In the Absence of Episteme
Levas Kovarskis

Abstract

As British psychoanalyst Fakhry Davids put it in his presentation on EPF conference in 2017, “our profession remains overwhelmingly white and “Western””. By this he meant the discrepancy between demographic shifts in European population after WWII and the growing number of non-Judeo-Christian culture representatives in other mental health professions except psychoanalysis. For those of us who believe in the universality of psychodynamics it presents few important theoretical and practical questions: 1) can the person be adequately understood without intimate knowledge of his/her cultural-religious background; 2) is the defensive system basically the same or predominantly culture-bound; 3) can it be addressed with the same psychoanalytic tools – clarification, confrontation and interpretation; 4) does the act of unconscious becoming conscious affects individual in a similar way whatever the cultural milieu and 5) is psychoanalytic relationships (the essence of transference) essentially different in different cultures. In other words: can psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy be meaningfully practiced with people from different culture than ours. This paper is an attempt to reflect upon these issues with the help of clinical example – the treatment of a young man of Sudanese origin and Islam religious background.