

A Routledge FREEBOOK

Object and Desire

Psychoanalytic Explorations



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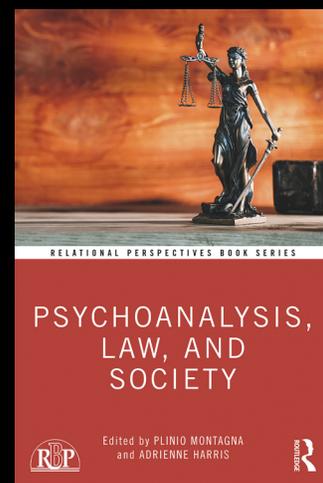
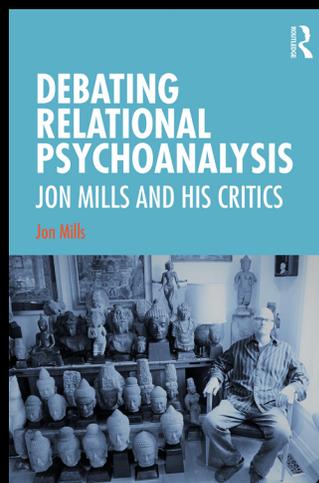
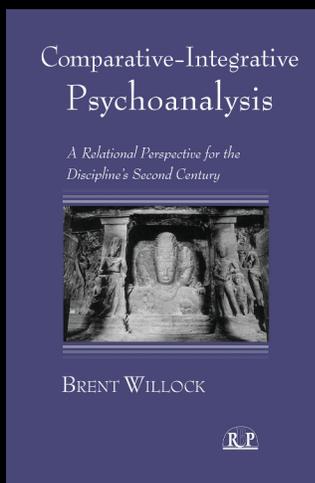
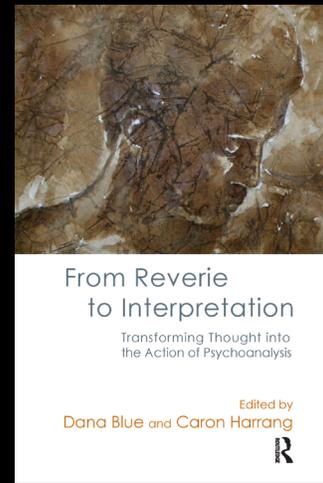
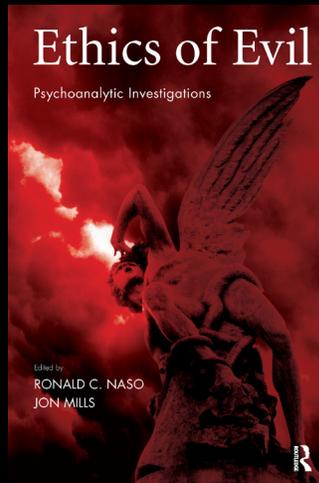
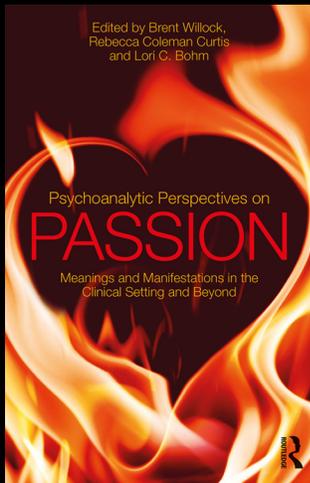


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About Adelphi's Programs in Psychoanalysis

The Postgraduate Programs in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (PPPP) at the Gordon F. Derner School of Psychology, Adelphi University, NY is an internationally recognized leader in the field of psychology and has been ranked fourth worldwide for psychology–psychoanalysis by the Center for World University Rankings (CWUR). In addition to its postgraduate certificate and advanced certificate programs in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, the Derner School offers certifications in:

- License Qualifying Programs in Psychoanalysis
- Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy
- Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy
- Couples Therapy
- Group Psychotherapy
- Postdoctoral Psychology Fellowships
- Psychoanalytic Supervision
- Psychodynamic School Psychology
- Trauma Treatment

Taken together as a whole, the programs embrace pluralism as well as an array of treatment modalities it inspires as part of its effort to promote greater awareness of the continuing relevance of psychoanalytically-informed treatments and their efficacy. PPPP's programs are unified by their view of the human condition as expressing a multiplicity of factors, both conscious and unconscious. Committed to excellence in education, training, and treatment informed by empirical research, PPPP seek to reduce emotional suffering and promote deeper understanding and well-being of individuals, families, communities, and, ultimately, society at large. Put concisely, Adelphi provides a welcoming community that is at once diverse and inclusive. Its programs encourage intellectual curiosity and respect the dignity of humanity.



Introduction: The Many Objects of Desire

The editors are pleased to publish *Object and Desire*, the 2nd annual volume showcasing scholarship from the faculty of the Postgraduate Programs at Adelphi University. The papers included here reflect the breadth and diversity of scholarly interests among faculty and highlight the continuing relevance of psychoanalysis as a treatment, science, and profound form of human understanding.

Central to psychoanalysis' preoccupation with mind, culture, and the ontology of the unconscious is the evocative role of objects and desire in human experience and social relations. Objects are what we covet and become the condition for satisfaction as the aim of desire. Yet they simultaneously become the very condition for dissatisfaction and suffering, so much so that they are imbued with projections, avoidance, and the cause of unhappiness. Although we largely consider objects to be people and their various forms of relatedness to ourselves and others, in psychoanalysis objects and desire acquire special significance in our psychic lives and the world at large. Objects seek to be desired just as we desire them, for psyche may be said to be the desire of the other's desire, the object of desiring itself as being in relation to lack. Just as we lack, we desire to fill the lack, the lacunae—the hole in being. Objects then become desirous even though they are subjects. Still, other objects fill the subject with subjectivity, with emotional possession, even if we are relating to absence, hence nothingness. Yet such nothingness is literally no-thing, but rather the subject of desire, of fantasy, in presence or absence. Desire yearns for objects even when missing, lost, or gone. And desire covets more even when populated and satisfied with the evocative world of objects. This may bring us to conclude that the essence of desire is being in relation to an absent presence. We want, we wish, we pine for objects, which become internalized into our interiority as internal objects, objects that we at once both resist and crave.

In this book our contributors address the many facets of objects of desire, from sexuality, attachment, and love to wealth, status, and power, such as the desire for money, greed, and entitlement. Still other subjects of desire are desires in marriage, intimacy, relationship, and the analyst's presence in mediating these longings. We also desire to improve upon our theorizing through comparative-integrative thought while preserving old paradigms in psychoanalytic history, as well as improving our contemporary theories, practices, and innovations in current times. And lastly, we desire objects that are often intangible, such as ideals and values important to a wishing humanity. Here the desire for collective ethical and environmental consciousness and the role of psychoanalysis in ecological sensibility, social justice, equality, and moral integrity are the objects of virtue in pursuing a better world.



Overview of the Chapters

In our first chapter, Amira Simha-Alpern and Alma Krupka Klein explore what desire really wants. Here they discuss the effect of the interaction between attachment and passion on mind and human behavior. They identify passion as a motivational force and a stylistic component of action encompassing a wide range of powerful feelings that are manifested in diverse settings across different domains and forms of engagement. The authors suggest that the specific interaction between the nature of one's attachment state of mind and the intensity of his or her passion colors the individual's ability to integrate attachment and passion, hence affecting adaptation throughout the lifespan. They argue that the relationships between attachment and passion are bi-directional and that high and low levels of passion can enhance or detract from one's life, depending on the context of one's attachment organizations and what one is looking to gain from human bonds. Individuals with insecure attachment styles are much less successful in integrating attachment and passion, while more secure attachment styles are more successful in achieving better integration, even in the face of developmental obstacles such as trauma and loss. The implications of attachment-passion configurations in both patient and therapist are discussed in the psychotherapeutic encounter where several case illustrations are offered.

In chapter two, Ronald C. Naso presents the psychoanalytic treatment of a man who perpetrated a serious financial crime. Unlike many white-collar criminals who are overly narcissistic and antisocial, the patient appeared modest and principled. However, analytic exploration revealed a personality structure animated by disavowed entitled expectations and a childhood that combined insecure attachment with morally corrupt influence. The confluence of these conditions and influences made selective transgressions permissible because he never felt obligated to face the striking disparities in his life, especially between the principles he endorsed and the kinds of malfeasance he engaged in. The implications of these findings offer a broadened psychoanalytic view of integrity, one that views it as complex and dynamic, encompassing processes that are both volitional as well as those that are unconscious and intrinsically linked to character. The paradox of integrity is that it involves both openness to and willful foreclosure of alternatives and new possibilities. Never completely the product of reflection or of fixed dispositions, integrity involves the integration and creative reworking of unconscious identifications, motives, norms and new learning into actions that comport with one's sense of self as an ethical actor. Unfortunately, as Naso shows, these very same processes lie at the core of evil.

Relying on Winnicott, Carl Bagnini begins his chapter with a theoretical discussion of



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reverie and utilizes a clinical vignette illustrating his emotional experience in an initial couple consultation. In his experience-near approach, the internal world of the couple is revealed and made accessible by reverie and interpretation. A new understanding of the couple's emotional struggles is established once his reverie permits an unfolding of individual and couple projective processes, which is necessary for transformative potential. When reverie is sufficient, affective linking and creative thinking are possible. When therapists care about the couple's pain it reduces anxiety, allowing the couple to pay attention to the therapist's ideas about their dynamic situation. Ideas can reduce preoccupation with conscious beliefs and lift unconscious material into conscious thought. Ideas decrease the hold that conscious thoughts have on the couple's repetitious and stuck interactions. Novel thinking about underlying circumstances makes distortions and avoidances plausible, as does thinking about thoughts help explain how unconscious anxieties and defenses prevent understanding. As the couple dramatizes disturbed modes of relating, the author links this to their possible origins. Bagnini shows how linking may take the form of confrontation, interpretation, use of a metaphor, and/or a storyline constructed to illustrate the repetition of blind spots. Here he demonstrates how these affective processes of reverie in the initial consultation opens up potential space for healing.

