

Relational ethics as the unique selling proposition of contextual therapy?

By Paul Heyndrickx

Relational ethics, the fourth dimension in contextual therapy, was mentioned by Ivan Boszormenyi Nagy as 'what is helpful in therapy' (Masterclass Amsterdam 1997). Relational ethics is what happens in between people. It is a reality that can be shared. Working on justice and fairness in relationships helps people to deal with pain and become themselves. The dimension of 'relational ethics' is often designed as what makes contextual therapy different from other therapeutic paradigms

Discussion: Is the fourth dimension the 'unique selling proposition' of contextual therapy? If so, how can we make the power of this dimension more visible?

Relational ethics in a world of 'evidence based' protocol thinking.

In mental health care there is the movement towards more 'evidence based working'. Psychotherapy has to be based upon models and protocols that have proven to be successful. Evidence based psychotherapy seems only to be interested in the individual. One's behavior can be observed and counted. Can fairness be counted and measured?

Is 'relational ethics' a reality of its own, or is it just another narrative? Can it be measured? (e.g. Relational Ethics Scale) (Wetzels, J; 2017)

Is there enough 'practice based evidence' that taking action towards relatives has a healing effect? Is working on ethics an evidence based way of working? Or is it just another theory without scientific base?

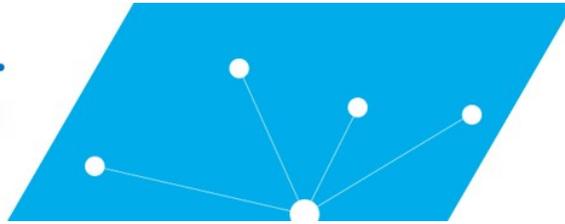
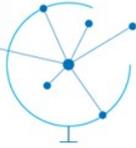
Is it helpful to measure relational ethics? Do therapists have to agree with the idea that measuring is helpful?

Is relational ethics the unique selling proposition of contextual therapy?

Psychotherapy moves towards measuring and protocols. Psychological suffering is looked at in the same way as society looks at physical diseases: the right cure will take away the suffering. The government is forcing psychotherapy into this medical way of thinking and working.

But there is more in and between human beings than cognitive learning, behavior, attachment or hormones. There is also a movement in psychology and psychiatry towards philosophy. (Peter Rober, Dirk De Wachter, Paul Verhaeghe). These scientists and psychotherapists talk about meanings and narratives instead of diseases and pathology. Are they talking about 'relational ethics'?

Is there another therapy school that talks about ethics and how it makes people live a joyful, happy and wholehearted live.



How to make 'relational ethics' as the 'unique selling proposition' of contextual therapy more visible?

How can we show how helpful it can be to take action in relationships? How can we show the balance of give and take and how it works? How can we show entitlement? How can we show the influence of injustice on someone's self? (Hermans, W. & Loon J. van, 2014).

Is it helpful to step into the logics of evidence based thinking. Is a 'mere' philosophical approach enough? As we know people and their relations are so complex and rich that it is almost impossible to reduce it to numbers. Is it helpful to reduce the rich world of meaning, ethics, art, love and joy into numbers and statistics?

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'De meervoudig gekwetste mens. Gedeelde en verdeelde zorg' LannooCampus 2011

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