
The tradition that comprises phenomenology and existential philosophy provides psychology and psychotherapy with a foundation for practice. Concrete human limitations and everyday experience are ready themes that offer themselves to exploration and description. In *The Paradoxical Self*, Schneider follows in that tradition by thematizing a basic human contradiction.

Starting from Kierkegaard's description of the contrast between finitude and infinitude, Schneider pursues its contemporary significance. He suggests that the "degree of abstraction" of Kierkegaard's "dualities" might obscure the existential roots of human dysfunction in that polarity. For infinitized and finitized Schneider substitutes the terms expansive and constrictive. In developing a "paradox principle" to describe what this duality indicates, he writes:

The paradox principle embraces the following basic assumptions: (1) The human psyche is a constrictive/expansive continuum, only degrees of which are conscious. (2) Dread of constrictive or expansive polarities promotes dysfunction, extremism, or polarization (the degree and frequency of which is generally proportionate to the degree and frequency of one's dread). (3) Confrontation with or integration of the poles promotes optimal living. (p. 27)

Schneider outlines dysfunctional "extremes" as "hyperconstriction" and "hyperexpansion" as well as "mixed dysfunctions," which blend both modes. He indicates the "extremism of everyday life" as the existential manifestation of the paradox principle and presents numerous examples of individuals in the throes of contradictions that often cause them to become fixed on one or the other horn of the constrictive/expansive dilemma. This leads to dysfunction, according to his thesis. For example, he notes:

A man who chronically suppresses his imagination will probably daydream at undesirable times. A woman who repeatedly denies her need to affiliate will probably compound that need at an inadvisable mo-
ment. Similar cases can be made for the denial of one's constrictive potentialities—obligations, duties, priorities—all the ways that one "draws back" and confines. For example, a boy who continually spurns self discipline will increase the likelihood that someone else will discipline him. A girl who continually dodges her job duties will increase the likelihood of feeling burdened by those duties. (pp. 39–40)

To situate the thesis in the tradition, he distinguishes his espoused "existential-phenomenological" view from psychoanalytic "limitations," which characterize the classic Freudian position, the Jungian variation, and the more contemporary object-relations position. Yet, his revisions are sympathetic to the still relevant insights that each provides, such as descriptions of unconscious phenomena. He follows Binswanger in emphasizing the importance of the manifest meaning of signs, symbols, and dreams and follows Krippner and Dillard in suggesting that "it may be more fruitful" to understand dreams as metaphoric in regard to "current problems" and "not as historical byproducts" (p. 127).

As an introductory theme that leads the reader toward the description of therapeutic encounters with individuals, Schneider offers examples of "optimal" individual, social, and organizational "confrontations" with paradox. These confrontations overcome the dread of one or the other extreme of expansion or constriction and lead, Schneider asserts, to a comparable overcoming of dysfunction. Schneider suggests further, as his philosophic theme begins to turn toward the individual in therapy, that optimal development and physical health are also possible outcomes of confronting paradox.

In order to support his critique, which emphasizes the existential, contradictory reality of the individual, Schneider utilizes the paradox principle as a critical lens to view Ken Wilber's stance that people can attain "total cosmic unity" (p. 174). This perspective, according to Schneider, amounts to "an effort to deify consciousness," which has "forfeited that which is realistic, practical, and inspiring to people," a one-sided (unlimited) expansiveness that presumes with "hubris" that "human beings have achieved ultimate or infinite consciousness" (p. 176).

Following Tillich in the interest of developing the moral aspect of his theme, Schneider offers that "the concept of traditional religion must be broadened to include secular ways of living" (p. 175). He thinks "religious practice" might utilize the principle to curtail "attempts to forsake responsibility for . . . [religious] 'truths'" (p. 181) by examining how religion might "affirm both our need to yield and assert, withdraw and affiliate, concretize and transcend" (p. 180). Although the philosophical and theological questions that arise within this discussion continue to