Hans Strupp: A Pioneer and Giant in Psychotherapy Research

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Gelöscht:

Hans Strupp

Hans Hermann Strupp was born August 25th, 1921, in Frankfurt am Main, Germany and died on October 5, 2006, in Nashville, Tennessee USA. In between, he led a remarkable intellectual, professional, and private life—one that was internationally influential and inspiring, and that brought honor to all organizations, such as SPR, with which he was affiliated.

At age 18, Hans emigrated in time to the U.S. from NAZI-Germany with his mother. He ultimately pursued studies in psychology, earning his doctorate in 1954 from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He also received a Certificate in Applied Psychiatry for Psychologists from the Washington School of Psychiatry, a founder of which was Harry Stack Sullivan. The early career step toward the Sullivanian interpersonal school had an obvious, enduring impact on Hans' subsequent thought and research.

Hans began doing psychotherapy research in the 1950s. By his own account, Hans' lifelong career focus on therapy research and theory was spurred by a trick of fate. The U.S. government personnel research department for which he worked when he needed a dissertation project changed policy: employees could no longer use data from department studies for dissertations. Hans cleared the unexpected hurdle by designing a psychotherapy study.

Recognition for his therapy research came quickly, and helped established Hans as a pioneer in the development of the field of psychotherapy research in the U.S. By 1958, he was invited to participate in what became a series of conferences sponsored by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Division of Clinical Psychology and funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. A broad purpose of the first conference was to foster psychotherapy research. (The conference reports are fascinating windows into the history of therapy research in the U.S. [Rubenstein & Parloff, 1962; Strupp & Luborsky, 1962; Shlien, Hunt, Matarrazo & Savage, 1968]).

One of Hans' pioneering scientific efforts was his insistence that actual therapy session material, audio and videotapes of therapy sessions, was methodologically required to test theories of psychotherapeutic change. The introduction of taping technologies to the consulting room was highly controversial in the 1950s, even summarily dismissed in psychoanalytic circles—Hans' primary theoretical reference group. He was "diagnosed" as a voyeur by some.

Hans was a prolific scholar and researcher: over 300 publications, including 16 books. His contributions to both research and practice have been recognized frequently and internationally. For example, he received the very prestigious APA Distinguished Contributions to Knowledge award, an honorary Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Ulm (an honor that doubtless had special

meaning/significance for several reasons), and the Distinguished Professional Achievement Award of the American Board of Professional Psychology. He also received the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award from APA's Division of Clinical Psychology; was a fellow of the APA, of four APA divisions including psychoanalysis and the history of psychology, and also of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1966, Hans joined the faculty of Vanderbilt University's Department of Psychology as a Full Professor; he was named Distinguished Professor in 1976.

Hans was among the first members of SPR when it was founded by two assistant professors, Ken Howard and David Orlinsky. Hans was the third President of SPR (1972-73), following Ken and David. In 1986, Hans received SPR's Distinguished Career Contribution Award; he mentored about 25% of the recipients of SPR's Early Career Contribution Award as of 2006. The latter statistic is both extraordinary and clear evidence for a widely acknowledged fact: Hans was a truly gifted, dedicated, and inspiring mentor.

Hans' contributions to psychotherapy research are simply huge. A profile in the *American Psychologist* in 1988 described him as "a pioneer in the study of therapeutic process and change," and credited him with forging "rigorous research methods for studying psychotherapy" and also providing "stewardship of psychotherapy research [that] helped form it into a respected field of scientific inquiry." Also noted was Hans' "active leadership in the integration of clinical and research knowledge" that was "invaluable to the psychotherapy professions."

Perhaps two of the most broadly influential threads in Hans' thought and research were theoretical emphasis on the impact of qualities of the patient-therapist relationship on the potential for therapeutic change to occur, and on how therapists might develop relationships capable of having therapeutic effects with "difficult" patients. With Susan Hadley, Hans developed the "tri-partite model" of therapeutic change. A key contribution of the model was that it helped to conceptually integrate what were viewed, at the time, as contradictory and confusing—but robust—findings: measures of outcome obtained from different perspectives (e.g., patients, therapists, and clinical evaluator) were rarely highly correlated. Among the qualities as a scientist that earned the respect of his mentees was Hans' openness and commitment to asking any important question. He remains among the few therapy researchers ever to focus on psychotherapy's potential to have negative, or iatrogenic, effects.

Among Hans' prodigious gifts was eloquence—an eloquence permeated by human warmth. Jeffrey Binder, Hans' collaborator on the development of Time-Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy (1984), recently described "the sheer power of [Hans'] eloquence" and his "ability to put his ideas in a way that really touched people." It agreed that Hans also had a memorable, sonorous voice, one that could be used to great effect—such as when he delivered concise, impeccably-timed witticisms.

Hans Strupp indeed had superior power both to touch people and to lend gentle, steady guidance to an entire field.

Admirers, Colleagues, and Mentees of Hans Strupp