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The Mystery of Goodness and the Positive Moral Consequences of Psychotherapy

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The Mystery of Goodness and the Positive Moral Consequences of Psychotherapy, by Mary W. Nicholas. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994. 248 pp. \$30.00 cloth. ISBN 0-393-70166-2.

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According to Nicholas, the essence of goodness embodies a core of values that consists of five moral attributes: altruism, responsibility, justice, egalitarianism, and honesty. These are contrasted to the opposite dimensions of selfishness, irresponsibility, injustice, elitism and dishonesty (meaning lying, cheating and stealing).

The Preface describes how the author came to write the book. As often is the case, this book derives from the author's professional concern in what she decries as the amoral and neutral position of psychotherapists in the face of what may represent problems in character development more than symptoms of clinical psychopathology. Section One contains two chapters discussing the absence of "goodness" as an overt issue in psychotherapy and deploring a lack of emphasis on the five interpersonal virtues (the moral attributes above). Goodness is defined as the capacity to behave with love and concern toward others. This in turn embodies two aspects: morality (distinguishing right from wrong), and virtue (being and acting positively in the world). The entire thrust of the book from this point onward is that of "the therapist as moral beacon."

Section Two contains five chapters. According to Nicholas, morality is not viewed as a target of change by many therapists today largely because it is not considered a valid topic for "scientific consideration" (p. 39). She feels Freud's biologic positivism is well established in the medical model in psychotherapy and continues to dominate the field as "scientific" but remains grossly inadequate to explain what it means to be a human in terms of spontaneity, subjectivity and goodness. The remaining four chapters elaborate more on Darwinism and individualism. These chapters are rich with quotations from philosophers, sociobiologists, economists, educators and self psychologists in particular, who together institutionalize four amoral biases which prevent the therapist from conscious awareness of the meaning of goodness as a therapeutic tool. These amoral biases are:

- An assumption of alienation in the universe.
- A positivist bias in overvaluing pragmatic and empirical outcomes in therapy.
- A Darwinian bias which negates prosocial behavior.

- An individualistic bias which tends to attribute improvement in patients to independence rather than enhanced social relatedness.

A good deal of emphasis is given to Rest's model of moral development which is a four component paradigm which includes moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral attitude and moral action. The author provides numerous citations from Bellak, Sullivan, Buber and generously credits Alcoholics Anonymous with the positive power of group connectedness for helping individuals gain or regain a sense of moral grounding. Group therapy is touted highly and described repeatedly as a forum for the development of the five values that lead to goodness.

Section Three essentially is a potpourri of clinical vignettes and citations from the psychological literature with all of Chapter Eleven describing moral dilemmas of persons with narcissistic and borderline personalities and how group therapy can provide a safe environment for clarifying the problem of *hubris* in individuals with addictions involving issues of codependency and shame. The section ends with emphasis on the therapist's responsibility to be moral and to promote "goodness" by incorporating the values of honesty, responsibility, altruism, egalitarianism and justice in clinical practice.

One positive aspect of this book is that it is timely in catching the mood of every person that the social order is "out of order" and that attention must be paid to basic fundamental values of decency. There is indeed something terribly wrong in a society which abdicates a willingness to take a stand for good against not good.

I found reading this book frustrating, yet compelling. It is a complicated critique of the psychological literature, a review of 17th and 18th century philosophy, and a narrative about how group therapy can be a forum for addressing personal and social values. There is an unfortunate shift back and forth between a pedagogic theoretical stance of academic debate and a descriptive clinical patient-oriented style of writing. There is a plethora of data and case studies which are not organized into an easily assimilated framework. One can be impressed with the trees but finds oneself lost in the forest. The author's rich professional and personal experience shines through but there are assumptions about the level of the reader's knowledge and clinical experience that may be difficult for both beginning practitioners and lay persons to fully appreciate. I would certainly recommend it to any experienced clinician, although hopefully, one would be preaching to the choir. The implication

of the author's thesis is that goodness occurs in a social context. Her book makes explicit what is implicit, namely that the morals of the therapist are critical. The therapist must be a morally active change agent or the patient merely exchanges one dubious parental superego for another.

Dr. Nicholas brings us to the edge of goodness with insight. However, it has been my clinical experience that insight is not enough as gained in individual psychotherapy for sustained behavioral change. I fully echo the author's understanding of the synergistic effect of individual and group psychotherapy as a catalyst for moral change. The book is heavy on "shoulds" and "oughts" and light on "how to." This book on "Mystery" of Goodness could easily be called the "Mastery" of Goodness. This was not light, escape reading. I felt a moral obligation to read it and having done so, feel definitely the better for it. It is unfortunate that we need such a book to remind us as human beings to be kind and gentle toward and with each other. There is an aphorism of Hillel in Hebrew, paraphrased: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

This Rough Magic: The Life of Teaching, by Daniel A. Lindley. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. 1993. 142 pp., \$15.95 paperback. ISBN 0-89789-366-2
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This book integrates the author's recent experiences with Jungian psychology with his many years of experience teaching both adolescents in the secondary classroom and students going into teaching in the college classroom. He is currently completing the analyst training program of the Jung Institute of Chicago. For over twenty years he was Chair of English Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In the preface he states his thesis (xii): "I am interested in what happens in actual successful classrooms, but I am just as interested in what happens in the psyche of the successful teacher over time. Technique without the involvement of the teacher's soul—psyche, literally—is worse than hollow: It is a sham, and will immediately be seen through by students."

Lindley wants to understand teaching in a deep way. For him teaching has two planes (public and private) and two domains (the teacher and the "Other," the separate student). The task of being a great teacher is to understand the "mystery under the craft" of teaching and to join up as an equal with the student. What is being taught in the curriculum