In the next chapter, Brent Willock launches Part One of his book, *Comparative-Integrative Psychoanalysis*, by exploring innovation and tradition in the evolution of psychoanalytic thought. Heinz Kohut was concerned by how old ideas can inhibit new perceptions and conceptualizations. This chapter complements that worry by positing that excessive commitment to *new* explanatory models and to innovation can also constitute surprisingly powerful obstacles to understanding that which continues to be valid and valuable in *pre-existing* bodies of knowledge. Support for this principle is provided by detailed reflections on a series of three dreams provided by Kohut in his final book. Greater awareness of these problems that have long plagued psychoanalysis will enable us to be less tripped up by their unconscious machinations. This liberation, in turn, will facilitate our becoming better clinicians and theoreticians.

In chapter five, Jon Mills describes his latest book, *Debating Relational Psychoanalysis*, as an attempt to provide an historical record in one volume of the debates that had taken place for nearly two decades on his critique of the relational movement, including all the responses from his critics. He further extends an olive branch to relational practitioners in the hopes that further dialogue may not only lead to conciliation, but more optimistically, that relational theory may be inspired to improve upon its



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he gives an historical overview of his critiques of the intersubjective, relational, and postmodern turn in psychoanalysis, or what we may generally call under the rubric of “contemporary” psychoanalysis today, including the controversy surrounding his critiques. Mills further examines the relational turn toward self-critique, which itself seems to be lacking in genuine critique. In an appeal encouraging new possibilities for advanced rigor and improvement in relational thought to materialize, he sketches out potential elements of the future of relational psychoanalysis it needs to address in order to bolster its theoretical foundations, clinical theory, methodology and practice, and technical considerations it may wish to revisit as the relational school moves forward in innovation and reform.

In our final chapter, Elizabeth Allured addresses her desire for ecological awareness and action in order to subvert our global climate emergency caused by the Anthropocene. The societal shift toward justice, in all of its permutations (social justice, racial equality, class mobility, equal educational opportunity, and sexual choice, among others), has in some ways preceded psychoanalytic theory on these themes. Analytic institutions have striven to catch up with leading edge movements that aim to heal inequalities and restore rights and recognition to the unseen, the unheard, and the forgotten. Many of the unseen have been dissociated or disavowed. Another injustice, the ongoing dysregulation of the nonhuman environment through human-caused climate change, has recently become a topic of analytic inquiry. This chapter is an attempt to understand the interplay of forces, both conscious and unconscious, that have led to the tragic unfolding of environmental crises and potential catastrophe within the nonhuman environment, our common and shared home. Psychoanalysis is uniquely positioned to offer a larger understanding of avoidance, competitive strivings, “othering,” and many other processes that are at play in this tragedy. The perspectives on nature and the role of humanity within it, as seen by founding analytic theorists, and more contemporary analysts, are discussed.

We hope you find these topics stimulating on the various objects of desire we encounter in self, society, the clinic, and our world and will continue to inspire reflection, critical thought, and scholarly colloquy.

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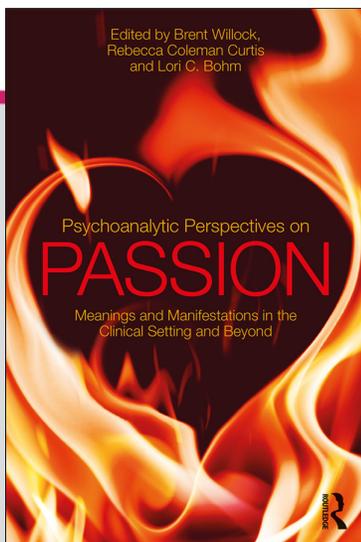


CHAPTER

1

WHAT DO I REALLY WANT?

PASSION AND ATTACHMENT



This chapter is excerpted from
Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Passion
edited by Brent Willock, Rebecca Coleman Curtis and
Lori C. Bohm

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Excerpted from *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Passion*

Much has been written in the psychoanalytic literature about three interrelated, fundamental aspects of human experience: sexuality, aggression, and attachment (Diamond, Blatt, and Lichtenberg, 2007; Eagle, 2013). From infancy on, they form a multidirectional matrix, mutually influencing each other in configurations that shift over the life cycle. Less has been discussed about passion as an independent construct. Frequently, psychoanalytic thinking identifies passion with sexual desire. It seems, however, that passion encompasses much more than erotic desire or romantic ardor. It is a strong motivational force and characterological attribute that includes a wide range of powerful feelings manifested in diverse settings and forms of engagement.

In the absence of a broader psychoanalytic conceptualization of passion, we borrowed insight from closely related psychological domains such as temperament theory. Much like passion, temperament is the stylistic component of behavior that captures how a behavior is manifested. Temperament is a biologically based constellation of inborn traits that are relatively stable and determine a person's behavioral style and way of experiencing and reacting to the world. Although there is no consensus on what constitutes temperament, it is generally agreed upon that it is a core aspect of personality that operates across domains (affect, cognition, motor activity, and interpersonal/social behavior) or situations and is closely linked to adaptation throughout the lifespan (Goldsmith et al., 1987). Most aspects of temperament are not immutable. Their adaptive valence is determined more by the context of "goodness of fit," otherwise known as "match" and "mismatch" with the environment, rather than by intrinsic value (Goldsmith et al., 1987). Temperament can be broadly classified as expansive or restrictive/inhibiting – dimensions akin to the notion of high and low levels of passion respectively. Affects and behaviors associated with various temperament clusters can be adaptive or maladaptive; the former enhancing success and sociability, the latter making the individual unreliable, uncooperative, or vulnerable to affective episodes (Akiskal et al., 2000, 2005a, 2005b; Evans and Rothbart, 2009; Kwapil et al., 2013; Walsh, Brown, Barrantes-Vidal, and Kwapil, 2013).

Passion has received a great deal of attention in social psychology, where Vallerand (2008) defined it as "a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that one likes . . . finds important, and in which one invests time and energy. These activities come to be so self-defining that they represent central features of one's identity" (pp. 1–2). Vallerand posits two types. Harmonious passion is motivation to pursue an activity out of personal, authentic volition not contingent on gain or



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outcome. It is within the individual's relative control and is flexibly used in harmony with other needs and pursuits. Positive affects are experienced during the engagement and after. In obsessive passion, the urge to engage in an activity is uncontrollable, often pursued out of rigid persistence and dependency rather than freedom of choice. Individuals seem enslaved by it. Excitement and positive affects derived from the activity are short-lived, followed by negative feelings, especially shame and anxiety. Its consequences are often in conflict with other aspects of one's life. Although less adaptive than harmonious passion, it is more adaptive than no passion at all.

Vallerand's model can be applied to psychoanalytic libidinal theory. Much like passion, drives push us from within and are sources of both vitality and destruction. Although passion is not identical to aggression or sexuality, it is most likely fueled by the two. Similar to harmonious passion, non-hostile aggression is used in the service of self-preservation, sexual competition, territoriality, protection of the young, interpersonal warmth, creativity (Smith and Carisson, 1986), and agency (Mitchell, 2002). Like aggression, passion is closely associated with energy, vitality, and ambition. Without it we remain passive, only responding and thus being shaped by external forces (Mitchell, 2002).

Attachment, the third leg in the tripod of human experience, has received a great deal of attention over the last few decades. Attachment theory's fundamental premise is that infants learn and internalize ways of relating through earliest experiences with primary caregivers. These internal working models are formed as children interact with specific interpersonal environments to maximize safety and minimize anxiety. These relational strategies function as self-protective tactics to elicit care and comfort. They are adapted to the expectancy of the attachment figure's availability as a safe haven in times of distress and a secure base for exploration. The hallmark of secure attachment is confidence in the caretaker's consistent availability and sensitive responsiveness, providing the infant a foundation for intimacy and autonomy through attentive, nurturing caretaking. Early neglect, maltreatment, loss, separation, and threat of separation often result in insecure attachment – an adaptation to inconsistent responsiveness or absence of sensitive caretaking (Hesse, 2008).

Research delineated four major attachment organizations among children: secure (reaction to consistently responsive parent); avoidant (reaction to consistently unresponsive parent); resistant/ambivalent (reaction to inconsistently responsive



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parent); and disorganized (reaction to disorganized parent); and four corresponding adult attachment categories: secure-autonomous, insecure-dismissing, insecure-preoccupied, and disorganized (Hesse, 2008).¹

Massive attachment research over the past 20 years expanded our intuitive understanding that a sense of safety provides more than emotional security. Internalized interpersonal patterns in the formative years become incorporated into the brain's neural structures, shaping the ways we relate to others and our sense of self (Bowlby, 1973), sense of efficacy and mastery (Tronick, 2007), resilience, adaptability, self-regulatory efficacy (Schore and Schore, 2008), balance between self-regulation and interactive/mutual regulation, ability to recover or repair ruptures (Tronick, 2007; Beebe, Lachman, Markes and Bahrck, 2012), and ability to mentalize one's affective states and interpret those of others (Fonagy and Target, 2007).

Attachment and passion can be successfully integrated, segregated, or confused (Eagle, 2013). Sexual passion can bring people together; attachment keeps them together. If passion is compulsive, too intense, toxic, or thwarted, attachment bonds, more often than not, are in jeopardy. The frequent schism between attachment and sexuality/passion, or love and desire, has long been recognized in psychoanalysis. Mitchell (2003) attributed it to difficulties integrating opposing needs for security and excitement. Security, he suggests, leans on predictability and familiarity, which is opposed to the quest for novelty that fuels passion and excitement. Eagle (2013) believes this schism is not inevitable. He asks why "some people show relative success in integrating love and desire and others relative failure" (p. 114). Insecurely attached adults have greater difficulties shifting from their primary attachment object, he suggests. Their partners become parental substitutes – a parental equation – rather than a sexual figure.

