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The Development of the Unconscious Mind

Allan N. Schore.

New York: W W Norton, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-393- 71291-9
(hardcover).

As I read Dr Allan Schore's most recent companion publication, I am propelled out of my complacency once more. I feel a sense of disruption. My psychological 'terra firma' is disrupted. Building on his three decades of original contributions, Dr Schore reaffirms that he '...continues to assert that much of the mental health field's research overemphasizes measures of the left brain conscious self and underappreciates the power of unconscious implicit motivational and emotional systems in the human experience...

There is now agreement that affect dysregulation is a fundamental mechanism of all psychiatry disorders, that right brain deficits in implicit and relational processes are the key to all personality disorders, and the all psychotherapies show a similarity in promoting affect regulation.' (a, p. 28).

These are bold claims. The current evidence to support his claims are precisely the subject of his most recent books, the former 'The Development of the Unconscious Mind' (2019), dedicated 'To all our children', offers readers a chance to re-familiarize themselves with Dr. Schore's vast contributions over the last three decades.

Dr Schore provides ample evidence for the foundations for his paradigm changing principles, embodied in his regulation theory the

focus of his second book (to be published) as applied to our day-to-day clinical practice in, 'Right Brain Psychotherapy' (2019), dedicated '(T)o diligent practitioners of the science of the art of psychotherapy', from the title of his 2012 book.

Collected over three decades, Eva Rass (2018) has edited key papers from Schore's extensive back catalogue of original contributions in The Allan Schore Reader. She offered a useful introduction to Dr. Schore's oeuvre, Sir Richard Bowlby's Preface concluding with:

'All human achievement is built on the shoulders of giants, and just as John Bowlby and Allan Schore have stood on giant's shoulder's, so future generations of scientists will in turn be standing on their shoulders. In his books he has integrated a vast array of scientific advances and organised it in an overarching way that deserves the deepest acknowledgement and gratitude.' (p. ix). That was back in 2012. Now we are treated to a feast of his deepening ideas and concepts.

Allan Schore has continued to push beyond the limits of conventional wisdom, unconstrained by conventional expectations. To redefine basic assumptions in mental health is an act of courage and daring. His quest and passion, to consistently and persistently address the vast advances in the basic neurosciences while at the same time to be deeply engaging, updating and infusing his new insights into our ever-changing cultural and social upheavals, in order to inform our current psychotherapy, is one hallmark of his paradigm change.

This first book is divided into seven chapters. Dr. Schore continues to more deeply explore and to offer the most recent evidence in support of the complex issues related to the mechanism underpinning our earliest attachments, in ordinary and dysregulated states, underscoring an inventiveness that continue to refine his now classic 'inceptive volume', Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development (1994).

Expanding on Bowlby's building blocks of early emotional attachment theories, Schore addresses the relevance of modern attachment theory to autistic spectrum disorders; offers a new level of precision to account for how neurobiology and neuroendocrinology sheds light on the origin of gender and sex differences; relocates Freud's 'unconscious', and much more.

However, it's chapter six, 'The Development of the Right Brain Across the Life Span. What's Love Got to Do with It?' (p172- 209) that, for me, captures the essence of his life's work.

Having heard Schore lecture on this subject at the Australian Childhood Foundation Conference in 2018, he boldly asserts: '(A)lthough the humanities have a long history of exploring this deepest expression of the human heart and mind, the idea that the brain sciences can be used to explain the subtleties and depths of human love has been controversial. Many share the fear that a reductionistic science will reduce the complexities of love to a neural synapse or to a collection of neurochemicals. My ongoing interdisciplinary work on emotion, a central component of love, disputes this idea'. (p. 173).

Yes, I still find reading and re-reading Dr Schore's books a disruptive experience. Yes, I am still deeply challenged as I emerge from my immersion in his concepts. I find that his authentic and original contributions, a pioneer clinician-scientist, has contributed to refine and reshape our understanding of the mechanisms underpinning psychopathology and thus my clinical practice of developmentally informed psychotherapy. Such disruptions will likely continue as the traction of the current paradigm change reshapes the foreseeable future of our therapeutic endeavours, informing our research, clinical practice and policy, as we continue to chart our new 'terra firma'. 16

Reference

E. Rass (ed). The Allan Schore Reader. Setting the Course of Development. Oxon: Routledge, 2018