

Review of: "The Empty Chair"

Udeni Appuhamilage¹

¹ Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

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The article explores the emotional absence in clients and process of forming an 'as-if' personality centering that discussion on the concept of 'empty chair.' It draws from several key writings related to Jungian and Gestalt therapy and attempts to view these theoretical discussions together by applying them on the case of 'Lucien.'

The paper is theoretically well-informed, referring to key concepts and references to make meaningful and thought-provoking inferences. It also builds a convincing analysis of the clinical picture of a client who struggles with the absence of emotions. The author's clinical capacity to hold the client's vulnerabilities and to accompany the client in a journey of self-configuration or self-completion is also note-worthy.

The focus on empty chair in relation to the absence of emotions lacks a concerted and clear reference to the here-and-now. While the empty chair, in this case, is assisting the client to have a conversation with parts of themselves or others like the absent father figure, it is also fundamentally a technique that encourages clients to build awareness of their feelings, thoughts and behaviors in the here and now. For instance, how did Lucian's reference to the empty chair enabled/assisted them to build awareness of their 'being' in the current moment?

The paper can also improve its discussion about the as-if personality. While those who develop the façade of 'as-if' and there by lose that space to be totally present and feel real, they also struggle with that as-if personality, feel numb, disconnected. This struggle is indicative of the fact that while they play the 'as-if' persona, they are, at a deep level, aware of the fact that they are only acting an 'as-if' version of themselves, which is not real. The disconnect they feel within is rooted in this awareness of the disparity between the real and the unreal. I think it would have been more compelling if the author could have used the clinical case of Lucian to illuminate this paradox of the real and unreal in their discussion of the as-if personality.