The Development of Psychological Counseling—Literature Therapy

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Abstract: It has been more than one hundred years since Psychology separated from Philosophy. During this period of time, people paid more and more attention to mental health issues. So, psychological counseling also gradually developed and expanded. In the course of the development of psychological counseling, the traditional psychological counseling has been improved and adjusted on the basis of the original theory, and many new methods and means of consultation have been derived, among which the brightest one is art therapy. After combing the traditional schools of psychological counseling, this paper discusses one method of art therapy—the literature therapy and its relationship with the traditional schools of psychological counseling.

1. Introduction

During the development of human history, psychology has undergone more than 100 years of development, from "The Interpretation of Dreams" to literature therapy, the different schools of psychological counseling and different methods have been greatly developed. People paid more attention to mental health issue, and this promoted the continuous progress and improvement of various psychological counseling methods.

2. The traditional schools of psychological counseling

The traditional psychological counseling can be divided into four schools, namely Psychoanalysis approach, Behaviorism approach, Humanism approach and Cognitive approach. These four schools have their own viewpoints and propositions respectively.

Psychoanalytic approach, which was founded by Freud, argues that the mental trauma which suffered by individuals is the main reason of mental disorder. They advocated that human behavior is very complex, using of psychoanalysis can find the contradictions of patient, which was repressed into their subconscious (Tyson, Phyllis, 2002). Freud proposed the concept of the subconscious, and he thinks the subconscious is relative to consciousness, containing various instincts (Sigmund Freud, 1910). At the same time, he believes that the subconscious was very powerful to drive the individual to pursue the gratification of instinct and desire. But the instincts, such as aggressive or sexual, were usually suppressed by the consciousness. So it leads to the individual consciousness and subconscious in the opposite state. The instincts in the subconscious will not disappear; the wrong way to suppress the instinct and the desire in the subconscious will cause the psychological conflict and the mental disorder. Based on the theory, Freud also proposed that the personality is composed of id, ego and superego. The id is divined by innate; it can eliminate or reduce the tension of body when it has been satisfied. The superego is the social value and moral ideal of the internal; it restrains the unacceptable instinctive impulse. The ego is response for balancing the conflicts between the id and the superego (Friedman & Schustack, 2011). The methods commonly used in psychoanalytic include free association, dream interpretation, transference and empathy.

Behaviorism founder John B. Watson argued that psychology should only studies the human behavior. This doctrine emphasizes the role of the environment, which means all human behavior is determined by the environment. They rejected the introspective methods and suggested to understand behavior by only measuring observable events Watson used the classical conditioning
proved that every behavior was the result of learning, and these behaviors also can be removed by learning. This lays the foundation for the corrective action. In the late 20th, Skinner, the neo-behaviorism, believed the constitute of human behavior are mainly of operant conditioning, and later he performed operant conditioning experiments with rats, proving that the behavior was formed under the action of reward or punishment (Skinner, 1991). The behavioral therapies thought that the unusual behavior was a bad habit or an abnormal reaction to a common situation. The disordered behavior was formed and fixed by conditioning and learning. The therapies related to behaviorism include systematic desensitization and exposure therapy (Madden, 2013).

Humanistic psychology was widely accepted in the mid-20th, it was referred to as the "third force" in psychology, distinct from psychoanalysis and behaviorism. This approach emphasized the human value; they believe that individual was driven by the motivation of self-actualization. The earliest humanism believes that all human behavior is caused by the need and motivations (Clay, 2002). The motivations also have different levels—physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Humanistic proposed that human beings are aware and are aware of being aware. Because human being can make their own choices and therefore have responsibility for themselves. Humanistic believe that everyone will seek meaning, value, and creativity in their live. Humanism believes in the subjective initiative, believes in the value of each individual. Human beings can aware their own problems and be voluntary to solve. It also believed the importance of human beings and their subjective experiences, including self-concept and self-realization. So, the aim of humanistic therapy is to help the visitor develop a stronger and healthier sense of self. The treatment method of humanism is called “Client-centered therapy”, which emphasized that the therapist should listen to the client without any judgment, allowing the client to come to insights by themselves, to discover their own value, to mobilize their potentials and to know their own problems. The therapist should ensure that they considered all of the client’s feelings and ensuring that there is an air of acceptance and warmth (Myers, 2014).

