

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Polarities of Experience: Relatedness and Self-Definition in Personality Development, Psychopathology, and the Therapeutic Process.** By *Sidney J. Blatt*

Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008, 404 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1-4-4388-0314-7. \$69.95. (hardcover)

### **Relatedness, Self-Definition and Mental Representation: Essays in Honor of Sidney J. Blatt.**

Edited by *John S. Auerbach, Kenneth N. Levy, and Carrie E. Schaffer*  
New York: Routledge, 2005, 316 pp. ISBN: 1-58391-289-4. \$62.95. (hardcover)

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DOI: 10.1037/a0015154

These two volumes present a most impressive and fitting capstone to Sidney Blatt's very productive lifetime of almost unmatched threefold integration of (a) clinical experience, beginning with his astute observation of the strikingly different thematic preoccupations of two otherwise very similarly depressed patients whom Blatt was analyzing during his psychoanalytic training; (b) the theoretic conceptualization stemming from these clinical observations, which became the basic fabric of his lifetimed major addition to our psychological explanatory universe; and (c) the painstaking systematic empirical data gathering, together with the creation of necessary—and truly appropriate—measures and instruments that, in ensemble, provide such strong data-based support for Blatt's clinically inspired theoretic harvesting. It is this almost unique, and almost seamless, combination of the clinical, the theoretical, and the buttressing empirical that is presented by Sidney Blatt, psychoanalyst and developmental clinical psychologist (author or coauthor of approximately 200 professional articles, and author or coauthor and editor or coeditor of about a dozen books) in his own very persuasive assembling of the trajectory of his life's work in his own magisterial volume, and it is amplified and extended in the festschrift volume, edited by three former students and continuing colleagues, one from very early in his career and one very recent, and contributed to by a stellar assemblage of 27 additional authors, about half former students at Yale University who became collaborating authors and about half long-time colleagues working along related intellectual lines.

The entire enterprise is an intellectually and psychoanalytically grounded, and empirically supported, effort to create a unifying conceptualization of the normal developmental process (extending into the entire adult lifetime), the normative evolution of the lifetime prevailing personality organization, the failures of balance and the compensatory exaggerations that result in the maladaptations evident as our varying psychopathological formations, and the reparative therapeutic processes designed to undo the psychopathology. The central theme—and this is what stems from Blatt's insightful observations with those two depressed analysands from his psychoanalytic training period—is that we are all psychologically constituted by two distinct, but interdependent, developmental configurations: one originally labeled *introjective*, later enlarged to *self-definition*, dealing with issues of the identity and the integrity of the autonomous self, the self as agent; and the other originally labeled *anaclitic*, later enlarged to *relatedness*, dealing with issues of relationship with, and need for, others, originally the caretaking family, and enlarging over life to friends, colleagues, and the larger networks of our social and political world.

These two configurations are distinctly constituted with differing character styles (self-oriented vs. object-oriented), differing instinctual focus (more aggressive concerns vs. more libidinal concerns), differing defensive systems (counteractive vs. avoidant), and differing expressive modes (cognitive vs. affective). Normal development consists of a balanced, interrelated development of both dimensions—at times leaning more one way and at other times the other way—but always in constant dialectical tension and oscillation. But such balance is never perfect, and human variability in genetic endowment and in life experience is such that most become more focused on the issues of the one polarity or the other: either the concerns with ambition, achievement, self-worth, fear of failure, and so forth, with risks of burdensome shame and guilt; or oppositely, concern with one's sea of relationships, with being nurtured and loved, with one's capacity to love, and with risks of loss and abandonment. This distinction was first discerned in the different psychologies of those two depressed patients and ultimately developed into the two distinct and clearly discernible anaclitic (relatedness) and introjective (self-definitional) normative character configurations with so many, lodged of course at some point along the connecting spectrum linking them.

And of course, our manifest and diverse psychopathological forms, from neurosis through the borderline and on to the psychotic, are the varying degrees of more extreme and maladaptive exaggerations of the one or the other

of these binary dimensions that our genetic anlagen and our idiosyncratic more or less dysfunctional or traumatic upbringing have brought us to. Thus, the various psychopathological forms are not isolated, independent diseases but are interrelated modes of adaptation (or maladaptation) organized at different developmental levels within two basic personality configurations. Actually, this is a powerful current (and in the hands of Blatt and his many coworkers, empirically supported) restatement of Sigmund Freud's original innovative thesis of the continuity of the normal and the abnormal (i.e., pathological), along a spectrum in human development and functioning.

