Psychotherapy is faced with internal and external crises.

Essentially, psychotherapy is “work” based on the premise of “self-relationship” or “self-consciousness”, which is particularly characteristic of modern Western Europe. In this sense, a basic requirement for establishing psychotherapy is that the “infrastructure” (base structure) in one’s internal world has already been set in place. However, today, in the 21st century, what is referred to as “reflectedness” characterized by “self-relation” or “self-consciousness” (in the sense of “reflected” or “thought back”) is no longer found in the “contemporary consciousness.” This is caricaturized in such conditions as “Multiple Personality Disorder (Dissociative Identity Disorder)” and “Autism Spectrum Disorder”; that is, loss of essential premises for establishing itself.

What kind of psychotherapy is possible for such a postmodern, or non-modern, “consciousness”? This is the “internal crisis” that psychotherapy faces in our time.

The environment surrounding psychotherapy has also significantly changed, especially in the last 30 years. First, external frames and systems, such as insurance and law, have invaded psychotherapy. “Law” and “economy” are the foundations for the social lives of human beings. Psychotherapy was, in a sense, performed outside of them; it was isolated in a social “nature reserve.” Such “immunity” is no longer permitted. Second, as if responding to requests from society, the “evidence-based” movement has developed in the realm of psychotherapy and has had influence since the 1980s. This “evidence-based” movement can be viewed as having occurred inside psychotherapy to deny the “absolute in-ness” (Giegerich, 2004) as a form of human existence, which was already lost in the modern period, but was attempted to be artificially recreated as the “unconscious” by the depth-psychology movement. This is “outside inside psychotherapy.”

What is common to both crises is that there are movements trying to drive psychotherapy out of the “nature reserve.”

In this situation, psychotherapists have to meet the following contradictory obligations: 1) accepting its non-scientific, inefficient and impractical nature, instead of aiming to be integrated, psychotherapy should stand on the narrow point of “itself” and enter the world widely and deeply from this point; and 2) not accepting the above-mentioned critical situation into which psychotherapy is falling as being affected from outside, but seeing through it as its own destiny, or self-development, psychotherapy should seek the possibility of really being evidence-based or contribute to so-called academic psychology in its own evidence-based way.
Based on this recognition, the theme of these special issues (one more issue will follow on the same theme) was chosen to be “Evidence-based Research in Psychotherapy.” In this first issue, we have four special papers.

The first paper, written by Kyoko Takaishi, examines changes of aspects of the “ego-experience” between 1982 and 2005 using a questionnaire answered by high-school girls in Japan. “Ego-experience” is a subjective experience, engraved in the memory, of the awakening of the ego. Takaishi shows that the subjective world of contemporary adolescents is characterized by less internal confrontation and dialogue. The second paper, by Toshihisa Noguchi, also looks at the change of personality characteristics in young adults by specifying a “new type of depression” as a significant feature of personality in our time. In this paper, Noguchi develops a scale on working attitude types and then abstracts “avoidance of responsibility” among its clusters as being related to higher stress responses, compared to individuals who tend to be eager and perfectionistic.

These findings agree with recent findings in the mentality of adolescents and young adults, based on various clinical experiences in psychotherapy. The third paper, by Toshiki Matsuoka, highlights adolescent mentality from another angle; that is, “the sense of self.” Matsuoka has also discussed the close relationship between adolescents with a low sense of self and with ASD-like mentality in a previous paper.

The fourth paper, written by Chihiro Hasegawa et al. is the most clinical in this issue. It discusses the psychological characteristics of patients undergoing surgery for thyroid diseases based on a questionnaire and Baum Test administered before and after surgery. Some patients did not improve psychologically or even became more unstable after surgery. Hasegawa et al. point out the need to introduce appropriate psychological support when latent psychological problems come to the surface.

As a guest editor of this special issue, I hope that these four papers in the field of clinical psychology will be helpful for psychotherapists and for other clinicians and non-clinical psychologists to understand the academic meaning of psychotherapy research more clearly.

REFERENCES


(Released online in J-STAGE as advance publication 5 September, 2019)