

Serge Sulz

## Retrospective View on Frederik H. Kanfer (1925 to 2002)

Frederik Kanfer died on 18th October 2002. On 6th December 2002 he would have turned 77 years of age. In September the same year he was in Germany to receive a reward for his especially most significant scientific and teaching work concerning Behaviour Therapy in Germany.

He was born in Vienna in the mid-nineteen twenties. His family fled the Nazis in 1938. Rather by chance they succeeded in escaping the occupiers in a very dramatic way during a stopover in France. In 1941 the family reached the USA. Fred Kanfer went to school there, did his military service and won his Ph.D. in 1953. He became assistant professor at Washington University St. Louis, subsequently was professor at Purdue University of Cincinnati and from 1973 he was professor at the University of Illinois in Champaign, where he was also director of clinical training. In 1995 he was given emeritus status.

He and his wife Ruby had a son Larry, who became a renowned photographer, known amongst other things for his artistic landscape photos. And the couple had a daughter Ruth, who is a professor of psychology.

Fred Kanfer gained a broad knowledge of philosophy and psychology and studied the field of clinical psychology and psychotherapy in such great depth that he knew not only the scientific experimental approaches but also the psychoanalytical views also very well. Early on he researched verbal learning, long before this research topic was named 'cognitive'. Out of this research the then trendsetting approach of self control developed, based on his concept of self regulation with the steps self observation, self judgement and self reinforcement. Hereby he worked out how a person can change their behaviour by overcoming the learning laws, and how one thus emancipates oneself from outside influences and one's biological nature. Groundbreaking for us as young Behaviour Therapists was his textbook (Kanfer und Philips 1970) and the Behavioural Diagnosis Schema SORKC, which he developed together with Saslow (1974).

At the same time as Albert Bandura, Michael Mahoney and Donald Meichenbaum he went beyond animal experiential psychology of learning and examined the speaking and thinking and feeling human being. In the course of 30 years this led to the now well-known self man-

agement approach, as he described it for the first time in the German language in 1990 together with Hans Reinecker and Dieter Schmelzer, which is sometimes named a humanistic Behaviour Therapy.

This approach models a Behaviour Therapy that from where we stand today in psychological research shows a form of therapy that comprises the cognitive approach on the one hand and includes on the other hand the knowledge of emotion research (1998, 2000).

His inquiring, therapeutic and teaching work shows an applaudable and exemplary stance of deep respect of other persons, which gives them a chance to perceive their own resources and use them to solve their problems.

Fred Kanfer became especially important to Behaviour Therapy in Germany because from 1965 onwards when he was Fulbright Professor at the University of Bochum, he came to Germany once a year. First he supported J.C. Brengelmann and his psychological department of the Max-Planck-Institute for Psychiatry in Munich in building behaviour therapeutic research and supply. This led to advice on establishing behaviour therapeutic working clinics, of which the Psychosomatic Clinic Windach was the first. Kanfer became the teacher most in demand and highly estimated and a supervisor at many German Universities, in clinics and subsequently also in educational institutes. For nearly 40 years he was available in Germany for advancement and further training in Behaviour Therapy and influenced those who now occupy chairs in Clinical Psychology or run behaviour therapeutic working clinics or institutes.

Tirelessly he set up numerous intramural classes in Germany each year as an emeritus professor, so that even today's young generation of Behaviour Therapists benefits from his rich knowledge and long experience. Finally he wrote a booklet with his disciple Dieter Schmelzer that includes all that constitutes Fred Kanfer (Kanfer und Schmelzer 2001).

His unobtrusive modesty hindered video recordings of his ways of working. It took a lot of time before Dieter Schmelzer and I succeeded in persuading him to produce training videos (2002) containing the essentials of his theory. Both, the booklet and the videos help us to keep him and his work in vivid recollection.

I myself am very thankful for having been in the position to spend so many evenings with him in discussion during the last ten years of his life. A friendship arose - which is invaluable to me. All the more was I affected and grieved when he died. The memory of Fred Kanfer remains, as a model and guide for us. Even today, in 2014, Kanfer's humane and client-centred spirit can be felt in a distinct way in the thinking and acting of Behaviour Therapists.

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