It is also a very persuasive restatement of a position forcefully propounded by Karl Menninger, Mayman, and Pruyser (1963) in their book, *The Vital Balance*, which proposed that the "Life Process in Mental Health and Illness" (their subtitle) consisted of five orders of dysfunction of the normal developmental process, both linking normal psychology to the abnormal and linking the various separately described mental disorders to one another as reflections of varying degrees of maladaptation from the norm, each of them a stage in a single (potentially) reversible process. In that era, dominated by the categorical illness pictures described as distinct pathologies that became the dominant *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*; American Psychiatric Association, 1980) diagnostic presentation, *The Vital Balance* quickly became the least attended of Menninger's many volumes.

It is just this long-time dominance of the *DSM* system—with its putative atheoretical stance, with its categorization of a myriad (over 400) presumably distinct individual mental illness categories with little attention to etiological considerations or to meaning structures, and with the consequent problems of comorbidity based on overlapping diagnostic symptom clusters—that forms an important subtheme of Blatt's volume, his effort to replace *DSM* with a coherent and meaningful classification system based on a comprehensive, logically comprehensible, elaboration of the psychoanalytic framework provided by Freud and the subsequent generations of his followers. This is the same impulse that activated the production, during the period that Blatt was preparing his book, of the *Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual (PDM)*; PDM Task Force, 2006), edited by Stanley Greenspan, Nancy McWilliams, and Robert Wallerstein, a comprehensive, also psychodynamically based, diagnostic system built on dimensional elaborations of character configurations and maladaptive and symptomatic extensions in theoretically linked extrapolations, each based on differential meaning structures. Although Blatt does not mention *PDM* in his volume, that effort is clearly in concert with, and complementary to, his unifying developmental and meaning-making thrust.

Drawing upon a vast literature review of his own work with his collaborating authors—as well as a seemingly exhaustive list of contributors in all the linked and related areas, encompassing some 75 printed pages and probably over 1,200 citations to books and articles, with some as recent as 2007 and even one spotted from 2008 (*mirabile dictu*)—Blatt has organized his volume sequentially (after defining and describing his fundamental polarity of experience) into three logically following sections on personality development, personality organization and psychopathology, and lastly, the therapeutic process. Actually, he starts with the philosophical literature of ancient Greece and Rome (with the earliest citation to Empedocles in 440 B.C.) and then proceeds through the Medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment periods, to our modern sociological and evolutionary theorizing with attention to psychoanalytic theory, to what Blatt calls *neopschoanalytic theory*, to systems theory, and to the array of nonpsychoanalytic personality and developmental theorists, as well as to attachment theory and its involving imbrication with psychoanalysis. This is all in the effort to demonstrate the long-standing intellectual awareness of the basic postulated dichotomy, though not always explicitly articulated as such, and of course with widely discrete vocabularies. Which of course leaves one to wonder how this historically Western worldview might be tempered by a comparable literature focus from the Eastern world. More research for the future? (Blatt at many points indicates open areas for indicated research still to be done).

Blatt feels that most personality theorists—including Freud, Erik Erikson, and Jean Piaget among the most notable—have given undue (quite one sided) emphasis to the quest for self-definition, personality integrity, and identity, basically the self as individual agent, although Blatt is able to point oppositely to others, beginning in American psychoanalysis with Harry Stack Sullivan and the interacting relational perspective inaugurated by him. This latter is a perspective that has been given much additional current impetus by psychoanalytic and nonpsychoanalytic feminist theorizing, which highlights issues of relatedness and of connectedness within a nurturing and loving matrix, beginning of course with the mother-infant interacting dyad. In this context, Blatt proposes an amplified version of Erikson's famous eight-stage lifetime developmental unfolding (to which Blatt has added what he feels to be a missing ninth stage, placed during the childhood Oedipal period), together with a different mode of graphic presentation (see p. 105). This revision is meant to show that implicit in Erikson's schema, one can discern an alternating preoccupation with one or the other side of the interpersonal relatedness or self-definitional polarity. I find it a compelling perspective, creating now two distinct, but always interactive, lines of epigenetic psychological development. And where the two lines are initially more separate and distinct, Blatt sees an

increasing maturational integration, coming in adolescence, as one of the hallmark achievements of that phase of life.

With the development of adult basic personality or character styles, which occurs within the balanced range of normal development, as most people put more emphasis on one or the other of these fundamental dimensions, Blatt harks back to the ancient Greek division between the Dionysian and Apollonian lifestyles. His charts on pages 135 and 139 can be seen as today's anaclitic type (e.g., "levelers," "field dependent," even Carl Jung's "extroverted")—with histrionic personality styles, and avoidant, repressive defenses, focused on issues of the heart—and today's introjective type (e.g., "sharpeners," "field independent," and Jung's "introverted")—with obsessive personality style and counteractive defenses, focused centrally on issues of the head—with all of psychological normality and pathology arrayed at different developmental levels of the two configurations, both the adaptive and the maladaptive.