Cognitive psychology emphasizes that human behavior is governed by human cognition. They proposed that the core of psychology is the psychological process between “input” and “output”, which means the stimuli and response. But people cannot directly observe the characteristics between this two processes, only can inferred by the observation of the things during the input and output process. In a simple term, cognitive psychologists can infer the sightless psychology process through the visible phenomena. So, the cognition refers to all processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. The most popular therapy method roots of cognitive psychology called cognitive behavior therapy. CBT was originally designed to treat depression because none of the behaviorism therapy methods are effective (Baardsethet al. 2013). Cognitive behavior therapy emphasizes helping visitor to change unhelpful patterns in cognitions (e.g. thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes), so they can truly change their behaviors. For example "Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT)", which holds that humans get emotionally disturbed by how they construct their views of the environment through their own beliefs about the world, themselves and others. In REBT, there is an A-B-C model, which states that it is not an adversity that causes consequences, but also what people believe about the adversity (Dryden & Neenan, 2003). REBT believes that people's beliefs include reasonable and unreasonable. Reasonable belief produces normal emotion, and unreasonable belief will have extreme cognition for things. So, the treatment should focus on how to change people’s cognition, with reasonable beliefs instead of unreasonable one.

3. The development of contemporary psychological counseling
In the late 19th century, the capitalist economy of the United States developed rapidly. In the meantime, there were a lot of problems come with that. This problems included that related to job hunting and career adaptation. Many people need someone to guide their career and tell them what kind of job is suitable. So there have aroused the interest of someone who are willing to help to solve these problems, then gradually developed into an organized and influential movement, named
the Vocational Guidance movement. And it has considered as the beginning of contemporary psychological counseling. Before the 1960s, psychological counseling only growing vigorously in the United States, people continue to explore in order to fulfill the achievements are no longer limited to vocational issues. So after this era, psychological counseling began to develop in the world.

After World War II, the main task of psychology counseling became to heal the wounds of the war. Therapists tried their best to find a way to cure the psychological problems. In this case, positive psychology arises, and the positive psychologists are concerned with what makes life most worth living (Christopher, 2008). Positive psychology emphasized using a more open and appreciate view to see the human potential and ability to study positive quality. They concerned for human development and survival, emphasizing human values. The positive psychology and the humanistic consultation point of view have something very similar, it emphasizes the positive subjective experience, emphasizes the individual subjective happy feeling, and emphasis helps the people to discover and use own intrinsic resources, and then promotes individual's quality and the life quality(Seligman, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Positive psychology uses internal resources to help the average person or someone with a certain talent to maximize their potential to achieve a better life.

The traditional psychological counseling schools are based on the philosophic view of "reality is recognizable", and have formed a variety of psychological measurement tools in the course of development, which can be used to diagnose and treat the visitors in all directions. However, with the rise of postmodernism psychology, psychological counseling has been influenced by the thought of "decentralization" and "pluralism", arguing that the individual has different cognitive construction of the world, and that psychological counseling is not a condescending treatment, emphasizing that the healer should enter the patient's world with the mode of cooperative intervention. The most representative of this is narrative therapy. The narration therapy proposed that person's beliefs, skills, principles, and knowledge are seen as the means to help them regain their life from problem. The therapist should help visitors to examine, evaluate, and change their relationship to a problem by acting as an “investigative reporter” who is not at the center of the investigation but is nonetheless influential; that is, this therapist poses questions that help people externalize a problem and then thoroughly investigate it (White, 2007).

4. Principles and characteristics of art therapy

In the early development stage of psychological counseling, painting is an essential tool of personality test. Many therapists believe that the patient's painting can be used in the diagnosis of psychopathology, and most psychiatrists believe that the work of a mental patient's art work can prove their diagnosis of the patient, especially the diagnosis of schizophrenia.

Subsequently, the continuous development appears art therapy. Adrian Hill, one of the founders of Art therapy, argues that patients ' inability to use language to express subconscious problems can be expressed in the form of artistic creation, which treats the body and psyche of the patient as a method and means to promote rehabilitation (Hill,1945). In the process of contemporary art therapy, art treatments are no longer limited to painting, the treatment is a flexible use of different expressive techniques, such as painting, music, dance, sculpture, photography and other artistic forms, to makes the communication with patients come true.

Art therapy believes that the patients through the expression of art works can reflect the subconscious thoughts, art works have not restricted to age and education level, and more easily to get close to the subconscious of the patient, then it’s become an important psychological treatment of mental illness therapy (Junge,2010). Art therapy compared with other treatments, belong to nonverbal communication, so the objects of the treatment have wider range than the general psychological treatment, and in the process of artistic creation, consultants can put them into this event, so they will reduce their psychological defense, let the subconscious content naturally emerge, can be established as a good relationship between effective methods. Meanwhile, in the
process of artistic creation, patients can vent their own anger or other negative emotions, which do not hurt others and accepted by society. Artistic creation is a kind of spontaneous and self-control behavior. The parties can not only alleviate negative emotions, but also can show their feelings to the counselor. These can also be a concrete presentation of the inner thoughts. Therefore, in psychological counseling, the application of art therapy is very extensive.

