

Review of: "Psychotherapy as a Subversive Art"

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As a clinical research psychologist who moonlights in the realm of psychotherapy-as-liberatory-praxis, I was thrilled, intrigued, and worried by the title of this paper. So, I was eager to sign on to read and review it, despite my inexperience in commenting on papers whose roots in primary philosophical texts are on full display.

Overall, my experience as a reader was one that moved in waves. The opening paragraph of each section (after the asterisk breaks) pulled me in and brought me to the edge of my seat. But by the end of each section, I was left wondering how the author ended up where he did – and how that destination spoke meaningfully to the question raised at the outset. It felt like a frustrating series of missed opportunities.

As other reviewers have said, I think that this was due in large part to an excess of references to previous thinkers. Sometimes, these references became recursive loops in which the first supporting reference inspired a second that supported the first, which in turn inspired the third, etc., with unsatisfying (or non-existent) attempts to connect the line of reasoning to the central questions. The labyrinthian complexity of each section never felt warranted. I expect to have to slow down and struggle a bit once the basic tenets are laid out and the argument is getting into the thicket, but this paper felt instead like its analytic focus went off the rails much sooner than that and rarely did so for the benefit of advancing a core idea.

At the risk of sounding like a philistine, I feel that the article would benefit from more of a focus on how the author's questions and concerns mapped onto a real human's suffering or a relatable clinical scenario. What would it **actually** look like to reject an approach to clinical boundaries that is based in fear? How would it **actually** affect one's practice if they were to see themselves as a wounding healer? What would it **actually** look like to practice therapy without a focus on the stale mummy & daddy stuff behind the relational screen?

Instead of leaping from subject to subject, I think this article would benefit from more fully exploring some of the fantastic questions it raises at the start of each section by deepening into, not the succession of thinkers whose lexicons could be roped in as synonyms, but the real-world implications of the quandaries that the author is raising. It's not enough to raise and briefly elaborate these questions, as versions of them have been on the minds of many for decades. I was eager to see the author move the ball down the field a bit by gesturing toward an actionable vision, but it did not happen. This was made all the more frustrating by the author's demonstrated familiarity with and ability to draw upon many voices that could point a way forward. I wish he had dedicated himself to that task in a more brass-tacks kind of way.

