

Bookreview

Textbook of psychodynamic psychiatry (In Greek)

Stelios Stylianidis (editor)

Publisher: Topos Books, Athens 2021

To write a psychiatry textbook with a psychodynamic view is quite a difficult task. There is a risk of being trapped in one-sidedness - even invoking biopsychosocial unity - and in an internal dialogue between the different psychodynamic schools of thought and the respective approaches to psychopathology. Perhaps these are important reasons for the fact that the literature of modern psychiatry lacks clinical psychodynamic textbooks, with only a few notable exceptions. The "Textbook of psychodynamic psychiatry", written by many reputable colleagues, under the scientific supervision of Stelios Stylianidis, comes to fill this gap in Greek literature.

Avoiding the aforementioned dangers, the book is characterized by pluralism and thoroughness. The presentation of mental disorders and their treatment does not ignore but contains information deriving from recent developments in neuroscience and does not undervalue but gives prominence to clinical psychopathology. On the contrary, in many other current textbooks of psychiatry we observe that any treatment option other than pharmacotherapy is "shrinking" and that the richness of psychopathological manifestations is replaced by the descriptive diagnostic criteria of the classification systems. Moreover, in contrast to existing psychodynamic textbooks published in English, that otherwise have a significant contribution to the literature, this textbook has the epistemological and methodological competence for its purpose, that is, to be a comprehensive clinical textbook in psychiatry.

The most important contribution of the book, in my opinion, is its emphasis on the patient as the focus of psychiatry. In no way as a proclamation, that is made and then "forgotten" through the technocratic modes of everyday practice or "shrunk" into regular professional ethics. But in the notion of the central position that the patient has in psychiatry, the individuality, that means the carrier of a unique experience and one of the two members of the therapeutic relationship. The phenomenological approach of symptoms and the access to others' experience through understanding and empathy as well as the pursuit to build through them the therapeutic relationship – a relationship that heals, not just a therapist-patient relationship – are issues that are included and highlighted in this book, and

most important they emerged from the presentation of each psychopathological category. In the line of the above, the emphasis is on community psychiatry, patient rights, and the shift of the therapeutic approach towards patients' personal needs, which is reflected in the modern concept of recovery.

I think there is one aspect of the above approach that deserves special mention. The notion that psychiatric practice is not only an activity for the patient but also an activity with the patient, has traditionally inspired psychiatry training. Unfortunately, this seems to have been forgotten lately in the training programs for psychiatrists and other mental health clinicians, as well as in the relevant textbooks. It is commendable that in this textbook there are clinical examples everywhere, mainly in the form of clinical vignettes. We must not go off these rails: there cannot be teaching of psychopathology without the patients themselves.

As one not belonging to the psychoanalytic school of thought, I feel the need to emphasize that many of the topics in this textbook originated from the psychodynamic approach should be considered general clinical knowledge and skills that are necessary for every clinician. Knowledge and diagnosis of defense mechanisms, the importance of attachment and narcissism for psychic structures, psychopathology and therapeutic relationship, transference and countertransference, and the therapeutic framework, concern not only psychoanalytic psychotherapy but any psychological treatment.

In conclusion, this textbook is an important addition to the clinical psychodynamic literature in our country as well as to the educational material available for students and mental health professionals of every clinical and theoretical approach, not only the psychoanalytic one. Its major contribution is promoting and updating the Hippocratic command, which is expressed by William Osler as follows: The good physician treats the disease, the great physician treats the patient who has the disease.

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