THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Useful Untruths: Another Look at Pluralism in the Clinical Setting

Claudia Lament

To cite this article: Claudia Lament (2020) Useful Untruths: Another Look at Pluralism in the Clinical Setting, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 195-218, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1715690

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1715690

Volume LXXXIX, Number 2
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1715690

USEFUL UNTRUTHS: ANOTHER LOOK AT PLURALISM IN THE CLINICAL SETTING

BY CLAUDIA LAMENT

Hans Vaihinger, the early 20th Century German philosopher, contended that across a broad range of thought people tend to select one theory over others, all the while knowing that such a singular perspective is but an idealization or useful fiction of what the fuller truth is if one eventually includes those other theories. He argued for the necessity of utilizing a plurality of perspectives in order to see a more complete picture of the world despite our cognitive inability to juggle more than one theory at the same time. This vexing paradox is a focus of the contemporary philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah's recent work that pays tribute to Vaihinger's exploration of this topic. Appiah also examines Vaihinger's view that hewing to a single fiction at certain times and for certain reasons is useful, while also considering how to expand one's scope to reach for a more inclusive multiplicity of inexact models. I apply these and related issues to the psychoanalytic clinical situation, addressing such matters as: the possible triggers for the analyst's shifts toward alternate theoretical persuasions and the complex matter of truth.

Keywords: Pluralism, useful fictions, psychoanalytic theory, countertransference triggers.

Claudia Lament, Ph.D. is a Training and Supervising Analyst at The Psychoanalytic Association of New York, an affiliate of The New York University Langone School of Medicine. She is the Editor-in-Chief of *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* and President of The Anna Freud Foundation.

Staying close to one's chosen theoretical perspective that necessarily excludes other possible perspectives is not an unusual stance among psychoanalysts—and for good reason. To introduce alternate theoretical systems which are not the analyst's habitual one risks that the analyst will operate with an imprecise assembly of part-theories, and may even attempt to integrate models that hold contradictory points of view. On the other hand, are there risks in this exclusionary practice? It is likely that turning away from other models of the mind in considering a patient's mental life will have a limiting effect on therapeutic offerings and possibly, on the success or failure of the treatment. If a case can be made for electing to try out new lenses (Zimmer 2017), under what circumstances would such decisions make sense within the clinical situation? Whether or not to do so will have ramifications for what aspects of the patient's mind are within the analyst's sights and fair game for exploration. Similarly, it will have far reaching consequences for how our patients engage with their own minds years after they leave our consultation rooms for the last time.

Although the preceding paragraph sounds like a reasonable and cogent introduction to my topic, it is also what the early 20th Century German philosopher Hans Vaihinger would call a *useful untruth*. What Vaihinger meant by this is that my description of pluralism is "false" in that it captures only a single aspect of a complex and multi-faceted subject. Thus, he would say that my passage and the ideas contained in it is an idealization or a fiction of what the truth actually is, in all its diversity. Another way of putting it is that I have selected one angle on the diverse and controversial topic of pluralism amidst numerous other perspectives that, had I chosen to mention them, would have presented a more textured and dimensional—and a more *truthful*—point of view. So, in this way, I have presented something fictional; yet, it is also a felicitous way of introducing a dense subject by forging a path into it by way of one simplistic road map, so to speak. In its simplicity, that fiction can be quite useful despite its drawbacks, as it will provide a much easier way to speak about pluralism than had I introduced the additional 'truths' surrounding it all at once. For Vaihinger, the "untruth" I wrote, while lacking in breadth, offers important advantages. I will delve into this matter more fully, shortly. But first, I wish to outline some of the principal tenets in

the debate about theoretical pluralism in psychoanalysis and provide an historical context for it.

THE POLEMICS OF PLURALITY

The polemics of theoretical pluralism in the psychoanalytic canon began to exert their pride of place in the 1980's. Wallerstein's seminal paper, "One Psychoanalysis or Many?" (1989), which he presented in 1987 at the 35th International Congress in Montreal, still resonates in important measures. Namely, while he expressed the difficult problems that beset plurality internationally, such as contradictions in epistemological considerations; differences in culture, language, regional preferences for certain analytic persuasions, and stylistic diversities, among others, he also felt that a common ground could be located in the clinical arena of the consulting room where theoretical divergences tended to fade in significance.

One of the more vocal detractors in these controversial dialogues was Green (2005) who argued that in his experience, the so-called common ground was fatuous, as clinical discussions of which he was a part did not allow sufficient space for alternate views. But despite his dissention, Green's agreement with Wallerstein's accent on the clinical dimension as a port of entry into pluralism opened a door to dialogue. This call for unity on the clinical front has persisted through the years and can be traced in Bernardi's scholarly and enlightening explorations of the ensuing debates that have lasted for two decades (1989, 1992, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2014a, 2014b, 2015).

I will return to Bernardi's more recent work presently, which also highlights the clinical situation as a unifying reference point for analysts working in different schools of thought, but I would like first to address Sandler's (1983) earlier dissection of several noteworthy issues which were and continue to be at play in his paper, "Reflections on some relations between psychoanalytic concepts and psychoanalytic practice." In this groundbreaking paper, Sandler perceptively articulated the fact that psychoanalysts, often unconsciously, import part-theories from theoretical persuasions other than the one they own; that is, what they do and how they think in the privacy of their consulting rooms may differ from

the public stance they take in conferences, published papers, or institute gatherings.

Putting aside that these part-theories may fail to integrate well with each other, Sandler saw an opportunity for a new way of thinking about psychoanalytic theorizing. If concepts were to be described as "pliable (and) context-dependent," it would open the way toward "… an overall framework of psychoanalytic theory to be assembled" (p. 36). He goes on to say that such an approach to psychoanalytic concepts views "each as having a set of "*dimensions of meaning*" (p. 36, italics in the original). That is, each set exists "in in a meaning-space, in which it moves as its context and sense changes" (p. 36).

As though peering into the future, Sandler looked to be espousing a post-modernist position of sorts in allowing for individualistic preferences in theory building. For him, the solution lay in the idea that psychoanalysis reflects "*a body of ideas* rather than a consistent whole … " (p. 37, italics in the original). It highlights "… *the work we have to do*" (p. 37, italics in the original). So then, having put the question of epistemology aside, Sandler imagined that a theory needed to be clinical, technically oriented, and one that addressed itself to the normal and abnormal in human mental functioning. That the many ideas which comprise that "body of ideas" of which Sandler spoke may be contradictory to one another *and* that they co-existed without an unpleasant rub is entirely possible as long as the analyst is unconscious of them, and of their essential inconsistencies. He put it squarely:

> The human mind being what it is, he [the analyst] will continue to underestimate the discrepancies and incongruities in the public theories and will learn to move from one part of his theory to another without being aware that he has stepped over a number of spots in this theory that are conceptually weak. [p. 37]

Sandler championed the opinion that it was the analyst's use of those very part-theories, notwithstanding their illogicality in living cheek by jowl with one other in the mind of the analyst that has led to enrichment of the theory and of the practice of psychoanalysis. These private adjustments that he described as "the analyst's developing intrinsic private preconscious theory" (p. 38) appeared to him to fit better with the data the

patient brings to session than the analyst's official, publicly espoused theoretical perspectives to which he was consciously aligned.

Bernardi's papers drew breath from Sandler's, Wallerstein's, and Green's ideas as he investigated the knotty problem of pluralism. In a recent work, Bernardi (2015) actualized Green's (2005) desire for a procedure that "establish(es) a clinical common ground as a reference point for analysts working in different theoretical and technical frameworks" (p. 733). He elucidated for his readers *The Three-Level Model for Observing Patient Transformations* (Altmann de Litvan 2014), a paradigm that was developed by the IPA Clinical Observation Committee. It was implemented globally by analysts from a wide array of theoretical and technical points of view (Bernardi 2014a, 2014b) and was recently incorporated into APsaA's Winter Meetings programming. In its essence, the model allows for the study of detailed clinical material that can be engaged with by analysts who may be aligned with a variety of psychoanalytic perspectives. What Bernardi and his colleagues discovered over many years of working with this paradigm among groups of analysts was that consensus among participants of varying persuasions did not occur at the higher order level of metapsychology. Rather, resonance occurred among group members when the clinical material itself was critically examined.

Jimenez's (2008) perspective is relevant too in his consideration of the impact of theoretical plurality within the context of the consulting room. He underscores the quandary that the clinician faces when, sitting with her patient, she becomes immediately aware of the numerous theoretical stances possible, and hopes not to lose her balance as she listens and selects her method of intervention. Jimenez underscores that no matter what theoretical tendencies–that live in the high altitudes of abstraction–lead the analyst toward certain choices of therapeutic action, they will give way, ultimately, to the hard ground of pragmatism. By this he refers to those practical reasons which "guide the taking of decisions on what to say and when and how to interpret" (p. 589) in the setting of the analytic hour. Such instruction consists largely of composing hypotheses of predictions as to how a statement or how the allowance of moments of silence will land in the emotional heartland of her patient. He speaks poetically of those moments of selection as "'devoid' of theory" (p. 589).

Yet, for some analysts, the bedeviling issue that haunts pluralism is the impossibility of squaring the circle with respect to the nature and grounds of evidence: we can compare and contrast one theoretical perspective with another, but is integration possible if the epistemological assumptions underlying our theories are discordant? Boesky (2011, 2015) for one, fiercely reminds us that our vast array of theories derive from "logically incompatible epistemological assumptions" (2011, p. 830). For example, he cites the unbridgeable chasm between those theories that ground conflict in drives and those like Kohut and some relational thinkers who do not. For him, the central challenge that confronts the field is determining whether some theories might be better equipped to account for all the available data than others. This may be investigated, he feels, by tracking the epistemologies that undergird each theory and guide the practitioner toward a specific type of therapeutic action that flows directly from that theory's assumptions.

Greenberg (2015b) echoed some of Boesky's concerns (without using the term epistemology) in his intentionally provocative use of the term, "controlling fictions." He described how each psychoanalytic theory contains underlying assumptions (some entirely at odds with each other) that "dictate the elements that can be seen within the psychoanalytic situation and that come to define it" (p. 86). He continued:

> … because these elements are derivatives of the controlling fiction and have meaning only under the umbrella created by it… concepts that seem to be shared among a range of theories actually have different meanings depending on the broad assumptions within which they operate. [p. 86]

The recent collection of papers entitled, *The Analyst's Use of Multiple Models in Clinical Work* (Zimmer, LaFarge, Blass, and Cooper 2017) are positioned within the culture that Cooper describes as "post-pluralistic" (Cooper 2015). Zimmer's introduction to this cache of contributions states that on the one hand, analysts in the contemporary climate are implicitly asked to assemble a personal hybrid of theoretical models that is jerry-rigged in its approach; or to hew closely to one school of thought with a more constricted therapeutic armamentarium, but underpinned by a more logically consistent foundation, on the other. LaFarge, for instance, maintains what she considers to be a "personal core theory"

that anchors her identity, but regularly acquires aspects of other models that better fit the patient's clinical data when necessary. In contrast, Blass never deviates from her Kleinian roots, while Cooper's methodology enlists him to listen for multiple metaphorical surfaces that appear in his patient's productions; these naturally guide him toward a selection of one or more theories that he sees as valuable in forming his intervention. An integrative outcome is not Cooper's want; it is, rather, an organic emergence of "an interpenetration of theories, technique and clinical sensibility … " (p. 860).

These varying perspectives on pluralism also touch on the complex problem of truth as it has surfaced in contemporary psychoanalytic discourse. A full explication of this topic would require a more extensive review than what is possible in this context, but a few points are relevant. A post-modernist persuasion (Civitarese, Katz, and Tubert-Oklander 2015) leads the way to the acceptance that there is no single, absolute truth, but rather, "only a number of alternative approximations to and perspectives of a highly complex and unbounded process" (p. 559). The authors state further that postmodernism gives rise to pluralism, which for them supports the tension between keeping in abeyance a number of valid interpretations that may emanate from different theoretical persuasions, but without giving up the search for "a humble, partial, contextual, perspectival, and temporary truth … " (p. 560). The tilt in recent years has been toward privileging the process—or the patient's experiential capacity for "knowing" one's experience—as opposed to the search for a representation in the mind that, if under repression, can be recovered and known. However, as Katz (2016) reminds us, the truth value of affective "knowing" is itself subject to fantasy and may be "idealized substitutes for—rather than components of—complex thinking and representing" (p. 528). To her, psychoanalysts today tend to refer to truth as " … *a quality of experience*, rather than simply *an attribute of a representation*" (p. 522, italics added).

Returning to Freud, Greenberg (2016) pointed out that his definition of truth underwent several transformations and course corrections, from the notion of the excavation of the past to locate the genuine articles of truth versus the idea that truth simply cannot be plucked from memory without always being shaped by the inevitable distortions that occur in the present-day recollection of it. However Freud oscillated

between such definitions, it was, for him, *the sine qua non* in a patient's cure. But in a later paper (1937), Freud turned the matter of truth on its head yet again in his famous statement that a patient's sense of *conviction* of the truth of a constructed memory provides the same therapeutic benefit as a recovered memory itself! Freud skirted the matter of how he came to determine this outcome, but his perception has had a lasting impression, indeed.

In the section to follow, I will bring Kwame Anthony Appiah's ideas into this conversation as he elucidates Vaihinger's approach to the world of theories as fictions or useful untruths—what he believes are *idealizations* of truth—and their close relationship to pluralism.

APPIAH'S REFLECTIONS ON VAIHINGER

The recent book by the eminent, contemporary philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, *As If: Idealization and Ideals* (2017) opens up fresh ways to consider these thorny matters. His theme is an homage to Hans Vaihinger, the philosopher I referenced earlier, whose 1924 masterwork *The Philosophy of "As If": A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind* observed that people have a proclivity to idealize a selective theoretical outlook to help them navigate through complex matters. He describes these commonplace, oversimplified idealizations as "fictions" that pervade our thinking when we enter into the world of theoretical models. Humans have a tendency to think about complex matters by seizing upon one variable, "as if" that single variable provides the complete truth. As Appiah puts it:

> Once we come to see that many of our best theories are idealizations, we will also see why our best chance of understanding the world must be to have a plurality of ways of thinking about it. [p. 23]

But why then should it be that we have a predilection for over-simplifying complexity? Appiah response is clarifying:

> … one of Vaihinger's thoughts is that it is precisely the difficulty of embracing "the whole subject" that makes idealization inescapable. It's the fact that the phenomena are

> "excessively complicated" that requires us to leave out some of the details.
>
> But to say that the complexity is *excessive* is to make a point not so much about the world as about our understanding of it: The complexities exceed *our* cognitive capacity to encompass *them,* and that is as much a fact about *us* as about *them.* [p. 24]

The lesson that Appiah conveys that is new for psychoanalysts is that it is essential to hold onto the paradox of knowing that *a greater truth involves a plethora of perspectives and models to consider that on their own are imperfect, and may even be in contradiction to each other—and that our minds are incapable of holding onto all these many theories at once.* Consequently, we are perpetually thrown back on our haunches to embracing a single aspect, or what he would term "a fiction"—idealized in that it is the one that takes the foreground—*at certain times and for certain reasons.*

Whatever could those be? Appiah explains that these fictions in their singularity do not only generate mischief; to our good fortune, they also provide a user-friendly road map into a discipline without the burden of conjuring up its web of complexity: of "getting lost in the weeds." In his words, they are "useful untruths" (Appiah 2017) be it in the disciplines of psychology, ethics, mathematics, economics, literature, or the social sciences. [1] Yet, there is a final matter in Vaihinger's argument: *at some point, if gradually, the other theories have to be added in.* So, bit-by-bit, that multiplicity of pictures must be brought to the table—and here I would add the caveat: at least as best one can.

Appiah's and Vaihinger's lens on the very human propensity toward the idealizing of one's theoretical preference may be applied to psychoanalysis, too. Apart from its useful role as an orientation system of sorts as the analyst gains her bearings with a patient, the idealization of one's theory has led to a legacy of fragmentation and fractious infighting as different schools of thought have vied for hegemony at different epochs, since the early 1900's. The Freud-Klein Controversy is especially notable

[1] Appiah cites Vaihinger's view on Adam Smith's theory of economics as an example. Smith constructed his theory based on the assumption that humans are motivated from self-interest, despite the fact that he was fully aware that human motivation was far more complicated.

for its bitterness and persistence, especially in North America where Kleinian views were depreciated and harshly critiqued until the past few decades. Self-psychology, ego psychology, relational theories, Lacanian perspectives, field theorists from Europe, field theorists from Rio de la Plata in Latin America, and the French psychosomatic tradition among others have all bid for pride of place, and also uphold contrasting, if not contradictory models of the mind.

What is the rejoinder to the dilemma, as prominently found in Boesky's critique, of integrating multiple theories that may be in contradiction to the personal model that we customarily use?

Appiah writes:

> So the success of our current model, for some purpose or other, cannot count against accepting an additional model that is inconsistent with it, for at least two reasons. One is that just because our theory, which is not strictly true, succeeds to some degree for some purpose, we cannot infer that another theory inconsistent with it could not also succeed to more or less the same degree for the same purpose; the other is that what is successful for some purposes might not be successful for others. The result is that Vaihinger can give us an explanation for why we might profit from mobilizing a set of theories that are inconsistent with one another. [p. 17]

The first point does not argue for the integration of epistemologically incongruent models; rather, it sees the answer to these irreconcilable differences in simply allowing them to sit side-by-side. It does not answer the question as to which theory is "better"—for psychoanalysts, this will have to be debated elsewhere. But Vaihinger's position that more than one theory could be equally successful for the same purpose is relevant. This response finds resonance in Sandler's "body of ideas" that does not have to align within a "consistent whole." It also stands shoulder to shoulder with Zimmer's (2017) note concerning the greater expansion of therapeutic potential that exists in the use of multiple models, despite the illogicality regarding those models' central principles that are embedded therein.

Not only do different models have different foundational postulates—there may be inconsistencies that exist within one model itself, as

well. This does not mean that what is inconsistent or false should be jettisoned; it may still provide a valuable resource at certain times. Or, as Appiah says above, in his second point, "… what is successful for some purposes might not be successful for others" (p. 17).

For example, a psychoanalyst may find Melanie Klein's clinical applications concerning the fantasy life of the infant quite user-friendly, despite the fact that she is aware that there is no empirical evidence that shows that infants are capable of fantasy, nor has it been proven that they are even capable of differentiating themselves from others in mental life which would be required for a projection of unwanted affects onto an internalized mother to happen. Yet, ideas of projection, projective identification, paranoia, splitting, and other concepts offer high dividends in their metaphoric value among clinicians across a broad spectrum of schools of thought.

The idea of partial theories as working models also have implications concerning the search for truth in the contemporary psychoanalytic canon,[2] as mentioned in the previous section. In Appiah's and Vaihinger's thinking there is a kinship with Freud's (1937) perception[3] that the analyst's construction (an approximation) of repressed contents which produce the patient's "assured conviction of the truth of the construction … " (pp. 265-266) results in the same therapeutic outcome as if those repressed contents were actually remembered. The analyst's construction is not a veridical, unequivocal truth, yet it is a useful story—*a useful untruth*—that benefits the patient; just as Appiah illuminates, Vaihinger's view of the fictional truth of a single theory (its truth *value*, so to speak) offers an important function by guiding the individual more easily than by the function provided by numerous simultaneous theories which must be juggled in one's head.

WHAT IS FRESH IN APPIAH'S OUTLOOK FOR PSYCHOANALYSTS?

To summarize: firstly, while the psychoanalytic opus boasts a handsome collection of papers that reflect the reality of pluralism in our discipline,

[2] See Special Issue, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 65(2) 2016: "Is Truth Relevant?"

[3] Despite his eliding a full explication of how he claims to discern this.

analytic thinkers have not articulated the idea that pluralism is *a requirement* for a more truthful grasp of the workings of mental life. This perspective is notable in its range, thus differing substantially from those of other thinkers on this subject which support the free use of this or that model or the importing of particular aspects of models as one feels is helpful. None advance the *necessity* of utilizing many. To my reading, no other writings have reflected such a definitive view and one that opposes the idea of loyalty to a single model. Such a perspective finds a companion in Greenberg's (2015) suggestion that "A Kleinian who is aware of (and maybe even faintly nagged by) attachment theory will be a better Kleinian than one who is not. And vice versa" (p. 88).

Secondly, Appiah brings to the psychoanalyst Vaihinger's understanding of a prominent obstacle in using a plurality of pictures: we will be drawn into incoherence if we attempt to hold all theories in our minds simultaneously. Vaihinger puts his finger on the paradox that besets the clinician which is that a more complete truth *necessitates* that the clinician brings a multiplicity of pictures to a patient's emerging data, the very thing that the human mind is not equipped to do.

Thirdly, despite this dilemma, what Appiah demonstrates in Vaihinger's writing that is novel for the psychoanalyst to ponder is the fact that an initial theoretical perspective can play an important role in shepherding the analyst into the interiority of her patient's mind. In that way, it is quite useful, despite the fact that it is *an untruth and a fiction* (and idealized in the fact that it has been selected above all others), as it circumvents a fuller complexity, a fuller truth, about her patient. It is a solution, albeit a flawed one—but the best we have—when the analyst is faced with the puzzle that our patients' psychological complexity exceeds our cognitive capacity to absorb every aspect of her, all at once (p. 24). [4]

And fourthly, the final lesson for the psychoanalyst is Vaihinger's prompting that those other models that have been left out for necessity's sake must be brought in at some point, if piecemeal, to the domain of the consulting room in order to arrive at that fuller understanding of her patient. When we engage with our colleagues in panel discussions or

[4] One's counter-transference reactions to various theories will also play a role in how an analyst thinks about and responds to her patient.

in educational settings and debate the terms of our different models, we enjoy a certain luxury of being able to entertain multiple points of view *removed from the fray of the clinical moment*. It is possible in such surrounds to let down one's guard and dip into and out of a wide range of ideas. In such moments of academic discourse or in solitude the psychoanalyst may use input from peers or her own counsel as well to compensate for what Vaihinger describes as our cognitive limitations in achieving this complex feat at one time—and for the psychoanalyst in particular, within the oft-times pressured atmosphere of the clinical situation.

WHAT TRIGGERS THE ANALYST'S ENGAGEMENT WITH A DIFFERENT MODEL OR PERSPECTIVE?

It is one thing to assert that giving proper due to the full spectrum of models, as proposed by Vaihinger and Appiah, is optimal. But it will only be an academic exercise, mixed with what may come to feel like a tacked on, rule-bound admonishment to ourselves if we feel we must force ourselves to tap into an alternate frame of reference in perpetuity, or merely now and then. Such urging, whether nuanced or clamorous, can set the conditions for a countertransference response on the part of the analyst who feels compelled by this approach to fall in line; it is a sure-fire breeding ground for exasperation, antagonism and even defiance. So, for this approach to make sense and to be a boon to the analyst's work in the consulting room, there must be a *clinical reason* why one would shift perspectives or change a style of intervention or interpretation. While many analysts blend theoretical perspectives naturally based on the shape or changing nature of the emerging clinical data as LaFarge's (2017) process demonstrates, or like Cooper (2017) who surveys the surfaces that are generated in the patient's data and chooses his perspective accordingly, there are other clinical reasons to change one's point of view. One is the analyst's awareness of an impasse in the treatment; or the sighting of a smoke signal, so to speak, that the patient sends us that something is awry; or a piece of countertransference that obscures a way forward. These may also open up possibilities to the analyst as to *why* seeing the patient's world through the usual lens is obfuscating and impeding of progress.

My contribution to this legacy of thought is that the discovery of an obstacle of these sorts is an important trigger in what urges an analyst to experiment outside one's usual reference point. It is, I believe, a way to address how pluralism may be helpful in the clinical setting.

In this context, it is important to cite Lafarge's (2017) urging of caution that a defensive "landing" upon a "better" fiction by switching the core theory that one customarily uses is, most assuredly, a countertransference reaction of its own, as I mentioned above. With sensitivity, she cites her preference for the importation of part-theories to what she describes as her personal core model based on fresh grasps of meaning that can rise up within the moment-to moment exchanges in the clinical encounter. These novel modes of thinking about her patient may serve to enlarge the analyst's vision as a valuable addition to her usual ways—instead of an "either/or" or substitute theory or fiction which may prove to be an overvaluation of a new concept, or an aspect of therapeutic action. Staying alert to this difference in meaning between a prudent yet creative integration of pieces of alternate models and a rash jump from one theory to another advances the creation of a rich tapestry of ideas that can be used flexibly without doctrinaire-imposed certainties.

For the purpose of highlighting the issue at hand, I will offer a brief précis of my patient, Stephanie, as well as some of the notable features of her personality, her cognitive style, and her vulnerabilities with respect to how she assembled her inner pictures of herself and others. As you read along, what may strike you, as it did for me in the writing of this piece, are the numerous theoretical possibilities that may be used to conceptualize a patient's data—even within a *snippet* of clinical material; and secondly, how few of these possibilities are in our conscious awareness in the immediacy of the clinical encounter.

Before turning to my clinical material, I would like to describe the principal aspects of my own theoretical framework. The tenets of ego psychology are guiding features of my clinical listening: paying close attention to defense and the centrality of unconscious fantasy and its derivatives as they find expression in the patient's internal and external worlds and in the transference and countertransference exchange. I also privilege the patient's experience of historical traumata in the developmental passage and beyond, and its impress in the formation of the personality. Non-conscious mental systems, or ego functions are also

features that I track and monitor for delays or compromised functioning, such as the capacities for impulse control, affect tolerance, mentalization and symbolic operations. The latter emphasis on such systems might be viewed as an example of my importing part-theories to my personal core model, such as mentalization theory, that enriches my generally ego psychological approach.

CLINICAL EXAMPLE

Stephanie, of eastern European descent in her early thirties, was referred for treatment due to longstanding difficulties in her romantic relationships. She clung to men who tended to use her as a narcissistic self-object to bolster their self-esteem or to enliven their sense of self. Yet, as I came to know Stephanie, I found that the same could be said of her: her own sense of identity seemed fractured and often child-like in quality. She was charming, personable, and articulate, but a deeper impression of loneliness imbued her chatter about her work and dating life. Her descriptions of her parents were that they were overly involved with themselves, and insensitive to her needs and desires as a person in her own right, separate from them. In her growing up years, she complied with the "identity" they created of her, found herself doing things on their terms, and split off her own rage, profound disappointment and guilt about these matters. As Stephanie and I reflected upon her childhood and adolescent past, we could see that she used *action* as a way of managing these reactions that she didn't experience consciously. When some build-up of tension became too strong—she couldn't identify the feeling beneath the anxiety—she might refuse to go to school if she was frightened of a test, or over-eat as a means of ridding herself of free-floating anxiety. Until she came to understand the complex dynamics that operated between her and her parents, she continued her pattern of being drawn to men that fit the bill of her parents.

In childhood, one or other of her parents would leave frequently for extended periods of time on business trips or tend to an ill grandparent who lived abroad. These repeated comings and goings helped to set the stage for Stephanie's feelings of "being dropped" or "left," in addition to her feeling she was used by them to fulfill their own narcissistic supplies. From an early age and persisting throughout her childhood and

adolescence, Stephanie's paternal aunt Cassie resided with the family on and off, due to financial hardships. Cassie was an important and loving figure in her life, as unlike her parents, she was able to take her in as an individual. But in the analysis, it became clear to Stephanie and me that despite her positive characteristics, Cassie often reverted to overly simplistic views of how the world worked, which made an impact on Stephanie's own thinking, even as she moved forward as an adult. She frequently reverted to assumptions and theories about the world that typified dichotomous thinking; she revealed an overall naiveté in her perceptual assemblages of the world. Yet, in other moments, she was also capable of thinking like an adult, and could handle sophisticated abstractions and engage in impressive problem-solving strategies at work.

Stephanie's capacity for *mentalizing,* identifying her and others' states of mind and recognizing the difference between her and others' perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, was stunted. At different times, she could lapse into psychic equivalence mode of experience where she confused her feelings for facts. If she *felt* something about herself or someone else, it quickly turned into a belief system that held objective truths—the feelings she had transmogrified into facts. At other times, a teleological mindset held the day wherein she could not process feelings, but would have to put them into action immediately. Still in even other settings, her thoughts would spin like whirling dervishes until they lost their context within reality, and she lost the plot entirely, over-analyzing everything. She tended to project her own self-loathing onto others and fear rejection when there was no evidence for it, creating narratives that repeated again and again her own perceptions (and seemingly reality-based occurrences) of being rejected.

The circumstance of "being alone"—without the company of another person—was a frightening prospect and often, intolerable for Stephanie to bear. Feelings of rage and guilt and fears of abandonment accompanied these states of mind—reinforced by the periodic parental absences—but as I mentioned above, they were un-owned and split off from awareness. These configurations and their staying power, I conjectured, were how her psychological system self-ordered and found its relative equilibrium.

The context for this session occurs in the 6th year of our four times per week analytic work. Stephanie has been in the throes of working through feelings of abandonment. She has stayed out of the world of dating so as to protect herself from confronting these issues and facing the disappointments in her traumatic childhood past, as regards her self-involved parents, and her long-standing rage and identity that she is a lost-child, seeking parental figures to compensate her for all her wounds. Recently, she has taken a powerful risk by putting herself into the tumult of dating, which has been a roiling experience. She is currently beginning to date a man who appears to show genuine interest in her.

I wish to point out here that I am not selecting "breakthrough moments" (that these even exist is an arguable point) but common clinical experiences that I hope demonstrate how frequently useful untruths play a role in psychoanalytic work.

As she walks into my office, Stephanie looks to be in great distress. As soon as she lies down, she begins to sob, uncontrollably.

Stephanie: "I don't know what's wrong with me—everything is good—I have so much". *She pauses as he seems confused.*

Suddenly, she bursts out:

Stephanie: "I don't deserve any of it!"

Me: "Is it that it's hard to put this 'everything feels so good' part of you together with the part that feels you don't deserve anything?"

Stephanie: "It's easier to be with someone who treats me like crap. I've never felt this way! I can't stand it!"

I feel a sense of confusion. Then, in what follows, Stephanie's voice quickly changes several times between a vulnerable, frightened child and a rational, pragmatic adult:

Stephanie: "It's my shit that I haven't made a date with William for the holidays yet—it's my abandonment fears—it's my having to have him—But I feel so sad! I don't even know why!"

She is so disconsolate that she is barely able to speak: I think the sadness is that I *am* worthy! And I don't know how to put it together! How can that be? Why am I sad?

Now, I sense a contemplative attitude that informs her words: I feel I'm pursuing him and I've done it in the past with other men—and like with them, this may not work out. I may be left. I think that . . I don't know … I think that … my fear is that he'll go away—*her voice begins to break and she sounds like a forlorn child*—He'll disappear and I'll be hurt. I'll feel so abandoned. *Suddenly, the quality of her intonation changes to that of a reflective adult*: but it's all about me. If he doesn't give me certainty that he's mine, that we'll be together, that he wants to be with me, then I just put all this abandonment onto him—it's not fair that I do this to him. We're only just dating. It's too early. I get it, but I'm so scared!" *She begins to cry. After a few moments, Stephanie shifts to a voice of curiosity and self-inquiry:* "I don't get why I feel I'm not more wary of inviting him places—that's what I'm doing—I'm acting like the pursuer. And I'm not afraid that he'll say no. Why aren't I? But I also feel that part of me wants to shut it down."

It is clear to me now that I feel batted between two entirely different "identities" with almost no transitional space between 'them' that might help me to anticipate the next shift.

Me: "It's like you're a tennis ball flying back and forth over the net—between two completely different parts of yourself."

Stephanie: "Yeah! It's true! (*She perks up with recognition*) I feel one way, and then it's another. (*Pause*) There *is* a super rational part of me that says if he doesn't respond, it's not the end of the world!

Me:" Maybe this going back and forth between these two parts of you—is it about '*Can* you trust him?' or '*Can't* you trust him?' Does he mean what he says? Even if you get him to agree to do everything you want him to do– the thing is: you don't know what's in his heart."

Stephanie: "I feel like I can't trust, it's true! But the rational part says I can, and that it's true—he does like me.

Me: "These two parts of you are at war!"

Stephanie: "It's like I have this larger-than-life sense of myself vs. this terrible sense of myself. I feel like he's gone—that he's vanished. Out of sight, out of mind."

In the first few minutes of Stephanie's hour, I felt out of my depth by her affect storm. Although such squalls are not unusual in our work, this one was unusually acute. As I tried to find a foothold, I found myself immensely relieved to have alighted upon a way of thinking about what I was experiencing with her: I recognized that Stephanie was *not* relating to me from a single, unitary position, but rather as someone who was in a state of fluid and perpetual contradiction: I was forced to experience the high velocity shock waves that were generated between two opposing self-states that seemed to be volleying back and forth over a net, each vying for victory. There was the traumatized child-like Stephanie who foretells a narrative of certain abandonment, up against a more mature Stephanie—perhaps a composite of her identifications with me as regards my perspectives, my steadiness over the many years of our work as this has been integrated afresh into her own interior vision—who knows that such a narrative is not an objective truth, is resilient in her capacity for self-reflection, in her observation of the reality of the people who populate her life, in her assessment of the unreality of her desire to control her loved ones, and vice versa.

Whipsawed between the two, I decided to put language to my experience of her, which resulted in my observation that she seemed to be flying back and forth across a net between two distinctive selves. After I made my comment, and she replied, it came to me that behind this game of selves was an acute terror of trusting this man. I knew full well that the thorny matter of trust was never far from view in our years of work. "You worry you can't trust him." I said. She felt she could capture her beloved—by his physical presence in her life, by his literally *being* with her—or otherwise, he would *vanish*. "Trust!" I thought again. "Stephanie doesn't trust words, or previously kept promises, she only trusts action—and even then!" This inspired me to bring to our dialogue the importance to her of the *make-believe* of the physical: that is, Stephanie interprets *the presence of the other* as a *fact that she is loved*. To bring her attention to this defensive veil, I say, *even if William is physically with her, or she can get him to do what she wants, she cannot know what he truly feels towards her.*

WHAT GUIDED MY INTERVENTIONS?

As I listened to Stephanie when the hour began, what unnerved me was that I could not find a through-line in how she was describing her self-

state. My usual theoretical perspective of listening to unconscious fantasy, her defensive operations and uneven ego functions did not offer enough guidance. But when I re-focused upon my reactions to her, I was struck particularly by my impression that at one moment she seemed rational and thoughtful, and the next, like a frightened out-of-control child. I was in the midst of a countertransference reaction of helplessness, and in that state of mind, perhaps more vulnerable than I would be otherwise, it came to me that I was listening to at least two deeply divergent ways of feeling herself to exist—borrowing from Bromberg's theory of multiple self states (1998), which I realized only after the fact! This helped me, briefly, to take an interpretive position with her, and one that I would not have found in my more ego-psychologically informed model. But instantly, as soon as I found myself speaking these words, another thought rose to my awareness—so tangible a presence it seemed to have forced itself upon me: "*Trust*!" it whispered, urgently. "Don't you see? She doesn't *trus*t him!" After I put to her my thought about the importance of trust—that it was *this,* which seemed to be at the crux of her worries about William—she agreed with me, and associated further to her need that feelings be translated into action. An emotional state of being akin to a teleological mind-set seemed to prevail for Stephanie, wherein feelings cannot be processed adequately until they are expressed outwardly, by way of "proof" that must be demonstrated in tangible, "real world" action. Thus, it was difficult for her to believe that I could *consider* her, *imagine* her, or *think* about her when she is apart from me. I used this idea, a prominent aspect of mentalization theory and held it close during this part of the hour. It seemed to me that multiple self-states, mistrust, and teleological thinking were interconnected and expressed in varying configurations; further, I felt a discernable relief, as if I had made my way, with success, through rough terrain made more perilous by the cover of dense fog.

In essence, what appeared to me was a map—higgledy-piggledy though it was—informed by imported, roughly constructed part-theories, some of which were aspects of my usual operating model, but what was new was the addition of the idea of multiple self states. It shepherded me in my understanding of Stephanie's material in this hour and toward a strategy to help her, that was not of my habitual frame of reference. In accordance with Vaihinger and Appiah then, I put

together a *story* about Stephanie that acted like a grounds-work of sorts so that I could maneuver my way about her world, in this moment in time. It allowed me to find a way forward, and to listen again in a less ruffled state of mind.

What I wish to emphasize is that this is a fiction, *an untruth*, because it cannot represent the entire picture of Stephanie—and it is also one that contradicts other theoretical positions that would oppose the existence of multiple self-states (as well as mentalization theory). However, this perspective assisted me in finding a path through the circumstance of a difficult countertransference thicket. In Vaihinger's words, this was an example of my having *idealized* a set of jerry built part-theories that was for me, in this moment, *a useful untruth*.

But there was something else that was outside of my awareness, even in this period of self-reflection that I failed to take in fully. The "discernable relief" upon alighting to the model of multiple self-states, how she was mentalizing, and her mistrust of others was a partial untruth. There are other layers of meaning that she had projected onto me such as an idea of a depressed mother that she had to keep engaged with a flurry of volatile activity. There was also her link between grandiosity—"I have this vague, larger-than-life sense of myself"; her more rational sense of herself—"if he doesn't respond, it's not the end of the world"; and her denigrated self—"[There is] this terrible sense of myself. I feel like he's gone—that he's vanished." These will need to be integrated into a larger picture—which must eventually give way to further reflection.