Adding our own perspective on interactions between attachment and passion, we argue this relationship is bidirectional and that high and low levels of passion can enhance or detract from one's life, depending on the context of individuals' attachment organizations and what they are looking to gain from human bonds.

Case illustrations

The following cases demonstrate only four possible configurations of attachment organization and level of passion.



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Low passion-insecure (preoccupied) attachment²

Twenty-five-year-old Michelle entered therapy seeking relief from longstanding anxiety and depression, most recently centered on her inability to find a husband. She often spoke of feeling lonely, sad, and, less frequently, envious and hateful with regard to her “ex” and her current dating life. Regardless of what she spoke, her affect seemed flat. Although she was not objectively unattractive, her lack of expression and affective engagement made her appear plain and dowdy. Beginning in early childhood, she experienced extreme social awkwardness, consistently demonstrating confusion reading emotional signals in herself and others.

Michelle was raised in a religious milieu that places much importance on getting married early. Marriage represents security, peer acceptance, and – for Michelle – independence from parents. Her one significant romance lasted 15 months. She used most of her session time to talk about her “ex,” particularly their breakup, relating the same events over and over. Although the ending occurred two years previously, she spoke about it as if it were recent, with vagueness about the sequence of events and the ex’s personality. All that was important was the way the relationship made her feel valuable. She read into his polite, well-bred manners evidence of love and care and seemed extremely confused as to his complacency with the relationship ending. It was the same with everyone else – her brother, her girlfriend, her colleague. Nobody had a name or description outside of how they made her feel special or devalued. Her fixation on finding a husband – a process that would ordinarily represent the epitome of passion – was miserably pursued as a rote exercise. She viewed herself as boring and believed young men were “repelled” by her. Without concrete, immediate evidence of interest from her date, Michelle felt rejected. She withdrew, which made her anxious and even less present. It was only when she occasionally spoke of her failure to establish and maintain relationships with other women that Michelle awkwardly demonstrated emotion, briefly appearing angry or despondent. She was always unsure whether she was accepted. Being with women was tedious – they talked primarily about themselves. She would easily feel slighted when they did not include her. The only time she ever felt they were paying attention was when she had a boyfriend. No wonder she ceaselessly spoke about him. Similarly, she felt certain she disappointed her parents, having not fulfilled their aspirations for her to “give them grandchildren.”

Michelle’s insecure attachment was not surprising given her childhood. Her mother



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suffered from depression, anxiety, and somatic complaints. She spoke of her mother's superficial "dating advice" and ineffectual dismissive efforts to comfort Michelle when things went poorly. Michelle's father appeared self-absorbed and intrusive. He frequently interrupted what she was doing to engage in long conversations, disregarding her needs, getting angry if she was not interested, calling her self-centered, unreliable, and disrespectful or retaliating with "silent treatment." Her mother usually apologized for her father's insensitivities, dismissing Michelle's feelings, saying: "He didn't mean it."

Raised by a malattuned mother who often confused her own needs with her daughter's and a narcissistically intrusive father, Michelle was unable to sustain a sense of self without utilizing the other's reflected image of her. Her engagement with her object world was passionless. She was chronically preoccupied with fear of abandonment and expecting inconsistent attunement. Having never experienced relationship security, she was unable to establish it romantically or in therapeutic encounters and use it as a base from which to explore passion and desire. We will return to Michelle when we discuss the therapeutic process.

High passion-insecure attachment

Don Draper, the protagonist of the popular television series *Mad Men* (Weiner, 2007–2014), is creative director of an advertising agency. His past is fraught with trauma, abuse, abandonment, and premature overexposure to sexuality. Born to a 20-year-old prostitute who died at his birth, the midwife named him Dick. Referred to as the "whore's son," he was forever a shameful reminder of his father's philandering – never wanted, never intended to exist.

Dick was raised on a farm by his abusive, alcoholic father and cruel, rejecting stepmother. The father was killed by a horse in front of his son's eyes when Dick was ten. He moved with his stepmother to his maternal aunt's house in Philadelphia – a brothel. There, in addition to experiencing abuse and neglect, Dick was exposed to overly stimulating adult sexuality and confusing loyalties. Flashbacks to childhood, often triggered by adult disappointments, are fragmented and intense, bearing the footprint of trauma. They invariably depict him observing adult interactions – frightening arguments and sexual encounters – ignored, dismissed, and demeaned. Trying to put the pieces together, he is left with nonsensical memories and underdeveloped self-reflective capacities fused with hypervigilance.

As a child, Dick receives care and affirmation only from accidental strangers. In the



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brothel, he is sent by his stepmother to the basement with a tattered blanket, sick and alone. A prostitute takes him to her room, nursing him back to health. She introduces him to adult pleasures. When this is found out, his stepmother beats him. The confusing coupling of soothing care with forbidden promiscuous sexuality is forever etched in his brain.

At 18, Dick runs away from this gloomy destiny, volunteering to serve in Korea. His service is cut short by an explosion – that he accidentally caused – during an enemy’s attack, that wounds him and kills his commander, Don Draper. Profiting from a moment of wartime confusion, he switches his identity to begin a new life as Don Draper, reinventing himself as an empowered, adored adult, unlike the frightened, rejected, helpless child he once was.

Don has a complex dismissing-avoidant attachment style. He desires independence, invincibility, control, and power. Childhood left him with an incessant lust for women that he can barely regulate. He resorts to sex and alcohol for self-soothing. His shallow attachments are void of intimacy, often exploitative (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Horowitz, Rosenberg, and Bartholomew, 1993; Connors, 1997). His self-disclosure is very limited, unaffected by the level of partners’ openness (Mikulincer and Nachshon, 1991). He often denies or camouflages needs to protect himself from disappointment (Dozier, 1990; Connors, 1997). When vulnerability and need overpower him, they are frequently followed by renewed defensiveness and quest for control. What makes it difficult for Don to stay away from others and deny his attachment needs is his chronic dysregulated, obsessive passion. On its upside, he is passionate about work, works long hours, and demands the same of employees. His energy and conviction enable him to seal a deal with almost any client.

Don is a gifted individual, able to transcend his past in many ways. Unfortunately, that past has shaped his adult character, leaving him deeply damaged in ways which make it impossible for him to completely transform his fate. High obsessive passion and insecure attachment sabotage his efforts. Unable to reciprocate love he receives, he is vulnerable to irreparable ruptures in all relationships. His intense dysregulation, inability to use interactive regulation, and incessant need for affirmation, coupled with mistrust, render his attempts at achieving security either temporary or ineffective.



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High passion-secure attachment³

Jeremy, a bright, energetic, highly successful, 32-year-old man, had a long history of unremitting depression, partially relieved by medications and two previous psychotherapies. His father, a charismatic, successful attorney, died after three years of battling cancer when Jeremy was five. A year later, his mother married his father's best friend, a mild-mannered owner of a moderately successful small business, whom Jeremy experienced as supportive and responsive.

From all accounts Jeremy's depression has a strong genetic load. It is, however, reasonable to assume that early attachment trauma contributed. His formative years were overshadowed by sharing attention with a younger sibling and being cared for by a mother whose maternal sensitivity and responsiveness were probably compromised by looming loss and consequent mourning.

Jeremy, a high-passion, "work hard/play hard" individual, has diverse interests. He throws himself into activities with excitement and vigor, including high-risk pursuits that sometimes put him in danger. Graduating from two prestigious academic institutions, he now pursues a meaningful career that matches his intellectual depth, as well as his thrill-seeking, adventurous preferences. His developmental path was always an ongoing roller coaster. The demands of balancing opposing quests for autonomy, self-definition, and exploration with relatedness, intimacy, and longing for mentorship and care were challenging. Normal adolescent competitiveness, rebellion, and asserting empowerment, influence, and agency took intense forms that occasionally put him at odds with authorities and peers who felt threatened by his forcefulness, helpless against his shrewdness.

Jeremy enjoys an active social and romantic life with a healthy balance between attachment and separation, relatedness and self-definition (Blatt and Levy, 2003). He shows strong initiative with others, yet easily engages in solitary activities and is not particularly distressed during periods of separation. His wife, Karen, an intelligent, sensitive young woman, seems optimally supportive and understanding. She is Jeremy's significant attachment figure. Their marital relationship is a safe base from which he can launch exciting, solitary explorations, and a safe haven when he needs comfort and care. Their marriage is challenged by his dark moods and need for novelty and excitement. Romantic feelings wax and wane. To the extent they are aware of them, marital difficulties are discussed with mutual recognition of reciprocal needs. He finds himself depleted from his intensive



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efforts at work and experiences powerful disappointments, inevitable in his competitive field. Given his passionate nature, these emotional states are acutely experienced. Self-soothing requires tremendous effort. Most times he is able to recover using his internal resources, but often he also reaches out, primarily to Karen, but to family members and friends as well, for interactive regulation.

Jeremy is secure-autonomous in spite of the fact that his early caregiving was far from ideal or free of attachment crises. He values attachment figures and experiences, describing them in a coherent, well-integrated, collaborative, balanced manner without excessive idealization or devaluation. He articulates pervasive childhood adversities in a contained manner and is very open about their affective implications. Jeremy matches the “earned secure” profile, having risen above a difficult relational childhood but still paying a toll in terms of depressive symptomatology (Pearson, Cohn, Cowan, and Cowan, 1994; Paley, Cox, Burchinal, and Payne, 1999). He mourned his father in previous therapies and “earned security” through self-reflection and reconstructions of childhood memories (Saunders, Jacobvitz, Zaccagnino, Beverung, and Hazen, 2011). Complex interpersonal interpretative functions (Fonagy and Target, 2007) enabled him to formulate reasonable explanations for his mother’s neglect rather than confusing it with lack of love. He is sympathetic to the circumstances that forced her to work, making her less available. High harmonious passion enabled him to find ways to sublimate childhood anger and frustration into forces for survival and transcendence. His persistent, high-powered nature earned him security by “sheer will” rather than parental scaffolding (Roisman, Padrón, Sroufe, and Egeland, 2002).

