

The Science of The Art of Psychotherapy

by Allan N. Schore. Published by W. W. Norton & Co.

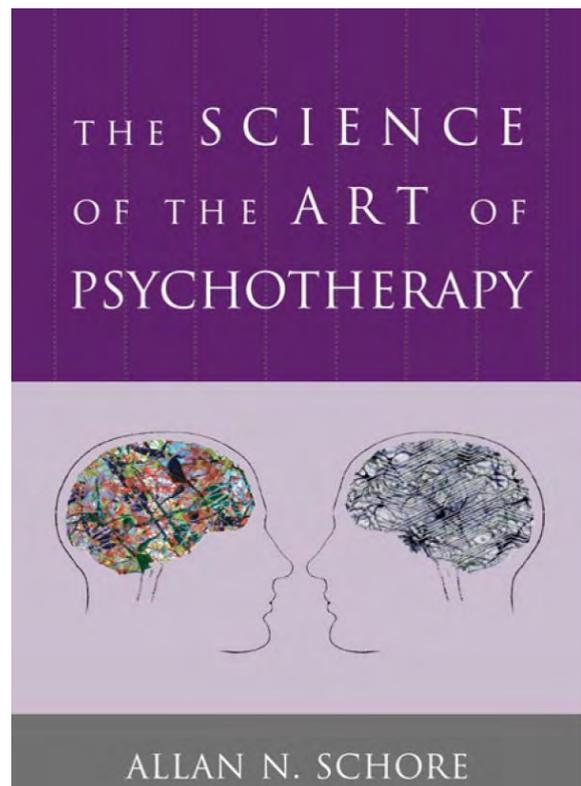
Reviewed by **Martha Stark, MD**

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The Science of The Art of Psychotherapy is the latest chef-d'oeuvre from the extraordinary Allan Schore, an internationally renowned master clinician, scholar, researcher, writer, and educator whose three previous volumes have long since become bibles for the burgeoning field of affective neuroscience. Schore's most recent opus was published as part of The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, for which he is the Series Editor and Daniel Siegel the Founding Editor. This well-known and highly respected Norton Series is specifically designed to provide, for the benefit of all, an integrative forum for the pioneering work of scientists from a broad range of interdependent academic disciplines—scientists who (1) cherish the dream of developing a broader and deeper understanding of the “brain/mind/body” connection and “the art” and “the science” of “human experience” and (2) share the goal of creating a common language and conceptual framework for the articulation of cutting-edge contributions to the continuously evolving field of interpersonal neuroscience.

Over the course of the years and by dint of his extremely hard work, his meticulous research efforts, and his brilliance as an integrative thinker, Schore has earned the well-deserved distinction of being at the forefront of the affective neuroscience movement. In this current volume, Schore assigns himself the somewhat daunting task of making explicit the interactive dynamics that transpire implicitly within a successful psychotherapy. By committing himself to exploring the (left brain) “science” behind the (right brain) “art” of the healing that takes place in an affectively attuned treatment, Schore is demonstrating his willingness to put his money where his mouth is!

And Schore does not disappoint. From beginning to end of this veritable tour de force and in a pro-



foundly satisfying and refreshingly accessible fashion, Schore manages to bring together the razor-sharp incisiveness and clarity of his analytical left brain with the creativity, wisdom, and synthetic ability of his intuitive right brain in the interest of capturing the beauty of something that few have dared to try and fewer still have been able to accomplish, namely, to offer a compelling explanation for how exactly a psychotherapy works and what exactly its scientific underpinnings are. With courage, passion, and conviction, Schore rises to the awe-inspiring challenge of capturing—by way of words—the essence of the mystical process that operates—without words—beneath the surface of a successful psychotherapy.

In this as in his previous volumes, Schore (1994, 2003a, 2003b) elaborates upon the fundamental differences between the right and the left sides of the brain and between how the two sides of the brain therefore differentially process information and energy. Schore focuses his attention on the right brain as affective/relational, the left brain as cognitive; the right brain as intuitive/synthetic/integrative, the left brain as analytical/logical; the right brain as subjective, the left brain as objective; the right brain as unconscious/deep, the left brain as conscious/not-so-deep; the right brain as nonverbal/imagistic, the left brain as verbal/linguistic; and the right brain as implicit, the left brain as explicit—in essence, the right brain as artistic, the left brain as scientific. Or, as some would say, whereas the left brain believes that happiness is in the future, the right brain knows that contentment is in the present and whereas the left brain prefers to follow the beaten path, the right brain loves to create its own.

