

## Book Reviews

### Polarities of Experience

**Sidney J. Blatt**  
**American Psychological Association, 2008**  
**404 pages**  
**ISBN: 978-1-4338-0314-7**

Sidney J. Blatt proposes that psychological development is a lifelong personal negotiation between two fundamental dimensions in human affairs: relatedness and self-definition. Thus states the book cover of this in depth work focusing on the necessary tension between the pole of the mature sense of self necessary to becoming an adult and, just as necessary for adulthood, the pole of satisfying interpersonal relationships. The book is divided into four parts as follows: Part I: relatedness and self-definition: a fundamental polarity of experience; Part II: personality development; Part III: personality organization and psychopathology, and Part IV: the therapeutic process.

The book is written in a style that reminded me of reading the “classic” texts by Fromm or even by Freud himself. It is didactic, academic and some of the sentences contain well above 20 words. In a sense the reading of many of the chapters is challenging for the clinical psychiatrist. One needs to take each chapter as a separate intellectual task that takes effort and perseverance to complete. However, the “tone that makes the music” cannot be mistaken. S.J. Blatt has produced a masterly work. The chapter on the two primary configurations of personality organization introduces the reader to the wonders of the Introjective (Apollonian) Personality with its literal and critical thought process and the instinctual focus of aggression in service of self-definition. On the other hand, one is acquainted with the Anaclitic (Dionysian) Personality with its figurative and impressionistic thought processes and instinctual focus wherein sexuality is in service of affection, intimacy and relatedness.

The chapters on the therapeutic process add to the way each of us approaches our patients in various settings. I found some of the observations on the difficult-to-treat-patients exciting and will attempt to apply them to inpatients.

In summary I recommend this book to the reader who is willing to invest time and effort – possibly a reader of the “Apollonian” persuasion.

Yoram Barak, Bat Yam

### Informed Consent to Medical Treatment: The Duty of Disclosure in View of the Patient’s Best Interests

**Ofra G. Golan**  
**Perlstein-Genosar 2008**  
**456 pages in Hebrew**  
**ISBN: 978-965-7098-42-4**

Dr. Golan states in the beginning of her brilliantly written book that: “...the dry requirements of the law are far from the practice and reality of physician-patient relationship.” Indeed, this fresh and courageous look permeates her book.

The book opens with a relevant introduction to the aspect of “informed consent,” anchoring this concept in the here-and-now of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unique attention is given in Chapter Three to the physicians’ attitudes towards informed consent, and Jewish law is addressed in Chapter Five. The sixth chapter is actually the book’s second part and it addresses informed consent in the context of specialized medical settings such as: obstetrics, oncology, cosmetic surgery and alternative medicine. The book’s appendices, index and lists of abbreviations and bibliography are a valuable aid to the reader.

The dry facts about this book do not do it justice. The writing flows and the attitude adopted by the author is one of enlightened debate. To quote just one example: “The reality is that patients do come to the physician to be healed...” and from this simple but oft forgotten fact the author goes on to discuss the ascent of paternalism as the patient is in critical condition and where the medical risks are extreme. As a psychiatrist suffering from the classical “paranoid position” when dealing with medico-legal issues, I have found treasures in many of the pages in this book. The aspects discussed in the case of a woman who died due to a complication of amniotic fluid extraction

during pregnancy are relevant to our profession in the sense that while this extremely rare outcome was judged in Israel to be in its rarity not of relevance to disclose to patients, the Canterbury ruling states: "A very small chance of death...may well be significant." Where does this leave us with the (happily) very rare cases of sudden-death due

to drug treatment or death by suicide? Probably with the urgent need to read Golan's treatise so that as psychiatrists we can improve the therapeutic contract that is the cornerstone of our unique physician-patient relationship.

Yoram Barak