



Cyclical Psychodynamics and the Contextual Self: The Inner World, the Intimate World, and the World of Culture and Society (Relational Perspectives Book Series)

By Paul L. Wachtel



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Cyclical Psychodynamics and the Contextual Self articulates in new ways the essential features and most recent extensions of Paul Wachtel's powerfully integrative theory of cyclical psychodynamics. Wachtel is widely regarded as the leading advocate for integrative thinking in personality theory and the theory and practice of psychotherapy. He is a contributor to cutting edge thought in the realm of relational psychoanalysis and to highlighting the ways in which the relational point of view provides especially fertile ground for integrating psychoanalytic insights with the ideas and methods of other theoretical and therapeutic orientations.

In this book, Wachtel extends his integration of psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioral, systemic, and experiential viewpoints to examine closely the nature of the inner world of subjectivity, its relation to the transactional world of daily life experiences, and the impact on both the larger social and cultural forces that both shape and are shaped by individual experience. Here, he discusses in a uniquely comprehensive fashion the subtleties of the clinical interaction, the findings of systematic research, and the role of social, economic, and historical forces in our lives. The chapters in this book help to transcend the tunnel vision that can lead therapists of different orientations to ignore the important discoveries and innovations from competing approaches.

Explicating the pervasive role of vicious circles and self-fulfilling prophecies in our lives, *Cyclical Psychodynamics and the Contextual Self* shows how deeply intertwined the subjective, the intersubjective, and the cultural realms are, and points to new pathways to therapeutic and social change. Both a theoretical tour de force and an immensely practical guide to clinical practice, this book will be essential reading for psychoanalysts, psychotherapists and students of human behavior of all backgrounds and theoretical orientations.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Wachtel writes accessibly and with humour. He honestly acknowledges 'the messy complexities of practice'. We surely need more of this kind of accessible integration of the sociocultural as well as the intrapsychic and the interpersonal. I would certainly commend this as an important book that deserves to be widely studied in all integrative training." - Colin Feltham, Emeritus Professor of Critical Counselling Studies at Sheffield Hallam University for *Therapy Today*

"For nearly four decades Paul Wachtel has been one of the great integrative thinkers in the field of psychotherapy. In *Cyclical Psychodynamics and the Contextual Self* he has really outdone himself! Wachtel applies his cyclical psychodynamic perspective breathtakingly to a wide range of clinically central issues, including the importance of the larger social and cultural context. A must read!" - Robert D. Stolorow, Ph.D., author of *World, Affectivity, Trauma: Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2011)

"Wachtel has once again produced a mighty work of astonishing brilliance and enduring value. *Cyclical Psychodynamics and the Contextual Self* is a rich and ambitious contemplation on the contemporary debates in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis by a pioneering clinician, a teacher and thinker with sparkling erudition, and a gifted writer. He examines our clinical beliefs and practices with a keen eye, an attuned ear, and a humane heart. His perceptive critiques on the world of society and culture are dispatches from the trenches. I love this book for its vividness, vitality, and vision." - Spyros D. Orfanos, Ph.D., ABPP, Clinic Director, New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis

"Paul Wachtel's cyclical psychodynamic theory may be the most important integrative theory of psychotherapy, bringing together a dizzying array of diverse literatures. Wachtel's range is astonishing, but he doesn't stop with mere comprehension. Even more interesting and significant than Wachtel's grasp is his capacity to bring all these theories into meaningful relation with one another. - Donnel B. Stern, Ph.D., William Alanson White Institute; NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy

"Paul Wachtel is in the vanguard of a group of seminal thinkers who are shaping what might be seen as the entrance of psychoanalysis into its 'relational era.' This book makes it even clearer why Wachtel's integrative theory of cyclical psychodynamics is acknowledged within and beyond the field of psychoanalysis as such a unique and powerful force in the ongoing evolution of personality theory and psychotherapy. Wachtel has written both a theoretical tour de force and an immensely practical guide to clinical practice. "— Philip Bromberg, author *The Shadow of the Tsunami: and the Growth of the Relational Mind* (Routledge, 2011)

"How an integrationist approach relates to clinical work is masterfully demonstrated by Paul Wachtel in his brilliant new book. Wachtel writes in an engaging and accessible style and offers numerous clinical examples of the relational processes that influence the perpetuation of suboptimal patterns in our daily lives, as well as the vicious circles that characterize social phenomena, such as race relations. It is an outstanding contribution to the psychoanalytic field and one that I unreservedly recommend to novice and experienced clinicians alike." - Paul Renn, author, *The Silent Past and the Invisible Present: Memory, Trauma, and*

Representation in Psychotherapy (Routledge, 2012)

About the Author

Paul L. Wachtel is CUNY Distinguished Professor at City College and the City University of New York Graduate Center. He is Past President of the Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration and is the winner of the 2010 Hans H. Strupp Memorial Award for Psychoanalytic Writing, Teaching, and Research, the 2012 Distinguished Psychologist Award by Division 29 of the APA (Psychotherapy), and the 2013 Scholarship and Research Award by Division 39 of the APA (Psychoanalysis).

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