Even as Schore is highlighting the structural and functional differences between the two hemispheres of the brain, he is ever appreciative of their complex interdependence, complementarity, and synergy. He is speaking to their duality, the yin and the yang—not either/or but both/and. Furthermore, in the interest of making dizzyingly complicated concepts more assimilable and clinically useful, Schore is willing to risk being called to task for oversimplification. Indeed, the enormous popularity that Schore has enjoyed over the course of the years attests to how remarkably successful he has been in generating renewed interest in a scientific psychology and its applicability to a broad range of clinical situations. Part of Schore's genius lies in his ability to delve—with head and heart—into rigorous and disciplined exploration and explication of the neuroscientific underpinnings of various clinical phenomena, to extract, after rigorous and disciplined scientific research, the essence of those underpinnings, and then to make that essence readily available to the scientific and clinical communities—to the benefit of all.

Based upon Schore's formulations, I have found it clinically useful to conceptualize the therapeutic effectiveness of psychotherapy in the following manner: An affectively attuned psychotherapy (which, of necessity, will include heightened affective moments when the right brains of both therapist and

patient are profoundly in sync) will afford the patient an opportunity, even though often long after the fact, to rework relational trauma that had once been overwhelming (and therefore defended against) but that can now, with enough support from the therapist, be processed, integrated, and adapted to. Psychotherapy is therefore a story about the belated processing of unmastered (and often dissociated) experience and—in the face of optimal challenge and by way of tapping into the patient's intrinsic striving toward health and innate capacity for self-repair—adaptive reconstitution at ever-higher levels of awareness, acceptance, and accountability.

Whereas psychoanalysis had always emphasized the primacy of insight (sometimes accompanied by emotional understanding and cathartic release), Schore's affective/relational approach emphasizes the primacy of affect and its interactive regulation within the patient-therapist dyad (sometimes accompanied by analytical understanding). So if we consider psychotherapy to be an art form with scientific underpinnings, then it follows that—in order to optimize the change process in psychotherapy—the patient must have the benefit of both the right brain's affective/relational capacity to “go deep” in the context of relationship and the left brain's cognitive capacity to step back, put things in perspective, and make sense of it all. Ordinarily, neither the right brain nor the left brain alone will be adequate for the task; both will be needed to advance the therapeutic endeavor.

The Science of The Art of Psychotherapy offers so much. So what doesn't it offer? I am hard-pressed to find fault with anything in this latest work by Schore, but I recognize that no book review would be complete without at least an effort by the reviewer to tease out the book's potential shortcomings—and so I offer the following three points.

Although Schore has made a masterful attempt to capture with words the essence of phenomena that are without words, at the end of the day I feel that his efforts to bring the clinical moment alive only partially satisfy. Admittedly, it is well-nigh impossible to explain with logic what takes place on an intuitive level—just as it is very difficult to explain why one might prefer chocolate ice cream to vanilla

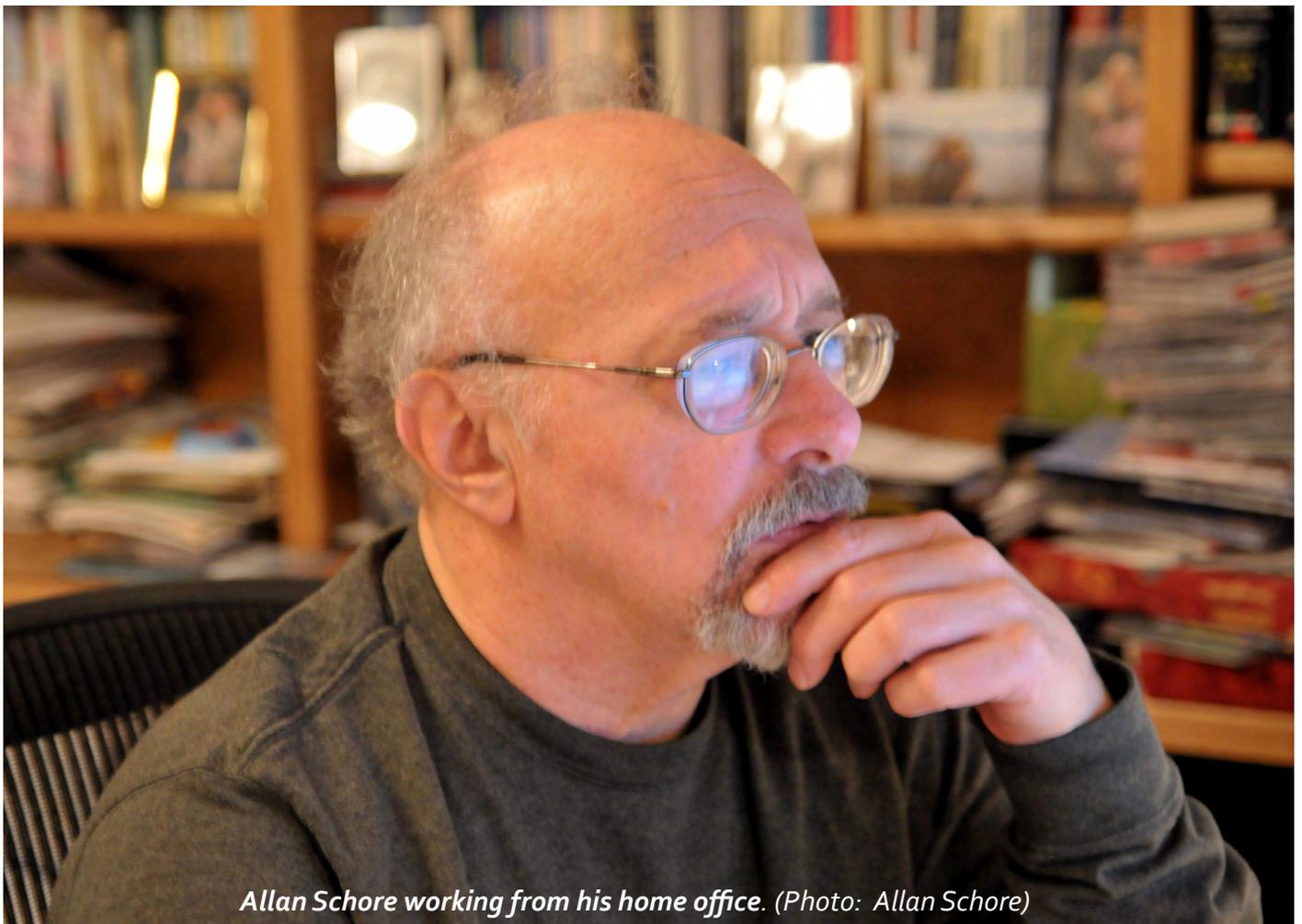
or why one's favorite color might be teal. With that said, however, my sense is that this volume would have been enriched had Schore gone to greater pains to develop a little further what it actually looks like—and feels like—when caregiver-infant or therapist-patient are authentically engaged on the deepest of levels. If anyone is up to the challenge of doing that, it would be Schore—but in this volume I do not believe that he has entirely succeeded. It is therefore only partially with tongue in cheek that I find myself suggesting that perhaps a later work of Schore's could be entitled *The Art of The Science of Psychotherapy*.

