Principles of Counseling and Psychotherapy

Learning the Essential Domains and Nonlinear Thinking of Master Practitioners

Gerald J. Mozdzierz, Paul R. Peluso, & Joseph Lisiecki



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Foreword

About this book: In 1960, in his preface to his collection of essays on personality titled *Personality and Social Encounter* (Allport, 1960), Gordon W. Allport, one of the wisest men ever to come to grips with the issue of personality, asked, "What is human personality?" He found he could offer no definitive answer. Instead, he gave voice and recognition to the truth that lay in all those positions that honestly sought the answer to that question, even though they provided responses to it that he termed *paradoxical*. He wrote,

Some would say that it [personality] is an ineffable mystery—a shaft of creation, an incarnation. Since no man can transcend his own humanity, he cannot hold the full design of personality under a lens. The radical secret will ever elude us.

Others would say that personality is a product of nature. It is a nervous-mental organization, which changes and grows, while at the same time remaining relatively steadfast and consistent. The task of science is to explain both the stability and the change.

Those who would hold either of those views—or both—are right. ...

Some say that personality is a self-enclosed totality, a solitary system, a span pressed between two oblivions. It is not only separated in space from other living systems, but also marked by internal urges, hopes, fears, and beliefs. Each person has its own pattern, his own unique conflicts, he runs his own course, and dies alone. This point of view is correct.

But others say that personality is social in nature, wide open to the surrounding world. It owes its existence to the love of two mortals for each other and is maintained through love and nurture freely given by others. Personality is affiliative, symbiotic, sociable. Culture cooperates with family in molding its course. 'No man is an island.' This view, too, is right. (p. v)

And, of course, Allport recognized that other frames also merited consideration.

Instead of quailing at the metaphysical paradoxes posed by these seemingly veridical yet competing views of what it is to be a person—either by retreating to the ideological security provided by one of the part views of human existence generated by a "great man's" theory, and in so doing blind himself to that which is also true, or by restricting his descriptions of human nature exclusively to "facts" gleaned by an army of social insects following well-marked, approved trails, and thereby miss the larger picture or leave the field in abject surrender—Allport (1960) chose to bravely soldier on, much, I believe, to his advantage and ours. His approach, he wrote,

is naturalistic, but open-ended. Naturalism, as I see it, is too often a closed system of thought that utters premature and trivial pronouncements on the nature of man. But it can and should be a mode of approach that deliberately leaves unsolved the ultimate metaphysical questions concerning the nature of man, without prejudging the solution. My essays are all psychological and therefore naturalistic, but they have one feature in common—a refusal to place premature limits upon our conception of man and his capacities for growth and development. (Allport, pp. v–vi)

Given that, explicitly or implicitly, therapeutic interventions are based wholly or in part (sometimes one just repeats that which one perceives to have worked, with no other reason for doing so) upon one's conceptualization of personality, one would expect, if Allport's analysis of the state of personality theory were correct, that a proliferation of psychotherapies would ensue, a goodly number containing a kernel of actuality in addition to their other constituents. This is indeed the case, I believe.

Today we stand not 10 years past the midpoint of the previous century, but 10 years into a new century. Although I have little doubt that our understanding of the human condition has improved somewhat in these 50 intervening years, I believe it has done so in detail. The larger picture, that divined by Allport, remains basically unchanged. And although there seems to be increased agreement that the efficacy of a subset of the panoply of interventions labeled psychotherapeutic has been reasonably established, and that these work effectively to reduce human misery and some specific miseries more so than others, how and why they do so are still moot in spite of, I believe, sectarian claims to the contrary.

That you are reading this foreword at all, I take as evidence that you, as well as Allport and the authors of this excellent book, have not yielded to the seductive enticements of nihilism, be it represented by a retreat to ideology, "factism," or "burnout." What, then, to do? What other course provides a goodfaith alternative, one that, again to quote Allport (1960), can "open doors and clear windows so that our chance of glimpsing ultimate philosophical and religious truth may not be blocked?" (p. v). To my mind, the authors of this work, Gerald Mozdzierz, Paul Peluso, and Joseph Lisiecki, provide one. The overarching aim of psychological treatment, as they envision it, is to foster clients' disengagement from preoccupation with symptoms, pathology, dysfunctional frames, and defective action patterns so that engagement with healthier beliefs and behaviors can occur. The tack they employ is to teach how master therapists think across the essential domains of competence that are necessary if a therapist—whether a beginning, advanced, or established therapist—is to be effective with patients. These are (a) connecting with and engaging clients; (b) assessing the clients' readiness for change and their strengths and goals; (c) building and maintaining a therapeutic alliance; (d) understanding, empathizing into, and working respectfully with the clients' cognitive schemata; (e) addressing the clients' emotional states and traits; (f) understanding and working with clients' ambivalences about change; and (g) using insight-generating nonlinear thinking and interventions to communicate more effectively with clients and to help clients communicate more effectively with themselves. The authors emphasize and demonstrate cogently, clearly, and to good effect that master practitioners do not think exclusively in conventional, linear ways, but at crucial times in the process of intervening in the lives of their clients distinguish themselves by a recourse to nonlinear thinking and communications in the service of engendering positive changes in their clients.

