collaboration with distinguished researchers and clinicians from all continents.

This book is about ISoS — the International Study of Schizophrenia, based on four research projects that collected a large cohort of patients studied in multiple centers. The 1,704 patients ISoS included were followed up for 12–26 years, at the end of which period 61.2% of the patients were still alive, 13.6% had died and 25.2% were lost to follow-up. A few results are worth quoting to entice reading about these patients with schizophrenic disorders (and other psychoses) traversing the path of life: over 40% of the total sample had no symptoms of psychosis during the last two years of the follow up, well over half were

working, almost all of them working satisfactorily. Fewer than a quarter of them were hospitalized during this period.

Surprisingly, patients without neuroleptics constituted a substantial number. Importantly, most of the findings varied by center located in both developing and developed nations, an indication that the course and outcome of the disorder is modified by the social environment. Chapters on the aggregated groups and on each one of the many research sites further illuminate these findings.

This book is for everyone. It is lucidly written and embraces in the text the uniqueness and the commonalities of the experience of a person whose disorder, as stated by the authors, “is largely an episodic disorder — with rather favorable outcome for a significant proportion of those afflicted.” Not surprisingly, “expectation, on the part of patient, family members, and treating clinicians, is a powerful factor in recovery.”

In conclusion, ISoS convincingly shows that research and care should be comprehensive: research that integrates biology, psychology and social sciences may help to uncover the elusive code of the disorder while the same triad may help the patient and the family face a serious disorder and overcome it. We can but agree with the authors: “This overarching message should be widely broadcasted.”

Itzhak Levav