BOOK REVIEW

The Good Psychologist by Noam Shpancer

Reviewed by Justin Stephenson
Department of Psychology
University of Witwatersrand
South Africa
justin@driversa.co.za

The Good Psychologist insists, preserve an optimum clinical distance and rigorous protocols, while remembering always that the unshakable conviction that disaster is approaching has become the real disaster in the lives of the anxious. But take a closer look at the Good Psychologist. For who is that waving to him seductively from his past? And what's beckoning him to rekindle extinguished hopes for the future? As the shell of his detachment begins to crack, he finds himself pulled into unfathomable waters where the boundaries between the professional and the personal, between help and harm, are dangerously blurring.

The Good Psychologist is the fictional firsthand account a psychologist’s life written by clinical psychologist Noam Shpancer. The book centres on the internal dialogue of the unnamed psychologist as we follow the Good Psychologist through his daily activities that include his psychotherapy, giving lectures and the turmoil faced in his personal life.
J. STEPHENSON

The novel provides us with an in-depth character analysis of an individual who is very aware of the human condition and whilst he may struggle, he genuinely tries to contribute positively to his own existence.

The accounts of patient psychotherapy sessions give the reader insight into the psychologist’s mind as he battles between his clinical responsibility and personal belief, of course presenting the desired psychological response to his clients.

The story picks up as he encounters a client who throws his routine out of sync and challenges the psychologist in his assessment. The client, a stripper, or dancer as she prefers, may be suffering from acute panic that may end her stage career. We witness as our Good Psychologist struggles in his relationships with his intended lover and the failure to create a bond with his child, the result of a strange agreement. We sit in the front row of a lecture theatre as the psychologist delivers his lectures, whilst his internal workings constantly whirl in the background as he battles to impart his life lessons to his class, particularly the girl with the pink hair in the front row.

The Good Psychologist is an amazing read for anyone interested in the subjectivity of psychology, cognitive behaviour therapy and how each person has choices to make that define and change their lives.

On a personal level I thoroughly enjoyed reading Shpancer’s début novel. It brings to life the realness of psychology that sometimes seems obscure in a text book. It adds a persona to the theory. I found myself laughing and in the next breath questioning myself on the matters that confronted the Good Psychologist.

Title: The Good Psychologist
Author: Noam Shpancer
Date: 2010
Publisher: Penguin Books
ISBN: 9780349123240
Pages: 256

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Justin Stephenson completed his BA (Hons) in Psychology from Unisa in 2009. He currently volunteers with Childline SA recently completing a Trauma Counselling Internship at Addington Hospital in Durban. He is currently enrolled for a Master’s degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand.