



Therapeutic Action: An Earnest Plea for Irony

Jonathan Lear

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This book argues that, properly understood, irony plays a crucial role in therapeutic action. However, this insight has been difficult to grasp because the concept of irony itself has been distorted, covered over. It is regularly confused with sarcasm; it is often mistakenly assumed that if one is speaking ironically, one must mean the opposite of what one says, that one must be feigning ignorance, that irony and earnestness cannot go together. All of these assumptions are false. So part of the therapeutic action of this book is conceptual therapy: we need to recover a vibrant sense of irony.

This book, then, is not merely about the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis; it is an enactment of conceptual therapy. It is thus written as an invitation to clinicians--psychologists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists--to renew their own engagement with the fundamental concepts of their practice.

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