It is of course the maladaptive with which the clinician is the most concerned in the constant crucible of daily work. Beginning with his initial elaboration of the two varieties of depression, the introjective and the anaclitic, and the tracing of this same polarization in the enlarging array of character configurations and personality disorders with which he has become increasingly concerned, Blatt has been able to link them to the whole array of *DSM* Axis I and Axis II disorders, not as "isolated, independent diseases, but rather as interrelated modes of maladaptation, organized at different developmental levels within two basic configurations that focus primarily on issues of either interpersonal relatedness or self-definition" (p. 186). Here is Blatt's effort to create an etiologically based, dimensionally organized, taxonomy of psychopathology.

This leads naturally to considerations of therapy in the final section of the volume. And while all that Blatt proposes is built consequentially on the argument up to this point and is indeed just as logically coherent, I feel that this last section may be less compelling to the psychodynamic clinician, trained and practiced in the varieties of technical practices that mark our pluralistic psychoanalytic metapsychological traditions in all their continually evolving refinements. Blatt begins by taking as his point of departure the assertions by the psychologist, methodologist, and statistician, Lee Cronbach—as early as the 1950s, very much in keeping with the stance that Blatt was inevitably bringing to the study of the therapy enterprise—that patients being idiosyncratically different, so must the study of therapy look at individual patient variables as important determinants of therapeutic strategies rather than seeing therapy conventionally as a one-size-fits-all activity. This call was, of course, not unique to Cronbach (or following him, Blatt) but has been characteristic of all serious psychoanalytic therapy research all along. An important example has been the psychotherapy research project of the Menninger Foundation, conceived in the early 1950s and written up by me in final form 30 years later, in my book *Forty-Two Lives in Treatment* in 1986 (Wallerstein, 1986).

Blatt presents in some detail the Austen Riggs–Yale Project, in which he was an active investigator; the Menninger psychotherapy research project, in which he and his colleagues reanalyzed the primary data lent to them in accord with his anaclitic–introjective dichotomization of the patients' character organizations; the Kortenberg–Leuven Study in Belgium, in which he participated; and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Treatment of Depression Collaborative Research Program, again in which he and his colleagues reanalyzed the data in keeping with his organizational schematization, the two configurations. Several different empirical research instruments created by Blatt and his group were applied to the various data sets, with very state-of-the-art statistical methods.

What may make their findings less immediately compelling to the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic clinical audience is what gets omitted from such a study, the actual verbatim content of therapeutic sessions, whether in critical clinical vignettes, or more extended narrative accounts, or in the moment-to-moment interactions captured, for example, by the different investigators who contributed to the volume on psychoanalytic process research published by Dahl, Kächele, and Thomä (1988). What emerges there from Blatt's accounts, at various points, of the propounded mutative forces of therapeutic change, is the experiencing of a "hierarchical series of gratifying involvements and experienced incompatibilities" (p. 244), akin at a higher developmental level to the early developmental sequences in the earliest mother–infant interactions. Inevitably, this emphasizes the therapeutic relationship and its transference–countertransference matrix at the expense of (i.e., lesser emphasis on) the interpreted lexical content and its multilevel meanings in the therapeutic transactions. This is related of course to the whole focus of the Boston Change Process Study Group (see Stern, 2004, p. xxii), among many others (emphases in different ways by Kohut, 1984, and by Loewald, 1960).

This concept of the balance of factors leading to therapeutic change is restated several times in the final chapter, with increasing emphasis, and while in accord with so much contemporary thought, can be seen as prompting an imbalanced perspective (whether inadvertently or not) in the continuing back and forth in the ever-ongoing discussions about the relative roles of relationship and insight in achieving enduring therapeutic change. For example, Blatt states, "The mutative power of long-term intensive psychotherapy appears to derive from the ongoing tension between closeness and distance, between attachment and separation, between the development of

relatedness and self-definition in repeated sequences of gratifying involvements and experienced incompatibilities” (p. 263).

But this is a very minor cavil about a wonderfully impressive accomplishment, integrating developmental, systems theory, and attachment theory perspectives into a recasting of classical psychoanalytic theory and its Eriksonian extensions (the latter itself first recast) into a unified coherent presentation of normal development, of normal character configurations (in an integrated duality), of psychopathology, and of its therapeutic remediation. Our field owes much to Sidney Blatt’s lifetime of work at clinical, theoretical, and empirical psychoanalytic integration.