Low passion-complex secure attachment⁴

Matthew, a tall, slightly overweight, Hispanic teenager, presented for therapy at age 11 after a trip to the emergency room for a panic attack. He had been experiencing anxiety and angry outbursts at home and school, directed toward teachers and students. Called “fatso” and taunted with other derogatory remarks, he tended to keep to himself. His parents were mainly concerned he was spending more and more time in his room with video games and computer, and had few friends. In an effort to self-soothe, he was snacking almost constantly. He responded increasingly to attempts at intervention with these behaviors with angry outbursts.

Six months previously, to enhance their living situation, the family moved from the city where Matthew attended a small Catholic school with many minority students, to a huge, impersonal, suburban, mostly White, public school. Switching to a local



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Catholic school brought no relief. Similarly bullied, retaliating with aggression, he suffered disciplinary consequences. His mother's attempts to hold Matthew accountable for his behavior clashed with his father's attempts to "fix things," minimizing his son's suffering by racing to the school after every episode, trying to bail him out. These interventions neither solved the school issues nor altered their son's behavior. Matthew re-enrolled in his original Catholic school. The bullying and his aggressive behaviors ceased over time.

Matthew's father, a tough Hispanic from a single-parent, disadvantaged family, admits to difficulty getting in touch with or discussing his or others' feelings. He suffered a number of early traumatic losses and had a rough adolescence during which he acted out. He is proud that he turned himself around and now has a good white-collar job and a stable, family-oriented lifestyle. He doesn't want Matthew to make the same mistakes as him or learn the hard way. Matthew's mother comes from a large, close family, and has shared very little about her upbringing. Almost all interpersonal activities Matthew engaged in were with the father, usually sports-related. He idealized his father, but seemed to miss having emotional depth in their interactions. Although Matthew expressed love of baseball and aspirations to play semipro, he did so in a passionless way, suggesting his involvement with sports was proximity-promoting behavior to maintain contact with his father and get his approval.

Matthew is judged secure because he valued attachment figures, narrating these experiences in a coherent, reasonably balanced manner. He turned to his parents at times of stress to provide safety and help him regulate. His parents had a strong, loving commitment to each other and family. They were reliably available during Matthew's childhood. As he began feeling overwhelmed by challenges inherent in his budding adolescence, he became increasingly unable to self-regulate. Reaching out to his parents no longer provided comfort. Despite their good intentions, his mother's over-reactive prodding and his father's overzealous encouragements proved overstimulating. Matthew was left feeling dysregulated, oscillating between outbursts of anger and inability to access his aggression adaptively when bullied.

Matthew presented with a complex attachment-passion configuration that was in a state of flux. His parents' difficulties in regulation and the mismatch in the mother-child and father-child units – which may have worked relatively well in early childhood – could not negotiate adolescent challenges. Matthew's low-passion temperament mismatched the family's gregarious nature and father's



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exuberant interest in physical activities. His parents' relatively high-passion characteristics contributed to their difficulty understanding his emotional life and needs that differed from their own. The adolescent aggressive surge and demands for autonomy destabilized the dyads and stimulated parental traumatic lacunae, introducing insecure attachment configurations into a previously secure structure.

Matthew's problems took over family life. They were all "walking on eggshells" so as not to set him off. We will return to Matthew when we discuss therapeutic process.

Passion and attachment in clinical practice

Attachment and passion have been discussed separately in clinical practice, mostly from the perspective of how patients' attachment organizations affect therapeutic process (Fonagy et al., 1996; Slade, 2000, 2008; Gullestad, 2003; Black, Gillian, Turpin and Parry, 2005; Wallin, 2007; Eagle, 2013). The following discussion attempts to expand on this literature, highlighting the contributions of attachment-passion configurations of both patient and therapist.

Patient's contribution

It is generally believed that patients' internal working models of attachment are recapitulated in the therapeutic relationship. Patients' expectations of therapists' sensitivity and availability resemble expectations developed toward original caregivers. As predicted by attachment theory, secure patients seem more comfortable seeking therapy, are more likely to commit themselves to the process, and usually report positive therapeutic alliance and treatment outcome. For them, the therapeutic process seems more even keeled, with fewer ruptures. The therapist is used more effectively as a safe base. Conversely, insecure patients vary in their ability to commit to the therapeutic process and experience more difficulties using the therapist as a safe base (Fonagy et al., 1996; Slade, 2008; Eagle, 2013).

Although the patient's attachment organization does not define the therapeutic process, it informs it (Davila and Levy, 2006; Slade, 2008; Mallinckrodt, 2010). We believe interaction between the patient's attachment organization and level of passion also plays a role. Passion accentuates inclinations predisposed by attachment style and colors therapeutic engagement. For example, although secure patients are likely to be committed to the process, those with high passion will likely embark on the endeavor with greater enthusiasm and be more



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affectively present and animated. Enactments are more likely as these individuals operate with greater spontaneity and freedom. Secure patients with low-level passion may be more contemplative; insight will more readily be gained through calm, steady dialogue. With compromised reflective functions, high-passion insecure patients will be more inclined toward acting out and extreme swings in the alliance than their low-passion counterparts. The following illustrations demonstrate interactions between patients' attachment organization and levels of passion in the therapeutic process.

Clinical illustrations⁵

Michelle, described above as having insecure-preoccupied attachment with low passion was difficult to engage in exploration and reflection. She resisted my attempts to connect, much less form an attachment. She told me she was okay talking to me only because it was my job to listen. Week after week, her passionless approach to therapy left me frustrated, struggling to maintain my passion for the work. Michelle remained in analysis for six months, terminating because of changes in her work schedule, with the ambivalent notion of possibly returning. Nine months later she called, but never responded to my return message.

In contrast, Matthew – described above as complex, predominantly secure attachment – took to therapy extremely well and remained for an extended time. He developed a warm, open therapeutic relationship and gained tremendously. Despite feeling Matthew's yearning to connect from the beginning, it takes lowpassion people considerable time to warm up to the therapeutic relationship and endeavor. His low passion necessitated a slow, evenly paced therapeutic style. To help him learn to better self-regulate and gain a sense of agency, affect-laden material could not be discussed until enough time had passed for him to feel comfortable and secure, rather than flooded and overwhelmed.

During our initial session, when asked if he would like to talk with me alone or have his mother stay, he requested to have her stay. In an unfamiliar situation requiring interpersonal interactions, he was extremely reticent to converse, looking first to his mother, then at the floor. She gently suggested it might work better if she left, seeming to intuitively grasp that she held attachment primacy and, with her present, he would rely on her for coping. Matthew agreed. Nervous at first, he swiveled back and forth in his chair, still looking at the floor, but responded to questions. As the session progressed, he talked about hobbies, swiveled less, made



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more eye contact, and warmed to the conversation. His ability to respond to my attempts to engage him, despite his anxiety, and to use my guidance to navigate the situation, much the way he was accustomed to using his mother, spoke to his secure attachment. He became increasingly able to autonomously negotiate anxiety-producing states, relying ever less on her or me.

During our first year, Matthew infrequently made eye contact and preferred for me to ask questions. He turned to me for cues on how to navigate situations. We initially talked almost exclusively about vampires, video games, and baseball. Although I was hardly an expert in these subjects, that worked to my advantage, as Matthew enjoyed nothing more than taking me under his tutelage. Toward the end of that year, he arrived extremely sad and angry over something that happened in school, and his parents' response. His mother had tried to get him to talk about it despite his not feeling ready to do so, and his father tried ineffectively to fix it by going to the school, promising it would never happen again. We spent most of the session in shared silence that felt profoundly moving and meaningful. Surges of emotion would surface and be reflected in his face, then recede. I felt a concordant ebb and flow within me. A palpable, mutual, nonverbal process was going on. My response to his silence with active silence may have "matched" his affective state, providing him the opportunity to contain and down-regulate in a way that allowed him to feel bad rather than deny feelings or act them out. With growing comfort being alone in the presence of another, he self-regulated in a manner complementing his style. Toward the end of the session, I asked how he felt about the silence. He responded that people who care about him can see when he is upset: "I don't have to tell them. I don't have to talk about my feelings." I noted that although this had just occurred between us, and may have worked for him when he was younger, it might no longer be enough in many relationships. Not unlike his parents, Matthew seemed to have difficulties transitioning into adolescence, expanding on the nonverbal mutual regulation process which predominated in early childhood (Tronick, 2007; Allen, 2008). We spoke about the risks and benefits of voicing feelings. This session was a turning point. Matthew's capacity for self-regulation was growing, along with his comfort in relating interpersonally.

Following that session, when feeling sad or angry, Matthew became able to use brief periods of comfortable silence to regroup, self-soothe, and mentalize subjective and interpersonal states. More comfortable with expressing affect in ways that suited his personality, he also became increasingly adept at recounting emotionally charged interactions, understanding his role in what had transpired,



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and verbalizing anger. Bullying completely ceased as Matthew no longer feared using non-hostile aggression for self-preservation for fear of it slipping into hostility. We rarely talked about baseball and video games. Instead, we talked about school and family, laughing and feeling sad together. Two years into therapy, Matthew reported a dream that reflected his budding agentic self and desire to connect with others. The dream occurred in vivid colors and had the quality of a video game in which he was driving a fast car in a futuristic, perfect world. He grabbed the stick shift and launched into a tall building full of people he knew. The tone went from wildly fun to more serious curiosity as he wandered around observing the people. He wanted to stay and “think with them.” He desired to “dream bounce” – to be in and out of their dreams so he could better understand them. We rarely hear such a direct plea for intersubjective relatedness and transparency. With shifting relationships with parents, friends, and therapist, and growing self-awareness, Matthew was deconstructing and reconstructing internal schemas of “ways-of-being-with-another.” As part of this meaning-making, he attempted to recognize others’ subjective reality, realizing he needed access to their minds. Mentalizing their subjectivity could help him develop coherent self-other configurations and, ultimately, self-understanding (The Boston Change Process Study Group, 2010).

