

Review of: "Psychotherapy as a Subversive Art"

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Review

Psychotherapy as a Subversive Act

There is much to like in this erudite article about psychotherapy as a subversive act. In the author's view, he trying to alert the profession of psychotherapy to not become a bourgeois social adjustment police aimed to further control and regulate its customers, its clients. He'd like psychotherapy to shift away from the individualization of suffering to understanding it as much as a socio-politico-environmental phenomenon. This is where the author brings in the concept of world feeling, *Weltgefühl*. I like the author's use of critical theory originating with the Frankfurter Schule and perhaps most famously expressed in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The latter, written right after WWII and deeply influenced by the shocking atrocities of the war-machines and the holocaust, was a book read and quoted widely by the European student movement in the sixties and seventies. The main point: as long as psychotherapy remains a practice, an everyday controlling and regulating of its clients to adjust to a disfunctioning social and political system designed to oppress human creativity and freedom, it does not serve our *psyche* [ancient Greek for *soul*] but rather our little self or ego constructions. The author thus advocates that psychotherapy be a praxis, a means to address the psyche's deep need for roaming freely in this world and "resist the allure of neoliberal gadgetry and gimmickry which turn [psychotherapy] into another tool in the hands of the reactive forces of stupidity and control."

As existential therapists we can help this move towards clients' true emancipation by refraining from quick answers and solutions coming from the therapists to allowing clients to sit with their suffering and/or dilemmas and encourage them to find their own answers arising from their souls. This requires of us therapists to deeply trust our clients to find their own truth which might often be against the social status quo, perhaps even realize that their sufferings emanate from exactly the mainstream norms chaining them in ways their *psyche* does not want to tolerate. To become therapists who can allow clients to emancipate, who can support clients' power and will to determine their fates irrespective of its associated costs, takes much personal work and strength on the part of therapists. It is to follow clients to places often uncomfortable for therapists with a more mainstream attitude. But the brightness and joy that shows itself when the soul can taste the freedom for which it longs so deeply might just be worth the fear and trembling therapists need to endure to help clients – and themselves – along this often quite arduous inner journey.