Commentaries on Friedman’s

The Anatomy of Psychotherapy

Issue Editor:
Melvin Bornstein, M.D.
Commentaries on Friedman’s *The Anatomy of Psychotherapy*

**Melvin Bornstein, M.D., Issue Editor**

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FOR THE LAST THREE DECADES, Lawrence Friedman has given psychoanalysts a fresh slant on the analytic situation. He has written of the experience of the analyst, which, until recently, was uncommon in analytic literature. He has asked how analysts think in the analytic situation. What are their sources of gratification and frustration? How do they deal with their frustration? How do their needs correspond and diverge from their patients’ needs? By understanding why analysts use theory, he explores the experience of the analyst, the reasons that analysts use a particular theory, and the evolution of theory in response to the changing needs of the analyst.

Lawrence Friedman is ideally suited for this task. He is trained in philosophy, history, and psychiatry. His understanding of psychoanalysis is extensive. His writings have special relevance for psychoanalysis because of the current attention given to the experience of the analyst in the analytic situation.

Although the title *The Anatomy of Psychotherapy* refers to psychotherapy, the book is actually about psychoanalysis. Friedman’s premise is that psychoanalysis is a stressful encounter. He believes that it is stressful because of the demands it evokes from the patient, which will be frustrated, and the unnatural responses to the patient’s demands that are required of the analyst. The analyst turns to theory for guidance and support in this unnatural situation.

Friedman contends that the objectives of analysis are different for the analyst and patient. The patient wants relief from discomfort and attempts to influence the analyst to provide him with that relief. The analyst wants to analyze and feel like an analyst. In the ideal analytic situation, the analyst remains ambiguous and avoids influencing the patient. The disparity in objectives comprises a major paradox in the psychoanalytic situation. Throughout his book, Friedman deals with how analysts have grappled with that paradox.
In an examination of theory, Friedman uses his skills in history to examine the changes that have been made in psychoanalytic theory in dealing with the paradox. One chapter is devoted to the therapeutic alliance that Friedman believes to be a concept that evolved from the need to feel that patient and analyst share a common goal when actually they do not, except in the content of the transference and counter-transference. He argues that the analyst's needs are often seen by the theory that he chooses.

We approached this issue of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* recognizing that *The Anatomy of Psychotherapy* is a significant book. However, because of its density, it requires several readings and might not be read by a wide audience. An issue of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* with commentaries by a variety of analytic writers, followed by Lawrence Friedman's response, will illuminate the important issues taken up in the book.

Fred G. Hilkert presents an overview of the book. He addresses the character of Freudian theory of correlating parts with whole, and specific with general. This theme is discussed by Theodore Jacobs, who contends that Friedman may have focused too much on some specifics and not the whole by arguing that the purpose of theory is to relieve tension and the fundamental experience in the analytic situation is stress.

Melvin Bornstein argues that, clinically, pleasure, mastery, adaptation, and closeness are of equal importance to stress as centers of experience in the analytic situation.

Robert Michels argues that Friedman has presented a metatheory of the therapist that has relevance only to the troubled analyst who uses theory for comfort. Michels does not believe it is applicable to all analysts and therefore cannot be made into a general theory.

Howard Levine elaborates on the image that Friedman portrays of continuous interaction within the analytic situation. The analyst and patient are constantly doing to one another. Levine focuses on an additional paradox in the analytic situation: the ubiquity of action by the analyst in the context of technically neutrality.

In contrast to Friedman's view that therapy is messy and ambiguous while theory is clear and reassuring, Robert Wallerstein argues that the theory is messy and ambiguous, not the therapy. No better example is the multiple theoretical models available that have the capacity
to address only parts of the analytic situation. Wallerstein describes how the clinical principles of transference, resistance, and conflict are indeed consistent, clear, and generally accepted.

Estelle and Morton Shane elaborate on Friedman's argument of the function of therapy as providing us with comfort. They point out that the differences between psychotherapy and psychoanalysis vary, depending on the theory that one uses.

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Friedman’s Paradox


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A Response