The companion volume, a festschrift, put together by three of Blatt’s former students, and now collaborating partners, although published 3 years earlier (2005), is best read as a supplement to, and a complement of, Blatt’s own account. There are 18 chapters, about half of them by Blatt’s former students who became working colleagues, and they are all well represented in Blatt’s own volume as well as having ample references to papers by, and with, Blatt in their own chapters here (anywhere from a dozen references to their work together, and on up, per chapter). The other half are by eminent colleagues, at Yale University and elsewhere, contemporaries of Blatt, with shared or related interests, and some of their chapters are based on that shared interest, though usually approached from a differing perspective, and some are expositions of their own work, with only tangentially shared themes. This half is a set of most distinguished psychological colleagues, all joined in paying tribute to their admired colleague. Most of the book’s contributors are American, though a third of the chapters come from authors in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Israel (mostly former students at Yale). Only one group seems missing: Blatt’s many collaborators and students at the University of Leuven, in Belgium, though a volume focused on depression, its theory and treatment, coedited and coauthored by Blatt, came out from that group in 2005 (Corveleyn et al., 2005). [Author’s disclaimer: I was asked to write, and wrote, the foreword to that volume.] Two of the festschrift chapters have been previously published and adapted for inclusion here.

The opening chapter by John Auerbach, Kenneth Levy, and Carrie Schaffer lays out the plan for the book. They start with their intention: “The present *Festschrift* volume is our attempt not only to honor these contributions (by Blatt and his lifetime collaborators) but also to disseminate them more broadly within both psychoanalysis, where empirical research is increasingly neglected, and clinical psychology, where psychoanalysis is increasingly ignored” (p. 2). The book fulfills this aim. It starts in this first chapter with a loving short biography of Sidney Blatt, followed by a capsule overview of his lifetime of intellectual contributions that his own volume has spelled out at length. Then the organization of this festschrift volume is spelled out, organized into five successive sections: personality development, psychopathology, assessment (meaning projective psychological testing), psychotherapy and the treatment process, and last, most challenging, applied psychoanalysis.

A half dozen of the chapters, all by former students, and all amply represented in Blatt’s own volume, elaborate and explain the aspects of Blatt’s oeuvre with which they worked together with him: David Zuroff et al., on the overall conceptualization of the dichotomous but ever-interactive developmental process and the various maladaptive outcomes; Nasreen Khatri and Zindel Segal, specifically on depression for which Blatt’s seminal contribution in delineating the anaclitic and introjective types is compared in detail to Aaron Beck’s somewhat comparable spelling out the personality styles of sociotropy and autonomy from a cognitive–behavioral perspective; Beatriz Priel, focusing on the developmental process, presenting particularly her own studies in Israel on what she calls the middle childhood developmental years (ages 5–6 and 9–10), all grounded in Blatt’s developmental framework of the two dialectically engaged referential themes; Barry Ritzler and Howard Lerner, both of whom focused on object relations. Ritzler used instruments devised by Blatt to operationalize object relations (in coordination with standard projective techniques, the Rorschach test and the Thematic Apperception Test) in the study especially of schizophrenic illness, and Lerner used a similar array of instruments to study the work of Blatt’s group at Yale alongside the object relations studies of M. Mayman’s group at Michigan, creatively pointing to similarities and divergences; and Phebe Cramer, using a somewhat idiosyncratic view of therapeutic change within a Blatt-grounded framework of shifts in defensive constellations vis à vis IQ (the latter usually not seen as an effectively interacting variable). The reader who has first absorbed Blatt’s volume will find most all of these chapters to be very familiar territory, each highlighting the author’s own participation in “the house that Blatt built.”

The remaining chapters, almost all written by colleagues not from Yale, offer more novel and challenging perspectives. Outstanding among them is Norbert Freedman’s chapter on what he calls *spatialization*. Taking off from Blatt’s early recognition of the crucial importance of spatial representation, Freedman intertwines very interesting personal and theoretical thoughts. As someone who has become totally blind, Freedman lives in a world where spatial awareness—closeness to, and distance from, objects and people—is dependent on constant searching attention to engraved memory and to heightened responsiveness to sensory cues other than visual (auditory, olfactory, etc.). The reflective theorizing that Freedman’s personal handicap inaugurated is summed up in the following way:

Personal recollections, together with empirical observations and conceptual reflections, persuade me that the notion of *psychic space* as it appears in psychoanalytic discourse, should be considered from multiple distinct vantage points, and as part of the representational process of self and others, where it is inextricably bound up with symbol formation. (p. 69)

Freedman distinguishes inner body-self space, object relational space, transitional space, and symbolizing space, all unfolding within the perception of an actual framework of physical space.

