

Mirjana Divac Jovanovic & Dragan Svrakic:
“GRANIČNA LIČNOST I NJENA RAZLIČITA LICA.
Šta su poremećaji ličnosti?”

“BORDERLINE PERSONALITY AND ITS DIVERSE FACES.
What are personality disorders?”
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"Borderline personality and its diverse faces" is an excellent, ambitious and comprehensive multidimensional book written by Mirjana Divac Jovanovic and Dragan Svrakic. We are all fascinated by illusions when things differ from what they look like. For this reason personality disorders are fascinating because they represent a significant form of psychopathology that is concealed by an outside facade of normalcy. There is a huge number of people impaired by personality disorders, who are unable of sustaining mature, creative and honest relationships. Some of them are very destructive, asocial and even dangerous. On the other side, people with personality disorders can have exceptional capabilities and attractive features and qualities, hold a significant number of positions of responsibility and importance in bussiness, political and public life. Personality disorders lack the professional consensus, respectability and validity that exists with the major mental disorders.

The authors of this book decided to take on the probably most complex entity in psychiatry and clinical psychology – personality pathology. The book itself consists of ten chapters: 1. Introduction into the concept of personality and personality disorders; 2. Conceptualization and classification of personality disorders; 3. Categorical and dimensional models of personality disorders; 4. Theoretical models of etiology and development of personality disorders; 5. Personality disorders: Adaptation disorders or integration disorders; 6. Clinical evaluation of borderline level of personality functioning; 7. Psychotherapy of patients with borderline disorder; 8. Empirical studies of psychotherapy; 9. Pharmacotherapy of personality disorders; and 10. Coda or What is our future? A relatively large proportion of this book has been dedicated to the topic of pharmacotherapy, seemingly in odds with the trend of "psychologization" of this field of psychopathology. The psychobiological model of personality presented by the authors is particularly relevant in the context of both causal pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy.

More specifically, these experts have based their latest book on the concept of borderline personality, a relatively older term describing general personality

disturbances such as identity diffusion and interpersonal instability, that serve as the basis for a multitude of maladaptive expressions of individual personality traits. This line of reasoning is certainly recognized by numerous clinicians around the world who, through their professional experience, have noticed some consistencies among various types of personality disorders (PDs), although at first these patients might seem completely different. Understanding such broader personality disturbances (i.e., borderline personality) and the complex reasons for their heterogeneous manifestations, as explained in some of the chapters of this book, will be of particular help to less experienced clinicians who frequently diagnose their patients with mixed types of PDs or those not otherwise specified.

In addition, the authors have been an integral part of the research group led by a world-renowned psychiatrist C. Robert Cloninger who devised the Psychobiological Model of Personality. This model, explained in detail in this book, has a thorough and valid scientific basis for the conceptualization and diagnosis of personality pathology. In a two-step diagnostic process, diagnosis of personality disorder includes character assessment (as a measure of general personality maladaptation) and the examination of temperamental traits (in order to distinguish dominant symptomatic presentations). It is worth noting that this diagnostic process proposed by the authors in this book as well as in their previous work has been incorporated in the alternative model of PDs added in the latest edition of DSM-5.

Another unique contribution of these authors, as described in Chapter 5, is the conceptualization (and perhaps future official term?) of PDs as "adaptation disorders" because it reflects more accurately the real nature of the disorder and distributes the causality of maladaptive syndromes more evenly, between the person and the environment. Moreover, it implies the possibility of personal change and growth, either through natural life processes or intensive psychotherapeutic interventions. Luckily, some prospective research studies have documented the reduction of psychiatric symptoms and increase in maturity among PD patients who, as a diagnostic group, have too often

been considered untreatable. A detailed review of psychotherapeutic, as well as pharmacological interventions aimed at PD patients is presented in the final two chapters of this book. The latter is particularly useful for “general psychiatrists” who frequently encounter patients with formal PD diagnosis, or those diagnosed with resistant forms of anxiety and/or depressive disorders.

In the end, I would like to thank Mirjana Divac Jovanovic and Dragan Svrakic for the early opportunity to read this fascinating book, and to present it to the readers of *Psychiatria Danubina*. As the authors themselves have noted, ideas and theories described and proposed in this book are subject to change within the

framework of scientific medicine and psychology. Moreover, rapid technological and societal changes seen in the last couple of decades prevent us from being certain what “adaptive personality” should look like in the future. However, we all hope that staying connected with other people and showing compassion and solidarity are the key personality aspects that should never cease to exist (and be considered adaptive).

Having all this in mind, such an extraordinary and comprehensive elaboration of personality pathology, one of the best the author of this review has ever encountered, deserves future publications in many world languages.

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