Will there be other models—other pictures about Stephanie—*useful untruths, that is*—that I will add in as the treatment progresses, as Vaihinger and Appiah advise? Undoubtedly. When included into the larger plot line of Stephanie's mental life, a deeper, richer, more complex, and dimensional picture will emerge from the mist. And even then, that yearned-after end-point of absolute truth will never come.

In a setting that affords me a certain peace of mind such as now, when writing this manuscript, or in presenting my experiences with Stephanie to colleagues, looking backward allows me to visualize how and why I found my way with her within the constraints of the method I used. It served a very useful purpose, albeit a fictional, oversimplified one, as Appiah would aver. But I also know that as Stephanie and I step

into the future, my viewfinder will have to accommodate "a Stephanie" that is more complex and *more truthful* than the one I had imagined while in her presence; and that I will need more pictures, even contradictory ones at that, to see the entirety—or at least approaching that—of whom she might be.

CONCLUSION

To find our way within the dense world of our patient's mental life, it is helpful to employ a single theory that provides an easier way into her world, than to embrace a multitude of theories. While more truthful in the aggregate of their complexity, the plurality of that multitude cannot be contained within the analyst's thoughts at once; it is beyond our human capacity to do so. Yet, for Vaihinger and Appiah, the analyst's employment of a unitary theory is a useful untruth, an *idealization*—a knowing deviation from the truth—that oversimplifies and delimits the vastness of possible portraits but in its departure from that vastness of the fuller truth, opens up a path forward. Our best theories or models of the mind may not be strictly true, then, and they are often in contradiction with each other. Nevertheless, at some later point, those other perspectives must be brought in for consideration to affect a greater expansion of our vision. Finally, there is the remaining, haunting problem that prods and provokes: those very openings along that spectrum of plurality contain countertransference pitfalls, illusions, and deceptions. Their regular appearance in the clinical setting unerringly prompts the question: "Can one kind, level, or order of truth conceal another?" (Katz 2016).

A version of the contemporary psychoanalyst is one who is continuously assembling a point of view that is peripatetic: gathering bits and pieces of partial theories that she hopes will touch her patient as she evolves and changes, and shows different aspects of her interior world. It is not a tidy enterprise, and there are those who argue against this emerging analyst that has arisen in this epoch (Blass 2017). But if we are to face the reality of how we think in the hotbed of the clinical situation—what helps us, but also what limits us and how to correct for those limitations—we can loosen our grip in the withering battle for "the truth" that can be observed among those who remain as impassioned

advocates of one or other of our models. Instead, we might trade such divisive trends for Vaihinger and Appiah's more compassionate and realistic view of the world, wherein a host of imperfect portraits are necessary in order to see the truth of who we are.

REFERENCES

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. (2017). *As if: Idealization and Ideals*. Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press.

Baranger W. & Baranger M. (2008). The analytic situation as a dynamic field. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 89:795–826. doi:10.1111/j.1745-8315.2008.00074.x

Bateman, A. & Fonagy, P. (2013). Mentalization-Based Treatment. *Psychoanal. Inq.*, 33(6): 595–613. doi:10.1080/07351690.2013.835170

Bernardi, R. (1989). The role of paradigmatic determinants in psychoanalytic understanding. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 70:341–357.

——— (1992). On Pluralism in psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 12(4): 506–525.

——— (2003). What kind of evidence makes the analyst change his/her theoretical and technical ideas? In: Leuzinger-Bohleber M, Dreher AU, Canestri J, editors. *Pluralism and Unity? Methods of research in psychoanalysis* 125–36. London: The International Psychoanalytical Association.

——— (2005). What after pluralism? Ulysses still on the road. *Psychoanal. Inq.* 25(5): 654–666.

——— (2007). Lights and shadows of pluralism. *Psychoanal Q.*, 76S(Supplement): 1585–1599.

——— (2014a). The assessment of changes: Diagnostic aspects. In: Altmann M., editor. *Time for change: Tracking transformations in psychoanalysis—the three-level model*, 263–78. London: Karnac.

——— (2014b). The three-level model (3-LM) for observing patient transformations. In *Time for Change: Tracking Transformations in Psychoanalysis*, ed. M. Altmann de Litvan. London: Karnac Books, pp. 3–34.

——— (2015). What kind of discipline is psychoanalysis? *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 96(3):731–754.

Blass, Rachel B. (2017) Committed to a single model and open to reality. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 65: 845–58. doi:10.1177/0003065117737750

Boesky, D. (2011). Psychoanalytic Pluralities: When Theories Touch: A Historical and Theoretical Integration of Psychoanalytic Thought. by Steven Ellman. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*59(4): 829–837. doi:10.1177/0003065111416653

——— (2015). Action and the analyst's responsibility: commentary on Greenberg. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 63(1)65–83.

Bromberg, Phillip M. (1998). *Standing in the Spaces: Essays on Clinical Process, Trauma and Dissociation.* Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.

Citivarese, G. (2016). Truth as immediacy and unison: a new common ground in psychoanalysis? Commentary on essays addressing "is truth relevant?" *Psychoanal. Q.,* 85 (2) 449–501.

Civitarese, G., Katz, M., Tubert-Oklander, J. (2015). Prologue: postmodernism and psychoanalysis. *Psychoanal. Inq.,* 35(6):559–565.

Cooper, S. (2015). Clinical theory at the border(s): emerging and unintended crossings in the development of clinical theory. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 96: 273–292.

——— (2017). The analyst's "use" of theory or theories: the play of theory. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 65(5): 859–882.

Freud, S. (1937). Constructions in analysis. *S. E.,* 23.

Green, A. (2005). The illusion of common ground and mythical pluralism. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 86:627–32.

Greenberg, J. (2015a). Therapeutic action and the analyst's responsibility. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 63(1):15–32. doi:10.1177/0003065114561861

——— (2015b). Response to Commentaries. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 63(1): 85–100.

——— (2016). Editor's introduction. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 85(2) 269–274.

Jimenez, J. P. (2008). Theoretical plurality and pluralism in psychoanalytic practice. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 89(3): 579–599.

Katz, W. (2016). The experience of truth in psychoanalysis today. *Psychoanal.* Q. 85(2) 503–530. doi:10.1002/psaq.12082

Lafarge, L. (2017). From "either/or" to "and": the analyst's use of multiple models in clinical work. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 65(5): 829–844.

Sandler, J. (1983). Reflections on some relations between psychoanalytic concepts and psychoanalytic practice. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 64:35–45.

Vaihinger, Hans (1924) *The Philosophy of "As If": A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind, trans.* C. K. Ogden. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co.

Wallerstein, R. (1988). One psychoanalysis or many? *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 69: 5–21.

Zimmer, Richard B. (2017) The analyst's use of multiple models in clinical work: introduction. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 65:819–27. doi:10.1177/0003065117737753

31 Washington Square West, PHA
New York, New York 10011

CMLament@msn.com

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Toward a Revised Form of Analytic Thinking and Practice: The Evolution of Analytic Theory of Mind

Thomas H. Ogden

To cite this article: Thomas H. Ogden (2020) Toward a Revised Form of Analytic Thinking and Practice: The Evolution of Analytic Theory of Mind, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 219-243, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1715719

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1715719

Published online: 18 Mar 2020.

Volume LXXXIX, Number 2
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1715719

TOWARD A REVISED FORM OF ANALYTIC THINKING AND PRACTICE: THE EVOLUTION OF ANALYTIC THEORY OF MIND

BY THOMAS H. OGDEN

The author tells the stories of the inception of mind that is developed in the work of five analytic theorists whom he sees as central to the evolution of a new and fertile form of psychoanalytic thinking and practice: Freud, Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, and Bion. The conception of mind presented by each of these authors moves from that of an apparatus for thinking (in the work of Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn) to that of a process located in the very act of experiencing (in the work of Winnicott and Bion). The work of each of the theorists constitutes a radical transformation of thinking relative to those who have preceded and those who follow him or her. The author, in telling the "stories" of the emergence of mind and the concept of mind according to each of these theorists, offers not only his own narrative structure and clarifications of their work, but also his own interpretations and extensions of their ideas.

Keywords: Mental apparatus, mind as process, emergence of mind, being, becoming.

I have come to view the work of Freud, Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, and Bion on the emergence of mind and the conception of mind as instrumental in the evolution of a new and generative psychoanalytic

Thomas H. Ogden is a Personal and Supervising analyst at the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California.

sensibility and mode of practice.[1] In this essay I will trace in the work of these authors a movement from a conception of mind as a "*mental apparatus" for processing experience* (in the work of Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn) to a conception of mind as a process located in *the very act of experiencing* (in the work of Winnicott and Bion). The evolution of this strand of thinking might be thought of as a movement from a notion of mind as a noun, to a notion of mind as a verb, a living process, perpetually in the act of coming into being.

I will offer a sketch of elements of each of these analysts' theories or hypotheses or stories concerning the beginnings of psychic life. I add the term "stories" to the terms "theories" and "hypotheses" because no one, even the most devoted mother, knows what it is to be inside the psyche-soma of a newborn infant. In recent years, infant observation has afforded us an opportunity to gain a sense of the experience of mother and infant, but we can do no more than make inferences about, and metaphors concerning, the interior life of the infant. We are still in the position of a person born without eyes trying to imagine the experience of sight. The person without eyes may use his other senses and may create metaphors for what sight may be "like," but they do not add up to the experience of seeing.

I find that a study of the hypotheses of each of these theorists concerning the emergence of mind creates another vantage point from which to view each theorist's broader conception of the way the mind works in later stages of life, which, in turn, sheds light on what it is to be human.

Each of the theorists has more than one version of genesis, so my rendering of their ideas necessarily tells one version of their stories of "the beginning," which in a sense makes me the storyteller for each of them. Moreover, I will along the way offer my own interpretations and extensions of the ideas under discussion, some of which I believe are implicit in the work of each author, while others entail my own elaboration of his or her work.

[1] See Ogden 2019, for a discussion of the growing shift in emphasis in psychoanalysis from an epistemological (having to do with knowing and understanding) mode of thinking and clinical practice to an ontological approach (having to do with experiences of being and becoming).

In writing this paper over the course of several years, I began with the hypothesis that the stories of the emergence of mind of each of the five theorists could be stated in the form of a response to the question: what is the problem for which the emergence of mind is a solution? This proved to be useful in relation to the work of Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn, but not for the conceptions of the emergence of mind and the concept of mind in the work of Winnicott and Bion. This brought to my awareness a radical change in analytic thinking that has its roots in the work of Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn and came to fruition in the work of Winnicott and Bion. It is the evolution of this change in analytic thinking that is the focus of this paper.

Freud

Freud's conception of the birth of the mind is something of a collage he created over the course of more than four decades. The pieces of the collage were not assembled in chronological order. In fact, Freud's conception of the earliest state of the psyche, which he called the "oceanic feeling" (1929, p. 54), is an idea and a term presented to him by his friend, Romain Rolland, in a letter written in 1927.

Freud (1929), in *Civilization and its Discontents*, adopted the term *oceanic feeling* to describe the earliest psychic state: "[the oceanic feeling] is a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole …" (p. 65).

While the ego becomes more differentiated from the external world, it retains "a residue" of the oceanic feeling as a background state:

> … originally the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself. Our present ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive—indeed, an all-embracing—feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it … the same ideas with which my friend elucidated the "oceanic" feeling. [1929, p. 68]

Freud (1929) uses the term "the ego" (p. 67) (*das Ich*, better translated as "the I") here, but does not offer a definition of the term. Instead, by means of quite extraordinary use of language, he indirectly

conveys transformations of "I-ness" (subjectivity) as they occur in development subsequent to the "all-embracing" "oceanic" feeling-state:

> An infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensations flowing in upon him. He gradually learns to do so, in response to various promptings. He must be very strongly impressed by the fact that some sources of excitation, which he will later recognize as his own bodily organs, can provide him with sensations at any moment, whereas other sources evade him from time to time—among them what he desires most of all, his mother's breast—and only reappear as a result of his screaming for help. In this way there is for the first time set over against the ego an "object," in the form of something which exists "outside" and which is only forced to appear by a special action. [1929, p. 66-67]

Here, Freud is describing the birth of the subject. With the "birth" of the object ("something which exists 'outside'"), there is in that same moment, the birth of the subject: there can be no separate object ("not-I") in the absence of a subject ("I") to experience it; and there can be no subject ("I") without an object to encounter that is experienced as "not-I."

In developing a conception of the next "step" in, or aspect of, the emergence of mind, Freud picks up a line of thought that he introduced almost twenty years earlier in "Formulations on two principles of mental functioning" (1911a): the idea that the ego is unable to successfully attain pleasure or avert pain by "hallucinati[ng] the fulfillment of its internal needs" (pp. 219-220). For example, when operating solely on the basis of the pleasure principle, wishful hallucinations of food will not satisfy hunger. This is the impetus for the ego to begin to operate both on the basis of the "reality principle" (Freud 1911a) and "the pleasure principle" (1911a), and to enter into object-relationships with real external objects:

> A further incentive to a disengagement of the ego from the general mass of sensations—that is, to the recognition of an "outside," an external world—is provided by the frequent, manifold and unavoidable sensations of pain and unpleasure … One comes to learn a procedure by which, through a

> deliberate action, one can differentiate between what is internal—what belongs to the ego—and what is external—what emanates from the outside world. [Freud 1929, p. 67]

As is reflected in the passages I have just quoted, it is in the medium of bodily sensation that the ego (the I) comes into being: "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego" (Freud 1923, p. 26).

The foregoing set of ideas concerning what, for Freud, are the earliest states of mind, serve as the background for his conception of the formation and elaboration of the conscious and unconscious mind. The primordial mind is faced with the problem of dealing with the disturbing effects of instinctual pressure emanating from the body: instinct, for Freud, "is the demand [of the body] made upon the mind for work" (Freud 1915a, p. 122). The inception of that "mental apparatus" (Freud 1900) takes the form of the development of the capacity to create "psychical representative[s]" (1915a, p. 122) of instinct (at first, primarily the sexual instinct [Freud 1905]). In other words, mind is a structure, a "mental apparatus," for processing instinct-derived bodily experience by creating psychic representations of that experience.

The creation of psychical representatives and derivatives of the sexual instinct (thoughts, feelings, phantasies, and impulses) create problems of their own, namely the fact that many of the phantasies and impulses generated are unacceptable, frightening, shameful, terrifying, overwhelming, and so on. This set of emotional problems is met by the creation of a divide in human consciousness that separates and connects the unconscious and conscious-preconscious aspects of mind. The concept of the dynamic unconscious mind necessarily involves a conception of the unconscious and conscious mind operating according to different principles (the "pleasure principle" and the "reality principle" respectively [Freud 1911a]). Neither the idea of the unconscious mind nor the idea of the conscious mind has any meaning in isolation from one another: each creates, maintains, and negates the other (Ogden 1992a). This may be Freud's most important contribution to the development of a general psychology: "If Freud's discovery had to be summed up in a single word, that word without doubt would have to be 'unconscious'" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, p. 474).

Intrinsic to Freud's conception of the conscious and unconscious mind is his concept of repression: "The theory of repression is the corner-stone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests" (Freud 1911b, p. 16). Repression is the psychic function that creates and preserves the separation of, and the communication between, the conscious-preconscious and the unconscious aspects of mind. Without repression, there is no unconscious (or conscious) mind. Thus, the creation of mind, for Freud, is the "solution" to the problem, beginning in early infancy, of powerful animal instincts (particularly the sexual instinct) that are so disturbing that a "mental apparatus" must be developed in order to cope with the psychic representations of the sexual instinct.

At this point in the discussion of Freud's view of the creation of mind, I will interject something of my own interpretation of his writings. The mental apparatus that is created in response to instinctual pressure protects us from ourselves (our frightening, unacceptable impulses and phantasies), while at the same time *safeguarding banished parts of ourselves.* Repression sends into exile aspects of ourselves while keeping those same aspects close to us, never completely silenced, continually reminding us of the disowned aspects of who we are, and who we are afraid we are. In effect, we are "burying ourselves *alive*" in the repressed unconscious, and those buried aspects of self are continually "banging on the door" of the repression barrier (the ever-present threat and promise of the "*return of the repressed*" [Freud 1915b, p. 154]).

The work of repression, so conceived, is that of creating and preserving a form of divided, yet unitary, consciousness in which we disown aspects of ourselves, and relegate them to the domain of the unconscious. The psychoanalytic unconscious is a mysterious aspect of ourselves—never fully understandable, making itself "known" only as "reflected" in derivative forms such as dreams, symptoms, slips of the tongue, artistic creations, and so on.

By means of our dual consciousness, it *seems* that we "get to have it both ways"—a coexistence of the feared and the embraced, which stand in dialectical tension with one another. But, to my mind, it is not quite accurate to say that we succeed in having it both ways because, by the use of repression, we figuratively *bury ourselves alive.* Repression, while preserving unconsciously what is *too much of ourselves* for us to bear, also depletes us by cutting us off from ourselves. We become less fully

ourselves. From this perspective, I would say that the effort to help a patient restore himself to himself is the therapeutic goal of psychoanalysis. While Freud (1900) most often articulated the goal of psychoanalysis as that of making the unconscious conscious (and available to secondary process thinking), I would restate this conception in the following way: the therapeutic aim of psychoanalysis is the "safe return" to the patient of aspects of himself that have been buried alive and are not yet dead.

Klein

If, for Freud, the psychic world begins with a whimper—"an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole"—the creation of mind, for Klein, begins with a bang. "The ego exists and operates from birth onwards" (Klein 1963, p. 300) and immediately faces a pressing emotional problem.

Klein's understanding of the nature of the problem with which the ego must contend "*ab initio*" (Klein 1952a, p. 57) stands in stark contrast with Freud's (1905, 1940) understanding of the earliest anxieties, those involving the psychic representatives of the sexual instinct, which, for him, do not come into play at the very outset of life.

Klein (1952a) states, "I differ, however, from Freud in that I put forward the hypothesis that the primary cause of anxiety is the fear of annihilation, of death, arising from the work of the death instinct within … The primordial fear of being annihilated forces the ego into action and engenders the first defences" (p. 57).

The earliest emotional problem faced by the infant, from Klein's perspective, derives from the workings of the death instinct. And the earliest development of the mind occurs as the ego is forced "into action" in response to the anxieties elicited by the death instinct. The "action" taken by the primordial ego is that of creating "unconscious phantasies" (1952a), which are "pre-verbal" in nature and are "felt by the infant in much more primitive ways than language can express" (Klein 1957, p. 180, fn. 1). For instance, phantasy is the form in which meaning is attributed to the conflict between, on the one hand, "extreme and powerful" (Klein 1952b, p. 64) aggressive feelings and impulses derived from the death-instinct, and on the other, loving ("libidinal," [Klein 1952b, p. 62]) feelings toward the mother derived from the life instinct.

The idea that phantasy is the ego's response to "[t]he primordial fear of being annihilated" is a stunning contribution to the psychoanalytic concept of the emergence of mind and of the concept of mind: phantasy is the form in which all unconscious meaning is experienced, represented, and structured.

The inner world of the infant—the unconscious mind—is the world of object-related phantasy. In other words, the entirety of the unconscious mind takes the form of phantasied internal object relationships (Klein 1934). For example, the feeling of envy, "the earliest direct externalization of the death instinct" (Segal 1964, p. 40), exists in the inner world as a phantasied relationship between internal objects. Envy is a principal emotional tie between the infant and the "feeding breast … [which in the infant's phantasies] possesses everything he desires and … has an unlimited flow of milk, and love which the breast keeps for its own gratification" (Klein 1957, p. 183). However, this "solution" (the creation of a narrative structure experienced in the form of unconscious phantasy) generates a problem of its own. The fact that the breast is also the source of the infant's life-sustaining milk and love makes it a perilous object to attack in phantasy. The ego must then take further defensive action in the form of a phantasied splitting of the breast into a good breast and a bad breast. This allows the infant to safely love the good breast and safely hate the bad breast. Thus, the defenses, too, are object-related phantasies (Isaacs 1952; Klein 1957).

Phantasying—the infant's principal "solution" to the problem posed by the earliest anxieties—represents a revolutionary transformation of Freud's conception of the unconscious. Klein posits that from the very beginning of life, there is a differentiation of the conscious and unconscious mind in which unconscious phantasy constitutes the entirety of its content and structure, which in turn, powerfully affects the development of both one's thinking and one's ways of relating to external objects:

> phantasies and feelings about the state of the internal object vitally influence the structure of the ego …
>
> *It is in phantasy that the infant splits the object and the self, but the effect of this phantasy is a very real one, because it leads to feelings*

> *and relations (and later on, thought-processes) being in fact cut off from one another.* [Klein 1946, p. 6, italics added]

From the beginning of psychic life, splitting of self and object occur *in phantasy*, but the effects *of phantasy* are "very real" in that they lead to internal and external object-relations "being in fact cut off from one another." In terms of the inner world, the unconscious becomes altered in its very structure as sets of object-relationships are cut off from other sets of object-relationships in phantasy. "[A]nd later on," not only do internal and external object-relations become disconnected emotionally, the different aspects of thinking ("thought-processes") are "being in fact cut off from one another." If, for example, primary and secondary process thinking are "disconnected" from one another, playing, dreaming, learning, and creative thinking become severely limited or are extinguished altogether. In addition, the integrity of the ego (*the sense of who one is*, I would add) is very difficult to maintain. Klein (1955) in her paper, "On identification," describes the depletion and ultimately the death of the psyche when projective identification is excessive.

A fundamental part of Klein's (1958) conception of the emergence of mind, which occurs at birth, is her belief that how one fares psychically as an infant is, to a large degree, determined by the inborn strength of death instinct relative to life instinct.

> The strength of the ego—reflecting the state of fusion between the two instincts—is, I believe, constitutionally determined. If in the fusion the life instinct predominates, which implies an ascendency of the capacity for love, the ego is relatively strong, and is more able to bear the anxiety arising from the death instinct and to counteract it. [1958, pp. 238-239]

Of course, the reverse is also true: if the death instinct is stronger than the life instinct, the ego is relatively weak and less able "to bear the anxiety arising from the death instinct and to counteract it," and consequently prone to the development of pathological defensive mental structures or fragmentation of mental structure.

Klein's idea that the unconscious is structured by phantasy is quite different from Freud's (1923) structural model, which conceives of the

mind as structured by the id, ego, and superego, a metaphorical committee in which the ego attempts to manage the impulsive aspect of self (the id), and the judgmental aspect of self (the superego), in its efforts to deal realistically with external reality and thereby derive maximal pleasure and satisfaction from life in the real external world. Klein continues to use the term ego, but it has a meaning quite different from Freud's use of the term. In Klein's work, the ego ("the I") that is present from birth onward is both the creator of unconscious phantasy and a figure in those phantasies—phantasies that are both psychic representatives of the death instinct and defenses generated in response to fears of annihilation "arising from the work of the death instinct."

Fairbairn

Fairbairn's conception of the birth of the mind is as radically different from Klein's as Klein's is different from Freud's. For Fairbairn, the most difficult emotional problem the infant faces at the beginning of life, and the impetus for the creation of the unconscious and conscious mind, is the infant's experience of his mother as both loving and unloving ("unsatisfactory" [Fairbairn 1940, p. 13]). This "problem" is better called a catastrophe because the infant's psychic and physical survival depends upon his ability to cope with it. This emotional crisis is a universal aspect of the early relationship with the (real) mother, but differs greatly in intensity depending on constitutional factors and the quality of the mother's care of the infant (Fairbairn 1940, 1944). Fairbairn's placing the relationship with the real mother at the core of the creation of mind and the preservation of the sanity and the physical life of the individual beginning at birth was, at the time he published these papers, nothing short of a transformative contribution to the psychoanalytic conception of the creation of the conscious and unconscious mind.

For Fairbairn (1944), the infant's experience of feeling unlovable by his actual mother engenders in him feelings of "shame" (1940, p. 113), "worthlessness" (p. 113), "beggardom" (p. 113), and "impotence" (p. 113). And,

> At a still deeper level (or at a still earlier stage) the child's experience is one of, so to speak, exploding ineffectively and being completely emptied of libido [love]. It is thus an

> experience of disintegration and of imminent psychical death …
>
> If … he expresses libidinal need, he is threatened with loss of his libido (which for him constitutes his own goodness) and ultimately with the loss of the ego structure that constitutes himself. [Fairbairn 1944, p. 113]

It should be noted that Fairbairn uses the term "ego" (which "is present from birth" [Fairbairn 1963, p. 224]) to refer not only to the entirety of the conscious and unconscious mind, but also to the personality as a whole ("himself"), including the subjective states of the individual.

From Fairbairn's perspective, the infant's psychic response to feeling unlovable is the emergence of a mind created by "internalizing" the unsatisfactory part of the relationship with the mother. The word *internalizing* is invented anew by Fairbairn here (just as Freud reinvented the word *unconscious* and Klein reinvented the word *phantasy*). No longer is internalization an introjective phantasy, as it is for Klein and Freud. When Fairbairn uses the concept of internalization in relation to the early unsatisfactory aspect of the relationship with the mother, he is referring to structural change of the infant's mind. Parts of the "ego," which to my mind is synonymous with self in Fairbairn's work, are split-off from the main body of the ego/self and repressed. These repressed *parts of the ego/self* enter into *actual* (not phantasied) internal object-relationships with one another in a way that replicates aspects of the unsatisfactory relationship with the real external object mother. Internal objects are real, not phantasied, in the sense that they each are, in themselves, capable of thinking, feeling and relating as they interact with other aspects of the ego/self (Fairbairn 1944; see also Ogden 2010).

The internalization of the unsatisfactory aspect of the relationship with the mother is the impetus for the creation and structuring of the unconscious mind. With the formation of an unconscious mind, there is, by definition, the formation of a conscious mind and a repression barrier that regulates movement of emotional content (thoughts and feelings) between the two. Fairbairn (1940, 1944) views repression as an unconscious ego function that is an expression of the infant's anger at

the unsatisfactory mother for reducing him to "beggardom" (Fairbairn 1944, p. 113) and "impotence" (p. 113).

For Fairbairn (1944), the repressed unconscious mind created in this way is structured in the form of paired addictive internal object-relationships between (1) an aspect of the ego/self endlessly craving the love of an exciting internal object that will never return that love; and (2) an aspect of the ego endlessly trying to win the love of a rejecting internal object.

This internal object world is a "closed system" (Fairbairn 1958, p. 385) in which, it seems to me, the principal driving force is the insatiable (futile) effort to change the bad (tantalizing and rejecting) internal objects into good (loving) ones (Ogden 2010). The only exit from this closed system is the redirection of libidinal ties from internal objects (split-off parts of the ego/self) to real external objects. This conversion of addictive ties to internal objects to loving ties with real external objects is the final, yet never to be completed, step in the formation of the healthy conscious mind (which is engaged in relating to, and internalizing the admired and beloved aspects of real external objects) and the unconscious mind (which is taken up with addictive ties between internal objects).[2]

In summary, Fairbairn introduced a radical shift in the conception of the emergence of mind. From Klein's perspective, and to a lesser extent, from Freud's, the pressure of instinct (the death instinct and the sexual instinct, respectively) presents the infant early on with "a problem" that forces the ego "into action" (Klein 1952a, p. 57)—that is, the elaboration of a conscious and unconscious mind, and the creation of a structure for each. By stark contrast, Fairbairn conceived of "the problem" faced by the infant as the threat of psychical death as a consequence of his experience of the unloving aspect of the external object mother. The "solution" to the problem is the formation of an unconscious inner world structured by addictive ties between split-off aspects of the ego/self.

[2] This conception of the mind is reflected in Fairbairn's (1958) clinical technique. For instance, he rejected the use of the couch and instead sat behind his desk while the patient sat in a chair faced slightly away from Fairbairn (the real object always being within view, if the patient desires).

Winnicott

Moving from an exploration of psychic genesis from the perspectives of Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn, to Winnicott's ideas on this subject, feels to me as if I am entering an entirely new domain. Winnicott introduced revolutionary change to psychoanalysis not simply by reconceptualizing psychic origins, but by introducing a form of analytic thinking ("ontological thinking" [Ogden 2019]) which had been as aspect of psychoanalytic theory and practice, but never elaborated, described, and practiced as does Winnicott.

In studying Winnicott's (1949) conception of the earliest life of the infant, we are immediately met with a paradox: "the paradox that mind does not exist as an entity" (p. 243). For Winnicott, the entity that exists from the outset is the psyche-soma, in which psyche and soma are inseparable parts of the whole:

> The mind does not exist as an entity in the individual's scheme of things provided the individual psyche-soma or body scheme has come satisfactorily through the very early developmental stages; mind is then no more than a special case of the functioning of the psyche-soma. [1949, p. 244]

When the mother is "tantalizing … we find [the inftant's] *mental functioning becoming a thing in itself,* practically replacing the good mother and making her unnecessary … the psyche of the individual gets 'seduced' away into this mind from the intimate relationship which the psyche originally had with the soma. The result is a mind-psyche, which is pathological" (Winnicott, 1949, pp. 246-247, italics in the original).

So the question of the creation of "mind" in Winnicott's work must be rethought since "mind" (the "mind-psyche") is a pathological entity. The psyche-soma is primary: it is the innate condition of the infant at birth (in the care of the environmental mother).

In developing his ideas regarding the relationship of psyche and soma, Winnicott (1949) makes what for me is an astounding statement about the psyche-soma and the origins of the experience of self:

> Here is a body, and the psyche and the soma are not to be distinguished except according to the direction from which one is looking. One can look at the developing mind or at the

> developing psyche. I suppose the word psyche here means the *imaginative elaboration of somatic parts, feelings, and functions,* that is, of physical aliveness. [p. 244, italics in the original]

I am always taken by surprise by the last words of this passage. I expect the words to be "psychic aliveness," not "physical aliveness." But that is precisely the point Winnicott is making. "The word psyche here means" imaginatively elaborating the parts and feelings and functions of the soma. And, I would add, conversely: I suppose the word soma here means, bestowing physicality to the psychic functions of thinking, feeling, playing, imagining, and fantasying, that is, of psychic aliveness. This, I think, is what Winnicott means when he says, "[P]syche and soma are not to be distinguished except according to the direction from which one is looking."

Winnicott is conceiving of psyche and soma in a way that is new to analytic thinking. He is defining them not as nouns, but as verbs. Psyche is no longer a mental apparatus, an intermediary for processing lived experience. Psyche, for Winnicott, *is* the experience of imaginatively elaborating the soma, thus creating physical aliveness. And looking at the psyche-soma from the other "direction," soma *is* the experience of bestowing physicality to psychic experience, thus creating psychic aliveness. The psyche is no longer the defensive response to bodily (instinctual) pressures (Freud and Klein) or to the unsatisfactory relationship with the mother (Fairbairn); rather, the psyche, "at the beginning" (Winnicott 1949, p. 244), is the very act of *imaginatively elaborating* the soma, thus creating "physical aliveness."

Winnicott is reinventing the word *aliveness,* as Freud reinvented the word *unconscious,* as Klein reinvented the word *phantasy,* and as Fairbairn reinvented the word *internalization.* The creation of the combined experience of physical aliveness and psychic aliveness is the defining feature of the birth of the psyche-soma (a birth that can only occur in an "environment … which *actively adapts* to the needs of the newly formed psyche-soma" [1949, p. 245]).

For Winnicott, the essential backdrop to everything the infant experiences (including the achievement of psychic and somatic aliveness) is the role of the real mother. Even before the infant is born, the mother enters into a state of "primary maternal preoccupation" (Winnicott

1956), a state of being in which she is, to a very large extent, no longer a person separate from the baby, "the infant … is part of herself" (Winnicott 1971a, p. 12). Under any other circumstances the mother's state of being as she prepares for the infant's birth, and in the early days after his birth, would be considered "an illness" (1956, p. 302). Once the infant is born, the mother, in this state, "can … feel herself into her infant's place" (1956, p. 304), in such a way that the infant is able to experience an undisrupted state of "going-on-being" (Winnicott 1949, p. 245) (a subjectless phrase that reflects the infant's *experience of being alive, while not yet being a subject).* This is where *the experience of aliveness* begins.

Implicit in the discussion of Winnicott's work is the idea that the birth of the infant is not synonymous with the infant's becoming alive. Winnicott's ideas concerning psychic and somatic aliveness were introduced in his 1949 paper, "Mind and its relation to the psyche-soma." Four years later, he published what is to my mind his single most important paper, "Transitional objects and transitional phenomena." In that paper (first published in 1953 and amended in 1971), he not only elaborated the idea of the primacy of the quality of aliveness in human experience, he introduced new concepts, language, and a way of thinking about human experience that simply had not previously existed in psychoanalysis (though Winnicott would be the first to say he could not have developed his own ideas in the absence of the analytic thinking that preceded him). He did so in what seems to me a quiet sort of way.

In his "Transitional object" paper (Winnicott 1971a), he introduces the idea of "an intermediate area" of experiencing:

> From birth … the human being is concerned with the problem of the relationship between what is objectively perceived and what is subjectively conceived of, and in the solution to this problem there is no health for the human being who has not been started off well enough by the mother… *The intermediate area to which I am referring is the area that is allowed to the infant between primary creativity* [the infant's experiencing the object as if he had created it in a way that is just right] *and objective perception based on reality-testing* [the infant's experiencing the object as a discovery]. The transitional phenomena represent the early stages of the use of illusion, without which there is no

> meaning for the human being in the area of a relationship with an object that is perceived by others as external to that being. [p. 11, italics in the original]

Without a capacity for generating this intermediate area of experiencing, "there is no meaning for the human being … in relationship with … [the] external [object world]." So, one might say, there is a second beginning of psychic and bodily aliveness (the first occurs in the state of subjectless going-on-being). As the infant enters into the intermediate area of experiencing, he begins to experience the world as both (and neither) created and discovered, as "alive and real" (Winnicott 1971a, p. 9). The intermediate area of transitional phenomena, "that exists (but cannot exist)" (Winnicott 1971b, p. 107) is an area of paradox in which the object is not an internal object and not an external object, "never under magical control like the internal object nor outside control as the mother is" (Winnicott 1971a, p. 10); it is neither "conceived of" by the infant, nor "presented to" him (p. 12) from the outside world. And the infant is and is not a subject separate from objects seen by observers to be external to the infant. These paradoxes must be "accepted and tolerated and respected" (1971c, p. xii) and not resolved "for the price of this [resolution] is the loss of the value of the paradox itself" (p. xii).

The state of being generated in the intermediate area is the inception of what "is *felt by the individual* to form the core of the imaginative self" (Winnicott 1949, p. 244), the beginnings of "the place where we live" (Winnicott 1971b, p. 104), the place where we genuinely come to life in a way that has "all the sense of real" (Winnicott 1963, p. 184).

The questions I have been asking of Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn concerning the birth of the mind must be rethought and reframed when approaching Winnicott. For him, the question is no longer, "How does one conceive of the emergence of mind?" The question becomes, "How does the infant first come to life, first come to experience physical and psychic aliveness?"

It would be an omission of an essential dimension of Winnicott's conception of the beginning of life and the inception of mind not to mention the fact that his knowledge of early life was derived, in large part, from his experience as a pediatrician, which powerfully colored his

way of being with, and writing about, mothers and children, and his conception of the earliest human states of being.

In talking to an imaginary mother with her newborn, he writes,

> … you must get a very funny impression of him [your baby] when he is handed to you just for you to feed him. At this time he is a bundle of discontent, a human being to be sure, but one who has raging lions and tigers inside him. And he is almost certainly scared of his own feelings. If no one has explained all this to you, you may become scared too. [Winnicott 1964, p. 23]

In another paper, he writes,

> A mother has to be able to tolerate hating her baby without doing anything about it … The most remarkable thing about a mother is her ability to be hurt so much by her baby and to hate so much without paying the child out, and her ability to wait for rewards that may or may not come at a later date. [Winnicott 1947, p. 202]

As I quote these lines, I am reminded of something James Grotstein said to me some thirty years into our friendship. He told me that English was his second language. I was stunned. In all the time we had known one another he had never once mentioned this to me. I asked him what his first language was, and he replied, "Baby talk."

Bion

As was the case in approaching Winnicott's work on psychic genesis and the concept of mind, I find in approaching Bion's work that I am met by radically new ways of thinking. Psychic genesis according to Bion is told in the form of two separate, but inextricably interrelated accounts that differ not only in content, but also in the forms of thinking and forms of writing used to tell "the stories." It seems to me that a major shift in Bion's way of thinking began with *Elements of Psychoanalysis* (1963) and took more highly developed forms in the works that followed. The "story" I will tell is my version of Bion's story of the circumstances of the beginning of psychic life. I will try to tell the story in a way that captures

the generative tension between the work of "early Bion" (pre-1963) and that of "late Bion" (1963-1979).

For "early Bion," from the very beginning of life, the infant is bombarded by raw sense impressions that are experienced as "its feeling that it is dying" (Bion 1962a, p.116), which I take to be a feeling of impending annihilation:

> The infant personality by itself is unable to make use of the sense-data [raw sense impressions which Bion calls beta-elements], but has to evacuate these elements into the mother, relying on her to do whatever has to be done to convert them into a form suitable for employment as alpha-elements [rudimentary thoughts that can be linked in the process of thinking and dreaming] by the infant. [Bion 1962a, p. 116]

Bion continues,

> The mother's capacity for reverie is the receptor organ for the infant's harvest of self-sensation gained by its conscious [lived emotional experience] …
>
> Normal development follows if the relationship between infant and breast permits the infant to project a feeling, say, that it is dying into the mother and to reintroject it after its sojourn in the breast has made it tolerable to the infant psyche. [p. 116]

So, in the beginning, in a healthy mother-infant relationship, the mother's "capacity for reverie," her dreaming the infant's experience transforms thoughts and feelings that are not yet thinkable by the infant into a form that his rudimentary, inborn mental "apparatus" (Bion 1962a, p. 117) is able to utilize in the process of thinking and dreaming. (Dreaming, for Bion, is synonymous with unconscious psychological work, which is our richest form of thinking.) But,

> If the projection is not accepted by the mother the infant feels that its feeling that it is dying is stripped of such meaning as it has. It therefore reintrojects, not a fear of dying made tolerable, but a nameless dread …

> The rudimentary consciousness cannot carry the burden placed on it. The establishment internally of a projective-identification- rejecting-object means that instead of an understanding [internal] object the infant has a willfully misunderstanding [internal] object. [1962a, pp. 116-117]

The circumstances of the beginning of life, for "early Bion," involve two people (who are not experienced as two people) living/dreaming experiences together. It must be borne in mind that the work of the mother in a state of receptive reverie is highly demanding, and includes being inhabited by the infant's "violence of emotion" (Bion 1962b, p. 10).

I find that Poe's (1948) description of a certain kind of thought—"unthought-like thoughts that are the souls of thoughts" (p. 80)—captures, for me, the paradoxical essence of Bion's conception of the "raw sense impressions" (the immediate, unprocessed form in which we register impressions of emotional experience). These sense impressions are "unthought-like" in that they cannot be linked in the process of thinking—they are yet to be organized raw sensory data. At the same time, they are "the souls of thoughts" in that they are the only direct connection with our lived experience, and as such, they are the living core (the "soul") of every thought and feeling that results from the processing of this raw data. The infant's sense-impressions are all he has of the experience of being alive, and this continues to be the case throughout life.

But at the beginning, the infant is flooded with sensory data derived from his lived emotional experience: "The rudimentary consciousness cannot carry the burden placed on it," which leaves the infant no option other than to "evacuate" sense-data into the mother. The mother, in a state of actively receptive reverie, *lives with the infant* what he is unable to think/experience on his own. This experience of mother and infant living the experience together creates emotional conditions in which the raw sense-data can be altered in such a way that the infant is able to think and feel his experience for himself.

But when the mother and infant are not able to transform the infant's raw sensory data, his "unthought-like thoughts" are stripped of what meaning they had held. This experience with the mother is internalized as a part of the infant that attacks his own thinking processes.

Bion's thinking in his early work is largely characterized by a hermeneutic approach[3], for example, in the way he conceives of the mother and infant working/living/dreaming together in rendering unthinkable thoughts and feelings utilizable by the infant's apparatus for thinking. (The idea that the mother's role in reverie is *living an experience with the infant* is my own way of understanding what occurs in early maternal reverie, but I think it is implicit in Bion's early work.)

Bion's thinking concerning the emergence of mind in his early work holds similarities with that of Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn in that the infant's earliest thinking is the "solution" (Bion 1962b, p. 80) to a problem. For Bion, the problem to be solved is unthinkable thoughts: from the beginning "thinking has to be called into existence to cope with [unthinkable] thoughts" (Bion 1962a, p. 29).

The theory of emergence of mind in "late Bion" is quite different from, though not contradictory with, the ideas in his early work. "Late Bion" is a thinker concerned most fundamentally with matters pertaining to *being and becoming in the present moment*, as opposed matters of *knowing and understanding* (see Ogden 2019). His paper, "Notes on memory and desire" (1967) is something of a manifesto on this topic. He instructs the psychoanalyst:

> Obey the following rules:
>
> 1. *Memory*: Do not remember past meetings …
> 2. *Desires*: … Desires for results, "cures," or even understandings must not be allowed to proliferate [in the analyst's mind]. [Bion 1967, p. 137]

And, later in that paper, "The psychoanalyst should aim at achieving a state of mind so that at every session he feels he has not seen the patient before. If he feels he has, he is treating the wrong patient" (p. 138). Our reflexive wish to relive the past (perhaps, in order to "get it

[3] I am using the term *hermeneutic* to refer to a method of interpretation in which a part of a text or a situation is understood in relation to the whole, and the whole is understood in relation to the part, thus moving between confusion and provisional apprehension, and ultimately achieving deeper understanding (see Ricoeur [1988] and Habermas [1971] on therapeutic psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic process). Hermeneutic interpretation is dialogic, but essentially linear in nature.

right" this time) or to imagine ourselves in the future (which is based on the omnipotent fantasy that we have the power to predict and control what will happen) removes us from the reality of the present moment, the only moment in which the individual (the patient, the analyst, the infant) *is*, and is *coming into being*.

> The belief that reality is or could be known is mistaken because reality is not something which lends itself to being known. It is impossible to know reality for the same reason that makes it impossible to sing potatoes; they may be grown, or pulled, or eaten, but not sung. Reality has to be "been": there should be a transitive verb "to be" expressly for use with the term "reality." [Bion 1965, p. 148]

The writing itself, in this passage, creates, for the reader, an opportunity to experience *being alive to ideas, humor, and creativity in the experience of reading*. If it is to be a real experience of reading, the reader must *become the reality* of reading this piece of writing. Education, psychoanalysis, parenting, are too often, exercises in getting to know, as opposed to experiences of *becoming* the reality of reading or of "'being' what is 'real'" (Bion 1965, p. 148) in the analytic session.

In other words, for "late Bion," becoming alive (and this includes becoming alive to one's experience at birth), is the act of *becoming* the reality of the moment one is living in such a way that it is as unencumbered as possible by what one thinks will happen or what one wishes were happening, for those wishes dull the senses, kill the aliveness and realness of what is occurring in that moment. Every new thought, every "caesura" (Bion 1976, p. 296), including the caesura of birth, every experience of joy, surprise, emotional turbulence, turmoil, or breakdown, is an opportunity to live reality freshly.

Bion, in his late works, views birth as one of the most dramatic caesuras of an individual's life, and like all other caesuras, it is an opportunity to live reality in a way that is fresh, turbulent, exquisitely alive. Birth is inevitably experienced as "excessive" (Bion 1976, p. 296). It requires some degree of repression, and "repression is a kind of a death" (p. 296). Nevertheless, despite inevitable repression, birth is life opening into something as new as "the invocation of Light at the start of the

Third Book [of Milton's *Paradise Lost*], 'Won from the void and formless infinite'" (Bion 1976, p. 296).

From this perspective, the infant is not simply born unformed and in need of help from the mother to organize, to "contain" (Bion 1962b, 1970), his experience, as the infant is in "early-Bion." I would add, though Bion never puts it this way, the infant is "an innocent," in the best sense of the word. That is, he is not nearly as weighed down with "understanding" as he very shortly will be, and as adults certainly are. Given the infant's *relative* freedom from "understandings," his way of experiencing/becoming is fresh and immediate and lively (if helped by his mother with his "unthinkable thoughts" as described in the work of "early Bion"). But the infant's experience at birth is also turbulent and distressing, which leads the infant, at times, to resort to repression, "a kind of death."

This conception of the emergence of mind, which places emphasis on the need not to know, not to understand, and instead to become the reality of what is occurring, adds a new dimension to the understanding of the emergence of mind found in Bion's early work, but it does not replace the earlier one; rather, it stands in dialectical tension with its more linear (hermeneutic) counterpart.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

The stories of the emergence of mind according to Freud, Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, and Bion, have embedded in them concepts of mind, which I have articulated. I have traced a movement in the analytic conception of mind from that of an apparatus for thinking and for coping with internal and external pressures (in the work of Freud, Klein, and Fairbairn) to that of a concept of mind as a process, an ongoing experience of being alive to the present moment (in the work of Winnicott and Bion). This evolution in analytic thought is integral to a new and vital stage in the development of psychoanalysis in which an emphasis on epistemological thinking and practice (having to do with knowing and understanding) is shifting toward an emphasis on ontological thinking and practice (having to do with being and becoming).

REFERENCES

BION, W. R. (1962a). A theory of thinking. In *Second Thoughts*. New York, NY: Aronson, pp. 110–119.

——— (1962b) *Learning from Experience*. London: Tavistock.

——— (1963). *Elements of Psychoanalysis*. London: Tavistock.

——— Notes on memory and desire. In *Wilfred Bion: Los Angeles Seminars and Supervision*, AGUAYO, J. & MALIN, B. (eds.). London: Karnac, 2013, pp. 136–138.

——— (1970). *Attention and Interpretation*. London: Tavistock.

——— (1976). Emotional turbulence. In *Clinical Seminars and Other Works*, BION, F. (ed.). London: Karnac, pp. 293–332.

FAIRBAIRN, W. R. D. (1940). Schizoid factors in the personality. In: *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952, pp. 3–27.

——— (1944). Endopsychic structure considered in terms of object-relationships. In: *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952, p. 82–132.

——— (1958). On the nature and aims of psychoanalytical treatment. *Int.J. Psychoanal.*, 39: 374–385.

——— (1963). Synopsis of an object-relations theory of the personality. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 44: 224–225.

FREUD, S. (1900). The interpretation of dreams. *S.E.* 4–5.

——— (1905). Three essays on the theory of sexuality. *S.E.* 7.

——— (1911a). Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning. *S.E.* 12.

——— (1911b). The history of the psychoanalytical movement. *S.E.* 14

——— (1915a). Instincts and their vicissitudes. *S.E.* 14.

——— (1915b). Repression. *S.E.* 14.

——— (1923). The ego and the id. *S.E.* 12.

——— (1929). Civilization and its discontents. *S.E.* 21.

——— (1940). An outline of psychoanalysis. *S.E.* 22.

HABERMAS, J. (1971). *Knowledge and Human Interests*, SHAPIRO, J. (trans.). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

ISAACS, S. (1952). The nature and function of phantasy. In *Developments in Psycho-analysis*, RIVIÈRE, J (ed.). London: Hogarth Press, pp. 62–121.

KLEIN, M. (1934[1958]). A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states. In *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis, 1921-1945*. London: Hogarth Press, pp. 282–311.

——— (1946 [1975]). Notes on some schizoid mechanisms. In *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963*. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Laurence, pp. 1–24.

——— (1952a [1975]). The mutual influences in the development of ego and id. In *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works*, 1946-1963. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Laurence, pp. 57–60.

——— (1952b [1975]). Some theoretical conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant. In *Envy and Gratitude and Other works, 1946-1963*. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Laurence, pp. 61–93.

——— (1955 [1975]). On identification. In *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963*. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Laurence, 1975, pp. 141–175.

——— (1957 [1975]). Envy and gratitude. In *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963*. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Laurence, pp. 176–236.

——— (1958 [1975]). On the development of mental functioning. In *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963*. New York: Delacorte Press/ Seymour Laurence pp. 236–246.

——— (1963 [1975]). On the sense of loneliness. In *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963*. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Laurence, pp. 300–313.

Laplanche, J. and Pontalis, J.B. (1973). *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, Nicholson-Smith, D. (trans.). New York, NY: Norton.

Ogden, T. H. (1992). The dialectically constituted/decentred subject of psycho- analysis. I. The Freudian subject. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 73: 517–526.

——— (2010). Why read Fairbairn? *Int. J. Psychoanal., l* 91: 101–118.

——— (2019). Ontological psychoanalysis or "What do you want to be when you grow up?" *Psychoanal. Q.,* 88: 661–684.

Poe, E. A. (1848). To _____ _____ _____. In *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York, NY: Barnes and Noble, 1992, p. 80.

Ricoeur, P. (1981). *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Segal, H. (1957). Notes on symbol formation. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 38: 391–397.

——— (1964). *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*. London: Hogarth Press.

Winnicott, D. W. (1947). Hate in the countertransference. In *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis*. New York: Basic Books, 1965, pp. 194–203.

——— (1949). Mind and its relation to the psyche-soma. In *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis*. New York: Basic Books, 1965, pp. 243–254.

——— (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In *Playing and Reality*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1971, pp. 1–25.

——— (1956). Primary maternal preoccupation. In *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis*. New York: Basic Books, 1965, pp. 300–305.

——— (1963). Communicating and not communicating leading to a study of certain opposites. In *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. New York: International Universities Press, 1965, pp. 179–192.

——— (1964). *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World*. Baltimore, MD: Pelican Books.

——— (1971a). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In *Playing and Reality*. New York, NY: Basic Books, pp. 1–25.
——— (1971b). The place where we live. In *Playing and Reality*. New York, NY: Basic Books, pp. 104–110.
——— (1971c). Introduction. In *Playing and Reality*. New York, NY: Basic Books, pp. xi–xiii.

306 Laurel Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
thomas.ogdenmd@gmail.com

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

A Cartoon in a Dream

Eugene J. Mahon

To cite this article: Eugene J. Mahon (2020) A Cartoon in a Dream, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 245-258, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1715753

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1715753

Published online: 18 Mar 2020.

Volume LXXXIX, Number 2
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1715753

A CARTOON IN A DREAM

BY EUGENE J. MAHON

A cartoon in a dream is an unusual example of an inclusion body*, so to speak, planted in manifest content by the dream-work to attract special attention to what is manifest, when what is latent is in danger of exposing itself too radically. In previous publications the author has described similar, unusual, conspicuous insertions in dreams (a joke in a dream; a pun in a dream; a parapraxis in a dream; a trick in a dream; the uncanny in dreams; dreams within dreams). In all of these instances it was possible, using the free associative method of dream analysis, to lay bare the dynamic architecture of each dream and expose what the manifest razzle-dazzle of the intruding element sought to achieve. It was often the case that such elements were a last minute heroic attempt on the part of the dream-work to save an explosive dream from falling apart as highly combustible, sexual, or aggressive elements could not be reined in sufficiently to escape the dream censor's vetoing disapproval. In the current example a rather vivid cartoon image took center stage, hoping to keep the focus entirely on manifest content and leave the latent content unexamined even when the awakener begins to analyze the dream.*

Keywords: Dream work, inclusion bodies, manifest content, latent content, transference.

Eugene Mahon is a Training and Supervising analyst at Columbia Psychoanalytic Center for Training and Research. He has published three books (*A Psychoanalytic Odyssey*, *Rensal the Redbit*, and *Boneshop of the Heart*) as well as numerous articles on diverse psychoanalytic topics. He practices child and adult psychoanalysis in New York City.

The dream is described at first, along with three other dreams from the same night, followed by sufficient clinical material to provide context for the dream analysis that is the main topic of this article:

Dream 1:

A woman surprises her audience. One was expecting a happy ending but on the contrary the woman is sick. Quite sick. So is her accomplice.

Dream 2:

The dreamer enters a room where women are giving a lecture. He sees his father on the floor with a mop in his hand. He joins him out of loyalty; out of solidarity. The women are talking about social work or sociology. The dreamer confronts them arrogantly, sarcastically, saying that all social commerce is interactional. If something costs $10.00 one can still negotiate and offer $9.00–it's all *interactional.*

Dream 3:

A cartoon appears in a dream. A seascape. Tall mountain or cliff on left of seascape. The beach stretches in a long rectangle to the right of the mountain. There are two groups assembled at the base of the mountain. First group looks conservative; in front of them is a more aggressive group that believes in telling their clients nothing, no matter what Rodrigo, a famous visionary economist, counsels. A line at the bottom of the cartoon, where a caption could be added, is left vacant.

Dream 4:

A professor Greenhouse asks dreamer if he could pretend to be sick so that instead of presenting his paper to the audience he would speak for only a minute. The dreamer says: why on earth would I do that? He then realizes he is not being asked; he is being told.

The dreamer is a forty-year old highly educated businessman, a renaissance man essentially, who inherited the family business. The business was about to file for Chapter 11 however, so recklessly, and self destructively, had his father managed his assets. Let us call him Carter, by way of honoring his cartoon. I will try to capture the spirit of the man

while disguising his profession and identity significantly. He had a law degree from a prestigious university. But his interests went far beyond business and law given the irrepressible creativity in him. He dabbled in book publishing, filmmaking, and had started a novel at about the time he entered analysis. He was aware that relationships were very problematic for him despite his natural social charm. He had married once with disastrous results. He knew he needed analysis earlier but found many excuses for not engaging in analytic process sooner. The dreams under review come from mid-analysis. Let me describe his childhood, his genetic development, and a summary of the analysis so that the reader has enough clinical context to understand the dynamics of the dreams.

Carter is an only child. He had often wished for older siblings that might have acted as a buffer between himself and his dysfunctional, sadistic parents. His mother, a socialite, seemed to have rejected her son from birth, as if he were the embodiment of all that she hated in her own mother and brother. There was nothing that Carter could do to please her. If he was phallic, exuberant, assertive she hated that. Did he not know how much he had just hurt his grandfather by being so cocky? If he acted needy and helpless she hated his weakness. He characterized it as a soul murder as soon as he began to be able to articulate such concepts. His father was never around, constantly traveling, supposedly for business reasons, but Carter had always assumed that there was more to it than that.

In the transference, my vacations were always experienced as not unlike the betrayals of a father who didn't care, or of a mother who meant him harm. Carter was a most curious, psychologically-minded man and analysis was most productive. He could be too polite and charming and it took work to undo an "unobjectionable part of the transference" (Stein 1981) that he might have basked in forever without analytic interventions.

At the time of the dreams in question, Carter was examining his relationship with his mother and father as well as some business colleagues who were often mistaken for hostile stand-ins for the dysfunctional parents. Another significant issue was Carter's new business: he had "gone out on his own," forming an elite business, which he experienced as a major act of individuation on his part. He expected severe retaliation from his parents for daring to individuate from them. His business

interests could consume him, so much so that social life became non–existent. He was aware or gradually became aware that his constant transference of his noxious relationship with parents onto all his friends, business associates, and especially women, made a social life or a sexual life almost impossible for him. Long-term exegesis of these issues in the analysis began eventually to allow progress in all these areas. Examination of the transference was crucial: he treated me as if I couldn't wait to get rid of him so he was constantly watching the clock so that he would be prepared to leave before I could announce the end of the session. Eventually he was able to laugh at the clock that formerly used to menace him. A session that ran over a few minutes without his noticing marked a major break-through in this kind of pathological vigilance. With this minimal sketch of his life and character and attitude in the transference let us proceed to examine the dreams.

Carter believed that all four dreams were intimately related. He spent several days working on them. Dream 1, in which the woman surprises everyone by being sicker than expected, seemed to represent the mother whom he had come to realize was indeed "a very sick woman." Her accomplice seemed to represent his father who had never intervened in some salutary manner to protect his son from her constant sadism. In a sense, he was expecting a normal healthy mother, the average expectable promise of birthright, and was astonished with the actual mother who was unable to cherish and love her only child.

In Dream 2, out of loyalty, he joins his father on the floor and speaks rather arrogantly and defiantly against the women who are discussing social work or sociology. He suggests that all social commerce is *interactional.* A $10.00 price could always be negotiated down to $9.00: it's *interactional.* Carter experienced both of these dreams as if a coiled aggression was about to spring out at the women in both dreams. At this stage of the analysis Carter had gotten in touch with the ferocity of his affect towards his mother. He was much more aggressive with me in the transference also. He had remembered some genetic events that were most disturbing. He remembered wanting to draw blood as he bared his teeth at his mother, a fantasy that really frightened him. He became a vegetarian for several years in childhood until the symptom vanished in adolescence. He was a "ferocious athlete" for a number of years in

adolescence, an activity, he believed, that may have returned his taste for meat to him by affording him an outlet for bottled up aggression.

Dream 3, with the cartoon in it, is our main topic so I plan to focus on it most extensively. Carter was very taken with it. He found it most unusual and sensed that it represented some very creative efforts on behalf of what he called the unconscious spin-meisters. He joked: "Ninety per cent of *New Yorker* readers look at the cartoons first—and the other ten per cent is lying." He had an immediate association to the mountain cliffs and seascape: it reminded him of a scene from a novel, or was it a movie, in which a woman, having fallen asleep on the beach, is about to be engulfed by the ocean until she notices a vertical cave in the cliff side, which she climbs up and up to safety. At the top there is a monastery, and the nuns, frightened at first but then sensing a divine intervention, welcome the miraculous apparition into their midst. He wondered about the analytic process: was it too engulfing of late as the raw aggression rose to the surface. Could it destroy parents and analyst in one gulp of the sea's voracious maw? He assumed that the aggressive group on the beach who insisted on sharing nothing with their clients, regardless of what Rodrigo says, represented his own repressions and reaction formations, which at times could shut down the analytic momentum almost entirely. He had become aware that such resistances were part of the analytic work, despite the ferocity with which he could attack himself when he felt he was not being a compliant patient.

He wondered if Dream 1 and Dream 2 had not gotten too close to murderous aggression towards his mother and needed to be shut down in Dream 3 altogether. He was most struck by Rodrigo and upon awakening his conviction that Rodrigo was a celebrated economist was unshakable even though Google could not confirm that for him. Even in the dream Rodrigo seemed as well known as Karl Marx or Adam Smith. Then it came to him suddenly that Roderigo was a character in *Othello,* a production of which he had just seen in a Shakespeare in the Park production. In the first scene of the play, Iago and his friend Roderigo are trying to incense Brabantio, Desdemona's father against the Moor, Othello. They both say hateful things about the Moor and how even now he is doing "the beast with two backs" with Brabantio's daughter. Carter was aware that his insistence on seeing Rodrigo (without the "e' in the dream) as an economist as opposed to Iago's sidekick

in Othello must be significant. He wondered if Othello did not represent his mother and Roderigo himself, railing against the beast with two backs (the voracious sexual mother), who in the primal scene had killed his father in an act of brutal intercourse. He realized that Othello was nothing like his mother and that perhaps it was his identification with a man who strangles a woman that was more to the point.

Carter had learnt that he could be all the characters in his dreams—all at once! He then associated to the *interactional* concept in Dream 2: did all interaction seem like a monstrous primal beast-like behavior to him that could explain his inability to "interact" with women in a safe loving sexual manner? I asked about his interaction with me in the transference: he said that it used to be something to be feared but that our work on it had made it more human. He had come to believe that he was obsessed with the menacing clock but that I wasn't.

I asked him what thoughts he had about the missing "e" in the dream "Rodrigo? Could it be "e" for energy like in Einstein's $e = mc^2$, he questioned? Was he disavowing his agency, getting rid of his energy, getting rid of his ego? Wasn't there an ego in the sound of Rodrigo, the supposedly world famous economist? He could see that there was a conflict in the dream between the forces of the ego (Rodrigo) that believe in communication, as opposed to the group that believes that no information should be shared at all. Did he want to be an informed, *interactional* man or an ignorant man who repressed or disavowed powerful affects? Wasn't that the essential conflict of the dream? Professor Greenhouse in Dream 4 must surely be his own sadistic conscience silencing him as it relieved him of the honor of presenting his paper to the assembled audience. "He was not being asked to curtail his statement to a few words: he was being told!" he said mockingly as if he could see through his own sadism in the dream.

Carter believed that all four dreams were complex associations to each other. The analyst was still puzzled by the introduction of the cartoon into the dream and asked about that. Carter could not speak for the dream-work's intentionality, obviously; what he did say was that in the dream he felt like he was looking at the bottom of the cartoon to see if the caption was there, but all he could see was the beach and underneath the beach the line that awaits for the caption to be filled as in the *New Yorker* Cartoon Caption Contest. Did the expectant caption

represent the analyst's potential interpretation of the dream, an appeal for help from a source he had come to trust, a source that did nor retaliate against him no matter how biting his sarcasm could be at times? He had one further ingenious association to Professor Greenhouse: a group of business associates had recently been discussing the greenhouse effect in regard to global warming. He had asked why it was called the greenhouse effect but got no satisfactory answer to his question. He thought it had to do with glass houses or green houses that retained their warmth in winter thereby allowing plants to grow indoors in the winter months. But he had jokingly said to a colleague maybe it has to do with a Professor Greenhouse, who discovered the phenomenon! And so he researched it and discovered that global warming could be compared to a greenhouse in the sense that fuel emissions create a kind of roof far up in the stratosphere that keeps heat from escaping upwards and so contributes dangerously to global warming. There is no way that Carter could never have known what the greenhouse effect was. In fact he had researched it a number of times but could never retain the information. It was obvious that he did know what the greenhouse effect was but chose not to know for neurotic reasons.

He associated to his mother as a kind of pathological roof above his development, a kind of glass ceiling that stifled his growth. He knew he had to live with the sadness and trauma of that reality no matter how much the analysis freed him up to be comfortable with the range of his emotions, sexual and aggressive. But despite the intractability of his sense of trauma and murdered soul, that might never heal completely, he had entered into a promising long-term romantic relationship, which was "working" and even if it could not undo the traumas of childhood completely it could prepare a present tense and a future tense that had no obstructive, or destructive limits set on it. Similarly in the long-term relationship with the analyst, he had grown comfortable wailing about a sense of irreparable childhood despair, as well as expressing fierce aggressive affect towards the person of the analyst whenever he experienced the analyst as not being really able to bear his pain and stay with it without rejecting it out of some countertransferential discomfort with the intensity of it. It's all *interactional* he would say, as if analytic negotiation could always strip toxic neurotic sadomasochistic relating of its regressive grip on reality. A ten could be reduced to a nine through the

ministry of analytic negotiation. A ten referred to the highest level of unbearable pain or aggression that could be modified down a notch through interactive analytic communication, thereby becoming manageable.

DISCUSSION

Carter used his dreams most effectively to gather all the insights they contained and put them to use in his analysis. He was a hard working, most engaged analyzand and all that remains to say are a few theoretical comments. I have been interested for years in the cunning of the dream-work as it employs its disguises so ingeniously. (In what follows I *personify* the dream work to create a dramatic effect). I have argued that when the dream work *inserts* a parapraxis, a pun, a joke, a trick, et cetera, in the manifest content of a dream there must be a compelling defensive reason for doing so. I have tried to imagine that moment, when sexual or aggressive latent dream thoughts are on the verge of bursting un-disguisedly onto the stage, as manifest content is failing to assemble its defensive images successfully.

I am picturing manifest content as the result of an act of creation that displays infantile wishes in such a disguised manner that dreamer and censor and even the awakener are all fooled. The dream with all its disguises in place can be dismissed as nothing more than a dream. But what about that moment when nightmarish affect is about to scuttle the whole aesthetic mise-en-scene, and awakening, with its flight into reality, is the only escape valve, the only way to save the endangered dreamer from the oneiric danger that has befallen her/him. At such moments of aesthetic failure I imagine the dream-work as impresario pulling out all the stops and introducing a comic relief (in the form of a joke) or a most visual creation such as a cartoon to distract the impending terror from its alarming affect so that dream and defense can proceed to beguile, amuse, confound while sleep continues. I am imagining this as an aesthetic issue, not unlike a horror story writer like Edgar Allen Poe or Stephen King titrating just the right amount of horror into a piece of fiction so as to beguile and seduce the reader with the exact amount of horror that will "hook" him or her into the literary flow of the fiction rather than frightening the reader off altogether. Similarly, a dream can

play with the combustible elements of latent dream thoughts but artistry is required so that the whole aesthetic effect doesn't blow up in the dreamer's hands and destroy sleep altogether.

In sleep, as Freud ingeniously argued, the usual kind of verbal representation of communicative reality is usurped completely by an almost totally visual parade of images that makes dream so surreal and engaging. Secondary process is tossed aside, so to speak, as primary processes strut their stuff. Dream display is almost totally visual, a total regression from word presentations to illuminated thing presentations, a display of reality so altered by primary processes as to be unintelligible to the awakener unless s/he is schooled in a Freudian, free-associative methodology that translates manifest disguise back into the latent dream thoughts that engendered them. If we imagine a hole about to form in that manifest firmament as the *ozone* of instinctual pressure damages the roof of illusion, so to speak, then a most resourceful dream work may need to plug the hole with a clever stop-gap gag or flourish to save the dream from extinction. Enter a cartoon in a dream as such a dream-saving flourish.

A cartoon is usually a visual montage that cries out for a caption to complete it. However, the best cartoons almost need no caption at all, such is the completeness of the visual statement. A cartoon by Sempe or Steig or Steed seems to need no caption at all to assist the visual statement. That said the caption contest in the *New Yorker* attests to the readers' appetite for the sheer joy of finding just the right word or two to enhance the cartoon or complete it. In terms of dream structure the manifest content is the cartoon, the caption is the interpretation that teases the condensations apart, retraces the displacements back to their latent origins or sees through the doubletalk of symbolism into the unitary meaning that is being obfuscated. The deconstruction of metaphor's condensations so that the two images can be displayed in separate isolation, so to speak, distills dream-work's alchemy into its components.

This too theoretical discussion can be brought down to earth if we examine the cartoon that appeared in Dream 3. There is a mountain or cliff far to the left of a rectangular space that denotes sea and beach stretching all the way to the right. There are two groups of people on the beach in front of the sheer cliff. One group insists that nothing

should be communicated to the clients regardless of what Rodrigo says. One association of the dreamer has to do with a movie, or a novel, in which a woman about to be engulfed by the sea escapes to safety by climbing up a narrow cave in the cliff to a monastery. Carter was aware that escape from the ferocity of his anger at both parents could not be accomplished through avoidance or disavowal or repression or regressive self-destructive acts. He was aware that his most dangerous acts of violence against himself always had a component of love in them as if his mother would be forced to *interact* lovingly with him if he became paralyzed and derelict at her doorstep. This was pure desperation in fantasy that reality would never redress for him. Escape from his own affects when their torrents seemed to engulf him, was often expressed concretely or geographically as if it would be possible to take a vacation from them through flight or phobic avoidance. He often contemplated relocation to another city as if a change of location would magically remove his mind from his intrapsychic suffering. It was a crucial insight for him when he learned that such escape was a futile gesture and that processing the affects in the interactional discourse of analysis was the only long-term solution that had any chance of success. A clever cartoon could distract momentarily just as dream could change latent disturbing thoughts into visual transformations; this could beguile or mystify momentarily but on awakening it was important to engage the challenge of dream instinct and affect more directly, more realistically.

From a theoretical point of view a cartoon with its heightened visual and yet somewhat cryptic portrayal of itself seems to be a caricature of the usual visual illuminated montage of a dream. The cartoon seeks to upstage the dream's manifest imagery with an even more ostentatious image that grabs all the limelight, as if to outdream the dream, or outshine it. Just as a *New Yorker* cartoon tends to distract from the more serious articles in the periodical at least initially, so does a dream cartoon attempt to focus all attention on itself away from the disturbing latent raw material. Carter's attention was certainly taken with the cartoon and a possible caption for it, a distraction that took him away from a closer examination of the many other dreams he had that night. Now this is a relative issue obviously given that a *New Yorker* cartoon often has some serious wisdom embedded in it and it would be a gross exaggeration to say that all cartoons are frivolous or distracting. The cartoon in Carter's

dream was full of meaning if one dug beneath its depths thoroughly. Ironically a cartoon that presents itself in an exclusively visual montage that seems to *appeal* for a caption to *explain* its cryptic meaning is not unlike the structure of dream itself whose manifest display has regressed almost totally from the verbal to the visual and awaits free associative interpretive process to clothe it in words again.

Rodrigo (the Roderigo of *Othello* disguised slightly) seemed to be a representation of the ego (Rodr and igo, ego) that processes reality sensibly and forthrightly, whereas the aggressive group that insists that clients should be kept uninformed seemed to represent defensive strategies such as denial, disavowal, repression. The cave with its access to escape from torrential engulfing affects (murderous aggression, incestuous disregard for boundaries) suggested yet another line of defense: phobic flight and invocation of the miraculous. When I asked Carter why the "e" had been dropped from Roderigo he answered after a pause: "perhaps it's $e = mc^2$, energy and agency being disavowed." A paraphrase of his understanding of the dream could be summarized as follows:

> I'm on the floor with my dysfunctional father "mopping and moping." The women have agency, my sarcastic comment about *interactional* notwithstanding. I assign agency to the women and lowered status to the men even if I try to reclaim some agency with my *interactional* comment. Roderigo with an "e" (Iago's sidekick) represents my wish to overthrow Othello, who despite his innocent, gullible nature still represents not only my evil mother but my weak father also.

Carter was expressing pre-oedipal and Oedipal fury at both parents for the soul murder inflicted upon him for so many years. The cartoon represents all of this in a mock serious, even comic manner, as if a witty caption could be tagged onto this visual tableau and then one could move on without considering the over-determinations that are being disregarded. The caption could be thought of as a too facile interpretation that illuminates momentarily by excluding the many other interpretations that deserve consideration also.

The original meaning of cartoon is derived from the Italian *cartone* which was a rather thick paper that afforded the old masters a hard

surface to test out their drawings or sketches on. (The more modern meaning of cartoon as comedy or caricature dates from the 19th century when cartoons first began to appear in Punch.) If one considers the dream work as an old master could one argue that manifest content is the first preliminary sketch of the metamorphosis of latent dream thoughts into disguised visual representations that primary processes have condensed and displaced so drastically in the service of disguise? The manifest visual sketch does have to gain the approval of the censor after all if the visual cinematics are to get permission to continue. Surely there are situations in which the first manifest sketch is not disguised enough and is about to arouse the censor's disapproval. At such a moment might a cartoon that almost mocks the concept of visual representability entirely be just the device to fool the censor with its enigmatic flamboyance and captionless status until some clever caption explains the manifest visual scene acceptably? In that sense the cartoon is not the preliminary sketch but a much later montage that is designed specifically with disguise as its sole purpose. "Look at this" the dream work seems to suggest. "Forget about the original visuals that were too transparent. And forget about those other dreams and their too obvious meanings. Devote all your energy to this cartoon and your search for a caption to unriddle its enigma."

Just as a clever joke in a dream (Mahon 2002) has the function of distracting the dreamer from much less humorous content in the dream thoughts, so too a highly visual cartoon and its conviction that Rodrigo is a world renowned economist is designed to steer the mind away from Iago's and Roderigo's murderous intent to destroy Othello (mother, father). Roderigo in that sense is the child whose soul has been murdered and who will not be satisfied until Othello (mother, father) have been totally destroyed. The four dreams taken as a whole dynamic statement of one night's psychology could be summarized: *I was expecting a normal loving mother who would cherish me rather than the monster that reared me in actuality. I can pretend to mop floors with my defeated father but I will attack the women who have reduced their men to that status. In a cartoon I can disguise my murderous intent by focusing attention on a renowned economist. I will pretend to submit to the greenhouse effect of my mother's contempt for the ecological development of the little endangered planet of my existence but secretly I will plot her overthrow as surely as Iago and Roderigo brought down the almighty*

Othello. When my oceanic affects reach high tide I will sweep all away with sheer elemental power of my well-analyzed ego. All disavowed "e" for psychic energy will be restored to me.

I have been studying *inclusion bodies* in dreams for several years trying to grasp the dynamics of the dream work's *decision* to deploy such a strategy of inclusion in the manifest content in the first place. In "A parapraxis in a dream," I argued that Freud's parapraxis (a sense of déjà vu in his dream) led to a sense of *satisfaction* in the manifest content: Freud felt satisfied that he was about to discover the meaning of parapraxes in dreams until further analysis allowed him to see that his manifest satisfaction was an attempt to cover up a much more sexual and aggressive triumphant satisfaction that he experienced in latent content but wanted to disavow. In "A joke in a dream," I suggested that the appearance of a truly funny joke in a dream, while contradicting Freud's idea that jokes in dreams are never funny and left him cold, merited scrutiny for that very reason. If the *inclusion* of a truly funny joke in a dream is a rarity, an exception, what dynamic function might it be serving? In the dream the analyst made a joke out of the analysand's biting of his tongue saying, "At least one of us will have a good meal." I argued that the manifest comic effect was a cover up of a most latent incestuous wish to endorse a sado-masochistic collusion between analyst and analysand that would have enacted a neurotic collusive symptom as opposed to analyzing it. Once again the manifest comic joy was a cover up of a most sinister, anxiety-riddled, latent pathology. In each of the other communications ("Dreams within dreams"; "A pun in a dream"; "The uncanny in a dream"; "A trick in a dream") it could be inferred that it was explosive combustible anxiety that was about to derail the defensive function of the dream that led to the mobilization of the unusual *inclusion body* as a last ditch defensive effort to save the dream from its own self destructive energies.

But to return to Carter: he had one other association to the *green* in Professor Greenhouse. Was he not merely a *green* immature child when his soul was murdered and was it not the greenhouse of psychoanalysis that had allowed his battered wintered soul to regenerate itself in the *interactional* psychological nourishment of a healing relationship? If plants can grow even in winter in the right environment can human

minds not recover their capacity to grow also in the healing ambience of psychoanalysis, one daring free association after another?

REFERENCES

FREUD, S. (1900). The Interpretation of Dreams. *S.E*, 4/5.
MAHON, E.J. (2002). Dreams within dreams. *Psychoanal. St. Child* 57: 118–130.
———. (2002). A joke in a dream. A note on the complex aesthetics of disguise. *Psychoanal. St. Child.* 57: 452–457.
———. (2005). A parapraxis in a dream. *Psychoanal. Q.* 74 (2) 465–484.
———. (2007). A pun in a dream. *Psychoanal. Q.* 76 (4): 1367–1373.
———. (2012). The uncanny in a dream. *Psychoana.l Q.* 81 (3): 713–725.
———. (2016). A trick in a dream. On the dream work's impressive creativity. *Psychoanal. Q.,* 85 (4) 963–976.
STEIN, M. (1981). The unobjectionable part of the transference. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.,* 29: 869–892.

6 East 96th Street
New York, NY 10128
Ejmahon8@gmail.com

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Vicissitudes in Winnicottian Theory on the Origins of Aggression: Between Dualism and Monism and from Back to Front

Osnat Erel

To cite this article: Osnat Erel (2020) Vicissitudes in Winnicottian Theory on the Origins of Aggression: Between Dualism and Monism and from Back to Front, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 259-279, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1715763

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1715763

Published online: 18 Mar 2020.

Volume LXXXIX, Number 2
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1715763

VICISSITUDES IN WINNICOTTIAN THEORY ON THE ORIGINS OF AGGRESSION: BETWEEN DUALISM AND MONISM AND FROM BACK TO FRONT

BY OSNAT EREL

Reading Winnicott's writings in reverse order reveals a major unacknowledged turning-point in his thinking. Based on the unveiling of this development it is proposed that: 1) It is only in his late writings that Winnicott makes a wholehearted shift to a monistic view of psychic energy, 2) The paradoxical joining of two opposing forces, taken together with the unification of "primitive love" and "motility" into a single energy source, as suggested in "The use of an object," was the missing step that enabled Winnicott's final shift to monistic thinking, 3) This shift allows to identify motility as the energetic origin of human behavior, and 4) Restoring the connection between aggression and motility is a major curative factor.

Keywords: Winnicott, aggression, motility, dualism, monism, "The use of an object."

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that if one reads Donald Winnicott's writings sequentially, there is not the same sense of evolution as with Freud's work (Modell 1985). With Winnicott, it is as if he intuited large portions of his theory at the beginning and then his clinical experience confirmed,

Osnat Erel is a training and supervising analyst at the Israel Psychoanalytic Society.

expanded, and deepened his initial intuitions. And yet, while this interplay between early intuition and later validation via clinical experience is characteristic of Winnicott's thinking, it does not provide an accurate description of the development of his thinking on the specific subject of aggression. Winnicott was preoccupied throughout his entire life with questions regarding aggression. His search for "naked aggression" (1939) and for an understanding of types of aggression and their course of development, was a long, convoluted, and even wearying journey. An understanding of aggression was not intuitive for him, and while glimmerings of later ideas can be found in his early writings, it would be inaccurate to say that later ideas were clearly present from the beginning. The weary journey was part of a prolonged inner dialogue with Freud's and Klein's view on aggression and the death instinct. Expressions of the frustration he encountered on this long quest can be found throughout his corpus. I offer three of these:

> Of all human tendencies, aggression, in particular, is hidden, disguised, side-tracked, ascribed to outside agencies, and when it appears it is always a difficult task to trace it to its origins. [1939, p. 84]

> Our search for naked aggression through study of the infant has partially failed, and we must try to profit from our failure. [1939, p. 88]

> I have recently been struck by the following idea, derived from clinical work, that when a patient is engaged in discovering the aggressive root, the analyst is more exhausted … than when the patient is discovering the erotic root of the instinctual life. [1950-1955, p. 214]

I think that even a non-analytical ear can sense that this exhausted analyst is no other than Winnicott himself.

Only in his final years, when writing "The use of an object" (1969a),[1] did Winnicott feel that he had finally reached an understanding of the roots of aggression. Winnicott was unable however, in the short time that remained between the formulation of this new

[1] The article's full title is "The use of an object and relating through identifications." It was first presented as a lecture in New York on November 1968.

understanding and his death, to put into words the full extent of the transformation he had undergone. As a result, these changes have not yet received the acknowledgement and recognition they deserve. My purpose here is to track the changes in Winnicottian thought on aggression, so that these ideas, and their theoretical and clinical implications, receive their full due. As I will demonstrate, tracing the development of Winnicott's thinking on aggression and discerning the changes it underwent requires a back-to-front reading of his works. It is likely that Winnicott was aware of this aspect of his thinking. His never-completed autobiography begins with the following quote from a poem by T.S. Eliot (1943): "What we call the beginning is often the end … The end is where we start from" (Winnicott, C., 1989).

The first inklings of Winnicott's recognition that the ideas he presented in "The use of an object" constituted a significant turning point, if not a revolution, in his theoretical thinking regarding the roots of aggression can be found in the latter part of the article itself. "The way of looking at things that belongs to my presentation of this chapter," he wrote, "makes possible a *new* approach to the whole subject of the roots of aggression … This involves a *rewriting* of the theory of the roots of aggression since most of that which has already been written by analysts has been formulated without reference to that which is being discussed in this chapter" (p. 93, italics added). Another indication that the "The use of an object" is an important cornerstone of Winnicottian thought can be found in a footnote[2] referring to the subject of aggression that Winnicott appended in 1970 to his book *Human Nature*: "N.B. This is the reason why I could not publish this book. The matter resolved itself, for me, in 'The use of an object'" (1988, p. 79).

Three things should be attended to in regard to this footnote. First, Winnicott died in January 1971, meaning that this postscript is one of the last things he wrote.[3] Second, this is the only place in the book and,

[2] Jan Abram also recognized the importance of this footnote as is indicated in her 2013 paper (p. 51).

[3] In the preface to *Human Nature* (1988), Clare Winnicott writes: "The first draft of the book was begun and completed in a comparatively short space of time in the summer of 1954, but ever since then until the time of his death it was under review and revision" (p. xi).

to the best of my knowledge, in any of his works, that Winnicott adds the notation "N.B." (i.e., *note bene* or "note well") in order to call for special attention to a remark. Third, the substance of the comment is simultaneously clearly stated and obscure. What is clear is Winnicott's declaration that only upon writing "The use of an object" did he feel that his understanding of the sources of aggression had come together and until that happened, he withheld the publication of *Human Nature*. The obscurity lies in the open question the reader is left with: What is the specific insight in "The use of an object" that led Winnicott to the resolution of his life-long questions regarding aggression and enabled him, to publish the book he had been working on for close to two decades?

"THE USE OF AN OBJECT" AS A TURNING POINT IN WINNICOTT'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROOTS OF AGGRESSION

Repeated readings of "The use of an object" were of no help in advancing my understanding of what it was that found its solution in this paper and thereby led Winnicott to consider it as bringing forth "a new approach to the whole subject of the roots of aggression" (1969a, p. 93). Things began to unfold only when I reread a later article, "The use of an object in the context of Moses and Monotheism" (1969b), in which Winnicott attempts to better articulate what he felt had not come across clearly enough in "The use of an object." On the basis of this later article, I suggest that the transformative insight Winnicott reached in "The use of an object" was that *a single source of energy, fundamentally identical to the life force, steers human activity in general, and aggression in particular.*

Winnicott writes:

> Presently I shall try to carry my argument further by a contribution that I feel needs to be made in regard to this *dualism*, philia (love) and neikos (strife).[4] I believe a step *further* could *now* be made … I am *now* free to make the *contribution* … This that I put forward is a *culmination* of a

[4] The terms "love" and "strife" are taken from Empedocles, a Greek philosopher of the fifth century BCE. Empedocles spoke of these two principles, which rule life and which are in eternal conflict with each other.

> trend in my thinking … I have recently tried to give my ideas life in a paper read to the New York Psychoanalytic Society … I learned that I had by no means made myself clear … *The crux of my argument is that the first drive is itself* one *thing*, something that I call "destruction," but I could have called it a combined love-strife drive.[5] *This unit is primary.* [1969b, pp. 243-245, italics added]

In this quotation Winnicott clearly states that it was only subsequent to the insights he reached in "The use of an object" that he made a final departure from the dualist view and clearly and wholeheartedly accepted a monistic view of psychic energy.

The monistic view stands in opposition to the dualistic Freudian view that presumes *two* conflicting sources of psychic energy (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973). As shown by several authors, Winnicott was constantly exploring Freud's metapsychology (e.g., Abram 2008; Fulgencio 2007) but up to this point, he had not fully formulated his alternative to Freudian drive theory. It is only in the latter part of "The use of an object" that he allows himself to consider the possibility of "rewriting the theory of the roots of aggression." True, when relating to drive theory, Winnicott consistently and categorically rejected the death drive. But, as I will continue to demonstrate, at least until 1968, his dialogue with Freud's dualistic metapsychology did not cease and he frequently referred to two sources of energy, which he termed the "primitive love impulse" and the "motility impulse." His writing on these two energy sources, especially about the latter, is confusing, as I will show. Reading of his works in reverse chronological order reveals that a major contributor to this confusion was Winnicott's unresolved theoretical discourse with Freud's dualistic drive theory.

The view that there is but a single source of energy has important theoretical and clinical implications. Before addressing these implications, I would like to offer further support for two of my claims: A) Winnicott's early writings, prior to "The use of an object," although not fully consistent, offer numerous passages containing dualistic conceptualizations of psychic energy; B) "The use of an object" was the final step

[5] The combining of the two terms into a single one, "love-strife," is unique to Winnicott. It clearly and concisely encapsulates Winnicott's movement away from the Freudian paradigm and expresses his transition to monism.

in Winnicott's transition to a monistic view of the source of psychic energy, even though the monistic viewpoint as such is not mentioned or explained in the text.

A) Winnicott's Early Writings on Aggression

There are many passages in Winnicott's works prior to 1968 testifying to a dualistic conceptualization of human nature. To cite only three examples: "Love and hate form the *two* chief elements out of which human affairs are built" (1939, p.84, italics added); "… there starts in the infant a joining up of *two* roots of impulsive behavior" (1960a, p.45, italics added); "Under favorable conditions, fusion occurs between the erotic and the motility impulses" (1959-1964, p. 127).

Despite passages as the three cited above, Winnicott's early thinking is not usually classified as dualist thereby leaving the transformation to monism unrecognized. I believe this unacknowledged process is due to: 1) a lack of consistency and to 2) a lack of clarity in Winnicott's writing on aggression prior to "The use of an object." Winnicott's lack of consistency is indicated in his early paper "Appetite and emotional development" (1936) which implies that there is only a single drive. Although, to the best of my knowledge, this is a rare if not a single exception to my claim that Winnicott's works prior to 1968 testify to a dualistic conceptualization, it makes it difficult to classify Winnicott's early thinking as dualistic. Winnicott's lack of clarity is indicated, for example, in the multiplicity of terms that he attached to the two sources of psychic energy and his inconsistent use of them. The *first* source is referred to as the erotic impulse, the erotic drive, the erotic potential, oral eroticism, libido, love, oral love, mouth-love, or the primitive love impulse. I will use here the term *"primitive love impulse."* The *second* source was also given numerous names: motility,[6] primitive motility, aggression, destructiveness, hatred, and muscular eroticism.[7] While the lack of clarity and the multiple use of terms is most likely due to Winnicott's attempt to redefine and reinvent terminology as his thinking

[6] Winnicott uses this term to designate free, uninhibited, bodily movement (Elkins 2015).

[7] Statements indicating that all these terms, when used by Winnicott, apply to the same source of energy can be found in Winnicott 1939, p. 84; 1963a, p. 74; 1958, p. 31; 1960a, p. 45; 1959-1964, p. 127.

develops, the variation among the terms signifying the second source of energy is so great that one has to read and reread Winnicott's works to understand that they all apply to the same source. I will here use the term *"motility impulse"* when referring to this second source.

A second example testifying to the lack of clarity in Winnicott's early writing on aggression, is that although when referring to the motility impulse he most commonly uses "aggression," at times, he also uses "aggression" when referring to the primitive love impulse (1950-1955, 1963a). This lack of consistency makes it all the harder for the reader to navigate the twists and turns of Winnicott's thinking on aggression's source of energy. It seems to me that this may explain why, despite appearing in Winnicott's writing at least forty times; the term "motility" did not take root and did not receive the attention it deserves. With few exceptions, notably Elkins (2015), scant mention is made of motility when the central ideas associated with Winnicottian theory of aggression are discussed.

As is evident in the following passage, Winnicott was aware of the vagueness of his writing on aggression:

> The baby experiences erotic and aggressive drives toward the same object … On the erotic side there is both satisfaction-seeking and object-seeking, and on the aggressive side, there is a complex of anger employing muscle erotism, and of hate … *some of this is necessarily obscure,* and I do not need to know all about the origin of aggression in order to follow my argument, because I am taking it for granted that the baby has become able to combine erotic and aggressive experience … [1963a, p. 74, italics added]

This passage, which addresses the fusion of *two* drives, again suggests that at even a late stage in his life, in 1963, the Freudian concept of energetic dualism is something Winnicott still considered viable. The Freudian term "fusion," *frequently* used by Winnicott, incorporates Freud's conceptualization of the integration of *two* sources of energy. Thus, whenever Winnicott uses the term, he expresses acceptance of the dualistic premise. Nevertheless, his claim that "some of this is necessarily obscure, and I do not need to know all about the origin of aggression to follow my argument" once again offers evidence that as late as 1963 he viewed his understanding of the sources of aggression as confusing and ambiguous.

B) "The use of an object": The Final Shift in Winnicott's Transition to a Monistic View of Psychic Energy

A complete shift to monistic thinking was not a trivial step for Winnicott. First, energetic dualism presuming the existence of two conflicting drives was one of the cornerstones of psychoanalysis. Second, the issue of energetic dualism versus monism was the major point of dispute between Freud and Jung and led to the break between them.[8] But Winnicott's difficulty in parting from dualistic thinking also had a theoretical rationale. Despite his definitive rejection of the death instinct, Winnicott had difficulty renouncing the existence of a second energetic force because, in his early thinking, he assumed that two distinct energetic sources are required in order to explain two opposing developmental processes. Specifically, while Winnicott perceived one energetic source (the primitive love impulse) as maintaining union with the object through instinct gratification, he viewed the second energetic source (the motility impulse) as promoting the opposite process, one of positioning the object as separate from the self. An example of this line of thought can be found in the following passage:

> Instinct-gratification gives the infant a personal experience and *does but little to the position of the object* … *Per contra*, the infant's experienced aggression, that which belongs to muscle erotism, to movement … this aggression … lends itself to the process of placing the object, to placing the object separate from the self. [1963b, p. 181, italics in the original]

This passage suggests that, at least until 1963, Winnicott viewed the energy of the motility impulse as responsible for enhancing the recognition of the object as separate.[9] The process of positioning the object as external to the self will be referred to as the "object placement

[8] From Freud's perspective, the Jungian view, by desexualizing the libido and defining it as the single psychic source of energy, invalidates the entire psychoanalytic enterprise (Benyamini 2008).

[9] In "Creativity and its origins" (1966, p. 80), there is a single sentence in which Winnicott links satisfaction and the processes of recognizing the externality of the object: "Drive satisfaction enhances the separation of the object from the baby, and leads to objectification of the object." This is the only place I have found a statement heralding what he would formulate fully only in 1968a.

process."[10] In contrast, the primitive love impulse not only does not promote the recognition of the object's distinctness, but may actually lead to the satisfaction of urges in a way that maintains the illusion of unity with the mother, and thereby may even retard the object placement process.

As long as primitive love and motility were held responsible for two crucial and opposing developmental processes, and as long as Winnicott wrestled to resolve this paradox, he found it not possible to whole-heartedly part from a dualistic viewpoint of psychic energy. The paradox had to be accepted, thereby enabling the primitive love impulse and the motility impulse to be united into a single source of energy, in order for such a step to take place. *The innovation in "The use of an object" is that here, for the first time, Winnicott describes a single, unnamed source of energy sharing characteristics of* both *the motility impulse and the primitive love impulse.* The terms "primitive love impulse" and "motility impulse" do not appear in the article, and the two places where Winnicott relates to the unnamed energetic impulse, he uses the non-committal word "destruction." Nevertheless, the description of the unnamed source of energy in "The use of an object" shows, that it unites the characteristics of the motility impulse with those of the primitive love impulse.

Given all that has been said above, it is now possible to conclude that two defining theoretical developments in Winnicottian thinking unfold in "The use of an object." First, an unnamed energetic impulse [later to be named "destruction"(1969b)] receives the characteristics of both the primitive love impulse and the motility impulse. Second, via the unification of the primitive love impulse and the motility impulse, the joining of two seemingly opposing forces (love/union and strife/separation) is indicated. This joining of two opposing forces rests on a theoretical fulcrum of an unresolved paradox. Hence, in "The use of an object," Winnicott reaches his own standard of wholeness and maturity by "accepting, tolerating, and respecting" (1971) a paradox which he was not able to integrate into his thinking prior to this point. Via paradoxical thinking a new level of comprehension and synthesis was

[10] The object placement process is the developmental process by which the child advances from a subjective to an objective view of the object. Winnicott presents a description and understanding of this complex and important process in "The use of an object."

achieved thereby enabling the transition from dualism to monism to be made.

In the following section, Winnicott's perception of psychic energy before and after the transition to monism will be described based on a reading of his early writings in light of his later monistic thinking.

FROM TWO TO ONE: READING WINNICOTT'S EARLY WRITINGS IN LIGHT OF HIS LATE MONISTIC THINKING

In his early writings Winnicott sought to grant equal weight to the two sources of psychic energy. Nevertheless, his writings on the primitive love impulse are more familiar and more well-known as central to his thinking than his writings on the motility impulse, and for good reason. While Winnicott's writing on the primitive love impulse is poetic, rich, consistent, and clear, his writing on the motility impulse tends to be hazy and inelegant. In this section I will review the main points of Winnicott's early thinking about these two sources of aggression to explore what may be derived from them about the characteristics of the monistic energy source. Specifically, I will review Winnicott's writings on the two energy sources, keeping in mind the newly attained knowledge that, in the end, he will eventually combine the two sources into one.

1. The primitive love impulse: The goal of this energy source is to gain libidinal satisfaction. It is thus also called the erotic element of aggression. The physical source of the primitive love impulse is the mouth, and its central and most important characteristic is that in its pure and initial primitive form *it precedes object relationships* (Abram 1996; Winnicott 1945, 1952a) *and therefore lacks an object-directed orientation or purpose*. Due to this lack in object awareness, the primitive love impulse is *ruthless*. Winnicott emphasizes the ruthless nature of the primitive love impulse: "destruction is only incidental … hate cannot be said to exist in these early stage … it is not the infants aim to destroy" (1950-1955, pp. 210-211). This lack of "ruth" is part of normal development, coinciding with the stage that the infant and mother are merged, and thereby recognition of the object's existence by the infant is not yet possible. An unfortunate "confusion of tongues" is caused when the m(other) mistakenly interprets her child's lack of object recognition as intentional

aggression and responds accordingly. It is critical to note that despite the fact that the term "primitive love" might seem to indicate a loving relationship to the object, primitive, primal love is devoid not only of hate and ruth but also of *any* object-directed emotion (including that of love). Winnicott does not state this with sufficient clarity, so it deserves to be emphasized: in the absence of awareness of the (m)other's existence at the initial, primitive, unitary developmental stage, any form of object-focused orientation is not yet possible as it is not yet part of the infant's emotional apparatus. When this attribute of the primitive love impulse became more refined in Winnicott's mind, he replaced the term "ruthlessness" with "pre-ruth" (1950-1955, p. 210). This latter expression contains within it the understanding that this is a stage prior to the recognition of the (m)other. Despite this development in his thinking and language, and despite his understanding that the earliest infant-(m)other contact is devoid of any object-directed emotion (including love), Winnicott continued to use the term "primitive love." In order to emphasize the lack of recognition of the object in primitive love, a lack that includes not only a lack of love and concern but also a lack of malice, anger, and hatred, Winnicott, in his later writings, tends to avoid using the term "aggression" when referring to the pre-recognition of m(other) stage and replaces the word "aggression" with "destruction" (Abram 1996).

2. The motility impulse: Winnicott coined this term to describe a person's primal and spontaneous physical motion (1950-1955). The role Winnicott assigns to the motility impulse expresses his wish to grant more weight in psychoanalytic thinking to *the connection between movement and the life force.*[11] Winnicott stresses that the motility impulse predates the primitive love impulse, as it exists already in the womb and before the first feeding (1950-1955). The bodily location of the motility impulse is the muscular system.[12] As noted earlier, *the central purpose of the motility impulse is to set in motion the process of object placement as separate*

[11] Winnicott is not the first to link movement to life. Thomas Hobbes and Blaise Pascal are among the most familiar philosophers who addressed the subject: "Life is but motion" (Hobbes 1651); "Our nature consists in motion. Complete rest is death" (Pascal 1969).

[12] It is interesting to note that Freud viewed the muscular system as the location of the death drive (Quinodoz 2005).

from and external to the self. Another important aspect of the motility impulse is that the destruction it sets into motion, unlike the destruction rooted in the primitive love impulse, can develop into anger or hatred which is directed at an object. These emotions may arise in response to disappointment or frustration from a separate-from-self object.

Thus far, Winnicott's understanding of psychic energy as it is described in his early writings. In his later writings, specifically in "The use of an object," Winnicott presents his innovative understanding of the development and establishment of the capacity to use objects and to perceive the object as a separate and external phenomenon. As Winnicott's brilliant new understanding of this process unfolds, the characteristics of the source of energy steering this process into motion are slowly uncovered. This force, not yet clearly named, and highly dependent on its encounter with the environment, by being the force that promotes externalization of the object, and thereby the capability to use objects, carries the central characteristic of the motility impulse. However, this still unnamed force, later to be named "destruction" (1969b), has two additional characteristics portrayed in "The use of an object." First, Winnicott clearly states, "*There is no anger* in the destruction of the object to which I am referring" (1969a, p. 93), when the absence of anger is a central characteristic of aggression that has its source in the primitive love impulse (1950-1955). Second, in "The use of an object," Winnicott frequently mentions the "destruction of the breast" in the context of the externalization of the object. The breast is part of "mouth love" and "oral eroticism," which Winnicott connects with the primitive love impulse. In this way, in "The use of an object," Winnicott links the object placement process with nursing, and thereby links the separation of the object and the primitive love impulse. This link between oral love, nursing, and the object placement process is even more salient when it becomes the central theme of his article "Breast feeding as communication" (1968a).

Thus, the development in "The use of an object" was in uniting two sources of psychic energy into one, linking up the central characteristic of the primitive love impulse—being void of aggressive intent—with the central characteristic of the motility impulse—that of enhancing the process of placing the object as separate from the self. This, taken together with the conceptualization of this single energy

source as paradoxically containing both love (union) and strife (externalization) were two developments of critical significance. The paradox contained within the single energy source is beautifully expressed, for example in the sentence: "While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you" (p. 90). These two developments were the critical and necessary steps in the "re-writing" of the theory about how the life force (spontaneous and object-free), via its interaction with the environment, may develop into aggressive emotion (directed at an object). This is what enabled Winnicott to declare that he can now introduce "a new approach to the whole subject of the roots of aggression" (1969a). The process by which the monistic ruthless energy force may develop into aggression shall be described later on. Beforehand, the issue of the bodily location of this monistic source of energy should be addressed.

THE BODILY LOCATION OF THE MONISTIC ENERGETIC SOURCE

As mentioned, according to Winnicott, the bodily location of the primitive love impulse is the mouth, whereas the physical location of the motility impulse is the muscles. In the transition from dualism to monism, the physical location of the single energy source is not addressed and therefore remains unclear. While for most of us, infancy is strongly associated with eating and suckling, I propose that it is more consistent with Winnicott's thinking to identify the monistic energy source with the motility impulse and the muscular system.

I offer three arguments in support of this proposition:

1. Motility is a broader system than eating, as the muscular system includes within it the mouth's movements. Eating (including eroticism and sensuousness) can be subsumed under motility and conceptualized as part of it.

2. Winnicott stresses that movement predates nursing, as it exists already in the womb. Because Winnicott emphasizes and that life in the womb has major influence on our emotional life,[13] one can presume a significant primal connection between movement and emotional

[13] As he puts it: "a great deal happens prior to the first feed" (1950–1955, p. 213).

development.[14] Not less important is the connection between orality and emotional development, which is subsumed under the connection between motility and emotional development.

3. An energetic model, anchored in "mouth love," is consistent with the classic drive model, which includes a source, goal, object, and drive. In contrast, an energetic model anchored in the muscular system is free of these four elements, and is consistent with Winnicott's gradual departure from the classic drive model and with his attempts to replace the terms "instinct" and "drive" with "impulse," a term that relates to spontaneous behaviors that are not necessarily goal-directed (as in drive-satisfaction) or object-focused. In addition, since a model based on motility is not focused on drive satisfaction, it is free to include elements such as vitality, play, and creation, all of which are so central to Winnicottian thinking.

I propose, then, that motility better encompasses the characteristics of Winnicott's life force, and *that the transition to a monistic view makes it possible to identify motility as the energetic source of the psyche-soma.*

FROM PURE AND RUTHLESS MOTILITY TO AGGRESSION

I will now proceed to extract and assemble references regarding the life force's characteristics and development from throughout Winnicott's writings and integrate them with the newly attained view that the newly defined motility is the energetic force fueling human behavior as a whole and aggression in particular. The most important source for understanding motility and its development via its interaction with the environment is the article "Aggression in relation to emotional development" (1950-1955), one of the densest and most challenging texts Winnicott produced.

[14] The connection between movement and development is palpable in Winnicott's "kernel and shell" model, which will be elaborated upon in the following section. Also, it is interesting to note that, in one of his final lectures ("Individuation," October 1970), when illustrating the process of emotional growth as a function of mother-child relations, Winnicott offers an example not of an infant suckling his mother's breast but rather of an infant kicking its mother's breast. In other words, Winnicott chose here to replace "mouth-love" with motility even when observing the mother-child interaction during nursing.

At "the theoretical start" (1950-1955, p. 216), prior to encountering the environment, motility is, in Winnicott's language, "pure." Motility is the primal life force, its earliest manifestation being the fetus' spontaneous and ongoing motor activity in the womb. Motility is the energy of life that sets in motion the development of the "core self," or what Winnicott later calls the "true self." Because motility does not necessarily have structure, a need for discharge, or an object-directed goal it does not fall within Freud's definition of drive or instinct.

To demonstrate the way in which the movement of the fetus, infant, child, and adult changes and develops according to the nature of its encounter with the environment, Winnicott creates a developmental paradigm in which the primal self moves in a spontaneous manner, by force of its motility, within a bounded space. In this paradigm, which I will call the "kernel and shell paradigm," Winnicott refers to the self as a "kernel" (or "core"), while the bounded space, representing the environment, is referred to as the "shell" (1952a, 1950-1955).[15] According to this paradigm, human behavior is the product of the encounter between the motile kernel, which contains the developmental potential referred to by Winnicott as the "inherited maturational process" (1963c, p. 89), and the shell. In addition, human behavior, which is set into motion by the motile force of the kernel, can continue to be generated primarily by this source of energy. Alternatively, behavior may also be generated by a reaction to the shell. In health, when the kernel's movement has not been too frequently disturbed by the shell, "the infant [can begin] to experience spontaneous movement and become the owner of the sensations that are appropriate to this early phase of life" (1956a, p. 303). This energy when continuing to reside in the kernel generates spontaneous behavior. However, when "maternal failures produce phases of reaction to impingement and these reactions interrupt the 'going on being' of the infant" (1956a, p. 303), he must respond to the shell, and thereby ceases to be spontaneous and becomes reactive. The more human behavior is motivated by a need to respond to the environment, that is to the shell, and less by the spontaneity of the self (or kernel), the greater are the chances that aggressive and pathological behavior will develop.

[15] Winnicott illustrates this model both thru accounts of specific developmental processes, and with the help of diagrams (1952b).

Two conclusions emerge from this model. First, since we cannot know whether a particular behavior originates in the kernel or in response to the shell, we cannot evaluate, on the basis of phenomenology alone, whether the behavior is healthy or pathological. Second, if the source of human energy is motility, that, in its primal form "is almost synonymous with activity" (1950-55, p. 204) then in its primal and purest form it is *not* object-directed. Thus, human beings, upon emerging into the world, cannot be considered "good" or "bad," as these terms are inherently object-related. In this view, a person is born, fundamentally, to move along his developmental path ("going on being"), to live his fullest existence, and to actualize his inherent potential. *Good and bad are thus not primal. They are rather forms, distortions, and transformations of motility, and they come into being as a function of the quality of the interplay between the moving kernel and its environment.* In Winnicott's words:

> … the baby's aliveness starts off as a unit … one could profitably use the idea of the fire …I quote from Pliny…"Who can say whether in essence fire is constructive or destructive?" …In this vitally important early stage the "destructive" (fire-air or other) aliveness … is simply a symptom of being alive. [1968b, p. 239].

Motility, like fire, can blaze steadily ("going-on-burning"), flare up, or die out. It can provide warmth or it can burn, it can enable life or kill. Motility, like fire, may develop in constructive or destructive directions, towards love or towards hatred, in accordance with the environmental conditions it finds itself in and to which it is exposed.

As mentioned, the kernel includes within it the energy of life (motility) that sets in motion the innate process of maturation. Thus, as there is "no such thing as a baby," motility's quality emerges as a function of the encounter between the kernel/self and the shell/environment. It is interaction with the environment that determines to what extent innate developmental processes will reach completion, be cut off, or distorted, and thereby twist or not twist motility into pathological aggression.[16]

[16] An example of this line of thought is Winnicott's perception of anti-social behavior as a sign of hope (1956b, 1967b). Specifically, within the conceptual framework presented in this paper, it can be said that hope, which can be considered as an aspect of the life force, when distorted by consistent deprivation, may express itself through anti-social (aggressive) behavior.

> So in every infant there is this tendency to move and to get some kind of muscle pleasure in movement (i.e., motility, my addition), and to gain from the experience of moving and meeting something. Following this *one* feature through we could describe the development of an infant by noting a progression from simple movement to actions that express anger, or to states that denote hate and control of hate … What will quite soon be aggressive behavior is therefore at the start a simple impulse that leads to a movement and to the beginnings of exploration. [1964a, pp. 93-94]

In other words, pathological aggression is the outcome of encounters with an environment, which did not enable the ongoing spontaneity of motility, and caused the life force to detach from its core self. Detachment of motility (our life force) from the core self can occur through disintegration, splitting, dissociation, or repression (1988, pp. 136-137), depending on one's stage of development. Detachment of the life force from the core self is the main cause of pathological aggression.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the entire range of clinical implications of the monistic perspective.[17] That being the case, I will consider here only the clinical implications derived from this paper's conceptualization of *motility* as aggression's innate source of energy. As mentioned, according to this perspective, pathological aggression is rooted in motility that has become detached from its source in the self, due to the interaction between the self and the environment. Accordingly, treatment of aggression must include a mending of the detachments within the self. The question then is what can enable such mending to take place.

In "The use of an object," Winnicott suggests that "survival of the object," which he defines as "absence of retaliation" (1969a), is the

[17] Such a discussion would have to address, among other things, the clinical implications of an approach that is not based on a model of conflict, and according to which "good" and "bad" are not primary.

central therapeutic factor in coping with aggression.[18] It is important to stress, however, that "The use of an object" is intended as a description of orderly development. As such, Winnicott's emphasis on the survival of the object as the curative factor in the transition from subjective to objective perception of the object, is based on his understanding of *normal* developmental processes. Therefore, when developmental processes are not intact, and a rift in the self develops as a result of the disconnection of motility from its nature as a life force, it may be that absence of retaliation is not sufficient to put the developmental process back on track. To put it differently, absence of revenge can promote normal development, but may not always be sufficient to heal rifts created by disturbed development.

Despite Winnicott's emphasis in "The use of an object" on the survival of the object, his clinical interventions express an understanding that non-retaliation is not sufficient, and that it is necessary, as part of the therapeutic process to restore the patient's connection to his motility. In one of his articles (1967a), Winnicott recounts three sessions with a one-year-old girl who reached states of disintegration several times a day. During the second and third sessions, the girl bit Winnicott's knuckle "so severely that the skin was nearly torn" (p. 49). From Winnicott's description, it is clear that he did much more than survive her bites. He wrote: "After a while she began to finger her toes, and *so I had her shoes and socks removed.* The result of this was a period of experimentation which absorbed her whole interest … Four days later the mother came and said that since the last consultation the baby has been 'a different' child" (p. 49, italics in the original). As I understand it, the removal of the girl's shoes and socks reflects Winnicott's intuitive understanding that, as a therapist against whom violence was directed, his task was not only to survive the violence through "non-retaliation," but also to reconnect the girl to her body, her toes, and to experimentation and play, all of which constitute a connection with her spontaneous motility which is the energetic source of the growth and becoming of her psyche.

***

[18] "In psychoanalytic practice, the positive changes that come about in this area can be profound. They do not depend on interpretive work. They depend on the analyst's survival of the attacks" (1969a, p. 91).

According to the conceptual framework presented in this paper, treatment of aggression entails restoring the connection between aggression and the innate life force that Winnicott refers to as motility. On the assumption that pathological aggression has its basis in life energy with which the individual has lost contact, the role of the therapist is to help reestablish such contact and restore it to the state it was at before it became distorted. This aspect of the mending process entails granting the self, via its interaction with the therapist, the possibility of experiencing aggressive emotion as connected to one's livelihood, vitality, primal life force, all referred to here as motility.

Acknowledgements: The author acknowledges indebtedness to the following colleagues who provided valuable assistance in the preparation of this manuscript: Yitzhak Bloom, Ria Frost, Sara Kolker, and Raanan Kulka.

REFERENCES

Abram, J. (1996). *The Language of Winnicott - A Dictionary of Winnicott's Use of Words*, London: Karnac Books.

——— (2008). Donald Woods Winnicott (1896-1971): a brief introduction. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 89, 1189–1217.

——— (2013). On Winnicott's area of formlessness: the pure female element and the capacity to feel real, *Psychoanal. Euro. Bull.*, 67, 43–57.

Benyamini, I. (2008). *Epilogue to the Hebrew translation of The Freud/Jung Letters: The correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung.* Tel-Aviv: Resling,

Eliot, T.S. (1943). Little Gidding, in: *Four Quartets*, New York: Harcourt.

Elkins, J. (2015). Motility, aggression, and the bodily I: an interpretation of Winnicott, *Psychoanal. Q.*, 84, 943–973.

Fulgencio, L. (2007). Winnicott's rejection of the basic concepts of Freud's metapsychology, *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 88, 443–461.

Hobbes, T. (1651 [1991]). *Leviathan.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Laplanche, J. & Pontalis, J.B. (1973). *The Language of Psychoanalysis.* New York: Norton,

Modell, A.H. (1985). The works of Winnicott and the evolution of his thought, *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 33s: 113–137.

Pascal, B. (1969). *Pens'ees.* Adelaide, AUS: The Univ. of Adelaide Press.

Quinodoz, J. (2005). *Reading Freud.* New York: Routledge.

Winnicott, C. (1989). D.W.W: a reflection. In: *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, C. Winnicott, R. Shepherd & M. Davies, ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

WINNICOTT, D.W. (1936 [1958]). Appetite and emotional disorder. In: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1939 [1990]). Aggression, in*: Deprivation and Delinquency*. London: Routledge.

——— (1945 [1958]). Primitive emotional development, in: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1950-1955 [1958]). Aggression in relation to emotional development, in: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1952a [1958]). Anxiety associated with insecurity, in: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1952b [1958]). Psychoses and child care, in: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1956a [1958]). Primary maternal preoccupation, in: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1956b [1958]). The antisocial tendency, in: *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1958 [1965]). The capacity to be alone, in*: The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. London: Karnac Books

——— (1959-1964 [1965]). Classification: is there a psycho-analytic contribution to psychiatric classification?, in: *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1960a [1965]). The theory of the parent-infant relationship, in*: The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1960b [1984]). Aggression, guilt and reparation, in: *Deprivation and Delinquency*. London: Tavistock Publications.

——— (1963a [1965]). The development of the capacity for concern, in*: The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1963b [1965]). Communicating and not communicating leading to a study of certain opposites, in*: The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1963?c [1989]). Fear of Breakdown, in*: Psychoanalytic Explorations*, C. WINNICOTT, R. SHEPHERD & M. DAVIES, ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

——— (1964 [1984]). Roots of aggression, in: *Deprivation and Delinquency*, London: Tavistock Publications.

——— (1966 [1971]). Creativity and its origins, in: *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock Publications.

——— (1967a [1971]). Playing: a theoretical statement, in: *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock Publications.

——— (1967b [1986]). Delinquency as a sign of hope, in: *Hope Is Where We Start From*, ed. CLARE WINNICOTT, RAY SHEPHERD & MADELEINE DAVIS. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

——— (1968a [1987]). Breast feeding as communication, in: *Babies and Their Mothers*, C. WINNICOTT, R. SHEPHERD, & M. DAVIES, ed., Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.,

——— (1968b [1989]). Comments on my paper 'The use of an object' in*: Psychoanalytic Explorations*, C. WINNICOTT, R. SHEPHERD & M. DAVIES, ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

——— (1969a [1971]). The use of an object and relating through identifications, in: *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock Publications.

