

The Healing of the Mind, Reuben Fine
David McKay Co., Inc., New York, 1971, pp. 306

There is a passion these days for new styles and new techniques in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. Because of this, and with some confusion, the beginning therapist has a wide selection of approaches he can follow in his attempt to meet the goal of his profession—the healing of the mind. What he, as well as the experienced therapist, will find with gratitude in Reuben Fine's latest book is a text on technique which is delightful in its clarity, evocative in its humanistic dimension, and solid in its intellectual grasp of contemporary psychoanalytic theory.

The two basic themes which pervade the work are a firm conviction that the therapist is a personal agent and thus the primary therapeutic tool and recognition of the need for careful attention, in terms of the therapeutic goals, to the patient's particular stage of development and consequent capacities. In both these areas the author evidences a directness and clearness of presentation, mostly by means of realistic case histories, which are in sore need in contemporary literature. In reference to the therapist as a personal agent, he states: "Regardless of his professional background, his effectiveness as a therapist depends on the degree of happiness that he has achieved as a human being." What is clear throughout the text is that this experience of happiness is not some type of personal charisma by which cure is effected; rather it is the foundation upon which a careful yet non-obsessive knowledge of technique must flourish. In regard to the therapist's technique, the author makes evident that psychoanalysis is not directed at curing, within the shortest time, the most disturbing symptoms. Because it is directed at achieving emotional awareness as well as the capacity to care for one's self, an analyst will not rush to use any and all manoeuvres to alter a patient's state. Quite frequently the temptation for the beginning analyst is to believe that such rushing in is in the patient's best interest as well as being a sign of the therapist's concern. In this careful phenomenological study of the process and technique of treatment, Fine delineates clearly that attention, care and interest, from which any decisive interpretations must flow, are the decisive

factors of the slow analytic process of growth. Understanding therapy within the paradigm of education, the author shows repeatedly the necessity for a respect of the forces of growth as well as a mature awareness of the tenaciousness of the neurotic patterns and thus the need for technique comes properly located. Within this context, the analyst's traditional anonymity and non-directedness, for example, are understood as "dynamic inactivity"—a necessary foundation for the use of interpretation, which is the core of analytic non-intrusive therapy.

Carefully building and coordinating the various aspects of therapy, the author gives workable guidelines, particularly helpful for new analysts, for judging a patient's therapeutic accessibility; he then carefully studies why the therapeutic impasse comes about, and describes the necessary analytic ways of working out the unconscious conflicts involved. In this vein the author candidly and wisely comments on the occurrence of erotic transference and the therapeutic dimensions to any type of sexual contact with a patient. Here we might add that sexual interaction with a patient literally destroys the therapeutic distance necessary for emotional autonomy. That is, the distance between phantasy and reality would be collapsed, and this in fact signals the end of analytic work. Furthermore, if an analyst is not able to hold and to find alternatives to the frustration of sexual drives, the patient will simply never learn it either; for a patient will only go as far as the analyst has gone. That healthy desires, and this is true of sexual as well as aggressive ones, can have destructive consequences, if simply acted upon, is a basic insight which seems to be in eclipse in segments of the analytic community today.

Finally, I would like to mention one area of disagreement with the author's conceptual framework. Fine presents the thesis that it is not only possible but actually desirable for the superego to disappear. This is most surprising since the author certainly knows contemporary ego psychology. To suggest that the internal self-observing and normative functions of the mind should disappear, even given their most primitive manifestations, is, in this reviewer's opinion, not consistent with the structure of the mind or the results of therapeutic practice. A primitive superego organization is superceded by stronger ego functions and more appropriate internal self-awareness. Thus the superego is matured and the capacity, for example, to exercise the distinction between healthy impulses and destructive consequences is strengthened. What is developed is an internal regulating capacity which is not experienced as obsessive burdening, but as an exercise of self-definition.

BOOK REVIEW

Notwithstanding this minor point of difference, Fine's text is recommended without hesitation. It is a work of scholarship without obsessive pedantry; it is a careful study of the humanistic ideals of the analytic situation without moralistic exhortations. And in a time when there is a frenzied search for therapeutic methods, it is a textbook of analytic procedures reflecting a basic respect for the analyst's mind and the patient's self-respect.

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