



The Couch in the Marketplace: Psychoanalysis and Social Reality

H. Shmuel Erlich

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The book aims at bridging the conceptual and practical gap between a psychoanalytic focus on the internal world and the dynamics of external reality by examining an array of junctures in which the two perspectives combine to enrich each other. Starting from the inherent bias of the psychoanalytic immersion in working with the internal world, the book deals with a wide array of phenomena in which a binocular perspective is potentially contributing. One such bridge is exemplified by the Group Relations approach, which richly combines psychoanalytic insights with systemic ones. This unique merger is valuable in studying a variety of phenomena both within psychoanalysis and outside it. The work of the analyst in the psychoanalytic setting implies situating oneself on several boundaries - internal and external, love and admiration as well as death and destructive impulses - and the courage and sacrifice demanded by taking up this role. This binocular perspective has significant implications for the formation and maintenance of identity and particularly for the psychoanalytic identity. A study of Moses and Monotheism provides a deeper look into Freud's anguish about his leadership and its aftermath for the survival of his legacy, and along the way - to an understanding of the roots of Jewish identity and the anti-Semitism it arouses, which stem from the explosive act Freud attributes to both Moses and himself. The focus of the book then shifts to other pertinent areas, such as the psychoanalytic contribution to the discontent of the contemporary subject; the inherent difficulty in the relationship of psychoanalysis with the university; the place of the enemy - intrapsychic and real - and the problems inherent in discourse with him; and the impact of external trauma, such as terror attacks, on the psychoanalytic space and setting. Finally, a number of organizational implications and practices are presented and discussed: the place and meaning of the subject in understanding the organization; the special role of corruption in paranoigenesis and regression in groups and organizations; a consultative intervention in a severely traumatized mental health center; and finally, some current perspectives on organizational and consultative intervention in psychoanalytic societies. The importance of this book is its uncompromising adherence to both sides of the divide: a psychoanalytic depth of fathoming the inner world of drives and experience, coupled with a systemic view of the external social conditions in which the psychoanalytic enterprise unfolds and the lives of individuals, institutions and organizations transpires.

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