SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION THEORY OF ETHICAL CHOICES

George Herbert Mead and Peter Berger

Selections from Chapter One of
The Ethical Lives of Clients - Transcending Self-Interest in Psychotherapy
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Ethics and morality are social constructed. In other words, the moral sense is created and modified through social interaction, beginning in childhood and continuing into adulthood. We are in continual social interaction, storytelling, and conversation about what we and other people are doing that is right or wrong.

How to apply this social construction framework to therapy?

Psychotherapy can be viewed as a specialized social interaction in which a client's ethical beliefs, feelings, and sensibilities are explored, affirmed, revised, rejected, and new ones created.

The therapist's focus is the lived experience of the client as a moral agent, on working through moments of struggle between the needs of self and responsibility to others.

We don't have a choice about engaging in this role if we are open to clients bringing in their real-world ethical struggles and dilemmas.

We either do our ethical consultation well—with theory, research, and skills to guide us—or we do it willy-nilly, which means we are not skillful and we take for granted the individualistic ethic of mainstream Western culture.

References:

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