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Macro Psychology

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Abstract

This is a conceptual attempt to integrate the major current psychotherapeutic methods via the introduction of *Macro Psychology*. The idea is fully philosophical, and the aim is to spur debate. Clinically, we land in the following picture: Scenarios with a maltreated dog, its owner, and a therapist. *Conditioning*: The therapist takes the dog to a safe environment. *Behavioral therapy*: The therapist instructs the owner to take regular long walks with the dog, to feed it regularly, to let it have access to fresh water, and to stop hitting it. *Cognitive behavioral therapy*: The therapist instructs the owner to take regular long walks with the dog, to feed it regularly, to let it have access to fresh water, and to stop hitting it. The therapist also tells the owner why. *Psychodynamically oriented therapy*: The therapist tries to help the owner to reconnect to repressed parts that care for the dog.

1. Introduction

The paper 'Biological Energy and the Experiencing Subject' (Gamper 2021) contains a definition of a purely biological energy that permits a purely mental energy. In this paper, we look at some fundamental psychotherapeutic principles that can be drawn from that standpoint.

2. Macro psychology

Macro psychology is built upon the notion of *biological energy* that was suggested in (ibid.). Biological energy was defined as *the organism's ability to recover from the load it is exposed to*. That load leads to a need for recovery that grows with the load. The available energy has a maximum, and when that is reached, as far as the ongoing recovery is concerned, the available amount of energy is decreased if the load continues to grow.

For experiencing subjects, it is assumed that the need for recovery on the one hand is mediated by signals thereof, and on the other hand, that the subject has a lower ability to perceive those very signals the stronger they are.

This dynamic for experiencing subjects has the odd consequence that even though the energy level lowers when the load is increasing, at high levels of load, the subject tends to put pressure on herself to avoid the troublesome signals of need for recovery in order not to perceive them.

3. The experiencing subject

The introduction of the experiencing subject allows for new possibilities for the organism to cope with load. We need to disentangle first, though, the biological object from the experiencing subject. For the biological object as such, there is no dynamic to talk of. The object recovers if it needs to and can. When the organism is exposed to signals of need for recovery, there is an experiencing subject that perceives them. Whereas the need for recovery is an abstract feature for biological organisms, the signals of need for recovery are a reality for the experiencing subject. The signals can be attended to as they are perceived. This means that the biological needs of recovery are met via the experiencing subject. This, of course, by assumption, is to say that the biological very needs of recovery are not perceived directly. The dynamic, however, is one dimensional — the organism recovers more or less.

The experiencing subject, on its side, can cope with its signals in other ways. To look at those possibilities, we first have to focus on the very subject. For the biological object, the need for recovery is an abstract feature. The subject, on the other hand, has real signals of need for recovery, so it is something that has the experiences of the signals. This something, the subject, has its parts. We will assume that the subject is composed of some parts.

3.1. Repression

The disentangling now comes to work. Whereas the biological object has need of recovery as an abstract but absolute feature, the experiencing subject has its signals of need of recovery as real but with degrees of freedom to engage with them. The suggestion is that the subject can project troublesome signals onto a single part and then repress it. This leaves the repressed part emptied of energy while the remaining parts are energized. This process can be reiterated.

4. Psychotherapeutic principles

The psychotherapeutic processes that are interesting are the reversed ones as compared to the ones previously mentioned. Those were concerned with avoiding difficult signals of need of recovery. Whereas conditioning concerns non-subjective features of the biological organism, behavioral therapy (BT), cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and psychodynamically oriented therapy (PDT) concern processes related to the experiencing subject.

4.1. BT

The psychotherapeutic principle of BT in the context of macro psychology is that the therapist instructs the patient to take explicit recovery measures. The patient, by following the instructions, recovers and by doing so has to endure the previously withheld difficult signals of need of recovery. A typical example is behavioral activation for depression, where the therapist may instruct the patient to take daily walks.

4.2. CBT

The psychotherapeutic principle of CBT in the context of macro psychology is that the therapist instructs the patient to take explicit recovery measures and explains why (according to some model). In the CBT variant of macro psychology, the rationale would be that the patient avoids recovery to avoid the signals of need of recovery. Therefore, she should try to recover even though it hurts in order to gain energy. A typical example is to accept sick leave in cases of exhaustion.

4.3. PDT

The psychotherapeutic principle of PDT in the context of macro psychology is that the therapist tries to empathize with the patient in order to identify aspects of the patient that she has repressed. If the patient can acknowledge repressed contents, she is instructed to try to endure the associated difficult signals of need of recovery that come with it in order to regain access to her own repressed parts.

5. Concluding remarks

The argument is at the heart of the subject/object difficulty in the philosophy of mind. Are experiences real? If so, is it a subject or an object that experiences them? If experiences are experienced by an object, are they really experienced? And if experiences are experienced by a subject, can the subject be an object? Finally, is there a difference between a biological organism with an experiencing subject and a biological organism without an experiencing subject? If so, can the subject be physical in its nature?

References

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