Befitting a text that takes such pains to distinguish degrees of therapeutic sophistication, the authors give considerable attention to the "stages of development" that would-be therapists traverse on their path to mastering the science and art of intervening for the better in the lives of those who come to them for help. The model the authors adopt to schematize that journey is that proffered by Stoltenberg (1997). Using this flexible, three-level, integrated, developmental schematization of counselor development, the authors define and describe the personal preoccupations of therapists at each level that may interfere with their growth as therapists and offer workable suggestions as to how they might get back on track should they be detoured.

Just as I have, I trust that you, regardless of where you place yourself on the ladder of psychotherapist development, will find this book useful and enlightening, for its authors have done an excellent job of summarizing and synthesizing the relevant literature, empirical and theoretical, on how psychotherapy when it is psychotherapy proceeds and works. Their presentation on training and developing psychotherapists is also state of the art. Their prose is lucid, straightforward, and nuanced. Just as I have, you will, I trust, appreciate the breadth and depth of knowledge that they express so clearly. Although that is all well and good and cannot be gainsaid, the exceptional worth of this book inheres in the insights it conveys into how master therapists function with their clients. And, make no mistake about it, the authors¹ give every indication that they are indeed master therapists. Their clinical illustrations are apt, pithy, and illuminating. They write of their clients with warmth, respect, and empathetic and insightful understanding. Their examples of nonlinear intervention are well-chosen, witty, enlivening, and perspicacious.

To sum up, to my mind, little has changed since Allport (1960) fully 50 years ago concluded that no one veridical, comprehensive view of personality had yet emerged. Instead, he believed that the human sciences created numerous descriptions of human nature and action, many of which represented an aspect of truth, but none the total picture. Although one could hope to build an accurate whole out of analyzing and synthesizing these part pictures, Allport (1960) surmised that it was impossible to harmonize

their fundamentally conflicting elements. His response to this state of affairs was not to leave the field or proceed to study it in "bad faith." His alternative: to continue on, while refusing to prematurely limit the conception of what it is to be human, and to work toward a valid naturalistic approach to human nature that, as he put it, "must have open doors and clear windows, so that our chances of glimpsing ultimate philosophical and religious truth may not be blocked" (Allport, p. v).

Because our understanding of psychotherapy and counseling is inherently linked to our understanding of human personality, those who wish to rightly alter for the better the state of those who present themselves as clients are faced with the same choice that Allport confronted. The authors of the text before you, Mozdzierz, Peluso, and Lisiecki, have provided, I believe, an appropriate response to that challenge. Train oneself and train others in the strategies and thinking that master therapists employ to engage and assist their clients in living better. Mozdzierz, Peluso, and Lisiecki's text is admirably designed to assist in that task. It is up-to-date and factual. Its principles of intervention are applicable to a diverse clientele experiencing diverse difficulties. It enables therapists of differing theoretical orientations to employ the frameworks provided by the theories they adhere to while applying the schemas that master therapists use in treating their clients. And, it teaches them admirably well, for not only are its authors master therapists, but they are also master teachers.

Herbert H. Krauss, Ph.D.
Pace University
September 29, 2008

ENDNOTE

In the interest of full disclosure, I ought to indicate that I have had a close professional and personal friendship
with the first author, G. J. M., for over 40 years. On my part, it was based on my respect for him as an exceptionally able psychologist and a fine and decent man of unquestionable integrity. I have met J. L. and have had no
contact with P. P.

Preface

If I have seen further it is by standing on [the] shoulders of Giants.

Sir Isaac Newton, 1676

As odd as it may seem, this text has a "story" to tell—it contains a narrative of sorts. The theme of the narrative concerns evolution, and as such it represents the growth in our collective understanding of how counseling and therapy work—their effective ingredients and how they work together in a sequence of sorts. As our understanding has evolved, it is clear that there has always been much to be learned from what master practitioners do when they interact with their clients, but there is even more to learn from how they think about things therapeutic. That revelation is a major part of the backdrop in our narrative.