Other contributors add to the wide array of directions inspired by one or another aspect of Blatt's work: Beatrice Beebe et al. on the bidirectionality of the mother–infant dyadic unit, with self-regulation and interactive regulation both emerging and leading to the necessity in therapy of both one-person and two-person therapeutic structuring; Peter Fonagy's and Mary Target's exemplification, via a detailed case report, of the useful applications of three types of psychic changes, all akin to concepts in Blatt's book—intersubjective shifts, changes of mental processes, and changes in mental representations—in studying the therapeutic process and its outcome; and Stanley Messer's and Laura McCann's discussion of the problem of the single-case method in therapy research in which they aver that “[w]ithin a single-case paradigm, generalizability, or external validity, is demonstrated through replication on a case-by-case basis. This approach has been called the N-of-one-at-a-time design” (p. 227). This they see exemplified in Blatt's research.

Others offer presentations of their own scholarly perspectives, stated in juxtaposition to Blatt's schemata and clearly not incompatible with them. These include Stephen Fleck's presentation of a multifactorial view of the development of schizophrenia, really a “mixed maldevelopment of the neurologic, psychologic and social dimensions of personality, rooted in early or inborn weakness of neuromodular organization which is compromised further by aberrant and contradictory social inputs” (p. 112); Philip Holzman's presentation of an instrument (Thought Disorder Index) as an assessment tool of Rorschach test data, in searching for clinical and subclinical evidence of schizophrenia or its diathesis, which it is no longer heretical to think has genetic determinants (with no mention of Holzman's long-term, and best-known, work on disordered eye movements as an indicator of this genetic endowment); and Lester Luborsky et al.'s discussion of his Core Conflictual Relationship Theme (CCRT) model for assessing change and outcome in therapy using the study of narrative relationship episodes (REs) discerned in therapeutic hours.

The concluding section in this tribute volume contains four articles, all more speculative extrapolations of Blatt's conceptualizations into the realm dubbed *applied psychoanalysis*. The first, by Paul Wachtel, takes up the “sin” of individual greed, little remarked in the literature, and in delineating greed based on psychological insatiability and greed based on psychological heedlessness of others as exemplars of a two-configurations model linked to issues of primary impact on self or on others, brings this all into conceptual line with Blatt's two-configuration model of personality organization. Wachtel intends, of course, “psychoanalytic social criticism” (p. 252), beyond merely individual therapeutic concern. Diana Diamond writes essentially of the same effort in relation to the phenomenon of narcissism and the narcissist, portrayed as the characteristic and dominant character type and mark of our time, and she relates her effort not only to the central psychoanalytic students of narcissism (Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut) but to the various social theorists of the Frankfurt school, some linked more closely to Kernberg and what she calls his “regressive” stance on narcissism, and some linked more closely to Kohut and his “progressive” stance. Again, a dichotomization into two configurations.

Rachel Blass, a long-time student and coworker of Blatt's, takes on shifting psychoanalytic conceptions of the role or the potential role of religion in human affairs, marking what she calls the shift by many from the negative Freudian concept of religious faith as an illusory departure from reality (linked by Blass to Blatt's separateness line) to the positive perspective of religious faith posited by Donald W. Winnicott as a special relationship of trust with community and God (linked to Blatt's attachment line). For Winnicott, that is, illusion it may be, but as with all transitional phenomena, illusion can be a necessary and positive experience. Freud himself was of course not totally impervious to what Blass calls the *Winnicottian perspective*. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud (1930/1961, pp. 64–65) wrote of the impression made on him by his exchanges with the admired Romain Rolland, who talked of the “oceanic” feeling of unbounded eternity as a true source of religious feelings, a sentiment that Freud could not share but could also not disavow. And Robert Holt, the only one of the contributors from a truly earlier psychological generation than that of Blatt, takes on the rise of postmodernism in current psychology and psychoanalysis and thoroughly rejects it as a hurtful influence, opting rather for the interlocking clinical, theoretical, and empirical work that marks the scientific commitment, Holt's and Blatt's alike.

Throughout this volume, the text is interlarded with many moving tributes to Sidney Blatt for his personal qualities as a mentor and as a friend and colleague, and for his intellectual achievements in his ever-restless, inquiring, and insightful mind, always in search of the fullest integration of the clinical, the theoretical, and the empirical. For those concerned with experiencing the wider psychological and psychoanalytic impact of

Blatt's lifetime work that is so well expounded in his own volume, this festschrift volume is a fitting and welcome addition.

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