——— (1969b [1989]). The use of an object in the context of Moses and Monotheism, in: *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, C. WINNICOTT, R. SHEPHERD & M. DAVIES, ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

——— (1970 [1989]). Individuation, in: *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, C. WINNICOTT, R. SHEPHERD & M. DAVIES, ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

——— (1971). *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock Publications.

——— (1987). *The Spontaneous Gesture*. London: Karnac Books.

——— (1988). *Human Nature*. London: Free Association Books.

14 Mishlat Street
Mevaseret Zion
Israel 90805
osnat.erel@gmail.com

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

The Epistemological Stance of Psychoanalysis: Revisiting the Kantian Legacy

Erik Stänicke, Anders Zachrisson & Arne Johan Vetlesen

To cite this article: Erik Stänicke, Anders Zachrisson & Arne Johan Vetlesen (2020) The Epistemological Stance of Psychoanalysis: Revisiting the Kantian Legacy, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 281-304, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1717229

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1717229

Published online: 18 Mar 2020.

Volume LXXXIX, Number 2
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1717229
OPEN ACCESS

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS: REVISITING THE KANTIAN LEGACY

BY ERIK STÄNICKE, ANDERS ZACHRISSON, AND ARNE JOHAN VETLESEN

Psychoanalysis, as conceived by Freud, originates from an epistemological position that is often at odds with related disciplines such as psychology and psychiatry. We argue that psychoanalysis is wedded to a Kantian epistemology that is rigorously committed to modesty. The aim of the article is to illustrate how Freud's thinking was embedded within a Kantian epistemology. Even if he was not explicit, a prevailing Kantian philosophical discussion influenced Freud. Hence, the article shall not argue for Freud as working with Kant as a philosopher, but more narrowly address his epistemological stance as influenced by Kant. Drawing on recent philosophical work, we clarify the difference between a Kantian transcendental idealism and the more modern critical realism, and show why the former is best suited for the psychoanalytic enterprise. This leads to a discussion of how we may understand transcendental idealism as a crucial if tacit premise in modern object-relations theory. We touch

Erik Stänicke, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor, and the President of the Norwegian Psychoanalytic Society.

Anders Zachrisson, is an Associate Professor Emeritus, and the former President of the Norwegian Psychoanalytic Society.

Arne Johan Vetlesen, Ph.D., is a Professor.

upon the implicit epistemological position in Klein and Winnicott, and the more explicit one advanced by Bion. Finally, we explore the psychoanalytic attitude towards the possibility of knowledge.

Keywords: Epistemology, Kant, critical realism, transcendental idealism.

INTRODUCTION

There is a long history of debate about the scientific status of psychoanalysis both within and from outside the analytic sphere (Grünbaum 1984; Habermas 1972; Heidegger 2001; Popper 1963; Ricouer 1970; Sartre 1956; Vetlesen and Stänicke 1999; Wittgenstein 1967). In the early phase of this debate, the discussion concerned the scientific status of psychoanalysis—whether it was a science or not, or being either a scientific enterprise among medicine, academic psychology, and biology, or a humanistic endeavour more like hermeneutical subjects such as philosophy, literature, and theology. The most notorious example was Karl Popper's (1963) allegation that psychoanalysis is a pseudo-science.

However, few researchers address the underlying question of the epistemological position of psychoanalysis. The aim of this article is to show that psychoanalysis is bedded in a Kantian epistemology, and that this position affects its scientific status. Even if several authors have linked psychoanalysis to Kant's philosophy (Bergo 2004; Eriksson 2012; Fulgencio 2005; Pettigrew 1990; Tauber 2009), we shall argue for a more restricted approach. Thus, we ask if epistemology as conceived by Freud is derived *specifically* from a Kantian position. We say "derived" because we will argue that psychoanalysis is embedded in a specific epistemology, but does not tally with Kant's general project. If we do not clarify this specificity, it is difficult to understand Kant's affinity with the psychoanalytic world-view and efforts to clarify the issue often lead to misunderstandings.

Two traits in Freud's thinking illustrate the Kantian legacy in early psychoanalysis. First, Freud (1933) shared to his last days Kant's unwavering belief in rationality: "Our best hope for the future of the intellect—the scientific spirit, reason—may in the process of time establish a dictatorship in the mental life of man" (p. 171). Second, Freud

contended that we could only approach truth, but never totally reach it: our knowledge about the world and ourselves is always through representations, and never directly sensed. Freud (1900) expressed it like this, "The unconscious is the true psychical reality; in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications by our sense organs" (p. 613). This strong belief in rationality combined with the view that knowledge of the world is not given to us, but can only be approached through representations, waned during the 20th century. However, in our opinion it retained a strong position in psychoanalysis. That it does so has been a source of misunderstandings and controversies between academic psychology and psychoanalysis.

As we have seen, Freud's epistemological position seems to be inspired by Kant, and in *The Unconscious* he wrote, "Just as Kant warned us not to overlook the fact that our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived though unknowable, so psycho-analysis warns us not to equate perceptions by means of consciousness with the unconscious mental processes which are their object" (1915, p. 171).

FREUD'S EPISTEMOLOGY

Freud was from early on concerned with the relation between psychic and external reality. As illustrated in the quotations at the start of this paper, his view was that neither psychic nor external reality could be known completely. The road to knowledge is through experience elaborated by rational thinking. We can only approach truth about reality; we can never fully reach it.

What kind of knowledge is possible, then, according to Freud, and how is the ability to know the world developed in the child? First, he distinguished between *perceptual identity* and *thought identity* (Freud 1900). Together with the concepts of *primary* and *secondary process thinking*, combined with the *pleasure* and the *reality principles*, they form the basis for human development of thinking and knowledge about the world. Freud's initial line of reasoning goes like this: in the absence of a drive-satisfying object in the external world, the (hungry) child first perceives

(hallucinates) the memory of the satisfying experience, the breast-feeding (perceptual identity). However, this leaves him unsatisfied, and instead a secondary process creates a mental image of the experience by establishing a thought identity with it. This is the dawn of conscious thinking and of contact with external reality (Freud 1900; see also Zachrisson 2013).

Later, Freud (1911) elaborated his conception of the development of thinking and contact with the world into a more comprehensive model. He introduced the concepts of primary and secondary process thinking and of the pleasure and reality principles. The way we perceive the world is never undisturbed (pure reality principle); it is always influenced by wishes, hopes and fears (according to the pleasure principle). In Freud's model, ego is the agent in the mind, which stands in contact with external reality, and "negotiates" the tensions and conflicts between id (drives), superego (moral demands), and the constraints and possibilities of external reality. The movement from perceptual to thought identity marks the start of this development in the ego and makes way for the function of the *delay* and the *detour* mechanisms (the capacity to postpone reactions and choose indirect ways of action to achieve pleasure and escape un-pleasure). These mechanisms are hallmarks of ego functioning and the individual's adaptation to reality.

Thus, we see how Freud's model of psychological development portrays a human subject that does not have a direct view on outer or inner reality. The Freudian subject is a person who struggles to understand reality and likewise struggles to grasp his inner state. However, with experience and development of mental capacities everyday man is able to relate fairly well to inner and outer reality. The main point is that this relation to reality is uncertain. We can never be certain that our mental representations correctly refer to reality, and we must be modest about truth claims. This is in line with Kant. Freud also emphasized that our uncertainty about the truth of inner reality applies not only to the patient but to the analyst as well.

THE DEBATE OF EPISTEMOLOGY IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

After Freud, the question of epistemology has been widely discussed within psychoanalysis. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a

comprehensive review of the matter. However, a presentation of the main paradigms is important in order to shed light on our proposal. Irwin Hoffman (1991) offers a good overview of the discussion until the 1990s, which overall is consistent with today's situation. He argues for a social-constructivist view, thus different from ours, but he discusses some of the main issues. To begin with, Hoffman argues that the tension between a positivistic and social-constructivist paradigm is often confounded with another dimension—the drive-relational one. Hence, he argues that a focus on drives often is associated with positivistic psychoanalysis and conversely a focus on relations with a social-constructivist viewpoint. He convincingly demonstrates that this does not hold up, and even more interestingly, he argues that psychoanalytic schools that oppose a positivistic position often end up in it against their own will. He then discusses different positions within psychoanalysis presented as "true" social-constructivists, yet in Hoffman's view are covert positivism.

We think that Hoffman misses a relevant contender in epistemology, namely transcendental idealism. This is a position that may explain, in our view, why most psychoanalysts do not find a place in either positivism or social-constructionism. Charles Hanly (1995, 1999, 2009) proposes "critical realism" as a contender. Critical realism is an epistemologically in-between position close to ours. However, we shall see below that it has some shortcomings of a sort that a modern Kantian epistemology may help demonstrate.

Nonetheless, there exist some clear-cut examples of positivism and social-constructionism. Let us provide some examples. A strict scientific position can be found when Peter Fonagy (2015) writes that psychoanalysis cannot still be regarded as science. In arguing for a narrow understanding of methods that may provide scientific knowledge, he clearly is committed to a positivistic position. On the other hand, there are many examples of a social-constructivist position besides Hoffman, such as Orange (2003) and Safran (2002).

Kant argues that an empirical realist view (which we may call a positivistic standpoint) and a rationalist approach to knowledge (which may be called a social-constructivist position) are both inadequate in claiming that we can develop knowledge that concerns the essence of the world. Both positions assume that knowledge—which either is provided through the senses or through thinking/logic—can be established

without taking the limitations of the human mind into consideration. A social-constructivist will probably protest, arguing that constructivism is concerned exactly with the mind's limitations and its effects on the perception of reality. However, there is an important nuance to this. In social-constructivism, one aspires to know the world directly by studying the constructs. In Kant's epistemology, knowledge is about the world, but always mediated by the human mind – and therefore knowledge about the world is always something limited. The philosopher Henry Allison (2012), a leading contemporary authority on Kant, calls it an epistemological position of modesty.

Kant's Philosophical Project and Freud's Psychoanalysis

Kant recognized that we are not transparent to ourselves: I can never be sure about the motives of my actions. Since I am not transparent to myself, what motivates the actions of others will likewise evade me. This lack of direct access applies both to self-knowledge and to knowledge about other people.

Kant's explanation for this lack of transparency is epistemic, not psychological. It is a matter of principle, valid for all individuals, regardless of their historical, cultural, and biographical circumstances. By contrast, Freud, in his metapsychology, partly inspired by Nietzsche's writings, attempts to develop a psychological explanation of the phenomenon. In Freud's conception, our urge for self-knowledge stands in conflict to our wish to avoid the pain this insight may yield. It is felt as something dangerous and threatening, causing anxiety and making us uncomfortable. We have accordingly developed a rich repertoire of defence mechanisms to guard against self-knowledge. To hold that the attainment of such transparency should be without ambivalence is for Freud a naïve thought.

It is important to acknowledge the differences between the approaches of Kant and Freud. Kant's is purely epistemic in a universal sense; what holds for one epistemic subject holds for all, necessarily so. Freud's is psychological, paying attention to mechanisms of resistance to transparent knowledge. These mechanisms are general and hold for all human subjects. Yet they are specific in the ways they come to the fore in the individual subject, depending on the particular circumstances within the person's biography that trigger them.

Kant maintained a sharp distinction between the intellect, which he considered as a locus of freedom and rationality, and feelings, considered as being heteronomous and deterministic. The more the intellect prevails over feelings understood as "pathological" (Kant's term), the more autonomous is the subject. Psychoanalysis as conceived by Freud seeks to explore the interaction between rational thought and subjective feeling, seeking to understand what gives rise to desire, what shapes our feelings and lends them energy, direction, and biographically distinct patterns. Everything concerning the fine-grained, dynamic, and individually conditioned ways in which a person's emotional life evolves the way it does, is outside of Kant's philosophical project. Although notions such as "the unconscious" and the sense of being "driven" are clearly post-Kantian and not a part of his epistemology, it may safely be assumed that for him such notions would underscore the existence of inescapable limits to our autonomy.

A KANTIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Despite these clear differences between Kant and Freud, Tauber (2009) has argued that Freud was inspired by Kant's rationalism and epistemological position. However, Freud's project of developing psychoanalysis as a theory of personality, psychopathology, and treatment is strained by the ambition of being *both* a humanistic psychology aiming to be of help to psychiatric patients *and* a scientific enterprise on par with biology and medicine. Tauber (2010) suggests that this strain between hermeneutics and science could have been more thoroughly clarified if Freud had related his project to contemporary neo-Kantians.

However, instead of reading Freud through a neo-Kantian lens, we will present a distinct understanding of Kant's epistemology and apply it to psychoanalysis. We do not claim this to be a concise, let alone exhaustive exegesis of Kant. We are inspired by Allison (2004) and Sgarbi (2012); in particular, we draw on Allison's understanding of Kant's transcendental idealism as a "two-aspect" view, as opposed to the familiar "two-world reading," but also on Sgarbi's notion of the importance of spontaneity in human rationality.

Kant's epistemology bridges rationalism and empiricism, seeking a synthesis, yet going beyond, what Kant takes as the core of truth in the

doctrines of Descartes and Hume, respectively. Rationalism holds that we can only reach knowledge by an inner search for forms that our rationality and reflexive thinking provide. All that is universal and true must be rationally developed. Empiricism holds the opposite view: we can only reach knowledge about the world through our sensibility, through the access to outer reality afforded by our senses. Empiricism holds that we, by comprehensive descriptions and systematizing of our observations – our sense data – and by checking their validity against those of others, develop knowledge about the world and our selves, and gradually so, by way of trial and error. Crudely put, while rationalism ends in idealism, empiricism ends in naïve realism. Yet, and that is the challenge, they both promote valid claims. Rationalism advises us, self-critically and un-dogmatically, to scrutinize the way we represent and think about the world in order to reach knowledge. Empiricism urges that we meticulously observe the ever changing outside world and adjust our representations if we aim for scientific knowledge.

Kant bridged these two positions by the postulation that cognition about objects in the world should lead us systematically to observe the world in order to reach knowledge about reality. At the same time, we also have to think about this knowledge (to *cognize* it) in order to grasp how the knowledge constitutes reality. In this way, Kant separates cognition from thinking. As we will demonstrate below, we can compare Kant's conception with Bion's distinction between thoughts, i.e. concepts, referring to experiences of the world, and the development of an apparatus for thinking these thoughts. According to Kant, when we cognize about objects in the world there are two requirements: first, there must be a concept by which the object is thought and second, there is intuition ("*Anschauung*") by which the object is given – this two-point requirement may be called a "concurrence-thesis" (Ameriks 1991 in Sgarbi 2012). However, in thinking according to Kant, we do not need the sensibility of intuition. We are capable of pure thinking where the faculty rests on spontaneity (Sgarbi 2012, p. 48). In Kant's vocabulary, the human mind can reach transcendental claims – *a priori* truths. These are truths of a truly conceptual nature, neither accessed nor assessed by our sensibility.

Our argument does not concern the possibility of *a priori* truth. The point is to make note of Kant's view that both cognizing about objects in

the world and pure thinking include transcendental conditions. *Cognizing* objects requires concepts that constitute the sensibility of the thinker. In contrast to this, *thinking* can be about pure thoughts, without intuition. In extension of this, Kant sets out to reveal the transcendental conditions for cognizing and thinking – and this is the background for labelling his philosophy as "transcendental idealism." Suffice it to say here that Kant's famous "Copernican revolution" consists in his idea that, instead of resulting from the ways in which objects in the world impinge on our senses, human cognition is a matter of how our peculiar capacities as epistemic subjects actively "form," and in that sense constitute, the world we seek to gain knowledge about. For our purposes, the most intriguing part of his complex argument is that transcendental idealism allows for a relation to the world that amounts to "empirical realism." Thus, a Kantian epistemology provides an argument for being an empirical realist—as a researcher—at the same time as we understand that our observations of the world and our self, *the real*, are in discourse with concepts. Another way of describing this epistemological position, in line with psychoanalytic thinking, is that we relate to the world as if it is real, and at the same time, we may experience that our representations of the world are not completely coherent with the real. We have to keep this possibility *in mind*, since we cannot overcome or eliminate it.

We grasp our knowledge about the world and our self through our representations, and thus never directly, through our senses. This corresponds to Kant's concept "things-in themselves." How to understand this concept is a source of heated debate. We take it in line with Allison's (2004) "two-aspect" view. This view of the concept does not conceive it as something different from how the world appears to us. As Allison (ibid) states, "In other words, the claim is not that *things* transcending the conditions of human cognition cannot exist (this would make these conditions ontological rather than epistemic) but merely that such things cannot count as *objects* for us" (p. 12). An implication of this reading of Kant is "a doctrine of epistemological modesty" (ibid, p. xvi), i.e. an epistemology that considers humans as finite observers and thinkers that never can achieve a "God's-eye view" of things.

Habermas (1972) and Ricouer (1970) argue that psychoanalysis be regarded as "depth hermeneutics" and "hermeneutics of suspicion,"

respectively. Both labels capture the quintessence of psychoanalysis as a scientific project in which we never take appearance for granted: what the patient says, and what the analyst feels, escapes direct understanding; the appearance may be distorted. Our point is that Kant's transcendental idealism provides an epistemological model that highlights how we have to be *modest* about the knowledge we establish. Paraphrasing Allison's words, we must be modest about how thoroughly we can understand another human being, and even ourselves; we do not possess a God's eye, we are not omniscient.

However, who is claiming to attain a God's-eye view in science? According to Kant, transcendental realists, either involuntarily or voluntarily, do exactly this, and in his opinion, both rationalists and empiricists fall into this category. Today *critical realism*, as developed by Roy Bhaskar and colleagues (see Benton and Craib 2010), is, in our opinion, a case in point for the same shortcomings and problems that we can identify in transcendental realism.

Before turning to the specific problems of critical realism, however, some comments about the general shortcomings in transcendental realism are required. We will focus on empiricism, and especially Kant's argument against Hume's version of it, since this epistemology is probably the historically most influential in positivistic psychological research. According to Allison (2004), Hume's failure is that he does not recognize the existence of *a priori* forms of sensibility structuring, in Kant's active not passive meaning, our impressions. Allison writes, "In the absence of such rules, however, there is no reason why, given object (or impression) A, something else, object (or impression) B, must be given: and this, as Kant sees it, is the source of Hume's sceptical doubts concerning causality" (2004, p. 27).

This lack of theory that accounts for *a priori* forms of sensibility makes empiricism susceptible to scepticism. An alternative solution to the problem in transcendental realism is to hold to a theocentric model – viewing our impressions *as if* they were things in themselves, i.e., as they simply "are" independently of our cognition. Doing so, we allow for a perspective on the world, which is not conditioned by any assumptions about it. This would mean that our senses provide us with a direct mirror of the real world, simply "copying" the way it is in itself, such that we may think it would be for an omniscient God.

Allison (2004) writes that Kant's epistemology advances a discursive thesis according to which human understanding and knowledge require both concepts and sensible intuition. Human beings can never gain knowledge exclusively through the senses. Knowledge presupposes that concepts are actively forming our perceptions. Hence, our perceptions are always discursive.

Our aim here is not to defend Kant's epistemology. As demonstrated in the vast literature on Kant, there are problems with his epistemology as there are with any epistemology. We may consider philosophy in Germany after Kant as being in a constant, although creative, crisis. Philosophers such as Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel all endeavoured to address the many challenges inherent in Kant's philosophy (see Pinkard 2000). Nevertheless, a Kantian epistemology is a well-argued system of thinking, and our aim here is to demonstrate that it influenced Freud's thinking. Indeed, to put it more strongly, it predisposed Freud's thinking to the core of his concepts, and it continues to be a basis for new developments in psychoanalysis, especially in object relation models. Before we explore this, to a large extent implicit, epistemology in Freud's psychoanalysis, we will show how transcendental idealism is different from contemporary critical realism. The distinction between these two epistemological positions is important because, as we will discuss later, some have proposed that critical realism represents the natural position for psychoanalysis.

CRITICAL REALISM VERSUS TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

Critical realism, as developed by the British philosopher Roy Bhaskar and colleagues, has revitalized the epistemological discussion within science (see Benton and Craib 2010). This is an epistemological position that stresses that we only have contact with reality through our representations; thus, it avoids a naive realist position. Furthermore, critical realism offers a theory of how scientists develop knowledge of the world by transcendental arguments. Following Kant, "transcendental" arguments start from some feature of human experience that we hold to be indubitable and beyond cavil. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant (1781) showed that the unity of the representations making up experience is a

necessary condition of its being experience of an object. In making a transcendental argument, that is, Kant moves from an unquestionable feature of experience in general to a stronger claim about the condition of its possibility, thus answering the question "How is experience possible?" in a manner that will apply to all subjects having experience and to all instances of experience (see Taylor 1995, p. 20). In critical realism, transcendental arguments are the approach a researcher often makes use of in order to establish knowledge about underlying causal structures. Such a transcendental process starts with well-established observations and then asks what must hold for this observation to be true (Benton and Craib 2010). For example, we observe that the apple falls to the ground every time, but Newton had to develop a theory of gravity in order to explain the underlying causal structure showing why this is the case, necessarily so.

Overall, we have sympathy for critical realism. However, we think that despite its sophistication it falls into the pit that Kant (1781) calls transcendental realism. He writes that transcendental realism:

> … regards space and time as something given in themselves (independent of our sensibility). The transcendental realist therefore interprets outer appearances (if their reality is conceded) as things in themselves, which would exist independently of us and our sensibility and thus would also be outside us according to pure concepts of the understanding. [p. 369]

Since critical realism employs transcendental arguments to grasp the "real" underlying causal structures, it does not respect the limits of human understanding. In Allison's words: "Thus, transcendental realism goes hand in hand with the rejection of the discursivity thesis" (2004, p. 27). The discursivity thesis is of vital significance because it claims that human knowledge must respect the limitation that is implicit in all knowledge, it is possible only from a specific point of view, namely the human point of view, and never from an omniscient point of view.

One may well ask why transcendental idealism has not received more credit. Partly this is because of the long-lived misunderstanding of transcendental idealism as a position of anti-realism and subjective constructionism (Callahan 2010). Given our Allison-inspired reading of

Kant, nothing could be further from the truth. Transcendental idealism aims at demonstrating the limits of our knowledge. In Kant's view, our search for knowledge must not ignore these limits, or aspire to cross and go beyond them, if our aim is to constitute valid knowledge. Further, these limits are not arbitrary, but dependent on our constitution *qua* human subjects. Read in this way, Kant's idealism is not about subjectivity and constructionism; it concerns principally inalterable and ineluctable, hence truly *given,* limitations inherent in our subjectivity. It aims at specifying conditions for what we know about and what not. Many critics interpret the limits Kant points to in a purely negative way, as restricting our quest for knowledge. Kant's project, however, was to show the conditions necessary for *enabling* our knowledge about objects in the world.

Against this background, we will now trace elements of Kantian epistemology in the thoughts of Klein, Winnicott, and Bion. We will not consider relational psychoanalysis or self-psychology. We think they deserve their own analysis, perhaps more in line with Hegelian epistemology.

IMPLICIT EPISTEMOLOGY IN OBJECT RELATION MODELS

Neither Klein nor Winnicott are to our knowledge explicit about their epistemological stance. Their primary concern was to develop clinical models. Klein (1952) however, indirectly hints at her position when she describes the gradual development of the ego thus:

> Integration, consciousness, intellectual capacities, the relation to the external world and other functions of the ego are steadily developing … .
>
> The relation to the mother as a person, which has been gradually developing while the breast still figured as the main object, becomes more fully established and identification with her gains in strength when the child can perceive and introject the mother as a person. [p. 72]

Later in the text, she observes, "The continued experience of facing psychic reality, implied in the working through of the depressive position, increases the infant's comprehension of the external world.

Accordingly, the picture of his parents, which was at first distorted into idealized and terrifying figures, comes gradually nearer to reality" (p. 74). The child's perception of the world gradually comes "nearer to reality"! Even if Klein's theory deviated significantly from Freud's, she shared his view of the development of thinking and the limits to direct knowledge of the world.

Winnicott (1953) too hints at the epistemological problem in his reflections about mental development:

> From birth … the human being is concerned with the problem of the relationship between what is objectively perceived and what is subjectively conceived of, and in the solution of this problem there is no health for the human being who has not been started off well enough by the mother. The intermediate area to which I am referring is the area that is allowed to the infant between primary creativity and objective perception based on reality-testing. [p. 11]

We note that the infant proceeds from the pleasure principle to the reality principle and establishes an intermediate area with the help of a good-enough mother who, "… makes active adaptation to the infant's needs, an … adaptation that gradually lessens, according to the infant's growing ability to account for failure of adaptation and to tolerate the result of frustration" (p. 10).

In Winnicott's thinking, the potential space plays a crucial role in man's development of culture. He underlined its paradoxical nature: "The baby creates the object, but the object was there waiting to be created and to become a cathected object" (1971, p. 89). This formulation adds to the complexity of Freud's epistemological position, and is a beautiful version of the "concurrence-thesis" (Ameriks 1991 in Sgarbi 2012).

SUMMING UP FREUD, KLEIN, AND WINNICOTT

Freud based his conception of external reality and its place in psychic reality on the notions of primary and secondary process thinking and on the pleasure and the reality principles. They present what Freud takes to

be the necessary steps in the development of thinking, and concern the interplay between perception and psychic structures behind our knowledge of the world. In our reading, this is in accordance with Kant's famous dictum that concepts without intuition are empty, and intuition without concepts is blind.

Klein and Winnicott developed their own concepts to handle the same dynamics. Klein's model contains detailed descriptions of how perceptions of reality are distorted—by splitting, denial, and projective identification. Winnicott described the infant's move from omnipotent primary process thinking to an increasingly more realistic experience of the world.

These three models approach the issue of knowledge about reality from different angles. In our view, however, they share a common conception of the infant's contact with external reality and of the development of thinking and of the reality principle, a conception that betrays a Kantian legacy.

BION AND KANT

Compared to Klein and Winnicott, Bion is more explicit and elaborated in his epistemological stance. In his theory of thinking (1962a), he classified thoughts by their developmental history into pre-conceptions, conceptions (or thoughts), and concepts. The pre-conception is an inborn disposition to experience a significant piece of reality.[1] He offered the infant's expectation of a breast as an example. When a pre-conception (of the breast) meets a realization approximating it (the actual breast), the result is a conception. He referred to the pre-conception as a priori knowledge of the breast and as an "empty thought," both unmistakably Kantian notions. They connote knowledge, or truth, which is not dependent on experience, knowledge that exists a priori of the experience (of the actual breast), but which is "empty" if it is not realized in the empirical world (recall Kant's dictum "concepts without intuition are empty").

[1] "Preconception" seems to have the same function in Bion's model as Kant's categories have in his system. Hartmann's (1958) notion of the ego's adaptation to an "average expectable environment" hints at a similar conception.

Kant's epistemology seeks to secure the possibility of true and exact (that is, scientific) knowledge (Kant 1781). Bion applied elements of Kant's system to Freud's model and formulated a psychological theory of the development of thinking. His point of departure is threefold: the child's *basic needs,* its *inborn mental capacities,* and its *tolerance of frustration* when needs remain unsatisfied. For Bion, the infant and the breast serve as the model that gives him a language for his thinking. He described four "constellations" for pre-conception, realization, and tolerance of frustration. The first occurs when pre-conception mates with its realization: the infant is hungry and the breast is there. The result is a conception. Conceptions, in Bion's (1962a) sense therefore are intimately conjoined with an emotional experience of satisfaction. The other three constellations concern cases where the hungry infant does not get access to the breast. Bion writes, "The model I propose is that of an infant whose expectation of a breast is mated with a realization of no breast available for satisfaction. This mating is experienced as a no-breast, or 'absent' breast inside" (1962a, p. 307).

This situation, however, is ambiguous. Has the infant the capacity to handle the frustration of an absent breast or not?: "If the capacity for toleration of frustration is sufficient the 'no breast' inside becomes a thought, and an 'apparatus for thinking' it develops" (1962a, p. 307). This is the second constellation. The breast is not there, the child tolerates the frustration, and the result is a thought and the development of an apparatus for thinking. The way Bion conceived the emergence of a *thought* corresponds to Freud's notion of *thought identity* and his model of ego development. When the ego tolerates the frustration of not being mated with the satisfying object and starts "thinking the breast," (thought identity), it can adapt to reality (by delay and detour mechanisms). This is the Freudian "reality principle."

If the capacity for toleration of frustration is inadequate, the infant has two alternatives to handle the bad internal "no-breast" situation: (1) evasion and (2) modification of frustration. When the infant is incapable of handling the frustration, the result is neither a conception nor a thought but an evasion. This is an addition to Freud's model. Freud did not discuss the situation where the child is unable to tolerate the "no breast" frustration, although he touched the problem in his paper on mourning and melancholia (Freud 1917). Instead of producing a

thought, the negative realization without tolerance for the frustration will result in a bad object, fit only for evacuation. Bion uses the terms *β-element* or *thing-in-itself* for this notion. In Bion's (1962a) model, evacuation disturbs the development of a thinking apparatus; projective identifications take its place.

What happens if the frustration is subject to modification? This is the fourth constellation that Bion discusses. Modification refers to the process whereby an intolerable frustration becomes tolerable—for the infant with help from the mother, for the patient with help from the analyst. This process makes possible the establishment of a piece of knowledge about reality (a thought). So, in contrast to evacuation (the aim of which is to deny reality), modification aims at knowing the no-object (the object whose absence triggers the frustration) (Bion 1962b). By this process, sensory states become mentally meaningful and subject to curiosity about reality.

Bion explicitly had his point of departure in Freud's model and elaborated it into a more-detailed theory of thinking. He also elaborated Winnicott's notion of tolerating frustration, first hinted at by Freud (1917). The relative capacity to tolerate frustration when the need-satisfying object is absent is the pivot of his model. This capacity is connected to the alternatives of denying reality on one side and accepting reality and developing an apparatus for thinking about it on the other. In Bion's model, the alternatives are between evasion of *meaningless* sensory impressions by projective identification on the one hand and transforming sensory impressions into *meaningful* entities, i.e. knowledge about reality, on the other.

Bion's theory specifies conditions for the development of an apparatus for thinking and of conceptions and thoughts concerning external reality. He explicitly presupposes an *a priori* form (a preconception) that structures the experiences. We may ask whether his conception of an apparatus for thinking thoughts has an affinity to Kant's distinction between cognition and thinking; that is to say, whether Bion's apparatus performs a similar function as cognition, i.e. "knowing" about the thinking. From a clinical point of view, Bion noted how this development can be disturbed and how the individual's capacity to relate to and know about reality and to learn from experience can be severely impaired, when the infant is left unsupported and unable to handle inevitable frustrations and anxiety (Winnicott 1953; Zachrisson 2013).

In *Transformations* (1965), Bion carried out a critical examination of the analytical process and of the nature of knowledge possible to reach in the analytic situation. As a frame for this examination, he used the *Grid*, and he made several explicit references to Kantian concepts, notably *thing-in-itself* and *primary and secondary qualities*. After presenting a clinical vignette, he comments: "something occurred during the session–the absolute facts of the session. What the absolute facts are cannot ever be known, and these I denote by the sign O" (p. 17). And introducing *O*, he had written, "it is a thing-in-itself and unknowable (in Kant's sense) …" (pp. 12-13). The event in the session is beyond absolute knowledge. We recall Allison's (2004) "two aspect view" of knowledge. Paraphrasing him, we can echo Bion's point: the absolute facts about the session exist, but they "cannot ever be known." In Allison's words, they cannot count as objects for us. The analyst can never attain an omniscient view on the analysand.

The analyst's interpretation of the event is a transformation of the realization (the unknowable O) to a representation of it. Bion referred to the preserved elements of this transformation as "invariants." The truth about the patient, in Bion's notation O_p, "is apparently the stimulus, yet it has qualities, which seem to be appropriate to Kant's primary quality" (p. 32).

Clearly, Kant, or more precisely central elements of Kant's epistemology, provided Bion with a structure for his conception of the analytic process and its access to knowledge. On this structure, he based his model of transformations, the representation of the unknowable truth of an event in a piece of psychoanalytic knowledge. At the same time, he clearly delimited his field of investigation. He applied Kant's epistemological structure on the process unfolding in the analytic situation. His concern was about the possibility of knowledge in the analytic session, and he perceived the psychoanalytic method through a Kantian lens.

DISCUSSION

Our reading of Kant's transcendental idealism is different from those following Hegel's understanding of idealism as a universally shared subjective idealism—in which the-world-is-just-for-us (Kalvage 2007, p. 160). In our Allison-inspired reading, Kant's transcendental idealism provides a basis for us to be realists, though with the twist that we as learning

human beings must critically examine our representations of reality. Stated thus, Kant's epistemology seems to be the same as Roy Bhaskar's critical realism (see Benton and Craib 2010). Critical realism is a particularly interesting position because Charles Hanly (1999) has argued for the view that it is the epistemological position of psychoanalysis. Much as we value Hanly's thinking and agree with his overriding aim, we find that Kant's transcendental idealism is more aligned with psychoanalysis than critical realism is.

Hanly's point is that critical realism is a realistic position in that reality is understood as existing independently of us humans, and therefore is there for us to explore and discover. However, and this is the main element in critical realism, there is "no pure objectivity, no omniscience." "Our knowledge will always be partial" (Hanly and Hanly 2001, p. 523). In line with Bashkar's argument, Hanly repeats the crucial point that our knowledge about the world, our patients and ourselves is always only through representations, and never immediately given for us. This seems to coincide with the views of Freud, the object relation models and Bion. The difference concerns the ontological status ascribed to "reality."

Hanly (1999) illustrates the implications of this epistemological position in the context of analytic treatment. He writes that "the meaning of the patient's associations is what it is; independent of what patient or analyst wants to make of them" (p. 432). This point is further illustrated when Hanly (1995) makes use of Proust's narrative about the discovery of de Charlus' homosexuality in *The Cities of the Plain*. The narrator has been puzzled by de Charlus' behaviour for some time, but when he understands that he is homosexual, everything falls into place. Hanly uses this example from Proust to illustrate how the idea of homosexuality does not alter reality, but the representation of homosexuality makes it possible to see de Charlus behaviour as coherent and personally motivated. As Hanly (1995) writes, this illustrates that whereas "we must depend on ideas to understand," ideas also have the potential to distort (p. 906). Thus, the *critical* in realism is about not taking for granted our representations, but being suspicious about it being potentially the wrong, distorted or self-deceptive idea. Stated thus, we think that most psychoanalysts will concur.

The problem we see with critical realism does not concern the need to be suspicious of ideas; rather, it concerns critical realism's aim to state facts

about reality. Does it compute to state facts about homosexuality? Especially when it comes to diagnose it on behalf of another human being – as in the example with Proust's narrator that observes de Charlus. Should we not as psychoanalysts be as suspicious on behalf of the narrator's "desire" to represent de Charlus in this particular way? We can say that Hanly in his critical realism transgresses an ontological border. We are of the opinion that Kant's transcendental idealism, taken as an argument against the pitfalls within transcendental realism, or in the modern guise as critical realism, has a stronger point to make – albeit implying a more modest epistemological stance. If we take as a premise that we never have immediate contact with reality, but always only through mediated representations and categories, we think it is more appropriate to understand reality as always more or less distorted. To allude to Kant, our grasp of reality is never as a thing-in-itself, but always as mediated through our own human perspective. As we have argued above, in keeping with Allison (2004), this is not to say that there does not exist any reality or that we advocate subjectivism and constructionism.

In our opinion, Hanly and Hanly (2001) are mistaken in categorizing Kant as an "ontological subjectivist" in the same family as Plato and Berkeley (p. 517). In our reading, Kant's position is that of a critical idealist preoccupied with delineating the limits of our knowledge. Thus, transcendental idealism is not subjectivism or constructionism. It is an epistemology that explores the limits of our knowledge about the world. If we understand Kant as a subjectivist, as Hanly does, we have reasons to reject Kant's argument. However, as we have demonstrated, such an understanding is at odds with the prevailing reading of Kant.

CONCLUSION: PSYCHOANALYTIC ATTITUDE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Freud had an ambivalent regard for science, ambivalence we see as persisting in contemporary psychoanalysis. Today we can still observe a split between analysts who regard their own practice as a delineated discipline and analysts who embrace academic research (see Sandler, Sandler, and Davies 2000; Zachrisson and Zachrisson 2005). Across this gap of opinions, most analysts, also the more academically oriented, appear to be sober in their expectations towards research. Analysts seem reluctant

to discard theory, or change practice, when confronted with new research findings. All the same, over time psychoanalytic theory and treatment develop and integrate new knowledge, be it with regard to attachment, to relational needs, to intersubjective communication or to neuropsychological findings. True, this development in psychoanalysis may seem to take place in a slow and circumstantial way. We think that this, at least to some extent, is a consequence of the epistemological position of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysts consider knowledge about the outer and inner world as mediated through representations, in which we as humans have passionate investments. We regard with scepticism research findings from studies conducted within an academic, often positivistic epistemological position. And rightly so, in our opinion, since positivistic empirical academic research often takes its findings on face value, and therefore tends to discover only short-lived truths, especially within psychology and psychiatry. Psychoanalysis develops its knowledge slowly and, let us hope, with soberness, wanting to avoid scientism in theory and to maintain a stance of humility in the therapeutic setting. In our opinion, these are the fruits of a modest epistemological position, one indebted to Kant's philosophy.