As therapy progressed, Matthew and his parents became better able to self-regulate and sensitively respond to each other. As his parents became better able to mentalize his state of mind, more attuned to his emotional needs, and better able to respond sensitively, Matthew’s capacity for self-reflection and self-soothing expanded. He increasingly used his parents more freely as a secure base and safe haven without the pressure to conform to their implicit demands or fear of burdening them. He no longer felt he had to choose between their love and his autonomy. His ability to think more flexibly allowed Matthew to achieve a post-oedipal configuration, appreciating more aspects of his mother and how she had been there for him, and knocking his father off his pedestal, recognizing him as a fallible human being who could elicit both anger and disappointment.

Matthew still struggles with peer pressure and relationships but is getting much better at metacognitive monitoring – processing his feelings and talking before acting. He is increasingly able to appreciate consequences of his behaviors – undesirable or desirable – and assimilate the experience for his own growth. His ability to reflect and own self-generated pride, rather than solely relying on others’ approval or disapproval for his self-worth, is also growing. As a relatively



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lowpassion individual, Matthew still spends much time alone, but his recreational activities are less consuming and obsessively pursued and he gets together with friends more often.

Therapist's contribution

Psychoanalytic literature rarely discusses therapists' contributions to therapeutic process from the perspective of their more stable characteristics, like attachment style and passionate temperament. If at all referenced, therapists' attributes are often inferred from case illustrations and writing style (Davies, 1994; Hoffman, 2000, 2009; LaFarge, 2014) rather than identified and articulated. Therapists' admissions of their attachment styles are rare, and passion is primarily discussed in the context of sexual (Davies, 1994; Maroda, 2010) and aggressive (e.g., hate or anger) countertransferences (Winnicott, 1947/1958; Davies, 2004; Maroda, 2010).

Attachment theory predicts that therapists who have developed a secure attachment state of mind are better able to form a positive working alliance because they are more comfortable with closeness and intimacy and better able to form mutual, warm, enduring therapeutic relationships. Significant positive correlation was found between therapists' self-reported secure attachment style and ability to establish positive therapeutic alliances (Degnan, Seymour-Hyde, Harris, and Berry, 2014). A reverse correlation was found with insecure attachment (Black, Hardy, Turpin, and Parry, 2005). If anxiously attached therapists were initially able to establish alliance, this declined over the course of therapy (Sauer, Lopez, and Gormley, 2003; Dinger, Strack, Sachsse, and Schauenburg, 2009). Anxiously attached therapists also tend to respond less empathically, particularly with fearful and insecure patients (Rubino, Barker, Roth, and Fearon, 2000).

Attachment organization also seems to determine the nature and depth of clinical interventions. Secure case managers are better able to challenge clients' internal relational models by attending to clients' deeper emotional needs, whereas insecurely attached case managers respond to the most obvious, concrete requests. Similarly, secure case managers are better able to reflect on countertransference and use it to promote therapeutic goals. Regardless of client characteristics, preoccupied case managers tend to intervene intensively, and dismissing ones nonintensively (Dozier, Cue and Barnett, 1994; Tyrrell, Dozier, Teague, and Fallot, 1999). Other studies have not shown these same relationships (see review in Degnan, Seymour-Hyde, Harris, and Berry, 2014). One possible explanation is that normally, patients do not become therapists' attachment figures and, therefore,



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therapists' attachment systems are not activated and their characteristic attachment behaviors are not likely to be manifested. When therapists become vulnerable due to personal circumstances (Hoffman, 2000; Sherby, 2013; Charlemagne-Odle, Harmon, and Maltby, 2014; LaFarge, 2014) or when therapeutic relationships become demanding (e.g., patient acting out) or involve impending loss (e.g., termination), therapists' attachment style will play a greater role in how they negotiate therapeutic challenges (Slade, 2000; Ligiéro and Gelso, 2002). This is possibly why – in spite of the finding that, in general, both secure and avoidant therapists appear to perform better than anxiously attached ones – securely attached therapists perform better than insecure ones when therapist's and patient's attachment style mismatch (Meyer and Pilkonis, 2001; Slade, 2008; Mallinckrodt, 2010). Concordant patient-therapist attachment styles do not challenge therapists' coping styles and ways of resolving interpersonal ruptures. Conversely, complementary or mismatched attachment styles confront therapists in a manner that forces them to alter habitual ways of coping (Dozier, Cue, and Barnett, 1994).

Contemporary, particularly relational, psychoanalytic literature idealizes therapists' passionate presence. Defining passion as the analyst's full emotional participation, Bion (1963/1989) suggested it is the central organizer of meaning in the analytic interaction. Analysts must tolerate feelings in the "here and now" in order to think creatively, truly connect with patients, and avoid colluding with transference projections. Passion, in his view, facilitates warm, intimate patient-therapist communication and catalyzes the ongoing cognitive process of integration that utilizes the therapist's most basic and important emotions to inform therapeutic intervention (Billow, 2000). Hoffman (2009) similarly encouraged therapists to "embrace their passion," that is, to be actively involved, not hesitating to be personally expressive, highly evocative, and moving. This stance, he suggests, inspires change and provides therapists with special power that gives them a fighting chance to overcome destructive influences from the patients' pasts. Without direct involvement and input, patients are left to fend for themselves against attacks by internalized bad objects that can have profound effects on their sense of self.

Bowlby's (1988) therapeutic vision brings attachment and passion together. Like Bion and Hoffman, Bowlby advocates for a passionate analytic attitude as an effective therapeutic action. In his view the major task of the therapist goes beyond helping patients recognize their insecure working models or maladaptive



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relational patterns. For significant change, therapists need to actively challenge patients' relational beliefs and resist the natural pull to respond to patients in a complementary manner. Securely attached, passionate therapists will be better able to take on this challenge (Dozier and Tyrell, 1998; Slade, 2008). The following section illustrates how the therapist's attachment style and passionate temperament played out in one therapeutic dyad.

A personal account and clinical illustration⁶

I approach things energetically. My gracious colleagues describe me as "passionate," less gracious ones as "intense." Not surprisingly, I found a home in relational psychoanalysis, which endorses mutuality, affective presence, and transparency, allowing me some freedom to hold onto my internal reactions and not overregulate my facial expressions, a task almost impossible given my animated nature. Liberating me from artificially holding back on interpretations and comments, I could be a therapist the way I am as a person.

I define myself in general as securely attached. However, I grew up in a country fraught with war and terrorism, where danger and threats of loss through violent acts were forever looming, and at times actualized. My immigration to the United States was motivated by my wish to protect my children from these threats, and to protect myself from the unbearable grief of losing one of them. I like to think I am resilient enough to reconcile this late life transition; however, I am aware that I am very sensitive to the threat of injury or death to those I care about, and this sensitivity was activated in Jack's treatment. Jack, a bright, intense man of Hispanic descent in his early 20s, was frightened by a series of panic attacks. He sought psychotherapy while an undergraduate. At that time he was an angry young man who took his frustration out on objects and, at times, himself. He was not outright suicidal, yet some of his behaviors, cloaked by his sarcastic vision of the meaning of life, indicated disregard for his safety. Under his hostile veneer was a compelling, warm sensitivity that I connected with immediately. His referring clinician described me as a "no-nonsense therapist." He liked that description, saying he was hoping to finally find someone who was not afraid of him. Twelve years of productive psychoanalysis ensued. He made tremendous strides, becoming a successful Ph.D. candidate. He was haunted by his history of a 30-day psychiatric hospitalization during his adolescence, triggered by an incident when he had become frustrated and reacted aggressively with his teacher for misunderstanding him. This traumatic experience scarred his self-esteem and complicated his ability



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to use aggression constructively.

I was very fond of Jack and had no qualms about demonstrating that within appropriate boundaries. Sessions were usually animated, spiced by his humor and biting sarcasm, matched by my delight in these playful interchanges. I actively (sometimes aggressively) pushed for reflection and challenged his foreclosed attitudes even when he skillfully tried to avoid this with sarcasm and playfulness. He repeatedly stated that what made him stay despite his mistrust of the “White man” was his sense that I cared about him as a person, not only as a patient, and that I believed in him even at times when he did not. He sensed I could tolerate his aggressive and sexual bantering and could “play” with him rather than reprimand him for transgressions or dilute the content by interpreting it out. For a long time, concordance between our passionate temperaments seemed to work well.

Therapy ended abruptly when I confronted what I perceived as Jack’s self-endangering displays of aggression. His new part-time job, potentially tapping into self-sabotaging elements of his behavior and posing risks to his physical safety, had me concerned. For several sessions I emphatically stated that I thought he was putting himself in danger and asked him to look into his motivations. Jack wanted no part in this exploration, which was unusual given his long history in analysis. He not only resisted but also justified his job choice as benefiting a social cause I could not fully comprehend and definitely did not endorse. I pushed back even harder, with an intensity that matched my panic, concerned he would destroy what he had worked so hard to earn, or simply get hurt.

“I want to do it... I need to do it... It feels good... I do not want you to stop me!” he exclaimed. “You have to allow me to do it my way,” he added, continuing to justify the cause.

“Suicide bombers justify the cause too but get killed in the process!” I blurted out.

At his next session Jack’s demeanor was somber and subdued. He said I had made an intense, unjust comparison. By that time I was composed, having reflected on my reaction. That intense metaphor came from my political background and the lacuna of my own trauma. My attachment system was activated when Jack put himself in harm’s way. I owned the fact that this comparison was intense and invited him to share his thoughts, but Jack quietly sulked. Our different levels of tolerance for aggression had previously been acknowledged by each of us. I knew the image I had invoked was dramatic. At the same time I felt liberated from the



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self-imposed shackles of overregulating my worry and tiptoeing around the issue. The session came to a disappointing end. Nothing was really discussed.