Following that major understanding about our "narrative," in each of the four major sections of our text, which obviously succeed one another, we first describe more fundamental and foundational thinking (and therapeutic understandings) that must precede more advanced concerns. It's just like telling a "story"—here is where our story begins, and as a consequence of that, here is how it evolves in the next section, and so on. The evolution of the thinking that we describe is not absolute—few things seem to be. Rather, it is heuristic, and meant to help counselors and therapists develop *their* thinking to evolve further.

Like all good narratives, we believe that our story has a rather unique, timeless, and sparkling introduction and a somewhat surprising ending. Although we would hope that our story is a "page turner" that will leave the reader breathless, it is after all a textbook that will be inspiring to some and mind-numbing to others.

Like some stories, we also have a "prequel" to tell. We give a hint regarding the nature of our prequel in the quote at the beginning of this preface by Sir Isaac Newton. That is, our narrative has precursors to whatever contributions that we may be making to an understanding of the nature and processes of counseling and psychotherapy. The coming together of this text reflects a combination of several things: a love for the field of counseling and psychotherapy, decades of study, practicing our craft, writing, teaching, and supervising. We collectively share amazement at the potential for healing that counseling and psychotherapy have in settings too numerable to mention. Our text and its prequel also reveal a deep respect and amazement for those master practitioners who seem to practice effectively and effortlessly. Those practitioners' efforts in concert with the creative, disciplined, and methodical work of countless researchers are the "shoulders" upon which we have stood to make our observations and write our "story."

Our narrative is an effort to take the seemingly therapeutically mysterious (i.e., the apparent magical results that master practitioners obtain) and demystify it. In doing so and revealing their "secrets" (i.e., how they think), we can hopefully put the "magic" we are unveiling to use in training practitioners and benefiting their clients. The historic classical giants of our field deserve recognition in our "prequel" (e.g., Freud, Adler, Jung, Horney, Rogers, and Sullivan). We note sadly that other, more modern masters passed away during the preparation of our manuscript. These include Paul Watzlawick, Insoo Kim Berg, Steve de Shazer, Michael White, Albert Ellis, and Jay Haley, just to name a few. Their passing punctuates the fact that if the best elements of their diverse (yet similar) ways of mastery were not preserved, they would pass into legend and be forgotten. That would be an unnecessary loss to the field and to coming generations of practitioners (as well as their clients). We are grateful for all their precursor contributions. It is our fondest hope that this text continues the evolution in thinking and understanding about psychotherapy and counseling that they nurtured.

There is a somewhat muted but nevertheless ominous reality underlying our narrative as well. It is our fear that the best ideas and methods of teaching are in danger of becoming lost in the training of new

practitioners. This may very well be due to the fact that although demands for more training are being imposed, some aspects of training have become curtailed. To add further intrigue to our "plot," emphasis seems to have moved more toward the technical and mechanical aspects of *what* to say and *how* to say it, pinpoint pigeonhole diagnoses, psychopathology, risk management, and so on, rather than a more acute focus on developing and shaping the critical and reflective thinking that enables a practitioner to *know* how to provide clients what they need. We do not believe that this needs be the case and offer our work as a way of conceptualizing *how to think like a counselor and therapist*.

Gerald J. Mozdzierz

Paul R. Peluso

Joe Lisiecki
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Acknowledgments

A project like this requires dedication and support in order for it to get through the process to publication. There have been many people who have helped us keep our dedication, and have supported us throughout. One person in particular who was instrumental in making this work was Dana Bliss and everyone from Routledge. We would be remiss if we did not also acknowledge those friends and colleagues who have encouraged us along the way, most especially Jon Carlson, Jim Bitter, Richard Watts, and Bernard Shulman.

We are also indebted to the countless clients and families with whom we have worked who sparked our imaginations, stimulated our thinking, and in the end promoted our development as better clinicians. These nameless individuals were the inspiration for the clinical case examples contained in the book.

Last, and most heartfelt, we could not have devoted the time, energy, and effort that a work such as this requires without the love and support of our families, especially our spouses, Charlene Mozdzierz, Jennifer Peluso, and Mary Ann Lisiecki. We also extend a specific loving acknowledgment to our children (Kimberly, Krista, Pamela, and Andrea Mozdzierz; Helen and Lucy Peluso; and Ann Marie, Joseph, Teresa, and Paul Lisiecki).

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