REFERENCES

Allison, H.E. (2004). *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

——— (2012). Transcendental Realism, Empirical Realism, and Transcendental Idealism. In *Essays on Kant*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Benton, T. & Craib, I. (2010). *Philosophy of Social Science: The Philosophical Foundations of Social Thought*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bergo, B. (2004). Psychoanalytic models: Freud's dept to philosophy and his Copernican revolution. In Jennifer Radden (ed.). *The Philosophy of Psychiatry: A Companion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 338–350.

Bion, W.R. (1962a). The psychoanalytic study of thinking. *Int. J. Psychoana.l 43*:306–310.

——— (1962b [1984]). *Learning from Experience*. London: Karnac.

——— (1965 [1977]). *Transformations*. In *Seven Servants*, 1–183. New York: Jason Aronson.

Callahan, G. (2010). Critical Realism … or Critical Idealism? *Int. J. Soc. Econ.*, 37:867–879.

Eriksson, J. (2012). Freud's metapsychology—the formal a priori of psychoanalytic experience. *Scandinavian Psychoanal. Rev., 35*:21–34.

FONAGY, P. (2015). Epistemological and methodological issues on process and outcome research. In LEUZINGER-BOHLEBER M & KÄCHELE H (Eds). *An Open Door Review of Outcome and Process Studies in Psychoanalysis*. London: Int. Psychoanal. Assn, 41–73.

FREUD, S. (1900). The interpretation of dreams. *S.E.* 5:509–621.

——— (1911). Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning. *S.E.* 12:213–226.

——— (1915).The Unconscious. *S.E.* 14:159–215.

——— (1917). Mourning and melancholia. *S.E.* 16:24–258.

——— (1933). New introduction lectures on psycho-analysis. *S.E.* 22:1–182.

FULGENCIO, L. (2005). Freud's metapsychological speculations. *Int. J. Psychoanal., 86*: 99–123. doi:10.1516/tny1-6yt7-v37t-16ld

GRÜNBAUM, A. (1984). The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique. Berkeley: Univ. California Press.

HABERMAS, J. (1971). *Knowledge and Human Interest*. Toronto: Beacon Press.

HARTMANN, H .(1958). *Ego Psychology and the Problem Of Adaptation*. Madison: International Universities Press.

HEIDEGGER, M. (2001). *Zollikon Seminars*. Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press.

HANLY, C. (1995). On fact and ideas in psychoanalysis. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 76: 901–908.

——— (1999). On subjectivity and objectivity in psychoanalysis. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 47:427–444.

——— (2009). On truth and clinical psychoanalysis. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 90: 363–373.

HANLY, C. & HANLY, M.A. (2001). Critical realism: distinguishing the psychological subjectivity of the analyst from epistemological subjectivism. *Int. J. Psychoanal.,* 49:515–532. doi:10.1177/00030651010490021001

HOFFMAN, I.Z. (1991). Discussion: toward a social-constructivist view of the psychoanalytic situation. *Psychoanal. Dial.* 1: 74.105. doi:10.1080/10481889109538886

KANT, I. (1781[1997]). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

KALVAGE, P. (2007). *The Logic of Desire: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books.

KLEIN, M. (1952 [1975]). Some theoretical conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant. In *The Writings of Melanie Klein III*, pp. 61–92. London: Hogarth Press.

ORANGE, D.M. (2003). Antidotes and Alternatives: Perspectival Realism and the New Reductionisms. *Psychoanalytic Psychology* **20**: 472–486. doi:10.1037/0736-9735.20.3.472

PETTIGRE, D. E. (1990). The question of the relation of philosophy and psychoanalysis: the case of Kant and Freud. *Metaphilosophy*, **21**: 67–88.

PINKARD, T. (2000). *Hegel: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Popper, K. R. (1963). *Conjectures and Refutations*. London: Routledge.

Ricoeur, P. (1970). *Freud & Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

Safran, J.D. (2002). Reply to Commentaries. *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 12: 235–258. doi:10.1080/10481881209348665

Sartre, J.P. (1956). *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Psychology*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Sandler, J., Sandler, A.M. & Davies, R. (2000). *Clinical and Observational Psychoanalytic Research: Roots of a Controversy*. London: Karnac books.

Sgarbi, M. (2012). *Kant on Spontaneity*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Tauber, A. (2009). Freud's dreams of reason: the Kantian structure of psychoanalysis. *Hist. Human Sci*, 22:1–29. doi:10.1177/0952695109340492

Tauber, A.I. (2010). *Freud: The reluctant philosopher*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

Taylor, C. (1995). *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Vetlesen, A.J. & Stänicke, E. (1999). Fra hermeneutikk til psykoanalyse: Muligheter og grenser i filosofiens møte med psykoanalysen. Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal.

Winnicott, D. W. (1953[1971]). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In *Playing and Reality*, pp. 1–25. London and New York: Routledge.

——— (1971). The use of an object and relating through identifications. In *Playing and Reality*, p. 86–94. London and New York: Routledge.

Wittgenstein, L. (1967). Conversations on Freud. In *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 41–53.

Zachrisson, A. (2013). The internal/external issue. What is an outer object? Another person as object and as separate other in object relations models. *Psychoanal. S. of the Child*. 67:249–274. doi:10.1080/00797308.2014.11785497

Zachrisson, A. & Zachrisson, H. (2005). Validation of the psychoanalytic theories: Towards a conceptualisation of references. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 86: 1353–1371. doi:10.1516/fb7h-7e8c-fdbg-yq9t

Erik Stänicke
University of Oslo
Department of Psychology
Postboks 1094 Blindern
0317 Oslo
Norway
erik.stanicke@psykologi.uio.no

Anders Zachrisson
Anton Schjøths gate 18
0454 Oslo
Norway
anders.zachrisson@psykologi.uio.no

Arne Johan Vetlesen
University of Oslo
Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas
Postboks 1020 Blindern
0315 Oslo
Norway
a.j.vetlesen@ifikk.uio.no

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Psychoanalytic Epistemology: Kant and Freud

Charles Hanly

To cite this article: Charles Hanly (2020) Psychoanalytic Epistemology: Kant and Freud, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 305-337, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1717261

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1717261

Published online: 18 Mar 2020.

Volume LXXXIX, Number 2
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1717261

PSYCHOANALYTIC EPISTEMOLOGY: KANT AND FREUD

BY CHARLES HANLY

Keywords: Kant, Freud, psychoanalytic epistemology.

"Critical realism," as I use the term, refers primarily to psychoanalytic epistemological issues and more generally to observational and experimental natural science and ordinary experience. I have only very recently become aware of the philosophy of critical realism advocated by Roy Blaskar. My philosophical orientation is not Blaskar's critical realism but scientific philosophy, which consists of working out the implications of scientific discoveries for philosophical epistemology, ontology, ethics, and aesthetics. A well-known exposition of this philosophy is Reichenbach's (1951) *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*. Accordingly, I shall argue that, although Erik Stänicke, Anders Zacrhisson, and Arne Johan Vetlesen and I share an epistemological perspective, I remain persuaded that critical realism has distinct advantages over critical idealism as an epistemology for psychoanalysis (see this issue). At issue is the question "what is the philosophically and psychoanalytically most sound epistemology for psychoanalysis." Stänicke, Zacrhisson, and Vetlesen have argued that the critical idealism epistemology originated by Kant is an improvement on critical realism, with which they otherwise agree, as did Kant. They argue that Freud was, at least implicitly, an epistemological Kantian. I would like to be able to reciprocate their appreciation of critical realism in my assessment of critical idealism but as you will find

Charles Hanly is a professor emeritus in philosophy, University of Toronto and a training analyst now in full time private practise. He was President of the IPA 2009-2013.

as you follow the arguments, the scholarly, philosophical, scientific, and psychoanalytic reasons why I cannot, reasons with which you may agree or disagree. But, let me first clarify my use of the idea of critical realism.

"Critical realism," as I use the expression, is grounded in two affirmations. The "realism" part assumes that patients, along with their neuroses, exist independently of our theories about them and our experience of them—even when repetitions of their neurosis are occurring in their associations and transferences and even when repetitions of the remnants of our own neuroses are occurring in our counter-transferences, even when analysts form empathic trial identifications with their patients in an effort to explore what it would be like to be or to have been them. This is an ontological assumption (i.e. an assumption about the nature of reality) that has powerful epistemological implications.

The "critical" part is that, despite difficulties in the way of objectively understanding patients and their transferences as they are, psychoanalysis can enable analysts to prepare themselves for being adequately objective in their clinical observation of their patients by undergoing a personal training analysis followed by self-analysis and reanalysis if need be. This preparation and maintenance can sufficiently reduce the interference of the analyst's repressed unconscious wishes and protect the analyst's capacity for non-judgmental, empathic experience. It is supported by reflexive and reflective capacities to be diligently observant of the analyst's capacity to be as observant as possible of patients as they are and not only as the analyst might wish them to be or preconceive them to be. This is difficult, fallible work; it can be unremitting as the subjectivist epistemologists, both philosophical and especially psychoanalytic, usefully remind us. The special difficulty for psychoanalytic observation is that the observing instrument of the analyst is akin (different only in degree, not in kind) to their patients in being vulnerable to defensive avoidance backed up by rationalizations.

This is a constant hazard of the human "detection systems," but analysts need not despair. Detection systems (observation instruments) in physics and other sciences also require exceptional care to insure that the signals received are not generated by the detection system itself instead of by events and processes in the universe. Guth's (1997) comment on the discovery of the cosmic radiation that provides evidence for the big bang theory makes the point, "they (the observing physicists)

understood how difficult it is to prove that the constant hiss (picked up by their receivers) was a real astronomical signal – that it was not caused by some imperfection in the detection system" (p. 68). Critical realism as an attitude of clinical enquiry supports a steady psychoanalytically informed questioning of the objectivity of our observations of our patient's and the formulations we derive from them about what is happening in the life of the patient and what is causing it. Having been analysed, preserving and extending its benefits with self-analysis and deepening knowledge of how the human mind works, sustains the objectivity of the self reflection that enables us to differentiate what is owing to ourselves and what is owing to our patients in our experience of them and our thinking about them. The depth and extent of the analyst's knowledge of psychoanalysis enables the reflexive critical scanning of the ways in which the residues of neurotic elements in the analyst influence the analyst's experience of and thinking about patients. This process, this exercise of critical realism, can comprehend and, in doing so, can contain the inappropriate and wayward desires, antipathies and defensiveness, that can insinuate themselves into our clinical experience of the patient and, thus improve our ability to be more open, adapted, and objective clinical observers. And there is always available the possibility of further analysis when needed. I understand that it is Stänicke et al.'s agreement with these basic educational, methodological, and epistemological points that results in their qualified approval of critical realism, as I have defined it, despite their conviction that critical idealism is even better and to be preferred. In fact, subject to a major qualification, it is consistent with a significant part of Kant's epistemology, as we shall see.

The "critical" in "critical realism," as I have used it, refers to the psychoanalytically informed reflexivity of consciousness which enables us to use the knowledge of the psychic and physical factors that cause experience to be cognitively subjective and, thereby, to be able to improve experiential objectivity and to recognize experiential illusion, understand and explain it even when it cannot be altered. In psychoanalysis, the psychoanalytically informed self-awareness increases the mind's adaptation and receptivity to patients' intended and inadvertent communications of their affects and fantasies (see also Cavell 1998). Spinoza first articulated the reflexivity of consciousness (1677). Reflexivity is

essential to the introspection which Freud (1914) considered to be at the origin of philosophical speculation. Although this observation does not hold for the empiricism of Bacon (1620), as we shall see, it does have a central place in Kant's epistemology as it did in Descartes' (1641) epistemological premise "cogito ergo sum." In clinical psychoanalysis, reflexivity functions as a cognitive third (Hanly 2004). Loewald (1960) among others has emphasized the importance of the analyst's knowledge of the analyst/patient relation. This experience requires the reflexivity of consciousness, which enables the analyst to be alert to the patient's experience of the analyst and aware of the analyst's experience of the patient. The reflexivity of consciousness allows us to be aware of how we are experiencing others. It allows us to be aware of the influence of our own mind upon our experience of our patients as well as the influence of the patient's mind and life experience upon their experience of their analyst. Thus the reflexivity of consciousness allows us to be both self-critical and understanding of our patients and, in particular, to raise crucial questions about what is cognitively subjective and what is objective in our experience of our patients.

The reflexivity of consciousness is involved in the developing capacity for subject-object differentiation during earliest infancy. As soon as the infant gains some memories of the pleasure of breast or bottle feeding, the infant begins to differentiate the image of the breast or bottle that, no matter with what hallucinatory intensity, does not satisfy and the object that by sucking on it satisfies (Freud 1950 [1895]). It is worth noting that untutored nature enlists the pleasure principle in the first psychic task of differentiating subjective images from perceptual realities. It makes the infant prefer the object to the image. In this universal experience, the reality principle is born. Reflexivity is also cognitively at work in the formation of everyday common sense as mentally and cognitively developing children learn from their experience without schooling, for example, that remote objects appear to us to be much smaller than they actually are, that posts standing in water appear to bend at the surface of the water although they actually remain straight, and the sun appears to be larger when rising and setting than at its zenith although it does not change. These common sense "corrections" of how things really are does not alter them in our visual fields; remote objects remain Lilliputian; fence posts standing in ponds continue to appear bent; train

tracks continue to converge in the distance, the sizes of the sun and moon appear enlarged at the horizons. The correction is made in imagination and thought. These critical reflections on our visual experience are our first introduction to the difference between appearance and reality, what is owing to our cognitive subjectivity and what is objective—a realistic representation of the object. Also implicit in these commonsense thoughts, even in children, there is the idea of perspectives and of more and less adequate perspectives on the actual as opposed to the apparent nature of things. We realize that the relative size of things is best accessed when one is at an optimal distance for sizing them up. This capacity for taking into account the influence of the position from which we observe things was at the foundation of Copernicus' revolutionary discovery that the rotation of the sun about the earth is an appearance of the sun's motion actually caused by our observing the sun from our location on a diurnally rotating planet. Ptolemaic/Aristotelian astronomy was naively, as distinct from critically, realistic in this respect. For centuries astronomers took the apparent motion of the sun to be real when in reality the sun is stationary relative to the observer who moves on a diurnally rotating planet. The only way we can detect the real motion of the earth experientially is by observing the apparent motion of the sun. Our experience of the sun's motion is a subjective illusion. At the same time, experience teaches us even in infancy that experience can also be reliable and for the most part, as far as our everyday mundane interests are concerned, it is pretty much reliable. And science as well as common sense has shown us that subjective illusionary experience can be corrected by imagination and thinking that is grounded in more reliable perspectives and experience. When an analyst hears a patient inadvertently say that he was castrated, while he is remembering being circumcised for medical reasons in early latency, without being aware of doing so, the analyst's informed awareness of the repression of painful and frightening affects enables the analyst to aptly interpret what he has heard and become alert to the effects of current castration anxiety at work in the patient's further associations and transferences. The patient's inner-experience of himself is illusory; he cannot experience his own castration anxiety. The analyst, by observing the reality of castration anxiety in the patient, is in a position to help the patient reduce its severity by means of interpretations that enable him to work it

through and become able to remember what really happened. The patient's memory will be able to provide him with a more realistic impression of these aspects of his life history and to live released from the symptoms and inhibitions his repressed Oedipal feelings had imposed on him. His inner experience of himself will correspond more closely to himself as he actually is and has been. The critical realist position that I have proposed locates in the reflexivity of consciousness the possibility of seeking and, often enough, finding ways to tackle the complex problems of identifying what is only apparent and what is real in our experience of our own lives. To this reflexive function Kant adds the more radical and powerful function of legislating the forms of our perceptual experience and the categories of our understanding, which are found in our experience of things because they have been imposed by the mind on it.

There are points of agreement between critical realism and critical idealism but there is one fundamental disagreement. The disagreement is about whether psychoanalysis has deepened our knowledge of the reality of human nature or whether psychoanalysis enables us to know only a phenomenological façade of our real being because the reality of human nature remains hidden from us by our own subjective conditions of knowing it. Critical realism has abandoned the transcendental while Kantian critical idealism retains it as an object of faith beyond realistic common sense and scientific knowledge in its ontological distinction between the knowable phenomenal world and the unknowable noumenal world.

We now need to turn to a brief more narrowly philosophical consideration of Kant's basic epistemological ideas. But before doing so, let me in a preliminary way set out my understanding of the relevance of the question: critical realism or critical idealism for clinical psychoanalysis? Stänicke et al.'s paper brings to our attention that Kant's epistemology is the major philosophical precursor of recent and current analytic subjectivist epistemologies that are of central importance to clinical psychoanalysis and to psychoanalytic theory. These epistemologies have unexpected roots in Freud's erroneous postulation of archaic residues as part of his libidinal instinct theory with the implication that the incestual and murderous wishes of the Oedipus complex are genetically inherited and are, therefore, universal. This error can be corrected but

so long as there is a genetic origin of an incest wish the same universality follows because incest wishes cause parricidal and matricidal wishes. Their repression brings into existence unconscious fantasies that exercise a causal influence on subsequent psychic development and relations with parents and siblings and their substitutes despite cultural variations in family structures and practises. The core idea is that innate common genetic psychic processes subjectively determine the way in which fundamental familial relations are experienced by each individual independent of the relations and actions of the individual's parents and siblings in so far as these familial relations may ameliorate or worsen the resolution of the conflict but cannot cause the formation of the complex and the repressed fantasy or its obliteration. Put simply, incest wishes in a small boy do not depend on his being made the object of seductiveness on the part of his mother and ambivalence and dread toward the father does not depend on harshness toward him on the part of the father. This idea of the universality of genetic innateness has a kinship as well as crucial differences with contemporary subjectivist epistemologies and with Kant's epistemology. For example, Goldberg (1976) postulated that a finite universality is to be found in the influence of their favoured theoretical ideas on how and what analyst's observe in their patients such that the truth of theoretical ideas can only be tested within schools but not across schools of psychoanalytic theory, e.g. self psychology and classical theory. The kinship with the classical instinct theory is to be found in the idea that the theoretical commitments of the analyst determine what the analyst observes of the patient. That is to say, the analyst's theory determines *a priori* (to use a Kantian term) the clinical experience of the analyst. The obvious difference is that the classical theory is an aetiological and not an epistemological theory about the nature of clinical facts which, in principle, remain available for objective observation by competently trained observers. It is consistent with critical realism. Whereas, Goldberg's theory claims that just by being committed to the classical instinct theory classical analysts will be able to see only evidence of an instinctually originated Oedipus complex and be unable to see the influence of relational factors. This idea is consistent with critical idealism. The issue of critical idealism and critical realism is central to our understanding of clinical psychoanalytic knowledge. We can be grateful to Stänicke et al. for introducing the bearing of Kantian

epistemology into this enquiry and for framing it conceptually. Accordingly, let us turn to Kant's epistemology to further explore this kinship and the differences and Kant's potential contribution to them.

The core of Kant's epistemology is grounded in the requirements of what he calls the "synthetic unity of apperception" (Kant 1787, pp. 152-162). Kant meant by apperception "the mind's perception of itself as a conscious agent" (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). For Kant, this conscious agency is cognitive, moral, and aesthetic; the topics of his three great critiques. The mind's perception of itself in its cognitive activities (perceptual experience and understanding) is the definition of the reflexivity of consciousness that we have discussed in relation to critical realism above. Kant's argument is that apperception (the reflexivity of consciousness) must preserve its own unity in its perceptual experience and in its thought activities by imposing order upon the flux of impressions of self, others and the world and in the syntheses (combinations) involved in knowing (Hanly 2004; Kant 1787, pp. 155-158). To this end the apperceptive self must impose conditions that preserve its unity. These conditions apply to the two forms of perceptual experience and observation. The mind temporalizes our experience in our inner awareness of being percipient and spatializes our external experience of objects. Time and space are inherent in our perceptual experience because our mind puts them there. And the mind in forming thoughts about what is and its nature similarly has to impose upon knowledge twelve categories of understanding of which causality and substance are by far the most important. Therefore, in my opinion the importance of the reflexivity of consciousness or apperception is the shared assumptions of critical idealism and critical realism. The difference is that critical idealism assumes with Kant that this reflexive psychic function legislatively temporalizes and spatializes our perceptual experience, hence our knowledge of space and time, while the categories of understanding, causality, and substance are similarly imposed by the mind on knowledge derived from our experience; critical realism does not. Critical realism assumes that self-awareness (reflexivity) is only the handmaiden of subject object differentiation and does not have within itself the power to legislate *a priori* knowledge of what is and is not knowable. In its critical function, it has to rely on experience. Knowledge of space and time, causality, and substance originate with and depend upon

experience, which can cause our beliefs about them to be seriously mistaken or reveal what is and what is not actually there and happening in nature. The reader will notice also that Kant assumes that nature is not in itself sufficiently organized and orderly in its processes for it to be known and to provide us with the experiences and ideas needed to know it. Whereas, critical realism acknowledges that there are difficulties in knowing but some, at least, of the difficulties can and have been overcome. These achievements also teach the mind how to correct for what is illusory in our experience by improved observation and experiment. Nature in a variety of ways dictates our experience sometimes yielding access to its reality, sometimes not. But when our minds or physical conditions of experience dictate our experience and our beliefs independently of experience, we are at risk of going off the rails. Consequently, critical realism assumes that our basic ideas about space, time, causality, and substance can be and need to be derived from experience.

Thus, there are some fundamental differences at the level of basic assumptions. Kant's basic argument is that the forms of experience and categories of understanding are found in our experience and thought about our internal and the external worlds because they are conditions for human knowledge. They are not derived from experience; they shape our experience. Hence Kant's repeated claim that these categories and forms can be deduced *a priori* from their status as conditions the mind must impose in order to know. It is from this claim that Kant derived his distinction between empirical knowledge of the phenomenal world, which is subject to these conditions, and the noumenal world of things-in-themselves that can only be known independently of the conditions imposed by these conditions of human knowledge. We can only know objects (substances) in space and time, which are subject to causal processes, but not objects that are not spatial, temporal, and are free (not subject to causality).

The basic assumptions of critical realism as I use the term are the basic assumptions of scientific empiricism. An empiricist epistemology does not accept Kant's idea that space, time, causality, and substance are, to use an applicable analytic term, projected into our experience of nature and ourselves. They are not *a priori*. They are *a posteriori,* derived from our experience of nature. They are not legislative mental constructs as in Kant; they are basic properties of nature and the material

universe. Bacon (1620), the father of empiricism, held that our ideas of space, time, causality, and substance are validated, not by deductive arguments, but inferred inductively from the predominant evidence of experience. The critical element of early empiricism was already to be found in the recognition that while we have to rely on experience, our experience may be deceptive about the cause of what we experience and of what is actually happening in nature, as Copernicus with the observations of Galileo had shown. Bacon also believed in alchemy as did Boyle but their alchemic quests led them to a deeper understanding of the chemical nature of objects, which makes alchemy a pipe-dream.

Kant (1787) likened his epistemology to the Copernican revolution in philosophy. It is a claim that is of interest to analysts for whom the epistemological question of what is subjective (owing to the analyst) and what is objective (owing to the patient) in clinical analysis is a perennial question for psychoanalysts. This perennial question has been even more vigorously explored during the last several decades in epistemological theorizing about the epistemological subjectivity of the analyst. Stänicke et al. have indirectly made a contribution to this discussion by introducing Kant's epistemology in which the subjectivity of some of the fundamental principles of knowledge is basic to their advocacy of critical idealism as an epistemology for psychoanalysis. I appreciate that Stänicke et al. are in agreement with some of the basics of this account of critical realism. The disagreement as I see it is whether or not critical idealism would improve on critical realism in some significant way or that critical realism has a flaw that critical idealism does not have. These are important question in current psychoanalytic theorizing because Kant was the first epistemological subjectivist of modern philosophy. And psychoanalytic epistemological subjectivists could, on the face of it, reasonably appeal to Kant's epistemology as a philosophical precedent for their own views.

And, indeed, Kant considered with some justice his epistemology to be a mid-position in philosophical epistemology between the British empiricism of Locke, Hume, and Mill (Kant claimed that it was Hume who awakened him from his dogmatic European rationalist slumbers) and the European rationalism of Kant's predecessors Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant's followers, especially Hegel and Schopenhauer. However, from the perspective of subsequent developments in science

and philosophy many philosophers, including this one, find Kant's transcendental *a prioriism* to be grounds for classifying him, despite many differences, as a European rationalist in contrast with naturalism, inductivism and empiricism. The crucial fact, on which this classification is based, is that Kant held that knowledge of space, time, and the twelve categories of understanding to be innate to the human mind and not derived from experience. His philosophy may be a minimalistic rationalism (idealism) but it is rationalist nevertheless. In my opinion, Kant can be correctly classified along with Plato and Descartes as a theorist of innate ideas. The alternative to Kant's epistemology is scientific empiricism first formulated by Bacon (1620). It is time to return to psychoanalysis via a consideration of the implications of a revolutionary scientific discovery on which we have already been reflecting.

This issue can be further explored by examining Kant's claim that his epistemology was a "Copernican revolution." The ambiguity of the experience of what is in motion and what is at rest is available to us, as it probably was not to Copernicus because it would be difficult to have it while riding on a horse or sitting in a carriage or wagon. One can "play" with motion and rest from within a moving train by taking the train as the point of reference or ground for observing the station. This will cause the traveller to "see" the station moving past the observer in a motionless train. Copernicus did not have any experience of the potential for ambiguity of motion and rest in our experience of them available to him to verify that it is the earth's rotation that causes us to experience the diurnal motion of the sun. Knowing that it is an illusion does not alter the illusion in our experience of the earth's rest and the sun's motion. All that Copernicus could do was to "save the appearances" by explaining its cause, i.e. Copernicus' theory explained what we do inevitably experience. It was Galileo's telescopic observations of the moon and its materiality, his discovery of the moons of Jupiter, and his discoveries about inertial and gravitational motion that proved the reality of the earth's diurnal rotation despite appearances. No one actually saw the earth's rotation until astronauts flew high enough to see it happening. The crucial point is that the Copernican distinction between appearance and reality is within nature, specifically, the diurnal rotation of the earth is real while the experienced motion of the sun is subjective and phenomenal. Kant's version of the Copernican revolution claims, in

effect, that Copernicus' discovery is itself ultimately subjective. The rotation of the earth, while empirically true from the vantage point of Kant's epistemology, is finally only an improvement of our knowledge of a phenomenal world the temporality and spatiality of which is man-made and the earth and sun may well be neither in their noumenal reality. Copernicus' discovery tells us nothing about the earth's noumenal being as a thing-in-itself any more than Galileo's telescopic discovery that the moon is a large rock of the same matter as the earth, and not at all like the completely "actualized" (therefore unchanging) matter of Ptolemaic/Aristotelian astronomy, is only a more accurate understanding of the phenomenal moon and not of the moon made visible not by a telescope but by faith. Kant held that reality (the noumenal) could only be known by faith (Kant 1787, pp. 26-32). Kant leaves us in the dark about faith other than its object is unknowable and that attempts to know the noumenal generates antinomies (Kant 1787, pp. 297-483) except for one inconsistent exception to which we shall shortly turn.

However, there does seem to be a real, if limited, kinship between Kant's basic epistemological idea and subjectivist ideas in psychoanalysis such as the irreducible subjectivity of the analyst (Renik), the inevitably subjective effect of the listening analyst, even with evenly suspended attention, on the narrative that emerges from the patient's free associations (Schafer), the co-creation of the patient (Stolorow), that clinical observations can illustrate but not test the truth of clinical interpretations and theories (Widlocher), clinical observations are predetermined by the analyst's explicit theories (Goldberg), by the explicit and implicit theories of the analyst (Sandler), etc. The kinship is constituted by Kant's claim that philosophy no more than science can know the nature of things as they are in themselves (the noumenal world) and can only know the phenomenal world that has been subjected to the two forms of perception and the twelve categories of understanding. In this way, Kant makes a significant departure from, for example, Descartes' theory and use of innate ideas one of which is God. Similarly, a shared premise of subjectivist psychoanalytic epistemological ideas is that subjective processes in the analyst and/or the analytic situation make it impossible to know the patient as he or she is but only as the patient is constituted in the relation of the analytic dyad. We shall return to this question again,

but first in light of the background above was Freud an epistemological Kantian?

What evidence is there in Freud's writings that he subscribed to these Kantian views of the nature of knowledge? Of Freud's references to Kant, two are in quotes from other authors without relevance to epistemology, two are on the evanescence of deception in jokes, another is a satirical use of Kant's simile of one man assisting another man, who is trying to milk a male goat, by holding a sieve under the animal, five are explicit or implicit references to Kant's deontological moral idea of the Categorical Imperative, and four have to do with Kant's epistemology. One is left with the impression that while Freud probably would have had an introduction to Kant's ideas when, as a student, he attended Brentano's lectures on philosophy, only a few of his references to Kant go beyond what would be available in the contemporary intellectual zeitgeist of Vienna scientific circles and, for the most part, left unexamined.

Let us first consider Freud's references to Kant's Categorical Imperative drawn from Kant's moral theory because it is the most frequent reference and an examination of it will identify a problem. The Categorical Imperative is at the heart of Kant's deontological moral theory: an act is moral if and only if it is a moral duty to so act. The alternative to the Categorical Imperative is the Hypothetical Imperative, which applies to acts motivated by inclinations of all kinds, be they whatever pursuit of egoistical interests or instinctual pleasures. A polar opposite of Kant's deontological theory is Mill's utilitarian definition of a moral act as one that brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. The morality of an action depends upon its consequences (Mill) and not upon its motive (Kant). Freud correctly emphasized the compulsive aspect of moral duty as Kant had defined it because the categorical imperative imposes obligations despite not wanting to satisfy them. It is the duty of the son to repress his parricidal wish to rid himself of his father along with the incestuous love for his mother that causes the wish: "Kant's Categorical Imperative is thus the direct heir of the Oedipus complex" (Freud 1924, p. 167). But profound differences underlie the one similarity of compulsion. If Freud thought that he was being Kantian, he was mistaken. Kant believed that the self-imposition of Categorical Imperatives on one's conduct requires the exercise of an autonomous, spontaneous free will. The performance of moral duty has

consequences, but it does not have any antecedent causes other than an act of spontaneous will. Therefore, Kant's theory of the psychic nature of the performance of duty not only contradicts Kant's impeccably *a priori* deduction of the universal and necessary causal category of his epistemology that all events have causes, it also contradicts Freud's principle of psychic determinism and Freud's discovery of the extent and nature of the unconscious motivation of individual character and conduct in the performance of duty.

Kant (1787, pp. 26-29) also considered the freedom of the will to be the human link to the noumenal, spiritual world which cannot be known by ordinary experience or science. Freud's (1901) view was that the subjective experience of a free, self-motivated will is an illusory inner-experience of the self caused by the fact that we are unaware of unconscious motives which are causally active in our choices and behaviour. Our inner sense of having a free will is, in this respect, akin to the illusion of the sun's motion. It is Freud and not Kant who has a valid claim to be Copernican. In my opinion, Freud's Oedipal causal explanation of Categorical Imperatives would have horrified Kant (Feuer 1970). Kant had recourse to faith in his failed attempt to resolve the contradiction between his moral postulate of a free (unmotivated) autonomous will and his deductive "proof" that all events must have causes. Freud failed to consider the inconsistency of Kant's understanding of the compulsion of moral duty with Kant's claimed *a priori* deduction of the principle of causality and, more seriously, he also failed to make explicit that his own psychoanalytic explanation of moral duty contradicts Kant's theory of moral will. Moreover, Freud's ideas of morality included the pursuit of Kantian Hypothetical Imperatives. To be sure Hypothetical Imperatives, in Kant's view, are not necessarily immoral but they are necessarily amoral. Freud was also a moral utilitarian in agreement with Mill and Epicurus. Freud considered that instinctually motivated behaviour that gives pleasure to self and others (Kant's pleasure seeking and egoistical "inclinations") to be intrinsically no less moral than the compulsion of moral duty as well as being healthier (Freud 1908). Kant's Categorical Imperative morality becomes necessary only when there is no better motive for doing what is right and good i.e. satisfies with pleasure both self and others. The implication of this brief excursion into the theory of morals is that Freud's recurrent use of a central Kantian idea such as the

"Categorical Imperative" is at best only marginally Kantian. Psychoanalysis has an understanding of the compulsiveness of moral duty that is causal and, for that reason, contradicts Kant's assumption of an uncaused will in the exercise of duty. Is it not possible that Kant's moral theorizing suffered from the introspective illusion that consciousness (apperception) is veridical and not in need of education from experience? Is it not possible that this introspective illusion finds its way into Kant's epistemology? And is it not possible that this Kantian illusion resulted in an exaggeration of the extent of the independence of human understanding from experience making it into a no less illusory source of *a priori* truths even while also acknowledging with Copernicus that sensory experience can be illusory? As noted above, Copernicus had had to find the alternative explanation in thought and imagination (speculation) that would save the appearance but which had to await observations made by Galileo to establish its truth.

Yet I agree with Stänicke et al.'s view of the relevance and importance of Freud's epistemological representationalism for answering these questions. They have soundly chosen a key Freud (1900) text, "The unconscious is the true psychical reality; in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications by our sense organs" (p. 613). However, what if Freud's "unwavering belief" was not only in rationality in general but, specifically, in scientific rationality, whereas, Kant's rationality strived, but failed, to abandon philosophical rationalism altogether. Kant proudly incorporated faith in a noumenal spirit world which cannot possibly be know scientifically but is "justified," even though inconsistently with his *a priori* epistemological proof that "all events have causes," when it comes to morally dutiful acts of will. Kant's moral theory comes into his epistemology in his claim that Categorical Imperative conduct is a referential signifier of what is unknowable, except by faith in something like a possibly non-temporal, non-spatial, non-causal, non-material spirit world of things that exist beyond science and its revelation of the temporal, spatial, causal materiality of the universe (Kant 1787, pp. 26-29). And what if a significant part of the genius of science is the ability to decipher from the appearance of things what is actually happening in nature as did Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes,

Boyle, Harvey, Newton, and eventually Darwin, Pasteur, Freud, Einstein, Born etc.? Should we understand Freud's representationalism to be the same as Kant's phenomenalism?

How are we to understand Freud's statement that the "reality of the external world" is left unknown to us in its communications to us by our sense organs? It is easy to agree that this statement might imply that the reality of nature is hidden from us in the way Kant thought it to be hidden when he made the distinction between the phenomenal world of scientific knowledge and the noumenal world of faith. And what if the limitation of our ordinary perceptual knowledge of "the reality of the external world" refers in Freud to the limitations, and indeed often enough actual delusional error, of our perception of and beliefs about the substance of the moon until corrected by Galileo by his use of the telescope which revealed the moon's real nature and its identity with the physical nature of the earth – not anything even remotely noumenal, but a large rock orbiting the earth which in the Ptolemy/Aristotelian cosmology, it could not do because of its mistaken idea of gravity and the laws of motion. Freud's purpose in the passage is to clarify that introspection does not reveal all of our mental life as it actually is and as it actually functions because of repression and other defensive processes. Similarly, our perceptions of the world are best considered to be representations of the objects of nature, which they often enough happen to disguise. The Copernican revolution in astronomy is a case in point. The key to this corrective knowledge of reality in observational science is that it is made possible by improvements in instruments of observation. The invention of lenses for telescopic observation corrected for the Lilliputian effect of distance to enable Galileo to discover that the moon and other planets of the solar system are actually composed, like the earth, of mineral substances. Freud had first-hand experience in the microscopic correction of perceptual representations of objects in nature when he invented an improved smearing technique for microscopic observation of brain tissue that enabled him and other neuroscientists to better observe the neuronal brain tissue of human and other animals. The new technique enabled Freud to observe the structure and function of the neurons of eels revealing their structural and functional identity with neurons of the human brain which, in turn, provided evidence against the then common belief in a special creation of

mankind evidence of which was the mistaken belief that the human brain is unique in its design which Freud's finding falsified. Free association and transference were important new methods of observation in psychoanalysis. The direction of these and many other scientific discoveries concerns the reality of nature without any trace of a noumenal world including the psychoanalytic understanding of Kant's Categorical Imperative. To refer to our perceptual experience as representing but not altogether or always corresponding to the real nature of the things represented as they actually are is useful but the distinction in science or in empiricist philosophy is not the same as the distinction made by Kant between the subjective phenomena of the natural world and the noumenal world of things as they are in themselves.

Therefore, would it not be more likely that Freud would have had in mind such things as his own youthful microscopic experience, the speculation of Copernicus, his search for a method to better observe unconscious psychic processes, the telescopic experience of Galileo, Darwin's theory of evolution and the scientific understanding of the transmission, reflection or absorption of light by the chemical structure of objects that cause us to see translucent and diversely colored objects that derive from but do not reveal to ordinary observation the molecular structure and dynamics of objects reacting to light by absorbing it or reflecting it all of which remains unseen by unaided vision. More simply, if you need to observe the bones of a joint in the body, you will need the representation provided by an X-ray machine. Ordinary vision leaves them hidden to sight and inadequately available to touch. Would not Freud probably have had in mind a scientifically based understanding of the representational nature of experience?