The following day I received an email from Jack saying he had decided to end therapy and would appreciate if I did not contact him. We had been down this path several times – his dramatically ending therapy after a rupture in my attunement, followed by my coaxing him back into exploration and reparation. My own secure attachment had helped me contain his anger and remain an unwavering place for him to return to whenever he protested and threatened to leave. This time I decided to respect Jack's request and not pursue him. Part of me did not want to feel like a hostage; a great deal of terror had been placed on my lap to hold and contain while I was not allowed to speak my mind or detoxify it. It was not the aggression and hostility that were intolerable; it was Jack's resistance to reflection that was unbearable. For years, I had held toxic, aggressive and sexual, unmetabolized actions and fantasies within the analytic space. I was able to tolerate this position to allow enactments to unfold and make material available for exploration. I felt this time, putting myself in a passive "done to" position would only collude with his acting out and encourage nonreflective regression. I also wondered if Jack was telling me it was time for him to leave analysis, at least with me, and become his own person – the autonomous self-defined individual he may not have been able to embody in analysis. He probably intuited, without fully knowing it, that I had limitations in tolerating the path he took, but he needed to pursue it anyway.

This abrupt termination was less than ideal. Although it fit Jack's dramatic nature and aggressive style, it did not fit my conviction that termination should be a carefully crafted working phase designed to prepare patients for separation and post-oedipal maturation (Simha-Alpern, 2012). It is possible that in recognizing my limitations Jack had begun to process a post-oedipal configuration – learning that I was not perfect, not an unconditionally accepting maternal figure, only a therapist who may be limited by her subjectivity. Regardless, I believe that having my own general secure attachment style permitted me to both invite Jack back to therapy multiple times when he threatened to leave and, later, let go of him the way he needed. Some growth and transformation may only be achieved posttermination, using skills patients have acquired during therapy (Guntrip, 1975; Simha-Alpern, 2012).

My attachment to Jack is evident. For a while I did not schedule anyone in the two



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hours that opened in my schedule, thinking he might come back. At the same time, I am not preoccupied with his whereabouts or with guilt-ridden soulsearching regarding what I said that might have chased him out. It is possible that a therapist with low passion who is free of sensitivity to loss through violent actions would have better contained this period of therapy. However, I am not sure a low-passion therapist would have been able to engage Jack in the therapeutic endeavor as long, working through the multiple ruptures.

Summary

This chapter focused on the contribution bidirectional interactions between attachment and passion make to understanding mind and behavior. High and low levels of passion can enhance or detract from one's life depending on individuals' attachment organizations and what they are looking to gain from human bonds. In clinical cases, we portrayed individuals' struggles to integrate attachment and passion. Those with insecure attachment style were much less successful in integrating the two. Secure individuals achieved a better assimilation, even in the face of developmental obstacles, trauma, and loss. Nested within a secure attachment organization, a high-passion temperament can facilitate sociability, confidence, productivity, creativity, and self-fulfillment. Secure attachment mitigates the potential pitfalls of high and low passion. It can discipline recklessness, thrill-seeking, disinhibition, and demand for immediate gratification in high-passion individuals. Their sometimes overconfidence, grandiosity, and intrusiveness can be regulated by intersubjective considerations and recognition of others' mental states and needs.

Patients' and therapists' passion-attachment configurations contribute significantly to therapeutic process beyond what attachment theory predicts. There is an interaction effect, especially when subcategories are considered. For securely attached individuals, level of passion may not change the main effect of attachment style but will color the tone of therapeutic engagement and pace of therapeutic work. Low-passion individuals usually need considerable time to warm up; exposure of affect-laden material should progress at a tolerable rate. The impact of the level of passion for insecurely attached individuals is more varied. It depends not only on the patient's and therapist's attachment subcategories, but also on variables such as patient-therapist concordance and level of activation of their attachment systems.



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Notes

¹ Based on recent research, the major attachment categories were revised. Eight Strange Situation (Waters, 2002) and twelve adult attachment interview subcategories (Hesse, 2008) are now identified.

² The analyst was Alma Krupka Klein.

³ The analyst was Amira Simha-Alpern.

⁴ The analyst was Alma Krupka Klein.

⁵ The analyst was Alma Krupka Klein.

⁶ The analyst is Amira Simha-Alpern.

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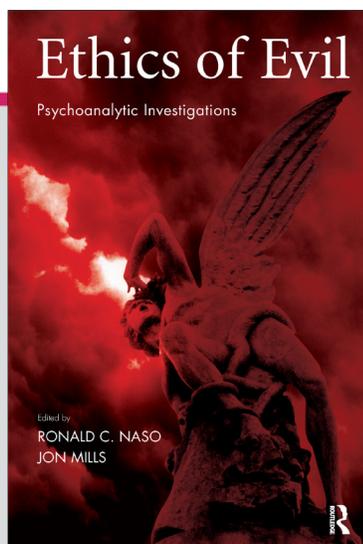


CHAPTER

2

FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY

DISSOCIATION, CRIME, AND THE CHALLENGES OF ETHICAL LIFE



This chapter is excerpted from

Ethics of Evil

by Jon Mills and Ronald C. Naso

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Jim was the chief financial officer of a non-profit organisation serving underprivileged children. Under his leadership, the organisation had grown from a small clinic operating out of the basement of a local church to an institution with a staff of over 200 and an operating budget in the multi-millions. Jim was credited with making much of this happen. Single-handedly, he had raised an enormous amount of money for the agency. He felt enormous pressure to sustain what he had created and suffered a variety of stress related symptoms as a result. Most recently, he found it nearly impossible to concentrate on his work.

Especially interesting was the contrast between Jim's self-perception and how others saw him. He was palpably insecure and quick to feel shame. By his own admission, he was ill-suited to a leadership role because he was indecisive and took criticism very personally. He dreaded the unavoidable conflict and tension inherent in a leadership role. Initially, the treatment focused on his struggle to balance family commitments and the demands of a stressful career. Specifically, it identified the core fantasy that success would undo life-long insecurities and the stress of functioning consistently at a high level.

I knew that something was wrong when Jim phoned me unexpectedly one afternoon. I was saddened, but not surprised, to hear that he was likely to lose his job. After all, this was commonplace since the economic downturn in 2008. However, I was shocked to learn that he had embezzled a large sum of money from his agency and was facing criminal prosecution. His offer to repay these funds had been rejected and the story would soon go public. He sat slumped over on my couch, face in hands, contemplating the prospect of telling his wife and children that their father was probably going to jail and that their lives would be ruined.

This chapter describes the psychoanalytic psychotherapy of a fortyfive- year-old man seen twice weekly for more than five years. It focuses particularly on material that emerged during the fourth year of his treatment when his crime was discovered. Why did he steal from an agency he had devoted his entire professional life to building? Why did he violate standards he appeared to respect in other areas of his life? Why did he deceive in circumstances where honesty was equally possible? In responding to these questions, I shall contextualise Jim's criminal behaviour. He was a man who honoured his commitments, especially those involving his family and career. He possessed moral motives and generally comported himself in accordance with them.

The question as to why Jim acted as he did takes on new urgency when one



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considers how easily otherwise moral individuals engage in evil. This phenomenon is the rule rather than the exception in wartime. However, even outside of sanctioned military action, ideologically driven violence and corporate malfeasance confronts us globally and at every turn. One is mistaken to regard these actions as rare and perpetrated only by monstrous individuals. Terrorism, genocide, violence, and white-collar, non-violent crimes of all kinds are daily occurrences, making it difficult to reduce the psychology of perpetration solely to individual pathology. Better put, explanations relying solely on individual psychopathology, whatever its aetiology, simply miss the mark.

For this reason, I focus on an offender who was not overtly antisocial. As far as I could tell, he was a devoted husband and father and, for most of his career, handled his work ethically and responsibly. Rather than presenting with antisocial personality disorder, Jim's personality more closely resembled that of the vulnerable narcissist (Wink, 1991). Empathic and attuned to the needs of others, all that I knew about him suggested that he was the antithesis of someone likely to offend. Yet, psychoanalytic exploration revealed an inner life animated by disavowed, entitled expectations. Inwardly, Jim was immured in a cycle of inauthenticity and shame. Moral motives were present, but selectively dissociated. His vulnerability to dissociation under conformity pressures was key to understanding his character. Conformity, or at least its appearance, promoted attachment security and elicited the mirroring that was so important to him.

I shall argue that the findings from Jim's treatment provide a broadened view of integrity. Rather than a fixed trait or structure, integrity is dynamic and malleable. It is best regarded as a process encompassing both self-directed and unconscious elements. For this reason, moral behaviour is never a straightforward product of rational deliberation and/or character, but almost always depends on unconscious processes that thwart further deliberation and lead to a refusal to relinquish core beliefs and commitments when faced with adversity. The paradox of integrity is that it involves openness and closure, tolerance and intolerance to alternatives and new possibilities. It is never reducible completely to the content of moral deliberations, or to attitudes and traits laid down in early life. Rather, it is the product of a dynamic process that necessitates the reworking of these influences and structures in the light of new learning, balancing adaptation with choices that accord with one's ethical identity.



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An unlikely criminal

White-collar criminals are singularly adept at exploiting opportunities for monetary success that cannot be achieved legitimately. Not only do they desire financial success, but often insist on achieving it in a relatively short span of time. Rarely satisfied with their achievements, they are excessively self-centred, grandiose, and attention-seeking, willingly placing their personal goals ahead of moral standards. When news of a massive fraud perpetrated by Enron became public in 2001, two of the main protagonists, Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling, were described during their trials as “arrogant and controlling from start to finish” (Barrionuevo, p. 13). They were actively self-enhancing, grandiose, vindictive, aggressive, exhibitionistic, and exploitive—quintessentially narcissistic. Their pursuit of power, success, wealth, and admiration blinded them to others’ perceptions, so long as they got what they wanted.

