

BOOK REVIEW

Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Therapies by Jeremy D. Safran. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2012, 232 pp. ISBN 978-1-433-80978-1. \$24.95

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To quote former President Richard Nixon, let me make one thing perfectly clear—I am not an unbiased reviewer. For many years, I have been learning from and recommending Jeremy Safran's books. For example, I have all of my graduate students read his book on *Negotiating the Therapeutic Alliance: A Relational Treatment Guide* (Safran & Muran, 2000), and his delineation of *Interpersonal Process in Cognitive Therapy* (Safran & Segal, 1990) is equally stellar. Furthermore, Dr. Safran has done some of the most clinically relevant research in our field. So when I was asked to review his most recent paperback book, published by APA as part of its Theories of Psychotherapy Series (edited by Jon Carlson and Matt Englar-Carlson), I thought, "Is there no end to this man's accomplishments?" Well, apparently there isn't, because *Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Therapies* is a gem.

As stated in the editors' preface, all the books in this series are designed to whet the reader's appetite by giving a "concise, clear, and informative introduction" to a major model of psychotherapy (as part of full disclosure, I have written a book on dynamic brief therapy as part of this series). And Safran clearly does that—but he does so much more. Safran's aim is to introduce recent developments in psychoanalytic theory to a wider audience and to correct certain misconceptions about traditional psychoanalysis. But his passion has to do with his belief that "a greater understanding of the nature of contemporary psychoanalysis, and a deeper appreciation of the more valuable dimensions of psychoanalytic theory and practice in general, can lead to an enrichment of psychologists' understanding of how best to help people and serve as a corrective to some of our potentially problematic cultural blind spots and biases" (pp. 8).

The bare bones table of contents (which is the same for all the books in the series) lists the basics to be covered—introduction, history, theory, therapy process, evaluation, future developments, summary, a glossary of key terms, references, and an index. But none of these simple headings prepares the reader for the richness and sophistication of the material contained within each chapter.

For example, in the introduction, Safran points out that contemporary psychoanalytically oriented treatments have a "substantial and growing evidence base" for their effectiveness and a "growing emphasis on the importance of adapting psychoanalytic theory and practice in a culturally responsive fashion" (p. 6). He goes on to enumerate the ways in which psychoanalysis has evolved. He explains how characteristic American attitudes (such as optimism and egalitarianism) have influenced the evolution of psychoanalytic thought and practice. And how feminist analysts have "challenged the patriarchal assumptions implicit in traditional psycho-

analytic theory." He also mentions the impact of a "postmodern sensibility" in which there is a questioning of the idea that one can know Truth objectively, and he points out that the numbers of clinical psychologists entering psychoanalytic training institutes have resulted in "intellectually interesting changes" in an area that was previously dominated by psychiatrists.

As a former social psychologist, my favorite part of the book involves Safran's delineation of the tension between conformist and subversive threads in psychoanalysis. He points out that it is ironic that modern day analysis has "justifiably" earned a reputation as an arrogant, elitist, conservative, esoteric approach, because when it started out Freud and many of the early analysts were part of a liberal, progressive, but oppressed and marginalized, group. They were critical of social oppression and many were social activists. Safran weaves the story of how psychoanalysis was transformed into a "lucrative, high-prestige, and socially conservative profession" that came to foster "technical rigidity and narrow-mindedness" as it took root in the United States.

One of Safran's real gifts is in his ability to write cogently at a level that can be digested and comprehended by a beginning graduate student or even an informed lay person, while at the same time providing a perspective that can be informative and thought provoking for experienced practitioners. Reading this book is like sitting down with an expert in the field who, in the process of conveying an enormous amount of material covering a century of theory and practice, is also sharing his perspectives in an accessible, up-to-date, and frank manner. For example, in the chapter on therapy process, Safran starts out his subsection on containment by writing:

Over time I have come to believe that one of the most important skills for therapists to develop is an internal skill, rather than a technical one. This internal skill involves attending to our own emotions when working with clients and cultivating the ability to tolerate and process painful or disturbing feelings in a nondefensive fashion. How do we help our clients hold on to some sense of faith that things will work out when we ourselves are beginning to feel hopeless? . . . How do we work with our own feelings when we begin to feel the same sense of despair that our client feels? (p. 111)

The chapter outlining the history of psychoanalysis is chock full of behind the scenes pieces of information that help demystify the evolution of Freud's ideas and make them comprehensible to the neophyte. Safran gives the reader an appreciation for why the writings of later theorists are often difficult to grasp or not well articulated. He explains how self psychology, attachment theory, and relational psychoanalysis played a role in challenging the tenets of the time and how they influenced future developments. Because the book is aimed for an American readership, the focus is on developments in North America; however, Safran also sneaks in a brief examination of the contributions of Lacan and post-Kleinian traditions in Europe and Latin America.

The chapter on therapy process is the longest, taking up almost half the book. Although the subheadings within this chapter are familiar ones (e.g., clarification, support, interpretation of trans-

ference, use of dreams, etc.), the reader might expect a series of dry descriptions of each one. Is there anything new to say about them? But Safran makes each intervention relevant by focusing on the philosophical dilemma or dialectic contained within it. For example, in discussing how to work through therapeutic impasses, Safran talks about the inherent difficulty in acknowledging the validity of the other's perspective because often doing so involves a sense of compromising one's own integrity. Safran wonders with the reader, "How can the interaction begin to shift out of a frozen position in which there is no alternative." As Safran explores the dilemma, he helps the reader move seamlessly toward the concept of intersubjectivity.

An added bonus for the book (as well as other titles in the series) is that there is a companion DVD (produced by APA Books) showing Safran's work with a real client over six sessions (<http://www.apa.org/pubs/videos>). In this video, Safran demonstrates his relational psychoanalytic approach. He also provides a session-by-session description of this case in his book.

My only negative comment about the book is that I wish Safran had included more in the Evaluation chapter regarding psychoanalysts' reluctance to encourage or condone empirical demonstrations of the effectiveness of psychoanalytic approaches. Psychoanalytic "antipathy" toward empirical research has unfortunately not only slowed down the accumulation of knowledge about important intrapsychic change processes, but the paucity of empirical data has also undermined the likelihood of third-party payment for more depth-oriented treatments. Furthermore, it is likely that such research would facilitate the training of future psychoanalysts. For example, numerous researchers have de-

scribed that using audio–video recordings can have enormous advantages in training and supervision (e.g., Levenson & Strupp, 1999), even within psychoanalytic programs (Haggerty & Hilsenroth, 2011). However, analytic supervisors and training programs have been slow to downright antagonistic in taking advantage of this basic technology. It would have been informative to hear more of Safran's take on this empirical controversy within the psychoanalytic community.

Safran concludes his book on an intriguing note. In the summary chapter, he muses that if the earlier successes of psychoanalysis resulted in its insular cultural conservatism, then perhaps its declining prominence today may lead it back to its countercultural roots: "The declining fortunes of psychoanalysis thus ironically provide us with the opportunity to recover and rebuild on some of the revolutionary, subversive, and culturally progressive qualities that were present at the beginning" (p. 191). Perhaps this is more Safran's wish than a likely prediction, but one can hope.

References

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