If so, then the distinction that Freud is making is not Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal; it is the distinction between the world as it appears to be and the world as it actually is. Freud's psychoanalysis has no conceptual place in it for Kant's faith in the existence of a noumenal world. Freud (1927) made clear his belief that science has been able to discover to some extent nature as it actually is in his debate with the person of faith. Kant shared a part of Freud's positivism but Freud, because of his psychoanalytic findings could not agree with Kant that moral will is not the effect of causal psychic processes and, as such, is the signifier of a noumenal world nor could he

have been convinced otherwise by Kant's (1788) moral argument for immortality and the existence of God.

However, Stänicke et al. (2020) have also rightfully called our attention to Freud's (1915) repetition of his (1900) position accompanied by an explicit reference to Kant:

> Just as Kant warned us not to overlook the fact that our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived though unknowable, so psycho-analysis warns us not to equate perceptions by means of consciousness with the unconscious mental processes which are their object. Like the physical, the psychical is not necessarily in reality what it appears to us to be. We shall be glad to learn, however, that the correction of internal perceptions will turn out not to offer such great difficulties as the correction of external perception – that internal objects are less unknowable than the external world. [p. 171]

In this passage, Freud affirms the Kantian idea that because "our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived though unknowable" to justify his hypothesis that introspection does not reveal important psychic processes at work unconsciously in the mind. This repetition of Kant's idea that our external perceptions are "subjectively conditioned" appears to provide solid ground for Stänicke et al.'s view of Freud's Kantianism. But is it? In both quotations there are two possible meanings. The Kantian meaning is that the subjectivity of the forms of perception and categories of understanding make it forever impossible to know the noumenal reality of nature and the universe. And Kant did consistently repudiate the claim to knowledge on which the European rationalist metaphysics of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz was based to which could be added the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle. The scientific meaning is that, although the reality of nature is often enough hidden from us by our unaided perceptions that nourish naïve, wishful beliefs, these perceptions and the beliefs based on them can be corrected by improved methods of observation and experiment that allow us to see and understand nature as it is and not just as it appears to be. The contextual evidence

suggests that the second alternative is what Freud had in mind because of the assertion that immediately follows which claims that the accurate perceptions of unconscious contents and processes are easier to make than accurate objective perceptions of the composition and processes of physical objects and the dynamics of physical forces (see Guth above). Locke first advanced the notion that our perceptions are representations of nature (1690) in his empiricist epistemology influenced by the new scientific discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, and his friend Boyle. And I have argued above that Freud's references to Kant's deontological idea of a "Categorical Imperative" include no considerations of how inconsistent the psychoanalytic understanding of moral duty is with Kant's understanding of it. It is reasonable to suppose that this reference to Kant is no different.

And there are other Freud quotations that are unambiguous about Freud's Kantianism. Freud (1920) unambiguously rejected, on psychoanalytic grounds, Kant's idea of the subjective cognitive origins of our ideas of space and time, "As a result of certain psycho-analytic discoveries, we are to-day in a position to embark on a discussion of the Kantian theorem that time and space are 'necessary forms of thought.' We have learnt that unconscious mental processes are in themselves 'timeless'" (p. 28). This same rejection of fundamental propositions of Kant's epistemology was repeated by Freud (1933):

> … we perceive with surprise an exception to the philosophical theorem that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. There is nothing in the id that corresponds to the idea of time; there is no recognition of the passage of time and—a thing that is most remarkable and awaits consideration in philosophical thought—no alteration in its mental process is produced by the passage of time. [p. 74]

Although I do not find Freud's argument convincing (Hanly 2009) because repressed memories and phantasies may not be changed by the passage of time, but these contents and the psychic processes that maintain them in a repressed state are not themselves timeless. They have a beginning, duration and an end if not by a reduction of their affect investment by analysis, then by working through conflicts without

analysis, by dementia or other illness and eventually by the death of the brain. However, the question is about Freud's adherence to Kant's epistemology and, clearly, Freud believed that he had refuted Kant's theory of time and space as "pure," *a priori* forms of perception. Consequently, Freud must have adhered to the alternative empiricist idea that space and time are properties of processes and relations in nature and that we learn about their nature from our experience of them and, especially, from scientific study. About the *a priori* categories of the understanding Freud is silent. His argument against Kant's epistemology is primarily about time but Freud includes space as well and this extension would surely also apply to the categories of understanding e.g. the causal principle and the nature of substance. There is also a late reflection by Freud (1941) that reiterates his rejection of Kant's idea of space and generally of "Kant's *a priori* determinations of our psychical apparatus" (p. 300). It appears that Freud's epistemology was not Kantian, but was critically positivistic.

Yet Stänicke et al.'s argument raises a further question, "is psychoanalysis as a body of psychological knowledge significantly Kantian independently of whether or not Freud did or did not think it to be?" We humans are not always aware of the consequences of our actions nor do we always think through the logical implications of our ideas. And as suggested above, Kant's epistemology comes intriguingly close to some analytic ideas about the epistemological (cognitive) subjectivity of psychoanalytic knowledge. It is closer, in my opinion, than any other system of philosophical thought in the European rationalist tradition from Descartes to Hegel. The question naturally arises as to whether or not Kant's epistemology provides a basis for Stänicke et al.'s proposal for "critical idealism" as a description of the foundations of psychoanalytic knowledge. And there is a promising similarity between the epistemological subjectivity of Kant's geometry of space, arithmetic of time and the categories of understanding and the epistemological subjectivity of unconscious fantasies in psychoanalysis. When unconscious phantasies are at work, especially when defended by projection, denial, and splitting these fantasies bring about alterations in the experience of objects, beliefs about them, and affective relations with them. These phantasies may be caused by traumatic assault or privation but they can also originate in the mind of the individual giving them a distinctly Kantian aspect.

In Freud's drive theory the libidinal incest fantasy of possessing the mother turns the son's experience of his father into an envied and dangerous rival for the mother's love. In Klein's theory, annihilation anxiety caused by the death instinct generates a projective identification with the mother's breast during the oral stage that results in the schizoid-paranoid position. This position, because of its instinctual nature, includes experiencing the mother's breast as persecutory independently of how well the mother has nourished, comforted, and cared for the infant. Similarly, Kantian categories of the understanding and the forms of perception originate not in the experience of objects and self but from the mind itself as conditions subjectively imposed by the mind on thought and experience required by the possibility of common sense and scientific knowledge. But in other respects the differences are fundamental and, I think, insuperable.

Kant made a fundamental differentiation between "synthetic *a priori* knowledge" and "synthetic *a posteriori* knowledge." Synthetic *a priori* knowledge is made up of the fundamental ideas of Kant's epistemology that justify the universal and necessary law of causality, the other categories of understanding and the two forms of intuitions, space and time. *A posteriori* knowledge is the result of the use of these fundamental cognitive laws in describing and explaining the structure and dynamics of psychic life. Some basic premises of psychoanalysis are: (1) that psychic motivational and thought processes occur unconsciously, (2) that libido begins its activities in the oral phase of infancy and passes through a series of stages in childhood leading to adult sexuality, (3) that unconscious fantasies and memories of trauma can affect individual development as much as conscious experience does, and (4) unconscious fantasies that alter the way an individual relates experiences and thinks about self and others are also caused by childhood trauma inflicted by others to whom the child is anacliticly attached. These premises are *a posteriori* postulates the truth of which has to be decided factually. They are not *a prior* principles of sensory experience and understanding. They cannot be proven by means of a Kantian transcendental deduction. They are the results of psychoanalytic clinical observation and clinical processes will show them to be probable or mistaken.

To be sure, psychoanalytic explanations employ the category of causality, but they are conceptually and logically of a different order than

Kant's assertions and arguments about the categories of causality and the forms of space and time. Kant's categories and forms are held by him to be *universally and necessarily* true. The libido theory is only *contingently* true. It may turn out to be false. It may turn out to be partly true but mistaken in one or more respects. Controversy continues on basic issues such as the relative significance of inherited development (drives) as compared with experience (object relations). This is because, unlike Kant's epistemology, psychoanalysis is an empirical body of knowledge, which, like all bodies of empirical knowledge, depends for its truth on what the facts are. The psychoanalytic theory of how it comes about that unconscious fantasies subjectively determine how different individuals perceive, value and think about objects depends upon how things *happen to be* and not upon what they *have to be*. The psychoanalytic principle of psychic determinism, if true, has to be shown to be true by finding the causalities that are at work in the psychic life of individuals. Unlike Kant's claims for his categories and forms, the psychoanalytic principle of psychic determinism is not, as such, either universally or necessarily true. This logical disconnection is implied by Kant's distinctions between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge and between phenomenal and noumenal worlds. It is a major point of agreement between critical idealism and critical realism. The similarity of Kant's categories and forms of perception with unconscious fantasies is real but useless.

And unfortunately, Kant's *a priori* epistemological ideas are no more compatible with the psychoanalytic understanding of volition than they are with modern scientific discoveries about space, time and causality. If space is subjective, Euclidean, and *a priori*, how does it come about that the space of nature, as relativity theory has shown, is not rectilinear but curves in the vicinity of mass. It appears that Kant may have been correct in one respect. Space may be an *a priori* form of perception in the sense that we experience the world wearing Euclidean spectacles that we can never take off just as ordinary experience does not reveal the rotation of the earth. But, like Copernicus's speculation, Riemann's geometry of curved space has removed the Euclidian spectacles governing our understanding of space. Our everyday experience of space remains subjectively Euclidean and accurate enough, given the limited distances, to work well in building cities or surveying counties. However, Einstein, using Riemannian geometry and the hypothesis that the degree of the

curvature of space is relative to the mass of objects, predicted the path of light passing through the sun's gravitational field, the location of planets as they orbit the sun in the solar system and much else, empirically proved that the large spaces of nature are curved and not as Newton had assumed rectilinear and Euclidean. Space is not a pure form of intuition (perception) as Kant had thought. Space is a property of the material world that is relative to the mass of objects that Einstein's relativity theory aided by Riemannian geometry revealed despite its appearance to us in our ordinary experience of it as being rectilinear. Similarly, Einstein has shown that time is also a property of the natural world and that it is relative to velocity (Hawking 1988) and not as it appears in our experience to be, a uniform passage from past to future. Physicists have articulated the relativity of time in the imaginary, seemingly paradoxical but theoretically sound, aging of identical twins when one of the twins goes space travelling at a high velocity while the twin who remains behind on the earth's mass with the velocities of its diurnal, seasonal, and annual motions. When the space traveling twin returns he will be younger than his brother who remained on the earth.

It also appears that even Kant's *a priori* category of causality fails to remain intact after physicists came upon the indeterminacy of sub-atomic particles. Kant's argument of necessity is that the mind is required in order to know to be organized in its thinking by a pure universal and necessary category of causality such that any event in nature will have antecedent causes. This idea of causation works well in relativity theory in which the location and velocity of macroscopic objects can be simultaneously known. But microscopic sub-atomic particles refuse to "oblige" physicists in the way that astronomical objects do by being indeterminate. If their location is known their velocity is not and conversely. Consequently, predictions of location and velocity of sub-atomic particles require statistical equations unlike the predictions of atomic and larger objects. If the mind is really constrained subjectively to impose a unified concept of causality on the world how does it come about that the causal laws of sub-atomic particles differ from those of atoms and larger objects in being statistical rather than determinate? Another way of stating this basic point is that sub-atomic particles are not deterministic in the way that atomic and larger objects in nature are. Scientific discovery has not been kind to the Kantian conception of the subjectivity of

the foundations of knowledge. It would appear that rather than claiming absolute knowledge of space, time, and causality because our minds impose them on our experience, it is preferable to find more and better ways of gaining knowledge of space, time and causality as it is in nature and the universe. Einstein's (1927) view of this basic epistemological issue was clear:

> The only justification for our concepts and system of concepts is that they serve to represent the complex of our experience; beyond this they have no legitimacy; I am convinced that the philosophers have had a harmful effect upon the progress of scientific thinking in removing certain fundamental concepts from the domain of empiricism where they are under our control to the intangible heights of the *a priori.* [p. xvi]

Compare Einstein's remark with Kant's (1781) assertion, "Geometry, however, proceeds with security in knowledge that is completely *a priori,* and has no need to beseech philosophy for any certificate of the pure and legitimate descent of its fundamental concept of space" (p. 122). Kant is referring to Euclidean geometry, which has been abandoned for Riemannian geometry by astronomy in calculating the location and velocities of the objects and processes that make up the astronomical universe.

However, even if Kant's categories and forms of intuition are *a posteriori* rather than *a priori* as Kant claimed, does not Kant draw our attention to subjective determinants of experience and thought? Have I not already acknowledged that Kant can be considered to have anticipated the interest of analysts in the subjective determinants of experience and thought mentioned above in Freud and Klein as well as in the more recent subjectivist thinkers? Is there not an idealist Kantian-like distinction between the phenomena and noumena in the idea that the real life of a patient cannot be known; all that can be known is a co-created version of it (Stolorow and Atwood 1992) or that the best psychoanalysis is able to manage is a coherent narrative of the life of the patient as distinct from the historical truth of the patient's life (Spence 1982)? Is not Spence's (1982) distinction between historical truth and narrative truth akin to Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal?

Stänicke et al. cite Bion's speculation that infants arrive in the world with a pre-conception of the breast presumably because he assumes such a pre-conception is evidence of a Kantian *a priori* at work. Assuming that Bion's speculation is true, there are three problems in relating it to Kant's critical idealism. Kant denied that his deduction of his *a priori* epistemological categories and forms rely on observational evidence of any kind. And even if the sucking instinct comes genetically endowed with an inchoate image of an object that could satisfy it, it is not yet a concept. Any concept requires language, let alone an *a priori* category of the understanding. Consequently, this pre-conceptual image is empirical. But, Kant's often quoted understanding of empirical concepts such as Bion's hypothetical new-born's pre-conception, "The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything" (Kant 1787, p. 93) which implies that "concepts without perceptions are empty and perceptions without concepts are blind" requires that the infant's pre-equipped desire to suck on something that satisfies remains empty until it makes its first discovery of the breast or bottle after the cutting of the umbilical cord. The infant certainly experiences with intense oral pleasure the breast and the bottle it finds, but this experience in its early stages probably does not include even knowing what the breast or bottle is let alone the mother whose breast or bottle it is, let alone rising to the status of a precursor of Kant's *a prior* pure categories and forms of perception. Bion's idea of an infantile pre-conception, even if true is not evidence of a Kantian form or category.

The same problem attaches to Bion's suggestion that his illusive "O" is akin to the noumenal thing-in-itself of Kant. Although Kant's claim is inconsistent with his claimed transcendentally deduced epistemological subjectivity of perceptual experience and knowledge, a problem with which he struggles in his preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1787, pp. 26-33), his claim is that the unknowable noumenal world is manifested in uncaused acts of free will required by a moral duty the criteria for which Kant (1788) set out in his *Critique of Practical Judgement*. I find it impossible to find any similar clarity in Bion's (1991) account of "O." Bion asserts that "there are many formulations of dread, unformulated and ineffable – what I denote o" (p. 77) or earlier (Bion 1970) "O":

> … stands for the absolute truth in and of any object; it is assumed that this cannot be known by any human being; it can be known about, its presence can be recognised and felt, but it cannot be known. It is possible to be at one with it. That it exists as an essential postulate of science but it cannot be scientifically discovered. No psycho-analytic discovery is possible without recognition of its existence. [p. 30]

Bion makes references in his mystical account of "O" to philosophical ideas without any evidence of serious conceptual or logical study of them or how the philosophers and a poet used them in exposition, argument, or speculation. For example, among these references in addition to Kant's noumenal world one finds Plato's Ideal Forms which for Plato are known but are objects of Kant's criticism of metaphysics listed along with Milton's "void and timeless infinite" which is contrary to Kant's linkage of morality to religious ideas and the ontological opposite of Plato's (Timeaus) idea of creation. Bion's inconsistent citations suggest at best a casual and superficial familiarity with philosophy. What evidence is there in Freud's papers of an encounter with "O" in his own revolutionary speculation that the failures of his clinical results treating patients according to the cathartic method of his seduction theory could be accounted for by childhood sexual phantasies (Freud 1897; Hanly 2004)? Kant's idea of morality is incompatible with reliable psychoanalytic findings but it is clearly formulated, even if inconsistent with his epistemology, as Bion's idea dropping version of the noumenal is not. Bion's idea of "O" is too ineffable to provide any evidence for Kant's noumenal world which itself can only be "known" by faith via moral experience.

As I have acknowledged above, in principle Kant's epistemology could be thought to be a precedent for subjectivist epistemological ideas in psychoanalysis. However, Kant's *a priori* subjectivism has run afoul of scientific and mathematical developments including psychoanalysis on the nature of volition and morality. Moreover, there is in Kant's epistemology a specific inferential poverty. Nothing specific follows from Kant's epistemological *a priories* for empirical *a posteriori* knowledge. For example, nothing follows from Kant's principle of causality about whether or not there are childhood instinctual libidinal and aggressive phantasies and what their causality might be.

Kant's causal principle states only that if childhood instinctual libidinal and aggressive phantasies exist, they will have been caused and they will have consequences of some kind. Nothing follows as to whether or not the genetic programme for individual human development includes psychosexual stages or not. Nothing follows about the origins of gender identity, heterosexuality and homosexuality,[1] perversions, character etc. Consequently, there are no implications in Kant's epistemology for analytic questions about the subjectivity of psychoanalytic clinical knowledge except the assertion about all science that it can only discover the nature of the phenomenal world and leaves us in ignorance about the transcendental noumenal world. For example, nothing follows for or against Goldberg's claim that psychoanalysts cannot avoid experiencing the associations and transferences of their patients according to their explicit (conscious) theories. The same is true of other subjectivist positions listed above. These subjectivist epistemologies have meaningful empirical content, as Kant's *a priori* causal principle does not. For example, analysts can and do become "theory bound." Analysts can become ideological and conduct an analysis as though they were trying to prove something to themselves rather than following and understanding the actual associations and transferences of the patient. There is no question but that this ideological use of psychoanalytic ideas can happen to analysts of any "school" including classical analysis. In this respect, the different concerns of analytic subjectivists contribute valuably to the understanding of how the analyst's mind can compromise the analyst's objectivity. The question is whether or not clinical cognitive subjectivity is always bound to happen? Whether or not, the problems of subjectivity in clinical psychoanalysis are *a priori,* necessary and universal? Is analytic subjectivity irremediable or is it remediable enough so that clinical observations and ideas can be objective? What is clear is that the

[1] Freud used the word "homosexual" descriptively and not pejoratively. He repudiated the moral, intellectual and characterological derogation of homosexuality of his day. I would like to preserve this usage in psychoanalysis. The passage in the paper (Hanly 1995) on epistemology to which the authors are referring uses the word "homosexual." Whatever term we use to denote this form of sexual longing and desire in men and women, the task is to understand its nature and place in the lives of our individual patients and in human nature.

assumption that Kant's epistemology could justify the universal subjectivist position is a mistake because the insights of subjectivist analysts are empirical and, therefore, *a posteriori,* having to be verified by experience. For the same reason, Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal does not offer any specific critical doubt other than the general conviction that scientific knowledge of *all* kinds is ontologically doubtful because of its inevitable subjectivity. Moreover, such an assumption does what Einstein warned against; it removes the question of the relation between theory and the objectivity of clinical observation from empirical investigation. In contrast, analytic subjectivist theories raise serious questions about the conduct of psychoanalysis when they are treated not as Kantian *a priories* but as real empirical problems to be addressed in clinical technique when they arise (as in Guth's problem in physics above). Critical realism recognizes the value of subjectivist concerns because they inform and strengthen the critical function of analytic clinical apperception (reflexivity) as Kant's categories and forms do not. Critical realism gives full value to contributions to an understanding of what can go wrong in clinical work. In comparison, Kantian subjectivism in epistemology provides only for a general ontological derogating skepticism about scientific findings as being only phenomenological accompanied by a defence of faith based inconsistently on a narrow deontological morality.

It has been pointed out by Kant philosophical scholars that Kant's premise that the "synthetic unity of apperception" as a source of *a priori* knowledge is, in fact, a psychological, empirical premise that merits examination like any other psychic functional capacity. If so, and if Kantian "apperception" depends upon the reflexivity of consciousness as I have argued it does, psychoanalysis has a decisive argument against the veridicality of this psychic function and its being a source of synthetic *a priori* epistemological principles. Psychoanalysis has shown that there are illusions of consciousness. The two principal components of this illusion are, first, that consciousness is the essence (defining property) of the psychical and, second, that will is spontaneous and uncaused. The ideas to which these illusions give rise have been held to be true by philosophers of otherwise opposed epistemological points of view, for example the rationalist Descartes, the empiricist Locke and the critical

idealist Kant. These ideas have frequently been taken to be self-evident. Psychoanalysis has shown them to be as false as the movement of the sun relative to the earth. The illusions of consciousness on which they are based are caused by repression. Consequently, it is very unlikely that self-awareness is a source and touch stone of *a priori* truths because, if it were, it would have, without the benefit of psychoanalysis, corrected these illusions of consciousness. Self-reflection like other cognitive functions needs to be educated to reality by experience. It is no less unlikely that the mind legislates rather than discovers with much ingenious observational labor the basic concepts required to gain and construct bodies of scientific understanding of nature. Psychoanalytic subjectivists have contributed to this education of self-reflection to reality despite their sometimes claiming that epistemological objectivity is *a priori* impossible.

Stänicke at al. criticize me (Hanly 1995) for an ontological error in supposing that a literary figure in a Proust novel is able to be seen to be homosexual by the narrator because he was able to entertain the idea. I had used Proust's narrator's descriptions of the sexual encounter between M. de Charlus and Jupien and a failure to notice the signs of pregnancy in a woman as illustrations of Darwin's motto that the ability to observe meaningfully depends on entertaining ideas. The exact criticism is not altogether clear to me but it seems to be that I was treating M. de Charlus' homosexuality as being noumenal rather than as being phenomenal and failing, therefore, to be critical of the narrator's reliability as a witness. It is true that, in my reading of the novel, I had assumed that in the absence of any evidence in the novel that the narrator was given to seeing homosexuality in characters in whom little or none was to be found, that Proust intended us to take the narrator's experience of the episode as he (Proust) had imagined and wrote it. The narrator's voyeuristic wish, as Proust describes it, does not imply that the telltale sounds he heard from the other side of the wall were a hallucinatory projection. If my reading of Proust is incorrect, then I agree that I would have to critically examine the sources in myself that would explain my misreading and, consequently, my illustrative use of the relevant passages. But I am confident enough of my reading and my ability to be guided in my imagination by the author's words that I would have to have evidence

about the character of the narrator in the text and not just a blanket accusation of having "transgressed an ontological border" (Stänicke, Zacrhisson, and Vetlesen, 2020). Nor do I think that a general skepticism about all knowledge because it is subjectively conditioned and rendered phenomenal (critical idealism) provides any meaningful grounds for doubt about the veracity of the narrator's experience in the world of the novel. I find such "transcendental" skepticism unuseful when compared with empirical skepticism.

Nevertheless, the criticism is fair, if one believes that there really is a noumenal world about which we know nothing, despite our growing scientific knowledge and developing common sense except that willing categorical imperatives is evidence of its existence and the basis for highly dubious arguments for freedom of the will, immortality, and the existence of a watchful, creator God who rewards the loss of pleasure in life for the sake of duty with eternal bliss (Kant 1788). But then, the demands of a Kantian, idealist criticism applies equally to every idea I hold and every experience I have and not just to my acceptance of the narrator's account of a sexual episode between two characters in Proust's world. And to claim that all common sense and scientific knowledge is dubious because it is phenomenal, as I have argued above, in making a claim about everything, tells us nothing about anything and, in particular, about whether the narrator's narration of the episode was dubious or not and, if dubious, for what reason. I do not share Stänicke et al.'s assumption that there is a noumenal world. Additionally, I find Kant's idea, that mankind legislates, rather than progressively discovers and improves in the light of further experience, the foundational concepts of empirical knowledge neither modest nor useful. Copernicus' speculation that the earth rotates causing day and night which led to the discovery that, in reality, that is the way it is by Galileo failed to reveal the reality of the earth's noumenal being not because this knowledge is subjectively conditioned but because the moon is not noumenal. Empiricist critical realism takes the view that Copernicus and Galileo had discovered an important bit of what is real and not merely a phenomenal version of it. The same is true of science generally including Freud's discovery of unconscious psychic processes and, more specifically in relation to Kant, how we come to act dutifully but fail to be aware, despite our capacity for apperception, of what compulsion motivates us

to so choose. Science is slowly, painstakingly, and often brilliantly revealing what is real. Although this knowledge is based on experience, it is on experience that is not taken at its face value. It is, in the broad sense of the word, "critical" for a variety of reasons and ways some of which at various levels of sophistication I have sought to describe. But even so, although much of this knowledge is probable and subject to modification in the light of new observations (we do not yet know what theory in physics will unify relativity theory and quantum mechanics [Rovelli 2014] and we do not know for sure what part the genes may and may not play in the development of homosexuality), not a little of scientific knowledge is unlikely to be found to be false, after all, by further investigation e.g. that we are evolved animals (Coyne 2009), that the blood systems of mammals are continuous (Harvey) and that sexuality in humans becomes active at birth (Freud), the biochemistry of immunology, and much more. To be sure there is much more to be discovered, but thus far the trend of scientific discovery including psychoanalysis is that we are an evolved species born to live and die in a real, indifferent, primarily inanimate, physical universe. Kant's epistemology is an ingenious denial of this unpleasant reality and of the ontological anxiety (anxiety about our mortality) that it arouses in us. Kant's argument is that this trend in our knowledge of man and his place in nature is only phenomenal. I think that the evidence thus far is that nature and the universe is what is real. In this respect, I can be quite generally accused of "transgressing an ontological border" although, to repeat, in my own opinion, the evidence of scientific discovery, thus far, suggests that there is no border to be transgressed.

Kant's core epistemological argument for his phenomenological-noumenal dualism is to be found explicitly, although not attributed to Kant, in Freud's (1927) dialogue with the man of faith. Freud's (1927) summary of the import of the Kantian argument is, "an attempt has been made to discredit scientific endeavour in a radical way, on the ground that, being bound to the conditions of our own organization, it can yield nothing else than subjective results, whilst the real nature of things outside ourselves remains inaccessible" (p. 55). Freud's reasonable, realistic and modest conclusion was "No our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere" (p. 241).

REFERENCES

Bacon, F. (1620). *Novum Organum*, ed. by Joseph Devey, New York: P.F. Collier, 1902.

Cavell, M. (1998). Triangulation, one's own mind and objectivity. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 79:449–467.

Coyne, J. (2009). *Why Evolution is True*. New York: Viking.

Descartes, R. (1641 [1911]). *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Einstein, A. (1921 [1922]). *The Meaning of Relativity: Four Lectures Delivered at Princeton University*. trans. P. Adams, London: Methuen.

Feurer, L. (1970). Unconscious Sources of Kant's Philosophy. In: *Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*, ed. Charles Hanly and Morris Lazerowitz. New York: International Universities Press, pp. 76–125.

Freud, S. (1895). Project for a scientific psychology. *S. E.*, 1: 281–388.

——— (1905). Three essays on the theory of sexuality. *S.E.*, 7: 135–244.

——— (1908). 'Civilized' sexual morality and modern nervous illness. *S. E.*, 9: 179–204.

——— (1914). On narcissism: An introduction. *S.E.*, 14: 67–104.

——— (1924). The economic problem of masochism. *S. E.*, 19: 293–172.

——— (1927). The future of an illusion. *S. E.*, 11: 3.

Goldberg, A. (1976). A discussion of the paper by C. Hanly and J. Masson. *Int. J. Psychoanal*, 57: 67–70.

Guth, A. (1997). *The Inflationary Universe*. New York: Addison-Wesley.

Hanly, C. (1995). On facts and ideas in psychoanalysis, *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 76: 901–908.

——— (1997). Psychoanalysis and the uses of philosophy. In *The Perverse Transference and Other Matters*. Ed. Arnold Richards et. al., London: Jason Aronson, pp.269–284.

——— (2004). The Third: a brief historical analysis, *Psychoanal. Q.*, 73: 267–290. doi:10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00159.x

——— (2009). A problem with Freud's idea of the timelessness of the unconscious. In *The Experience of Time Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, ed. Leticia Glocer Fiorini and Jorge Canestri, London: Karnac, pp. 21–34.

——— (2019). The problem of pluralism in psychoanalysis. In *On Freud's "The Question of Lay Analysis*. Ed. M. Sandler and G. P. Costa, London: Rutledge, pp.135–167.

Hawking, S. (1988 [2009]). *A Brief History of Time*. Toronto: Bantam.

Kant, I. (1787 [1950]). *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith, London: Macmillan.2

——— (1788 [2002]). *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

——— (1790 [1914]). *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J.A. Bernard, London: Macmillan.

Locke, J. (1690). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Peter H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Loewald, H. W. (1960). On the therapeutic action of psycho-analysis. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 41:16–33.

Reichenbach, H. (1951). *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press.

Rovelli, C. (2014 [2016]). *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Spence, D. (1982). *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth*. New York, W.W. Norton & Company.

Spinoza, B. (1677 [1930]). *Ethics: Spinoza Selections*, ed. J. Wild, New York: Scribner.

Stänicke, E., Zacrhisson, A. & Johan Vetlesen, A. (2020). The epistemological stance of psychoanalysis: revisiting the Kantian legacy, *Psychoanal. Q.*

Stolorow, R. D. & Atwood, G. E. (1992). *Contexts of Being: The Intersubjective Foundations of Psychological Life*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1947). Third Edition, ed. C. T. Onions, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

106 Elm Ave.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

charlesmhanly@gmail.com

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Response to Charles Hanly's Commentary on "The Epistemological Stance of Psychoanalysis: Revisiting the Kantian Legacy"

Erik Stänicke, Anders Zachrisson & Arne Johan Vetlesen

To cite this article: Erik Stänicke, Anders Zachrisson & Arne Johan Vetlesen (2020) Response to Charles Hanly's Commentary on "The Epistemological Stance of Psychoanalysis: Revisiting the Kantian Legacy", The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 339-343, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1717262

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1717262

Published online: 18 Mar 2020.

Volume LXXXIX, Number 2
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1717262

RESPONSE TO CHARLES HANLY'S COMMENTARY ON "THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS: REVISITING THE KANTIAN LEGACY"

BY ERIK STÄNICKE, ANDERS ZACHRISSON, AND ARNE JOHAN VETLESEN

Hanly has written a scholarly discussion of Freud's epistemology and related it to Kant's. He concludes with a rejection of Kant's position:

> Kant's epistemology is an ingenious denial of this unpleasant reality and of the ontological anxiety (anxiety about our mortality) that it arouses in us. Kant's argument is that this trend in our knowledge of man and his place in nature is only phenomenal. I think that the evidence thus far is that nature and the universe is what is real. In this respect, I can be quite generally accused of "transgressing an ontological border" although, to repeat, in my own opinion, the evidence of scientific discovery, thus far, suggests that there is no border to be transgressed. [See this issue, p. 335]

In contrast to Kant, he puts Freud's "reasonable, realistic, and modest conclusion": "No our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere" (*The Future of an Illusion*, p. 241 quoted on p. 335). Whatever the merits and faults of our paper, we are pleased to have inspired Hanly to this intellectual *tour de force* and thorough clarification of his own epistemological position. For Hanly, it is not Kant's critical idealism, but critical realism that is most in line with Freud's thinking. For the critical realist, the truth, the objective view of the world, is within the reach of science. Truth is expanding, and it is only a question of time and development of methodology before the (definitive?) truth is established.

Hanly's arguments are partly empirical, Copernicus gave us a new world picture, and Galilei's observations confirmed its truth. As Freud said, what science cannot give us, we cannot get elsewhere. This is also the view of critical idealism, and we are convinced that Kant would have approved Freud's reflection. The disagreement concerns whether absolute truth can be secured by scientific methods, or if we have to accept limits to absolute truth. Are we crossing an epistemological border in speaking of definitive truth?

For Hanly, the disagreement between Kant's position and his own:

> … is about whether psychoanalysis has deepened our knowledge of the reality of human nature or whether psychoanalysis enables us to know only a phenomenological façade of our real being because the reality of human nature remains hidden from us by our own subjective conditions of knowing it. Critical realism has abandoned the transcendental while Kantian critical idealism retains it as an object of faith beyond realistic common sense and scientific knowledge in its ontological distinction between the knowable phenomenal world and the unknowable noumenal world. [See this issue, p. 310]

Again, Hanly uses the advancement of science (psychoanalysis) as a proof for his position, accusing Kant of not accepting that "psychoanalysis has deepened our knowledge of the reality of human nature." Does Hanly really believe that in due time psychoanalysis will be able to formulate the ultimate and definitive truth about the human mind? Or is he speaking of a different truth concept? The truth is the realistic, common sense view, based on contemporary scientific knowledge. Scientific developments in nuclear physics and astronomy the last hundred years can serve as illuminating examples of how truth as conceived of by realism has to be revised following new methods of observation. Hanly rejects Kant with his "ontological distinction between the knowable phenomenal world and the unknowable noumenal world." However, we understand Kant very differently. While Hanly seems to have his own interpretation of Kant – and to us his reading seems conventional – we have been inspired by Allison's authoritative reading of Kant in which the epistemological

position of critical idealism is understood as a critical project rather than an ontological one. Even though we state this very clearly in our article, Hanly does not seem to take notice of this modern reading of Kant – unfortunately.

Nor does Hanly take notice of the differences between Kant's epistemological and Freud's psychological project that we have emphasized. To be sure, his discussion goes beyond our paper. We had a more limited aim—not to demonstrate or argue for a general concordance between Kant and Freud/Bion. With his epistemology, Kant attempted to secure the possibility of true and exact (that is, scientific) knowledge via logic, having deemed both "naïve" realism and "pure" idealism insufficient. Thus, he arrived at his transcendental or critical idealism. We have the impression that Hanly's reading transforms Kant to a pure idealist. Kant's project, however, was to go beyond subjectivism and empiricism in order to establish a rational and scientific epistemological position.

Freud, and Bion on his shoulders, pursued a quite different project: to understand the development of human thought. They both relied on Kantian ideas in developing their theories. Freud sketched a model in the last chapter of *Interpretation of Dreams*. Bion applied elements of Kant's system to Freud's sketch, and worked out a psychological theory about the development of thinking. His point of departure is threefold: the child's *basic needs*, its *inborn mental capacities*, and its *tolerance of frustration* when needs are left unsatisfied. The core of his model is the hungry child not finding the expected breast, i.e. being confronted with a frustrating reality. If this frustration is tolerated, the result is a thought of being fed. This process has a basis in earlier experiences, where the child has found the breast and formed a satisfying conception of being fed. "The expected breast" is in Bion's terminology a preconception, existing *a priori*. But it is not (yet) a concept, and we may ask whether Bion intended it to match Kant's *a priori* categories. At any rate, it is an element in his theory of the development of thinking, playing its part in the child's encounter with reality. That is also the case with "O," connoting the unknowable; the ultimate truth about the session or the patient. It is an element in his conception of the analytic session and the analytic patient. It certainly has an unmistakable

Kantian flavour, but again we have to ask whether he intended it to match *das Ding an sich*.

In our view, Bion did not aspire to be a Kantian philosopher, no more than did Freud. However, he was clearly inspired by Kant in his psychoanalytic conceptualizations.

To return to the big picture, our epistemological standpoint largely overlaps with Hanly's. A statement of his helps illustrate our agreement: "Critical realism as an attitude of clinical enquiry supports a steady psychoanalytically informed questioning of the objectivity of our observations of our patients … " (p. 307). We fully agree. As analysts we must continually reflect upon and enquire about our objectivity. However, we depart from Hanly's view on trusting empiricism. At the end of our article we pointed out how a Kantian epistemology – which can be seen as a middle position between empiricism and subjectivism/constructivism – can explain why modern empirical research does not usually impress psychoanalysts.

Hanly's response to our comment on the Proust example amply illustrates our disagreement. Because we have no "evidence" within Proust's novel that M. de Charlus had an inclination to see "homosexuality in characters in whom little or none was to be found," Hanly concludes that we do not need to concern ourselves with questioning the fact. For us it is self-evident that we can question "facts," even if the author himself has not done so. In our opinion, psychoanalysis – with a modest epistemology inspired by Kant – is and will remain a hermeneutics of suspicion.

Erik Stänicke
University of Oslo
Department of Psychology
Postboks 1094 Blindern
0317 Oslo
Norway
erik.stanicke@psykologi.uio.no

Anders Zachrisson
Anton Schjøths gate 18
0454 Oslo
Norway
anders.zachrisson@psykologi.uio.no

Arne Johan Vetlesen
University of Oslo
Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas
Postboks 1020 Blindern
0315 Oslo
Norway
a.j.vetlesen@ifikk.uio.no

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Core Concepts in Classical Psychoanalysis: Clinical, Research Evidence and Conceptual Critiques

By Morris N. Eagle. London and New York: Routledge, 2018. 318 pp.

