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PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACHES TO SUPERVISION

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Psychotherapy and psychoanalysis are taught through a combination of traditional classes with supervision of cases. In the case of psychoanalysis, the training analysis is the third vital component. Given that supervision is the major place where the detailed clinical experience of senior colleagues is communicated to newer therapists, it is perhaps surprising that supervision has received comparatively little attention in the analytic and therapeutic liter-

ature. The book under review is one of several recent contributions remedying this situation. It contains a number of papers discussing psychoanalytic approaches to supervision of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

The first characteristic that struck me is that the book consists of 26 chapters in under 220 pages of text. Not surprisingly, most of the contributions are exceedingly short, some as short as two pages. The second notable characteristic is that, for reasons that are never specified, all the contributors are psychologists. It would be interesting to know how this choice was made.

The chapters themselves fall in four sections, an initial section of nine chapters covering a wide variety of issues, and the three subsequent sections comprising the proceedings of three symposia, on "Gender Issues in Psychoanalytic Supervision," "Psychoanalysis versus Psychotherapy: Different Approaches in Supervising Graduate Clinical Students," and "The Psychoanalytic Supervisory Process." Given this diversity, it is no surprise that the book as a whole does not have a coherent identity. These papers make abundantly clear that, just as there is no agreement about the best analytic or therapeutic technique, so there is no consensus regarding the best approach to supervision. It would probably be fair to say that this book represents as many approaches to supervision as it contains chapters. The classic positions are represented here: Supervision is the teaching of technique through case discussion. Supervision is a quasi-analytic procedure in which the therapist goes through recognizable stages akin to the stages of early infancy. Supervision involves the resolution of countertransference resistances to proper understanding and treatment of cases. Supervision is, above all, concerned with the development of the student analyst/therapist. Supervision has a great responsibility to guarantee that the patient receives adequate and reasonable treatment. Supervisors play a primary role in evaluating students. Supervisors should teach students their particular approach to working with patients. Supervision should avoid indoctrinating students in a particular orientation.

Given the multiplicity of perspectives represented, it would be nice to find each perspective strongly argued. In the main, however, this is not the case. Most authors simply present their approach to supervision, with little or no argument as to why it is superior to those of others. The tower of Babel that bedevils contemporary therapy and analysis obviously applies also to supervision. The discussions of symposia papers by Singer (supervision of graduate students) and Mayman (psychoanalytic supervision) are, however, frequently sharp, raising strong reservations about some of the contributions and adding more of a sense of dialogue than is present in the rest of the book.

A few papers especially drew my interest. Wolkenfeld's emphasizes that parallel process can be bidirectional. Institutional and supervisory issues may end up being reflected in the therapy. Often, the direction of causality in parallels between the supervisory and therapeutic relationships cannot be determined. Such a perspective is a useful corrective to the usual dogmatism that sees only a one-way influence: from patient to supervisor by way of the therapist. This chapter is one of the few that contextualizes supervision by reminding us that it occurs in an institutional context. Unfortunately, the evaluative role of the supervisor, with all its complications, is discussed in only a few chapters.

Oberman begins his contribution by discussing two recent books by Wallerstein and Dewald in which accounts of supervisions are presented. In both books, the supervisees indicate that they did not feel particularly understood by their supervisors; they appear to have found supervision to be as much an impediment as an aid to treatment of their cases. Such disquieting accounts suggest that the very nature of supervision may be more problematic than many of us believe. I found myself wishing that other authors had dealt with the issues raised by Oberman.

A few of the chapters may be quite unsettling to many readers. Schwartz, in a chapter distinguishing supervision of psychoanalysis from that of psychotherapy, pronounces Kohut and Giovacchini, among others, as being in the psychotherapy camp, without so much as mentioning that these analysts themselves would disagree

with that characterization. She warns of the danger of converting an analysis to a hidden psychotherapy. It is probably useful once in a while to be reminded that such orthodoxy still prevails in certain quarters of our profession.

I found Fine's chapter to be particularly disturbing because of the author's judgmental attitude toward supervisees. He tells of one therapist who "stated that she did much better without supervision, that she handled her cases well, and that it would be best to forgo supervision with her. Instead, she was dismissed from the clinic" (p. 30). I got the impression that honesty with Fine could be extremely dangerous.

One characteristic that I found positive—probably partly because of the book's psychologist authorship—is that a number of papers referred to research findings, often without separating these findings from the clinical portions of the discussion. At moments I almost thought that the psychoanalytic world was about to allow itself be influenced by empirical research. At the same time, it did seem strange that a book on the training of therapists and analysts did not contain a single reference to educational research or theoretical literature. Especially with an increase in interest in educational circles in adult learning, we might learn from the experiences of those outside the mental health professions.

Clearly I was not overly impressed with the book; I would not suggest that it be read from cover to cover. Nonetheless, those concerned with conducting supervision or directing training programs may benefit from dipping here and there among the contents. In that way, one may allow one's thinking to be stimulated by the book, despite the mediocrity of much of its contents.