Along these same lines, I think that this current volume would have benefited from the inclusion of more clinical examples, especially extended vignettes that would have spoken to the session-by-session evolution of a psychotherapeutic process, which would then have captured not just a moment in time but movement over time. Although Schore

offers a smattering of brief clinical pieces, they are few and far between. Perhaps an even later work of his could be entitled *The Practice of The Science of The Art of Psychotherapy*.

Finally, as others have noted, Schore's material is a bit redundant – although I personally found the repetitiveness to be reinforcing and, with each reiteration, I was able to advance my own understanding of his richly patterned material to ever-higher, and ever-more satisfying, levels of integration, orderedness, and complex understanding. Be that as it may, perhaps someday Schore will decide to write a book entitled *A Brief Review of The Science of The Art of Psychotherapy*.

In any event, whether Schore describes his as an affect theory, an attachment theory, a modern attachment theory, or a regulation theory (all four of which theories he has espoused over the years), from the beginning of his career, Schore—with sci-



Allan Schore working from his home office. (Photo: Allan Schore)

entific precision, uncanny clinical acumen, and extraordinary vision—has been able to zero in on what matters most—both in development and in treatment. Inasmuch as Schore's interest has always been in the relational matrix out of which the individual emerges, his is, at heart, an attachment theory. But it is an attachment theory that stresses affective attunement within that matrix, which makes of it, at heart, an affect theory. But it is an affect theory that stresses the importance of affect regulation for shaping the organization of the self, which makes of it, at heart, a regulation theory. But it is a regulation theory that stresses the importance of affective communication between the right brains of both partners in the dyad (be it caregiver-infant or therapist-patient), which makes of it, at heart, a right brain-to-right brain interactive regulation theory.

Be that as it may, whether described as a theory of affect, a theory of attachment, or a theory of regulation, part of Schore's genius is that he has been right on the money from the get-go.

To conclude, *The Science of The Art of Psychotherapy* is a must-read for health professionals and interested lay persons alike because, although ostensibly about affect, attachment, the right brain, mutuality, and interactive regulation, it is ultimately a book about what it means to be human and how it is that we can be deeply and meaningfully connected to others. Schore's left-brained eloquence and giftedness with words, in combination with his finely honed right-brained intuition and heartfelt appreciation for the magic that can happen between people, enable him to demystify things that are actually quite mystical—paradoxically using carefully selected words to capture the essence of processes that take place without words!

In this most recent addition to The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, Schore weaves together, in a seemingly effortless fashion, left and right, science and art, head and heart, and theory and practice, managing somehow to make tremendously complex subject matter at once accessible, compelling, and clinically useful. Schore, an integrative thinker par excellence, is himself a veritable corpus callosum!

This magnificent volume says it all. So settle in, savor every morsel, enjoy every moment, engage both your left and your right brain—and you will be richly rewarded for your efforts. *The Science of The Art of Psychotherapy* will prove deeply satisfying for anyone who is human, knows humans, or is an elephant (but you will have to read the book to understand that reference!).

References

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