Richard C. Fritsch

To cite this article: Richard C. Fritsch (2020) Core Concepts in Classical Psychoanalysis: Clinical, Research Evidence and Conceptual Critiques, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 347-354, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1729004

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1729004

Published online: 18 Mar 2020.

Volume LXXXIX, Number 2

BOOK REVIEWS

CORE CONCEPTS IN CLASSICAL PSYCHOANALYSIS: CLINICAL, RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND CONCEPTUAL CRITIQUES. By Morris N. Eagle. London and New York: Routledge, 2018. 318 pp.

Morris Eagle has made a significant contribution to the critical literature of psychoanalytic concepts with his book *Core Concepts in* ***Classical*** *Psychoanalysis: Clinical, Research Evidence and Conceptual Critiques.* The "Classical" is emboldened to highlight that the concepts he reviews are derived from Freudian metapsychology that lean heavily on the structural model, though other perspectives on these concepts are usefully included. This book complements his book *From Classical to Contemporary Psychoanalysis; A Critique and Integration* (2011) which has a similar organization. Together, these two books are, from my perspective, essential reading for all students and especially teachers of psychoanalytic concepts, theoretical and applied. One does not have to agree with all of Eagle's conclusions to find extraordinary value in the depth, erudition, and scholarship that he lovingly devotes to psychoanalytic theory.

The premise of the book is conceptually straightforward. Eagle identifies four concepts that are central to classical psychoanalytic theory and then in a spectacular display of scholarship, reviews the empirical research evidence and to a lesser extent evidence from other sources, on the concepts which is then followed by conceptual critiques that clarify from his point of view, if the concept should be preserved, modified, or discarded. The four concepts are unconscious process, the Oedipus complex, inner conflict, and defense. His companion book has chapters examining transference, countertransference and projection and projective identification. This review will focus on his critique of classical concepts but if readers are stimulated by this approach, I highly recommend that both books be read, lest one grumble that one's favorite concept is not included.

Psychoanalytic theory, as we know, has been for the most part derived from the clinical situation. It was Freud's genius to be able to move from the logical positivistic orientation of his peers to develop a science based on his interactions with patients (and his own mind). Psychoanalysis has always lived at the cross-section of the subjective with the observable. The advantage of this approach has been the development of a perspective on human functioning that is unparalleled by any strictly nomothetic (that is norm based) empirical approach. The disadvantages, are also considerable: issues of validity and generalizability of the "truths" uncovered by this method of investigation are well known. That psychoanalytic truths are derived from the psychoanalytic method which is essentially different from the hypothetical deductive method of natural sciences troubles analysts to varying degrees.

This book is Eagle's attempt to persuade his psychoanalytic colleagues and others interested in psychoanalysis that we should not be afraid to look dispassionately at even our most valued concepts to see if they are supported by available evidence beyond the consulting room. Of course, this attitude of looking to discover what is true rather than looking for what one expects to find, is the same attitude that is the hallmark of the psychoanalytic encounter. As one of my teachers, E. James Anthony told us, one does not look for the Oedipus complex, one is shocked to learn of its existence in the patient's mind. James meant that one is surprised to find the particular configuration of love and hate and competition and possessiveness around which a particular patient organizes his or her relationships, and the depth and power of this configuration is shocking when the patient and analyst discover it. Eagle wants us to treat our beloved concepts with the same clear minded, mostly neutral but highly invested, brave attitude that one takes to the clinical situation to find out what is so, even if the results sometimes are surprising and upsetting.

This brief review cannot do justice to the depth of Eagle's comprehensive and integrative efforts to examine each of these core concepts. My experience of the breadth of Eagle's scholarship and the lucidity of his writing had me fruitfully revisit many concepts and theories that I have not thought of deeply since my days as a candidate trained in a mostly classical institute. It is Eagle's talent to both assume the reader knows something about these ideas while deepening this knowledge.

Reading Eagle's work allowed me to reflect on how much or how many of these classical notions still inform my clinical work, how many I have mostly jettisoned in a public way but still find useful in working with a particular person or even more narrowly at a particular moment, and how many others have ended up in my idiosyncratic dust bin of history. Readers can follow along with Eagle and make the same personal decision tree about which elements of which concepts they have retained, modified, or rejected.

Since Eagle finds the least support for the classical notion of the Oedipus complex, it may be informative to focus on the method he uses to evaluate it and reach one of his conclusions. Eagle reviews Freud's theory of the Oedipus and its relationship to development, mind formation, and mate selection. Suffice it to say that from my reading, it is a comprehensive, accurate, and very digestible summary of the classical view of the Freudian Oedipus complex and consuming it would benefit any student of psychoanalysis who has questions about this complicated biological/psychological/sociological position. It also reminded me that the current climate, which questions the equation of biological sex = gender, renders the conflict of love for the same sex parent and rivalry with the opposite sex parent already problematic. However, this is not the direction Eagle takes. Instead he examines evidence that either supports, calls into question, or rejects the basic Freudian Oedipal situation and its resolution.

The classical position is that the Oedipus complex is the pivotal stage in the evolution of the unfolding of infantile sexuality where the source of pleasure found in phallic stage is related to incestuous wishes toward the same sex parent and aggressive wishes towards the rival. As Eagle understands it, sexual desires are primary in this schema and the aggressive urges are secondary, related to the frustration of the incestuous urges. Intense conflict between the sexual and aggressive aspects of this complex as they relate to the motivation to resolve it (castration anxiety), and the means of accomplishing a resolution (identification with the rival parent) within the presence of a universal incest taboo as evidence that supports the universality of the incestuous wishes, drive the complex as Freud proposed it.

The foundation for the Oedipus is the assumption or, from Eagle's point of view, the fiat, that incestuous wishes are universal aspects of human development. But is there evidence for universal incestuous

wishes? To foreshadow a bit, Eagle does not find much if any support for the presence of universal incestuous wishes and with this bathwater (or is it the baby?) goes most of the associated elements of Oedipus complex including the primacy of motivations derived from sexuality and aggression, the formation of gender identity, the superego, and the source of neurotic conflict.

Eagle sets out eleven "arguments" for the validity of universal incestuous wishes and one by one, dismantles these arguments. Some of this dismantling comes in a critique of the logic for the argument, some draw on evidence from physiology and experimental social and developmental psychology, and some (though less) from clinical material. This chapter reads like an extended critical essay, in which Eagle sets out to convince skeptical analytic readers they are maintaining an illusion and this illusion negatively influences what is heard and what is interpreted in the consulting room. Here is a snapshot of some of his rhetoric that he marshals to persuade the reader.

The first argument for the presence of universal incestuous wishes is "That there would be no need for a powerful incest taboo were it not for the existence of equally powerful incestuous wishes" (p. 98.) This was one of Freud's original arguments. It is understandable how this logic developed as there is considerable cross-cultural evidence of incest taboos and Eagle also finds support for castration anxiety associated with the incest taboo.

Eagle asserts that there are more parsimonious and empirically supported explanations for the incest taboo and castration anxiety than the fear of parental retaliation for incestuous and murderous intentions. One argument against the link between universal incest taboo and universal incestuous urges is to suggest that incest taboo is there to reinforce incest avoidance, not to control incestuous wishes. That is, the result of incest is bad for the species which means the species develops mechanisms to avoid it. This moves the observation of the incest taboo from a dynamic formulation that signals the prohibition of a desired but forbidden act to the phenomenology of the universal uneasiness and avoidance of such an act. Eagle also shows that simply because there is a strong discomfort (that is the phenomenology of avoidance and discomfort) does not mean the act is desired. He quotes Pinker who states, "By this reasoning, we may conclude that people have an unconscious desire

to eat dog feces and stick needles in their eyes."[1] In other works, if A (incest wishes) then B (incest taboo) but if B not necessarily A.

What follows this initial rejection of the positing of universal endogenous incestuous wishes is a detailed elaboration of more arguments and the presentation of an amazing array of data from disparate sources that minimally calls into question and maximally calls for abandonment of the Freudian version of the Oedipus complex as the central organizing feature of the development of the mind and the source of neurotic conflict. He also examines other versions of the Oedipal complex that do not require the presence of incestuous wishes, such as the presence of triangulated relations, related to competition, rivalry and possessiveness; that is, object relationally derived triangularly. And while these have greater empirical support, they are, in his view, watered down versions of the Oedipus and should be given a new name.

To provide a sample of his unequivocal position regarding the need for change, here is one of Eagle's conclusions:

> The relinquishment of the Oedipus complex as the central factor in the development of neurosis, gender identity superego development and mate choice and its replacement by an emphasis on the issues of differentiation and separation individuation raises questions that need to be addressed regarding the role of sexuality in a wide range of psychopathology. It also raises questions regarding the "proper" role of sexuality in psychic life and its interactions with other motivational systems that need to be addressed. [p. 146]

That is a mouthful of conclusions for any psychoanalyst with classical leanings to swallow. However, I believe it is important for all analysts to chew on them.

Eagle similarly attends to three other classical concepts and not surprisingly, calls into question the classical formulation for the dynamic unconscious, defenses, and inner conflict. Eagle advances the role of early experience, primarily but not necessarily limited to, early caretakers over and even opposed to the role of endogenous, preprogramed (that is instinctual) drives, and unconscious phantasies. For Eagle, the

[1] Pinker, S. (2009). *How the Mind Works.* New York and London: W.W. Norton, p. 456.

id, as seen as a bubbling cauldron of pleasure seeking sexual and sexualized urges as well as aggressive urges, is not supported by the existing literature. That is, if the pleasure principle related to drive discharge has been replaced as the principal source of motivation by attachment seeking object relational motivations, these other classical concepts need amending, substantial revision, and different appreciation as well. However, unlike the Oedipus, Eagle finds these concepts supported, albeit in revised form.

One reason I valued reading the research literature that Eagle reviews is his nuanced, I would say, psychoanalytic, perspective on experimental results. For example, he summarizes an interesting study on how physical sensations can affect the perception of another. Briefly, people holding a warm cup of coffee are more likely to judge the person presented to them as having a "warm" personality than those holding an ice coffee. The point of the experiment is that supraliminal stimuli prime behavior because there is an associative link present which is outside of the subjects' awareness, thus supporting the concept of minimally a descriptive unconscious and perhaps a dynamic unconscious. However, as I read this study I wondered about subjects holding a warm beverage who did not judge the target as warm. Perhaps, I wondered, they had a cold mother. I was pleased, as a kind of contrarian to the over generalizability of such studies to read Eagle's commentary, later in the chapter:

> In developing a fully adequate explanatory account, it would be important to have some understanding of why some subjects showed the effect and others did not. It is likely that one factor that accounts for these differences is the different associative meanings given to the stimuli to which the participants were exposed… For example is it not possible even likely, that some subjects had warm associations to iced coffee (e.g. hot summer days) and negative association to hot coffee (isolated from adults?). [p. 79]

This is not quite as deep as a warm holding mother and a cold unavailable mother but in the same domain of finding individual meaning, something all analysts affirm. The difference between my "cold mother" and his "hot summer days" may represent the difference between our willingness to move (or is it leap) from the descriptive to

the deeper dynamic. However, we are similarly cautious about generalizing from nomothetic research results. This can ironically be generalized to Eagle's overall keen ability to make use of evidence to help analysts question their prejudices. He applies the data from many sources to help us remember that while research data that does not support, say, universal biologically determined incest wishes, this does not mean the patient on your couch does not have incestuous wishes. He asks clinicians researchers and educators to have open minds about how best to organize the complex facts that are presented to an analyst by a patient and not interpret based solely on the ideas that classical analysis holds that the nuclear neurosis is the source of all patient's symptoms.

What then are the new concepts that Eagle proposes that need a similar critical review? Eagle believes that psychoanalysis should be based on how internal working models evolve individualistically and how conflicts within and between different motivational schemas lead to adaptive and maladaptive internal representations and behaviors. Defenses, seen as turning away from a painful consciously experienced situation, are retained, as is a descriptive unconscious. The crucible of development is the period of separation individuation and differentiation from internal models, which is a lifelong endeavor. Eagle has laid out his rationale and the sources of support for his position. Any critical review of Eagle's new fundamental concepts should be similarly comprehensive, though I wonder if others will be able to match Eagle's depth and breadth of knowledge from sources outside of psychoanalysis proper.

Was I persuaded? Yes and no. I find the critiques useful and provocative in a positive way and find it important that while some patients have incestuous wishes, not all do and pushing this on them or into them represents suggestion, not analysis. However, I was not convinced that the best way to listen and be with patients is to instead to adopt an attachment-based internal working model focused on separation individuation. This primacy of object relations is shared by many contemporary analysts, but many have also found ways to incorporate Freud's view of the unconscious life and death drives, sexuality, and aggression in ways that I find essential to understand the inner violence and sexuality of my patients. That is, Freud's discoveries have been incorporated rather than relegated to an outmoded past. As mentioned above I believe that Eagle is arguing that we should listen to our patients and understand them as

best we can, using our theory or theories, intuitions, and our interactions with them to help them develop in more mature adaptive ways. He is arguing for a different basis for our theories and he is convinced that with the move to his empirically, logically, and clinically supported concepts, we could do a better job than we are presently doing in our theorizing and by extension, in our clinical work. As the earlier quote indicated, Eagle suggests that the challenge now is to find how sexuality (and I would add, innate aggression) can be incorporated into a comprehensive theory that is not derived from questionable ontological assumptions I agree heartily with both this conclusion and the open minded attitude that underlies it. Our theories may not be derived from sources outside of the consulting room, but we should not be afraid to see how information from other sources support or call into question the theories we use. If we turn away from such challenges out of loyalty to our model rather than loyalty to the truth, then we ironically turn away from the revolutionary nature of psychoanalysis.

Eagle's contemporary critical analyses, as we all know, have a classical precedent. Freud, while quite protective of his "classical" model of the mind, reshaped his theories as data from clinical work and his experience in the world, showed him they needed revising or amending. The ongoing dialectic between what is believed to be true and what does not fit such a schema is essential for a science to develop. Eagle has provided us with a powerful tool to advance this cause. I strongly recommend this book to psychoanalytic innovators and conservators alike.

RICHARD C. FRITSCH (WASHINGTON D.C.)

CLIMATE CRISIS, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND RADICAL ETHICS. By Donna M. Orange. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017. 147 pp.

Donna Orange, a psychoanalyst and assistant clinical professor at the New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy is an internationally recognized teacher of psychoanalysis and humanistic ethics

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Climate Crisis, Psychoanalysis, and Radical Ethics

By Donna M. Orange. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017. 147 pp.

Rita K. Teusch

To cite this article: Rita K. Teusch (2020) Climate Crisis, Psychoanalysis, and Radical Ethics, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 354-361, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1729008

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1729008

best we can, using our theory or theories, intuitions, and our interactions with them to help them develop in more mature adaptive ways. He is arguing for a different basis for our theories and he is convinced that with the move to his empirically, logically, and clinically supported concepts, we could do a better job than we are presently doing in our theorizing and by extension, in our clinical work. As the earlier quote indicated, Eagle suggests that the challenge now is to find how sexuality (and I would add, innate aggression) can be incorporated into a comprehensive theory that is not derived from questionable ontological assumptions I agree heartily with both this conclusion and the open minded attitude that underlies it. Our theories may not be derived from sources outside of the consulting room, but we should not be afraid to see how information from other sources support or call into question the theories we use. If we turn away from such challenges out of loyalty to our model rather than loyalty to the truth, then we ironically turn away from the revolutionary nature of psychoanalysis.

Eagle's contemporary critical analyses, as we all know, have a classical precedent. Freud, while quite protective of his "classical" model of the mind, reshaped his theories as data from clinical work and his experience in the world, showed him they needed revising or amending. The ongoing dialectic between what is believed to be true and what does not fit such a schema is essential for a science to develop. Eagle has provided us with a powerful tool to advance this cause. I strongly recommend this book to psychoanalytic innovators and conservators alike.

RICHARD C. FRITSCH (WASHINGTON D.C.)

CLIMATE CRISIS, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND RADICAL ETHICS. By Donna M. Orange. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017. 147 pp.

Donna Orange, a psychoanalyst and assistant clinical professor at the New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy is an internationally recognized teacher of psychoanalysis and humanistic ethics

and the author of more than 10 books on ethics, hermeneutics, and psychoanalysis written over the past 35 years. Her most recent book, *Climate Crisis, Psychoanalysis, and Radical Ethics* (2017), addresses what she persuasively calls "the climate emergency" and is not only an exploration of the responses to the growing environmental emergency, but a strong and urgent call to action. Orange makes a powerful argument that our culture at large and each of us personally need to become aware of the dangers, challenges, and ethical demands associated with the climate crisis. She emphasizes a need for "a radical ethics" drawn from Levinas, grounded in the responsibility for the suffering other. Orange states, "I believe that only a radical ethics of the fundamental worth of every human life will make the difference we need in the climate crisis" (p. 120).

This relatively short book (147 pages) provides us with an effective and illuminating discussion of the climate crisis and its resulting massive social injustice. Orange writes with warmth and compassion; her book both sounds an alarm and explores why we have difficulty heeding it, addressing our deeply human tendency to avoid engaging with issues that are frightening, overwhelming, and inconvenient. Psychoanalysts engage with human suffering on a daily basis in their offices, and Orange calls upon them, upon us, to step out of the comfort of these offices and to actively assume responsibilities, such as demanding change from governments, living more simply, flying less, and caring for the earth and its inhabitants everywhere. Emerging from climate unconsciousness requires each of us to allow ourselves to be touched by the immense human suffering that climate change is already causing, and to understand our responsibilities and roles.

The book is divided into four chapters: 1. Climate injustice and business as usual: What is wrong with this picture? 2. Historical Unconsciousness and the invisible present: settler colonialism and chattel slavery, 3. Beyond evasion: psychoanalysis for the climate crisis, and 4. Radical ethics for our climate emergency.

In her introduction, Orange states that psychoanalysts "possess the intellectual and communal resources to take on this responsibility" (p. xii) and therefore are uniquely positioned to serve as moral leaders in confronting the climate crisis. She urges us to "address the defenses that keep us avoidant, and name the forms of traumatic shock that keeps us

too paralyzed to respond appropriately" (p. xiii). In Chapter 1, Orange outlines the scientific consensus on anthropogenic (human-caused) global warming, its already devastating consequences in the southern hemisphere as outlined in the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), and the even greater dangers that will occur. Orange cites many advocates who are on the forefront of combatting the climate crisis, or who have worked to bring this issue into public awareness. Orange puts global warming in a broader historical and philosophical context, charging we in the West with an outsized share of responsibility for climate change, and noting how the emergence of scientific rationalism and political individualism in 17th and 18th century Europe paved the way for the climate crisis, with claims of a radical split between mind and nature, and an emphasis on efficiency, technology, and egoism. As reason was prized, emotion and sensibility to the human and earthly environment was deemphasized.

Orange urges us to acknowledge the fact that the climate crisis affects us unequally. Those of us in the West still live mostly comfortably, (though the U.S. and Europe have, since the book was published, experienced devastating heat waves, floods, and wildfires). But it is areas already troubled with economic deprivations and political instability that have felt the effects most acutely. For many there will be no future, for others there will be terrible suffering, the consequence of the developed world's mindless self-absorption. Orange argues that we in the West need to make a commitment to work for "climate justice," which is an increasingly broad and significant movement, because, she states that "climate injustice is racism" (p. 86).

Her focus is on both energizing her readers to act, and on providing a psychoanalytic understanding of what prevents us from being more engaged with this issue. Her understanding of psychological trauma here is key. Orange reminds us that we need not be aware of a trauma for it to have a traumatizing effect, and that we are all in the grip of climate trauma. Trauma has an immobilizing effect, prevents us from reacting with appropriate panic to our current situation, and causes a narcissistic injury to our sense of self and entitlement. Trauma destroys our normal sense of time, creates feelings of disorientation, and impairs our ability to feel what is happening to us and around us, because it causes splitting, compartmentalizing, and double-mindedness, which

leads to a loss of solidarity and an inability to face our own responsibility. We feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem, which is so systemic and intractable in the face of gigantic economic interests that control national and state politics.

Orange ends Chapter 1 by outlining that we, as psychoanalysts, recognize that trauma can be overcome when it is acknowledged and witnessed, traumatic losses are mourned, and a new integration can take place. Often the most painful part in overcoming a trauma is working through the shame that the person has contributed to their own destruction. Orange suggests that this process of acknowledgment and mourning applies to the climate emergency, with one addition: she calls for repentance of our wrongdoing to others so that we can develop a humbler spirit.

In Chapter 2, "Historical Unconsciousness and the Invisible Present" Orange draws on Winnicott, Kohut, and Loewald to argue for an expansion of our capacities for empathy, concern, and responsibility for the other, to redress the neglect of our U.S. history of settler colonialism and crimes of chattel slavery, racism and destruction. To find a path to climate justice, Orange maintains that we need to see and feel these earlier injustices in a concrete way, because keeping our indigenous people invisible and our people of color abject has short-circuited our capacity to mourn these original crimes and prevents us from developing an ethic of responsibility and concern. To do this, we need to get to know their vast cultural and spiritual contributions (p. 56). She connects this to the conditions at our southern border, and her words are powerful:

> Building fences along our borders to keep refugees out so that we can continue to live in comfort means pretending that we have nothing to do with their misery. It means forgetting, in personal and collective Unconsciousness that our government massively supported the violent dictatorships, whose corrupt successors these refugees we call "illegal aliens" are fleeing. [p. 27]

Orange reminds us that psychoanalysis has a deplorable record in the face of moral emergencies. She cites in particular the collaboration of German psychoanalysts with the Nazi regime and, more recently, the

silence of organized psychoanalysis in the face of the U.S. use of torture in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. She reviews the few psychoanalytic works on climate change and revisits Harold Searles' prescient writing on the topic. Orange recommends Judith Anderson's website, Climate Psychology Alliance (CPA) as a way for clinicians to keep up on the latest science and to make contacts with concerned others (www.climatepsychologyalliance.org). Orange argues that psychoanalysis as a profession, and psychoanalysts as individuals, need to make three significant changes to embrace the ethical turn in the face of the climate crisis. The first is repairing a dissociative evasion, a "double mindedness" (p. 62).

Orange locates the reasons for our evasion of the magnitude of the climate crisis in our fears of vulnerability, and shame and fear of our responsibility. She asks us to understand in a deep way that a single-minded focus on the climate emergency is essentially a struggle for social justice. All struggles for social justice are connected, she says, and these struggles can take varied forms of engagement. The only relevant question is: where can I make a difference right now? Secondly, she advocates for a shift to more communitarian values, essential for our common future survival. She provides a philosophical and psychoanalytic discussion of egoism (close to the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism), and discusses shame and envy as motivating our compulsive and conspicuous consumption. Thirdly, Orange points out the isolation of our psychoanalytic community, even within itself. Our community of psychoanalysts, she advocates, should be joined into a Psychoanalytic Consortium. She suggests that we open our training institutes to those who cannot afford the cost of analytic training. She suggests that each analyst personally make a contribution and a change toward more communitarian values. This could take the form of becoming involved with the community, providing financial support for those in need, using public transport and living more simply. On an organizational level, we should make better use of Internet communication, work toward reducing the number of our national meetings and hold them in places that do not price out those who cannot afford the traditionally high costs.

Orange wrestles with the question of what kind of ethics we need to truly engage with the climate crisis. In accessible language she reviews three major philosophical schools of ethics (duty ethics, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics) and discusses their relevance for the climate crisis. In

addition to these better known models, Orange discusses deep ecology,[1] which claim that all species have equal worth (not prioritizing humans), Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a dialogical phenomenology, and Asian philosophies (ahimsa and non-possessiveness).[2] But the main focus for Orange is a discussion of Levinas' "Radical Ethics."[3] Levinas was a Lithuanian Jew, a philosopher and teacher of Talmud. He survived five years in a Nazi labor camp, many in his family were murdered in Lithuania, and he never forgot that French nuns hid his wife and daughter while he was imprisoned. Levinas states that the ethical relation is not between equals, but it is radically asymmetrical, i.e. from "inside that relation, as it takes place, the Other places an obligation on me that makes you more than me, more than my equal."[4] This Radical Ethics states that we have an irrecusable responsibility to the vulnerable and suffering other that does not go away just because it is less visible to us. Judith Butler, elaborating on Levinas, writes: "The other's precarious life, questions me, accuses me, persecutes me."[5] In this ethics subjectivity is transformed because only in the suffering of the other, and in my response, do I come into being. Orange concedes that Levinas' ethics can sound extreme, requiring dispossession, substitution, unconditional hospitality, politically perhaps requiring open borders. But Orange believes Levinas teaches us an ethics of care over an ethic of abstract distributive justice. She cites Simmons. who writes that we are living in an era of meta-ethical emergency because we are facing the looming destruction of a livable world.[6]

[1] See Macy, J. & Johnstone, C. (2012). *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We Are In Without Going Crazy*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

[2] See Schumacher, E.F. (1973). *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. New York: Harper & Row.

[3] See Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and Infinity: An essay on Exteriority*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press.

[4] Critchley, S. (2002). Introduction. In S. Critchley & R. Bernasconi (Eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, p. 14.

[5] Butler, J. (2004) Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence. London, New York: Verso, p. 109.

[6] Simmons, J. (2012) A relational model of anthropocentrism: a Levinasian approach to the ethics of climate change. In W. Edelglass, J. Hatley, & C. Diehm (Eds), *Facing Nature: Levinas and Environmental Thought*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press (p. 229).

Orange offers a number of concluding thoughts: "Radical ethics means that we cannot go on as we did yesterday, self-satisfied that we are doing our best, or shifting our personal responsibility onto "the system." Instead, she writes:

> The terrified faces of the destitute refugees, of those whose homes are being turned into desert or going beneath the sea, threatened by violence, forbid me to sleep comfortably and command me to respond. Every day I must allow them to persecute me, to pull me out of my comfortable life, to make me non-indifferent. For each of us, response will take its own form, depending on how and where we see the useless suffering and hear the cries, and on what our own health allows. [p. 129]

Orange suggests we look to the wisdom accumulated by those who have overturned apartheid, organized the civil rights movement, as well as to our partners in the indigenous communities so affected by climate devastation, to find our way.

I found this book deeply moving and helpfully disturbing. It made me ponder how I can and need to engage with the climate emergency and its ethical demand. I noticed that the websites of our various professional organizations do not reference the climate emergency. The American Psychological Association (apa.org) had a task force in 2009: Psychology and Global Climate Change—addressing a multi-faceted phenomenon and set of challenges, which included policy recommendations to guide climate action for individual psychologists and organizations (the full report is available at climatepsychology.us). There is now also the Climate Psychiatry Alliance (www.climatepsychiatryalliance.org) with the mission "to enable and embolden the American Psychiatric Association to continue to lead the psychiatric profession in acknowledging, researching, educating and taking decisive action on the various climate related challenges to mental health that exist in the US and globally." These are important steps, but clearly, we still have a long way to go to wake up from climate Unconsciousness.

I believe more and more of us need to hear Orange's urgent message and feel not only emboldened but impelled to take action. The Climate Psychiatry Alliance tells us: It is our professional duty to speak

up. We cannot remain silent when the disavowal of reality is leading civilization towards an inexorable existential crisis.

RITA K. TEUSCH, (CAMBRIDGE, MA)

DECOLONIAL PSYCHOANALYSIS: TOWARDS CRITICAL ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES. By Robert K. Beshara. New York: Routledge, 2019. 161 pp.

Reviewing a book when one is not fluent in its theoretical language runs the risk of missing or misunderstanding central aspects of the project and mischaracterizing its success or failure; it is also argues, perhaps, for the importance of trying to receive material outside our home territory. As the non-fluent reviewer of Robert K. Beshara's work, *Decolonial Psychoanalysis: Towards Critical Islamophobia Studies*, I felt compelled to read a book that is presented as the "only critical psychological study on Islamophobia in the United States," (back cover) as this work joins a strikingly slender body of work on Islamophobia in the psychoanalytic literature and therefore merits attention not only from those analysts who will be more familiar with the Lacanian ideas and interdisciplinary critical methods employed by the author. The double task is to comment on how well the book can communicate to a more general audience (a part, at least, of any book's mission) and what degree of obligation we have to grapple with new work on an issue—prejudice—that is of critical importance.

The author works within a theoretical frame that uses Lacanian ideas in dialogue with a wealth of post-modern theories many readers will not be familiar with, but *interviews* are at the core of this project and the reason I was drawn to review this book. The author created a demographic questionnaire, which was sent to civil rights and advocacy groups: "My target research participant was any adult (18 years or older) US Muslim, who has experienced Islamophobia and is willing to talk about it" (p. 28). He then conducted semi-structured interviews with nineteen research participants over Skype (p. 29). Chapters 4 and 5 contain detailed excerpts from these interviews that are analyzed using

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Decolonial Psychoanalysis: Towards Critical Islamophobia Studies

By Robert K. Beshara. New York: Routledge, 2019. 161 pp.

Daria Colombo

To cite this article: Daria Colombo (2020) Decolonial Psychoanalysis: Towards Critical Islamophobia Studies, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 89:2, 361-365, DOI: 10.1080/00332828.2020.1729009

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00332828.2020.1729009

Published online: 18 Mar 2020.

up. We cannot remain silent when the disavowal of reality is leading civilization towards an inexorable existential crisis.

RITA K. TEUSCH, (CAMBRIDGE, MA)

DECOLONIAL PSYCHOANALYSIS: TOWARDS CRITICAL ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES. By Robert K. Beshara. New York: Routledge, 2019. 161 pp.

Reviewing a book when one is not fluent in its theoretical language runs the risk of missing or misunderstanding central aspects of the project and mischaracterizing its success or failure; it is also argues, perhaps, for the importance of trying to receive material outside our home territory. As the non-fluent reviewer of Robert K. Beshara's work, *Decolonial Psychoanalysis: Towards Critical Islamophobia Studies*, I felt compelled to read a book that is presented as the "only critical psychological study on Islamophobia in the United States," (back cover) as this work joins a strikingly slender body of work on Islamophobia in the psychoanalytic literature and therefore merits attention not only from those analysts who will be more familiar with the Lacanian ideas and interdisciplinary critical methods employed by the author. The double task is to comment on how well the book can communicate to a more general audience (a part, at least, of any book's mission) and what degree of obligation we have to grapple with new work on an issue—prejudice—that is of critical importance.

The author works within a theoretical frame that uses Lacanian ideas in dialogue with a wealth of post-modern theories many readers will not be familiar with, but *interviews* are at the core of this project and the reason I was drawn to review this book. The author created a demographic questionnaire, which was sent to civil rights and advocacy groups: "My target research participant was any adult (18 years or older) US Muslim, who has experienced Islamophobia and is willing to talk about it" (p. 28). He then conducted semi-structured interviews with nineteen research participants over Skype (p. 29). Chapters 4 and 5 contain detailed excerpts from these interviews that are analyzed using

Lacanian Discourse Analysis. The author is interested in both Islamophobia as experienced by his subjects and theories about Islamophobia. The former is more accessible than the latter, and I would argue that engaging with the former (the subjects' experiences) makes this book of enough value to the non-expert reader. Beshara quotes extensively and the words of his interview subjects is riveting. Beshara focuses on addressing what he identifies as "the under-theorization of subjectivity in Islamophobia studies" (p. 79) and part of his approach is to focus on people's subjective experiences. He quotes at length from interviewees responses; we hear parapraxes (p. 102), how people talk and feel about the signifier "Muslim" after 911 (p. 103) a woman discussing the "intersecting oppressions" of being female, African American, and Muslim (p. 105), how people grapple with the idea of being "just American" versus multiple other stigmatized identities, as Beshara queries and deconstructs "social identity categories" (p. 111). He quotes a subject saying, "I find it really hard to *be in the world* as a person and not an identity" (p. 111). There is a power, a punch to hearing people speak in their own words, and reading an analysis that so richly explores their words and worlds, in a variety of registers. While the registers and modes of analysis selected by the author to conduct and analyze these interviews are not mine, the words and thoughts provide a wealth of information and reports from people struggling with Islamophobia, and as such, provide a different entry point into prejudice that can be very valuable to any analytic reader.

Beshara's criticism of conceptual models in "mainstream social psychology" is that because it is "founded upon positivist grounds" and employs quantitative methods (p. 69), social psychology can reduce "a complex psycho-social phenomena, such as Islamophobia … to the level of the individual as pathology *qua* his/her mind, brain or behavior" (p. 69). So that "a reductionist move … has the (un)intentional effect of depoliticizing oppression" (p. 69). Psychoanalysis has battled since its inception with the competing goals of its positivistic and metapsychological roots and the inescapable limitations imposed by subjectivity and historical currents. Beshara writes:

> … I use psychoanalysis to critique "the other side of psychoanalysis" (Lacan 1991/2007), that is, the ideology of

> (counter)terrorism-Islamophobia/Islamophilia as a "master's discourse." However, I enhance my Lacanian ideology critique with a decolonial reading of psychoanalysis from the perspective and the interests of the damné (Mignolo 2007, p. 458). [p. 3]

The idea of thinking outside the hegemony of a dominant epistemology is one we find to some extent in relational thinking and in psychoanalytic modes that move away from a one psychology perspective; it is inherent in our debates about one versus multiple metapsychologies; and it comes alive in the treatment room. A PEP Web search reveals only few papers devoted to Islamophobia, with notable work done by Ad-Dab'Bagh and Akhtar. One can find more writing about other varieties of prejudice, mostly anti-Semitism. Does this apply to Islamophobia? Beshara's work pays careful attention to the interactions between theories about particular types of prejudice, against specific groups, and theories considering the underlying roots of all prejudice; intersectionality asks us to consider both the uniting themes and the disparate experiences of various groups. Certainly we need to expand our thinking and approaches both to prejudices of all kinds, and to particular prejudices of specific times. In this current political climate, this topic becomes (or should be) to even the most insulated reader (or specifically to such a reader), of central importance. Beshara writes: "In the forward to *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903/2003) characterizes the problem of the 20th century as 'the problem of the color line' (p. xli). If that is the case, what then is the problem of the 21st century? I would argue that it is *the problem of the color-blind*, which goes by many names: new racism, neo-racism, cultural racism, etc." (p. 2, italics in the original).

What is decolonial psychoanalysis? Beshara constructs this idea through a dialogue with his many discourses and sources. He builds upon Hook's notion of "postcolonial psychoanalysis" (p. 4) and draws from a multitude of theoretical and methodological approaches, of which the most central are ideas from Feminist theory, Lacanian thought, Said, Zizek, Foucault, and the fields of critical border studies and critical terrorism studies. Colonialism suggests the inevitable interlacing of authority with the definitions of who is other, with not allowing the subjectivities of people who have been outside this discourse.

Beshara is grounded in Edward Said's work on *Orientalism* and is rooted in Freud: "Freud *avec* Said provide us with a decolonial psychoanalytic praxis with how to attend to our secular wounds as besieged identities" (p. 47, italics in the original). The ways in which his idea brings together a set of theories that are themselves new to me (critical border thinking, critical terrorism studies) make it difficult to fully assess the status of his contribution in its own academic terms; but the goal, of opening up experiences of subjectivity in the crucible of prejudice, of understanding Islamophobia, in the net of language, personal identity, authority, and intelligibility is interesting and engaging.

This is an inescapably political work; Beshara uses feminist theory as one of his foundations and certainly believes that the personal is political. This book contains, for me as a reader, an unsettling combination of impenetrability (the Lacanian Figures) and absolutely provocatively invigorating ways to think about how we construct, contain, (mis)understand prejudice. The identifying of the position from which one perceives and theorizes (Feminist Standpoint theory) is a through line, and Beshara begins by describing himself as a "hybrid" (citing Bhabha on the concept), explaining: "I am writing this book as an Egyptian-Polish-American academic living in the United States (US) but who was born in and grew up in Egypt" (p. 1). He also locates himself temporally, as working in the context of the 2016 election and a section is entitled "Theorizing and researching Islamophobia in the age of Trump." Beshara's critical analysis on the language and ideas used in The War on Terror beginning in the early 2000s is the foundation for his book.

Questions about translatability, intelligibility, location of our native discourse are imbricated in the analyses the writer provides, and both trouble and inform the decisions I made to provide a review that, at best, can stimulate readers' curiosity and encourage engagement with a furthering of the author's interdisciplinary ambitions while acknowledging my "limited reading" of it. Reading this book for someone not well versed in Lacan and critical studies, creates the experience of being confused and alienated, uneasy in a new mode of discourse, unsettled in one's assumptions, in a state of imperfect knowledge, willing to work hard and worried whether this will result in enough (knowledge, understanding, critique) to provide a useful report. In her paper on translation, Birksted-Breen quotes Botella and Botella, "the very process of

translating can prove to be that of an eclaireur in the double sense of 'clarifying,' and of sending out on reconnaissance to explore an unknown terrain."[1] But as we attempt to grapple with the issues of prejudice in our field, I would argue that reading this book necessarily enacts what it demands that we necessarily be alive to, the ongoing mission to understand.

DARIA COLOMBO (NEW YORK, NY)

[1] Birksted-Breen, D. (2010). Is translation possible?. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 91(4):687-694., p. 690.