



Interpersonal Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Relevance, Dismissal and Self-Definition

Arthur H. Feiner

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Most books on psychoanalysis, its theory or its process, are packed with abstract, esoteric lingo that's far away from how people feel or express themselves. This one is different in that it's of the "she-Isaid" variety, and at the same time presents a pot full of insight about patients that really rings true. Dr. Levenson, in a truly lucid foreword, pegs dr. Feiner just right - a rare combination of the shades of Isaiah Berlin and Zorba the Greek. The book is erudite, scholarly and quite articulate and downright humorous, at times, all in the service of trying to capture precisely what goes on in interpersonal psychoanalysis, and how people might change. It is an area of psychotherapy that isn't written about usually. But the high point of this profound book is to demonstrate how authentic psychoanalysis is clearly non-adversarial and non-advice giving, but genuine analyses of the patient, the analyst himself, and their interaction. The themes of relevance and dismissal are central to our relations with other people and, therefore, to our concept of our identity. These themes of relevance and dismissal pervade Arthur Feiner's exploration of the core ideas of interpersonal psychoanalysis and his use of them in his clinical practice. This particular branch of psychoanalysis, developed by Sullivan, Fromm, Fromm-Reichmann and Thompson, shifts the focus from explaining experience to describing it, with an emphasis on therapeutic interaction. Our identity, or self-definition, is at least partially constructed from early relationships. The impact of the analyst's words and behaviour on the patient is crucial. Feiner considers the therapeutic relationship both from the patient's perspective - vengeful responses to dismissal, restlessness and the experience of hope - and from the analyst's - deliberate 'misreading' as a form of intervention, the usefulness of errors, and the contradictions and difficulties inherent in supervising - taking an interpersonal psychoanalytic approach. Throughout he returns to his central themes, reiterating that the rage, anxiety and depression experienced by patients are expressions of the feeling of having been dismissed, of being no longer relevant.

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