Recent research utilises a variation of Merton’s (1938) general strain theory (GST) to explain white-collar crime. While the original assumption of this theory has been sharply criticised, Agnew (2001) broadened the range of motives encompassed by GST to include the inability to achieve success legitimately. Specifically, he identified “the failure to achieve core goals that are not the result of conventional socialization” (p. 343) as a key motivator and, in so doing, provided a way of understanding actions that rely on deception rather than violence (Green, 2006) as well as on selective rather than indiscriminate norm violations. Threats to financial security, lifestyle (Lodi-Smith & Jimerts, 2007) and professional failure (Wheeler, 1992) are particularly compatible with Agnew’s understanding of white-collar crime, activating dysphoric emotions that are relieved by transgression. In this context, financial motives betoken a subjective experience of wanting or needing more than one has.

Because white-collar crime requires opportunity, specifically, circumstances in which detection is unlikely, it is hypothesised that offenders recognise, but do not honour ethical principles (Benson & Kerley, 2000; Weisburd & Waring, 2001). For most of their lives, they may have followed the rules and comported with norms, their behaviour indistinguishable from those who never offend. However, their security threatened, they opportunistically try to advance themselves. It is, therefore, more accurate to describe their value systems as flawed rather than non-existent; they possess moral motives, but chose expediency over integrity, facilitating various rationalisations of their transgressions (Gross, 1978; Ross,



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1977).

Jim was shy, humble, even self-effacing. Crippled by indecisiveness, he was more comfortable finding consensus, working hard never to offend anyone. Winning others' approval was a core concern and critical to his inner sense of wellbeing. He wanted nothing more than to do his job with as little conflict as possible and return home to the safety of his family. However, he felt enormous pressure to make money, to maintain the lifestyle to which his family had grown accustomed. He had private school tuitions to pay for his two sons and a wife with rather extravagant tastes.

Given his subdued presentation and the prominent role played by shame in his personality, it was surprising to learn that he felt special. Rather than consciously entertained, his grandiosity was preconscious and unformulated. Nevertheless, it was an abiding presence whose roots could be traced to early childhood. To be sure, Jim did not feel superior to others. He felt threatened and diminished by them and, for this reason, constantly sought approval. Yet, small successes activated a deep and comforting sense of specialness. He confided this fantasy embarrassedly at first; later he did so with some amusement, poking fun at himself. In a paradigm case of unconscious compromise, however, his humility masked the shadow of a grandiose self that nurtured him in the absence of real accomplishment. Over time, this core fantasy largely dissociated, he experienced his shame-vulnerable self as real.

Similar to the shy (Cooper, 1998), covert (Akhtar, 1989, 2000), diffident (Hunt, 1995), oblivious (Gabbard, 1989), or vulnerable (Wink, 1991) narcissist, Jim appeared neither self-absorbed nor arrogant. He was diffident, caring, and kind. Most important to him was to avoid criticism and to pursue mirroring in the most subtle, inconspicuous ways.

For example, whenever possible, Jim credited others for the agency's success. When grants or donations were secured under his guidance, he always credited his staff when reporting to his board of directors. It is easy to imagine the shocked expressions on the faces of board members when Jim's role in these achievements was perspicuous. Invariably, his comments would elicit comments like, "Jim was unbelievable", or "This would never have happened without Jim." Uncomfortable about being in the spotlight, Jim secretly was pleased. He never sought praise overtly, but instead pre-reflectively deployed strategies likely to elicit it. It did not hurt matters that he had a reputation for generosity.



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Unlike the grandiose narcissist, who is demanding and devalues those he cannot control, the vulnerable narcissist assiduously extirpates any trace of grandiosity from his or her presentation. Grandiosity is driven underground as it were, as are those aspects of self that are linked to it, making it impossibly uncomfortable to pursue the spotlight directly. Rather than publicising accomplishments, even when they are genuine, like Jim, the vulnerable narcissist is solicitous and self-effacing. He is more comfortable embarrassedly accepting others' praise than appearing in any way to be pursuing it.

One reason the vulnerable narcissist so effectively deceives others is that he remains unknown to himself. It is as if he assumes a role or persona that permits him to deceive with sincerity. He pursues admiration and positive regard covertly, moulding himself in the image of what he imagines will be desirable and, above all else, avoiding conflict and controversy. Yet, more than anything, he wishes to remain hidden; he reveals only those aspects of self that can be avowed without depression and shame. It is the latter rather than rage that emerge under circumstances of unexpected exposure.

Guilt experience rests precisely on integration of one's values and commitments with personal identity as a whole. So, completely driven by external affirmation, the vulnerable narcissist often behaves morally because it is the least costly way to be perceived as moral. Shame rather than guilt regulates his behaviour. He prefers the privacy of fantasy to real world accomplishment; in the former, the inevitable evidence of his imperfections can be facetiously discounted.

Rationalisation and moral disengagement

Rather than bespeaking immorality, Jim's value system illustrated what Freud described as splitting, as long as this term is understood to reflect Jim's inner construction of norms, rules, and values. Disavowal and dissociation brought about circumstances in which moral implications were ignored or misinterpreted. But, as recognised by Freud, this defence never is entirely successful.

Whatever the ego does in its efforts of defence, whether it seeks to disavow a portion of the real external world or whether it seeks to reject an instinctual demand from the internal world, its success is never complete and unqualified. The outcome always lies in two contrary attitudes, of which the defeated, weaker one, no less than the other, leads to psychical complications. (1940a, p. 204)

While several investigators have investigated this idea in the context of perversion



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(e.g., Arlow, 1971), only a handful have examined its implications for integrity (Grossman, 1993; Rangell, 1980; Renik, 1992). For Rangell, effective superego functioning depends less on inhibitory control than it does on the rational mediation of conflicts between rules and desires as well as among competing obligations, commitments, and norms. The latter concept highlights the lack of uniformity among our beliefs and values, an aporia within which creativity and choice may operate.

Rangell's ideas imply that the vulnerable narcissist sometimes deceives others and himself without brazenly disregarding moral standards. They underscore the conditionality of ethical principles—depending on context and opportunity, the same principles may lead to very different actions. Ambiguity allows the narcissist to deny, rationalise, or narrow his perception so that uncomfortable truths no longer are experienced as *really* real. Dissociation strips values and obligations of their moral force, engendering states of mind that have been described as a “perverse attitude toward reality” (Grossman, 1993, p. 422). It diminishes salience and, ultimately, agency, allowing offenders to take refuge in untested beliefs.

Rangell regards compromises of integrity as unconscious compromises among identifications, ideals, obligations, and desires. Integrity does not follow directly from a logical ordering of beliefs and attitudes; it is not established once and for all. Rather, it emerges from one's choices and relies on the continuous reworking and renegotiation of prior compromises in the process of adaptation. Adaptation, in turn, requires one to remain open to life's ever-changing circumstances, both interpersonal and cultural.

Most important about Rangell's thinking about integrity is its recognition of moral development and vulnerability to influence or corruption continues throughout the lifespan. Conscience never is established once and for all; consolidation surely is not complete with the resolution of the Oedipus complex. External influences may reinforce or destabilise existing values and beliefs. If it were the case that character as laid down in early life determined one's choices completely, subsequent influences would have little effect. Rangell underscores the powerful impact of post-Oedipal influences, thus offering a dynamic concept of integrity that encompasses ever-present possibilities and limitations for choice. These conflicts and tensions make learning, personal growth, and therapeutic change possible.

These ideas reveal an inherent conflict within prevailing conceptions of moral choice. Philosophers from Socrates to Kant have aligned the virtues of knowledge



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and duty. For example, Aristotle's concept of akrasia rested on the subject's misinterpretation of the good. In effect, the akrates acted out of ignorance, on the basis of dissociating what he otherwise knows. By contrast, Kant aligned moral choice with the rational evaluation of duty and obligation. It was his view that one is bound by imperatives that can be universalised. What both perspectives share is a belief that the good can be known and that this know - ledge inspires moral behaviour. Reflection and critical evaluation, therefore, ought to promote ethical action. However, the evidence suggests that the relationship between moral judgement and moral choice is at best a modest one (Blasi, 1980; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984). Critical to moral action is the willingness to bring one's behaviour in line with the product of one's deliberation.

Case material

Jim had worked for many years to build the agency that he headed. He worked long hours running its day-to-day operations as well as searching for sources of additional funding. By all accounts, he was very good at his job and transformed the agency into a highly respected regional service provider.

With respect to his personal finances, however, Jim struggled to make ends meet. He felt enormous pressure to maintain a lifestyle that permitted his children to attend an elite independent day school and for his wife to remain home as a homemaker. While he accepted this responsibility without complaint, he felt grossly underpaid and exploited, believing his compensation would be far greater in the private sector.

Adding to his stress was his wife's addiction. Joan had enjoyed "partying" when the couple met in college, but her recreational drug use soon became a lifelong struggle with addiction. Although she had refrained from drug use for most of their marriage, the past five years had been particularly difficult. She drank heavily and was addicted to oxycontin. She participated sporadically in treatment, doing well for periods of time, only to relapse after several months.

Supporting periods of addiction was an expensive proposition. Over the course of the past five years, Joan effectively drained the family's financial resources. Their credit card debt was astronomical, their mortgage three months in arrears as creditors clamoured for their money.

Jim did not intend to embezzle money from the agency he cared so much about. Indeed, the first time it happened, the thought of establishing a shell account



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occurred to him only on his way to the bank with a \$500 donation. Soon, however, he was diverting large sums of money that never appeared on the agency's ledgers; in effect, these funds did not exist, but were used to keep Jim afloat financially.

Jim knew he was doing wrong, but rationalised his actions in terms of having no choice. "If I don't do something, we'll go under. I'll lose my house, my family—everything." In other words, Jim increasingly viewed embezzlement as a feasible means of alleviating financial strain. Over time, this practice became routine. Jim treated these deposits into his private account as periodic bonuses. He said nothing to his wife about what he was doing as he urged her repeatedly to get help. When she finally agreed to enter rehabilitation for an extended stay, the cost to Jim was \$50,000. He did not have this kind of money. There seemed to Jim that there was no other (honest) way to provide for his wife and family.