5. Characteristics and principle of literature therapy

Literature therapy is the product of the continuous development of art therapy, which refers to solve psychological problems and promotes their mental health through the literature appreciation and literary creation. Literature therapy usually aims to achieve two goals: ease the emotional conflict by artistic creation and help individuals to understand their own personality. Through the expression of art works people can achieve the unity of self and environments. The current approaches to literature therapy mainly include literary creation and literary appreciation (Forrest, 1998). Literature therapy can not only use traditional media such as books and newspapers, but also can collect material through electronic medias such as mobile phone or network.

The literature treatment also originates from the psychoanalysis. Freud has introduced the psychoanalysis theory from the dream to the literature creation. He proposed that writer's creation activity is similar to the normal person's dream state, for example Nietzsche and Kafka both have similar situation. Therefore, Freud proposed that creative activities can compensate and replace the psychological illness. From the point of view of "catharsis", Freud believes that literary works are the substitutes of the creator's desires. In that way the creator's desire in the unconscious is to resonate with others and to arouse and satisfy the similar unconsciousness desires of others. From the perspective of literary creators, they has been emotional bent in the process of literary creation, and this kind of vent is beneficial to the alleviation of psychological problems. At the same time, the power of emotional energy is endless, so when a person in a strong emotional situation, it can transform the energy contained in this strong emotion into the power to get rid of the pain. From the view of literary creators, literary therapy allows them to vent and transform their energies.

In addition to literary creation, literary appreciation is also an important way of literature therapy. Appreciating literary works can keep a relatively open state of mind, which can also be regarded as the process of exchanging information between readers and authors, so it can adapt and combined the old knowledge or previous perspectives of reads with the attitude of the author. In addition, appreciating literary works can help readers to change their irrational cognition, to draw new concepts from literary works, to produce new behaviors, and also can help readers to strengthen their self-actualization ability, then make them can have a better develop of themselves. At the same time, literary appreciation can make people have a peak experience, meaning that when the reader absorbed in the reading, will focus on the high concentration, to achieve a full, selfless state, and this state can help promote mental health (Eum, 2014).

Imagination is one of the prominent characteristics of literature, not only in literary creation, but also in the literary appreciation. Readers are often combining the creator's words and their own ideas to form a scene in the brain, thus resonate with the author. Literary imagination can also be used as a kind of meditation. Therefore, the literary activities also have a certain psychological therapeutic significance.

Literature therapy is a branch of art therapy in psychological counseling and therapy. It has a certain requirements for choosing the consultants and literary works. First of all, the psychological counselor should have a sufficient ability of literature literacy, not only has a positive attitude to this work, but also has a certain appreciation of the ability and high aesthetic level. Secondly, the consultant needs to have a specific understanding of the visitors ’ preference for different literary works, and to choose appropriate literature works to carry out treatment. And consultants choose works not only need to cooperate with the treatment of preferences, but also according to the two principle to choose the works:
1. Suggestive principle: focus on the works which can stimulate the potential of the visitors themselves to develop, so that visitors from a positive perspective to understand the work. The selected works should also pay attention to the selection of those who are recognized by the visitors, so that they can be more interested with the work.

2. Antagonistic principle: According to the psychological physiology of the One Emotion Suppressing Another theory, consultants can choose the opposite works of the pathogenic mood to eliminate or transform the mood of visitors.

   A counselor should also create a full of respectful and attentive environment for the visitors to encourage them doing creation works when they are treated, and the counselor can explores the patient's inner world by these productions, such as the main complex and repressed emotions, and the problems needed to solve, these can provide a more effective way for consultant to reach a sympathetic chord with the patient, to be more closely guided.

In general, literature therapy as a method of art therapy can be used as a supplementary means in psychological concealing and therapy. The easy accessibility of literary works, the freedom in time and space of literary appreciation and creation make literature therapy more convenient and acceptable to the public. In the counseling room, literature therapy can allow visitors to release destructive energy in a proper way, so that their anxiety can be alleviated and the mind can be sublimated. Although literature therapy have so many advantages, we see that the current use of literature therapy is not very extensive. A large part of the reason is that consultants and visitors have a lack of literary literacy, literature therapy still needs to get further development in the process of continuous practice.

Reference


