



# Therapeutic Action: An Earnest Plea for Irony

*Jonathan Lear*

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"Therapeutic Action is many things: a passionate philosophical communication from one practicing analyst to other members of the psychoanalytic community; a commentary on the under-appreciated contribution of the psychoanalyst (and former student of Heidegger) Hans Loewald, and a profound yet succinct and non-technical discussion of the most important philosophical issues associated with psychoanalysis....The book is distinctive and original, and Jonathan Lear fuses its several dimensions into a whole that is more than the sum of its parts with prose that is effortless, humorous, and consistently engaging."

--Sebastian Gardner, Professor of Philosophy, University College London

"Jonathan Lear's *Therapeutic Action* vindicates its Oscar Wildean subtitle--*An Earnest Plea for Irony*--by giving us a Kierkegaardian reading, not so much of Hans Loewald, but of the transferences between Loewald and Lear. Just as the surviving traces of Plato in Freud were to identify reality-testing with a cognition freed of its sexual past, even so Lear attempts his own version of Kierkegaard's "The Case of the Contemporary Disciple." Lear is Plato to Loewald's Socrates, which is an audacious venture. *Therapeutic Action* has the high merit of helping me to rethink some of my own transferences."

--Harold Bloom

"With this ultimately personal 'how-not-to' book, Lear engages the difficult question: how to write about the process of psychic change without betraying either love or science. *Therapeutic Action* will enliven the thinking of anyone involved in analyzing the psyche."

--Carol Gilligan, New York University, author of *In a Different Voice* and *The Birth of Pleasure*

Prominent professor and highly regarded author Jonathan Lear argues that, properly understood, irony plays a crucial role in therapeutic action. He asserts that irony itself has been regularly confused with sarcasm; it is often mistakenly assumed that irony and earnestness cannot go together.

This book, then, is not merely about the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis--it is an enactment of conceptual therapy. Lear invites psychologists, psychoanalysts, and psychiatrists to renew their own engagement with the fundamental concepts of their practice.

To that end, the book investigates the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity that are appropriate for psychoanalysts, the concepts of internalization and of transference. Lear also offers an extended discussion of the theories of Hans Loewald and Paul Gray--and how they do and do not fit together. The very idea that love, or Eros, could be a drive--as Freud postulated--is given a new interpretation.

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