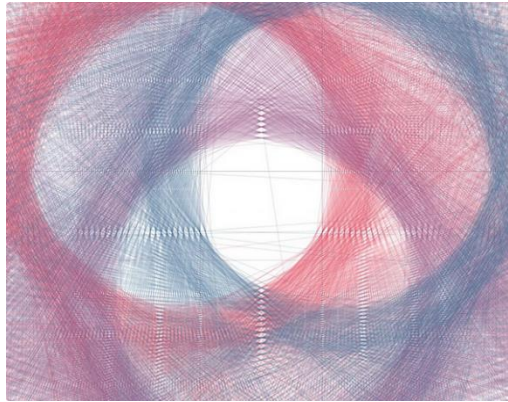


## INTRODUCTION

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By **Dimitris Kokkalis**

As psychotherapists inside a therapeutic relational condition, we cannot but consider the “other person” as a Human seeking help. When writing the word “Human” in October 2024, inescapably, the image of S. Freud emerges, as he considers man’s destructive rage during World War I, and tries to comprehend it. A short time later, he will develop and suggest, amidst general criticism from contemporary psychiatric cycles, the concept of the “death drive”. He considered this as a nuclear driving force, that alongside the driving force that emanates from the “pleasure principle”, defines man. With it, concepts like nuclear ambivalence and the moral imperative of suspending and controlling the death drive, take shape, through the development of human “civilisation”. A civilisation that will promote “relating” and “reflecting” on the self, the other, and the world. Because as Hannah Arendt put it: “We fight evil when we begin to think about it”.

Therefore, when we work psychotherapeutically with the “Other”, in October 2024, as a seeker of help, while finding ourselves amidst two raging, bloody wars with thousands of children among their victims; when the dominant social order is that of bulimic bliss through the accumulation of authoritative power and useless material wealth, we cannot help but question ourselves regarding “Man” as a species. Who is the “other person” as a species, but more importantly, who

are we ourselves as a species? What are the motivating forces behind our actions?

How can we preserve our self-esteem, and highlight the processes that are governed by the “pleasure principle” and the libidinal investment in “good” objects? The relational formations that carry basic values such as solidarity, empathy, cooperation, the utilisation of difference, “autonomy within interdependence” as my teacher G. Vassiliou put it, who himself was indelibly scarred by the Greek civil war.

How can the position of the people that decided to engage with the “Other Person’s” mental health be a position that considers man as worthy of living, of developing moral stances, survival and satisfaction skills, and the creation of a “Meaningful life” that is worth living?

Questions like the aforementioned emerge frequently, both in therapeutic sessions and in discussions between colleagues. Their answers seem to not be self-evident any more.

In this issue, I think that the gaze is turned, mostly, towards the position of the therapist. Towards the place where self-reference seems to be necessary in order to be able to refer to the “Other Person”. This is necessary since the wider setting of the therapists and patients’ lives can share several common stimuli. It may prove crucial to be one step ahead in the attempt to psychically and mentally process these.

Attempting, therefore, to make connections, I begin with Katia Charalabaki’s paper titled “Narcissism”. Narcissus’ reflection cannot contain the “other person” as an autonomous entity; neither can it create intimate relationships by overinvesting in himself, denying even mortality as a characteristic of his species. There is, however, an assisting, delimited narcissism that seems to be necessary for the preservation of the motivation for life and self-esteem, especially in old age.

The poetic reference to the twilight of life, offers – I think – an element of acceptance of mortality, and thus, of the futility of human greed (“The Twilight of Your Life” by Dimitris Kokkalis).

Human qualities like excessive narcissism and greed, probably, contribute to the socio-political arena of mental health being subject to a social condition where power relations are used to abolish the responsibilities of the rulers of the state system that they serve, and to transfer the responsibility of their suffering exclusively to the citizens in general, and the mentally ill individuals in particular. Concepts like “resilience” and “adaptation” on an individual level are presented as highly desired, while at the same time the regulations of democratic function and of the social state as organised collectivities, are drawing their final breaths. (“Work, wellbeing, resilience and politics: Mental health centres, psychotropic drugs and biomarkers in the era of the new normal” by Lykourgos Karatzaferis).

Returning to the psychotherapeutic setting, the reflecting team emerges as an important therapy tool that reflects and is reflected, so as to reinforce the therapeutic process and illuminate possible dark areas of the therapists themselves. (“The Reflective Team in Mental Health Community Settings for Children and Adolescents: Challenges, Benefits and Dilemmas” by Alexandra Perimeni).

How much strength does one really need as a therapist in order to face on a daily basis burning fears, frustration, and the loss of the strength for life in the face of prospective death? One has to tame his own fears and find the strength to turn them into therapeutic energy towards cancer patients. (“Emotions and thoughts of a psychotherapist from therapy with cancer patients” by Sophia Matiatou).

In order to become a therapist, one needs continuous training. Training in the ability of self-reflection, self-awareness, self-knowledge, as well as in interpersonal and group skills of functional communication, and emotional connection and boundaries. (“Not a therapist yet. Transformations of personal and professional identity in a systemic family therapy training program” by Sophia Petta).

Of course, it would be helpful if the experience of therapy could be recorded through the deposition of theoretically processed experiences and studies, for the effectiveness of methods of the systemic therapy approach. This is documented in a significant effort of collecting such experiences and organised studies, as a mapping of “useful instructions” regarding systemic psychotherapy. (Katerina Theodoraki, Rozalia Giannaki: Book Review “Handbook of Systemic Approaches to Psychotherapy Manuals” Editors: Mauro Mariotti, George Saba, Peter Stratton. Integrating Research, Practice, and Training).

Is there, ultimately, hope for “love” and “eros” as a “joyful exuberance” and as a “sense of belonging”? For human intimacy expressed without destructive aggression, and a greedy need to prevail? (Katia Charalabaki: Book review of Nikos Marketos’ book titled “Toxic forms of love”).

Concluding this introduction, I realise that by beginning with a reference to the warmongering aspect of the human species, we arrived at the question and the appeal for a different aspect. That of empathy, cooperation, and of love towards life. Of the aspect that is worthy of loving and of being loved. I think that this is an aspect that is worth fighting for and highlighting. The fact that we continue our work means that, somewhere, somehow, sometimes, we accomplished something.

**Enjoy reading!**

**On behalf of the Editorial Board,**

**Dimitris Kokkalis**