

**LONELINESS IN THE THERAPEUTIC DIALOGUE:
AN INTERPRETATION ACCORDING TO THE CONCEPTS
OF WINNICOTT AND HEIDEGGER**

By

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SUMMARY

Loneliness is ubiquitous in the life world of every human being. When the phenomenon is recognised and lived, it can be a positive experience propelling the experiencing person to growth and meaningful relations with others. However, the dread it elicits and the anxiety it engenders in a person may have as a result, a denial that leads to symptoms which can be pathological, such as severe anxiety or depression.

Concomitant with this is an inauthentic or false way of being which leads to disconnectedness from others and alienation from the self. This exacerbates the feelings of loneliness. The experiencing person will do almost anything to avoid this as is often seen in man's frenzied daily activity and intellectualisation, denying the affective part of the self.

These 'difficult to bear feelings' are often the reason for the experiencing person to seek psychotherapeutic help. The psychotherapeutic dialogue can assist the unfolding of the experience of loneliness and make that which is implicitly known to the patient more explicit. In this way loneliness and inauthentic living can be confronted and alleviated.

Because loneliness is a lived phenomenon it cannot be studied through measurement. It can only be understood as it is experienced by the person. For this reason a qualitative, descriptive-dialogic case study research design was chosen for this study.

Data for the study was obtained from one long-term psychotherapy patient who provided a rich source of information. Salient themes on the way in which the patient entered into dialogue with the therapist through various phases in the psychotherapeutic process, were extrapolated. These themes were discussed according to some of Winnicott's and Heidegger's concepts, representing the object relations and phenomenological paradigms, respectively. To facilitate the movement from Heidegger's fundamental ontology to an ontic- psychological discourse, relevant concepts from Buber and Binswanger were used.

The problems engendered by the denial of loneliness and an inauthentic or false way of being is aptly illustrated in the case in question. Although the understanding and verbalisation of loneliness is painful, it also brings relief. The therapeutic alliance makes the

phenomenon in question more accessible to the patient and therefore, makes it a positive experience rather than a ground for dread and anxiety.

Loneliness must be confronted and lived. The alleviation of it is only possible through meaningful relationships with others. To have meaningful relationships, where separateness and mutuality are the essence, one must live in a true and authentic manner.

Key words

Loneliness

Inauthentic Self

Authentic Self

True Self

False Self

Heidegger

Winnicott

Object relations and existential philosophy

Psychotherapy

Qualitative research

OPSOMMING

Eensaamheid is alomteenwoordig in die leefwereld van elke mens. Indien die fenomeen herken word en deel is van die persoon se bestaan kan dit as positief gesien word. Dit kan die persoon voortdrywe na persoonlike groei en gesonde interpersoonlike verhoudings. Indien dit egter ontken word as gevolg van die ang en vrees wat dit voortbring, kan dit negatiewe gevolge hê en presenteer as patologiese gevoelens van ang en depressie.

Gepaardgaande hiermee is 'n onegte, false leefwyse wat lei tot a gevoel van vervreemding van die self en 'n afbreking van verhoudings met ander. Dit het tot gevolg 'n verskerping van die gevoel van eensaamheid. Die persoon wat hierdie gevoelens ervaar sal enige iets doen om dit te vermy. Dit word gesien in dolsinnige daaglikse aktiwiteite of 'n afstomping van die persoon se gevoelslewe deur middel van intellektualisering

Hierdie ondraaglike gevoelens is dikwels daarvoor verantwoordelik dat die persoon vir psigoterapeutiese hulp aanklop. Die psigoterapeutiese dialoog is dikwels die bemiddelaar om hierdie gevoelens wat gewoonlik onuitgesproke is, tot uitdrukking te bring. Deur middel van hierdie proses kan eensaamheid en die vervreemding van self gekonfronteer en meer draagbaar gemaak word.

Synde eensaamheid 'n geleefde fenomeen is, is dit nie as sodanig kwantifiseerbaar en meetbaar nie. Dit kan slegs verstaan word deur te kyk na hoe die mens dit beleef. Daarom is 'n kwalitatiewe, beskrywend-dialogiese gevallestudie as navorsingsmetode vir hierdie studie gebruik.

'n Ryk data basis is vir die doel van hierdie studie uit die notas van 'n psigoterapie met een langtermyn patient verkry. Hooftemas oor die wyse waarop die patient met die terapeut in dialoog getree het, tydens verskillende fases van die psigoterapeutiese proses, is onttrek en bespreek. Hierdie temas is volgens sommige konsepte van Winnicott en Heidegger, wat onderskeidelik die objekrelasies en fenomenologiese paradigmas verteenwoordig, bespreek. Om die oorgang vanaf Heidegger se fundamentele ontologie na 'n ontologiesielkundige diskoers te vergemaklik, is gebruik gemaak van relevante konsepte van Binswanger en Buber.

Die gevallestudie illustreer duidelik die probleme wat ontstaan wanneer gevoelens van eensaamheid ontken word en die persoon op 'n false manier lewe. Dit bring ook duidelik na vore die verligting wat die verstaan en verwoording daarvan meebring. Deur die psigoterapeutiese proses is dit moontlik om die fenomene wat ondersoek word meer toeganklik vir die patient te maak. Sodoende word die gevreesde gevoelens omskep in 'n meer positiewe ervaring.

Eensaamheid moet gekonfronteer en beleef word. Versagting van die gevoel van eensaamheid kan slegs daargestel word deur betekenisvolle verhoudings met ander. Betekenisvolle verhoudings waarin die persoon homself en ander as unieke individue ervaar en sodoende die pad oopmaak vir wedersydse aanvaarding, alleenlik moontlik indien mens jou ware self ken en op 'n egte manier leef.

Sleutelwoorde

Eensaamheid

Onegte Self

Egte Self

Ware Self

Vals Self

Heidegger

Winnicott

Objekrelasies en eksistensiële filosofie

Psigoterapie

Kwalitatiewe navorsing

NOTE ON THE USE OF GENDER SENSITIVE TERMS

For the sake of simplicity the masculine pronoun will be used throughout the study, with exception of the case study itself. This does not imply any gender discrimination.

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