In the beginning, Jim had been extremely careful about his actions. He thought to himself, "God, just let me get away with this one more time and I swear this will be the end of it." But, as financial pressures continued, it was yet another promise he had no intention of keeping. In the end, Jim had grown so brazen that he allowed his assistant to make bank deposits, confident that his ruse was undetectable.

Once exposed, Jim did not deny his actions in treatment, but explained that he had no choice. He could not remove his children from the school they loved, or deny necessary treatment to his wife. He did not want to steal, but faced a choice between undesirable alternatives. Deception was preferable to the sacrifices of moral action. His focus narrowed to the balance in his current account and how much more money he needed to make ends meet. He insisted that his actions were not hurting anyone and that the agency was so well endowed that services were never jeopardised. Denial facilitated malfeasance. It was as if he was free to act as he wished, so long as the agency remained open.

With a full criminal investigation under way, Jim initially spoke detachedly of his actions as if they were events from the distant past. He said, "I can't believe how stupid I was . . . I would never do anything like that again", or "I don't know what I was thinking." He wanted to preserve his view of himself as a good, moral person. I said to Jim that, however much his actions made no sense to him, "one does not put oneself in such jeopardy without good reasons for doing so." I added, "These reasons are hard to think about because they expose parts of you that you don't want to know. You want to forget or to keep them hidden." A stance of relative



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neutrality permitted Jim gradually to speak more insightfully about his rationalisations, especially with regard to his catastrophic thinking about what would happen if he had not taken the money. He acknowledged that the simplest solution would have been to confront his wife's addiction and its impact on their family directly. As events unfolded in real time, he did not have the courage to do so. This "weakness," as he experienced it, was linked in his mind to how he had always been treated by his parents as if he could do no wrong. Doing no wrong also meant never having to face the uncomfortable consequences of his choices. "In my parents' eyes, I could do anything and everything. They thought I was perfect. As good as this felt, it was also something I had to hide so people wouldn't hate me. I felt deeply in my heart that it was wrong to regard myself as better than anyone else." However much this perception sustained him preconsciously, Jim recognised that it must be hidden from view. He wanted to believe it, but knew it was absurd. Were it otherwise, the threat posed by detection or acknowledgement of his grandiose self would have been inconsequential. But, he experienced his specialness in the same way he experienced himself—as fundamentally fraudulent. He settled for the immediacy of feeling liked and suffered terribly when unable to elicit mirroring experiences. At such moments, he felt worthless; he was a "nothing". Anonymity and inner isolation was the only alternative.

Despite never fully believing it, the hidden fantasy of being special sustained Jim as long as it remained unformulated. Real accomplishment was desirable, but unnecessary. For this reason, as much as he wanted to believe it, Jim intuitively appreciated the danger of testing this fantasy. To make his specialness *really* real required a level of commitment that was unsustainable. He simply did not have that level of motivation, and neither could he maintain that level of effort. He sheepishly acknowledged that he really did not work that hard. As he became less involved with the daily operations of the agency and more focused on fundraising, he spent most of his time networking with potential donors and napping in his office. He took solace in occasional accomplishments that kept the fantasy quietly alive, which also served to excuse him from further effort. He learnt over time to manage disparities between achievement and effort by creating the appearance of conscientiousness, cultivating the persona of doing more and being better than he was. When activated, he might be incredibly productive, especially if the failure to do so might attract the attention of his board. But this level of effort was the exception rather than the rule.

It was far easier to identify Jim's avoidance and dissimulation than the enactment



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in which we rather quickly became embroiled. That he experienced me alternately as an admiring and benevolent friend, dedicated to helping him, and a condemning parent likely to abandon him, was readily apparent. More difficult was recognising the kernel of truth in these perceptions. I disapproved of his actions and his facile rationalisation of them. As I reflected on their impact, seeking a way to clarify and confront the notion that they caused no serious harm, I struggled with discordant feelings of empathy for Jim as the victim of parental idolisation and his wife's addiction, recognition of his resentment, and anger with his indifference to the harm inflicted on community he served. This was not a victimless crime. These feelings provided important clues to his disavowed resentment, anger, and pervasive sense of entitlement. Bringing these motives into the therapeutic dialogue non-judgementally was essential to helping him. Without awareness of his roles as victim and victimiser, he was unlikely to avoid reoffending.

Initially, I focused on the immediate costs of Jim's actions. I worried that doing otherwise would be interpreted as tacit approval of his behaviour. In one particularly memorable exchange, I responded to Jim's insistence that he had caused no harm by tactfully suggesting that he had ignored the real costs of what he had done. Using the information he provided over the preceding months, I said, "By your own accounting, you've embezzled more than \$200,000, money earmarked for children and their families. How is that not serious harm?"

I did not question the reality of his financial problems, or the sincerity of his intention to replace what he had taken. Rather, I questioned the perception that he had no choice, reinterpreting it as his inability to imagine alternatives that did not resurrect what had been disavowed. These alternatives created unbearable tension and deception deleted them all. From his perspective, he was doing only what was necessary to rid himself of anxiety and to help his family. He failed to discern the aggression implicit in his manipulation of donors and betrayal of the population he was bound ethically to serve.

Gradually, Jim acknowledged that his behaviour was inexcusable and that he had taken the easy way out. He had acted expediently rather than on the basis of his beliefs and values. He rationalised his actions and clung to the hope that he could transgress without consequences. Only with his perverse attitude toward reality laid bare did he experience the affects against which his rationalisations so effectively insulated him.

Jim hoped that contrition would elicit my forgiveness and concern, even love. In his



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less guarded moments, however, I observed an unmistakable sense of pride as he described his scheme. He wanted approval of his antisociality, of his unabashed greed and disowned hostility. He wanted an accomplice, a self-object who loved him despite his flaws. The alternative was to feel utterly despicable and worthless. Not only had he deceived me for several years by withholding information, but fantasised that I might privately admire him. Given how facilely Jim discounted implications, I shared my concern that he had not yet told me the entire story. He was also the treasurer of his church and of a local youth sports organisation. While aware of moral and legal implications, I believed that it was therapeutically vital to approach these issues in an enquiring rather than moralising way. To do otherwise would be likely to evoke immediate conformity to what he perceived as my expectations, foreclosing opportunities to explore and, ultimately, confront the linkages between deception, irresponsibility, and self-cohesion. In short, it probably would have encouraged him to lie.

What ensued was a retelling of Jim's life on the basis of a different perspective on the past. Previously, he had described his childhood as a happy one: He was popular and seemed always to be the centre of attention. Imagining that he might one day be a musician or professional athlete, he enjoyed performing before audiences, supremely confident that he would be seen as he saw himself. Now, he added one crucial fact. Early in middle school, he formed a band with four of his friends that gained a degree of local fame. On one occasion, the band decided to enter into a "band battle" hosted by the local high school. Jim assumed his band would win. As it turned out, he was not disturbed so much by the fact that they failed to take first place as he was by the winning band's lead singer-guitarist. He remembered clearly the young man's sonorous voice as he belted out his lyrics and performed a solo that Jim could only dream of emulating. He watched the girls dancing in front of the stage, literally swooning at the feet of this teenager, feeling completely outdone, his confidence shattered, and an inexplicable, dislocating sense of shame. Jim quit the band the next day and never picked up his guitar again. It still sat in its case, unopened for over thirty years.

Importantly, Jim was not confused about his feelings, but resolute about never doing anything that might be perceived as attention-seeking again. He refused to expose himself in this way and risk humiliation. The bubble of childhood grandiosity burst, there was no going back. He entered adolescence without the swagger of his childhood years. Whereas he had once felt that no aspiration was too lofty, he now felt vulnerable and diminished. He devoted all his efforts to



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covering up aspirations of any kind for fear he would be ridiculed. After a time, they were no longer experienced as psychologically real.

“Covering up” became a rich metaphor in the therapeutic narrative, connecting his current behaviour with a family legacy of deception born of shame avoidance. Whereas Jim had described his parents’ lack of formal education with a certain pride, certainly as a source of motivation, these feelings could not have been further from the truth. After struggling for years with a variety of jobs, his father finally found work in a building management company in a major city. Jim could see how making money for the first time completely transformed his father, making him feel special and important. Only later did Jim discover the reasons behind the family’s change in life style.

Phil (Jim’s father) was a high school graduate who had no patience for college coursework. He was fun loving and a magnet for people, always ready with fantastic tales and humorous anecdotes. Jim was puzzled by the fact that his father had not completed his first semester at college, but never really questioned the man he idealised. It did not disturb him that his father had, for periods of time, waited on tables and worked as a day labourer before landing a job in building management. His father seemed happy. Jim ignored the rumours of an affair between his father and an attractive neighbour. People naturally gravitated to his father and he was just a friendly guy.

It was only when Phil was charged, along with forty other coconspirators, in a huge kickback scheme that Jim understood the sudden improvement in his family’s lifestyle years earlier. His father had accepted bribes from a number of construction companies in exchange for contracts and other considerations. Jim was a college student at the time, and his vision of his father was shattered. He loved and admired his father because he was the “smartest, funniest, and coolest” Dad anyone could have. How much money he earned meant nothing to Jim. Neither father nor son ever spoke of what had happened. Phil could say nothing more than that he had made a “terrible mistake”; immobilised by his father’s shame, Jim could not bring himself to ask a single question. He was more disappointed than enraged. Sadly, for father, like son, fraudulence was preferable to struggling with uncomfortable realities.

The metaphor of “covering up” yielded still more clinical data about Jim’s relationship with his mother, bringing forth linkages to attachment insecurity and self-defeating, deceptive behaviour. Whereas his father was ebullient and



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irrepressible, Jim's mother, Angela, was a depressed, lifeless woman. Her parents had no aspirations for their daughters, other than to find jobs after high school and, soon thereafter, husbands. Without apology or apparent guilt, they rationalised their decision to pay for their son's college education on the basis of limited financial resources. They had "no choice". Angela worked part-time in a mailroom during high school and was hired full time upon graduation. High school sweethearts, she and Phil married soon after graduation. Once pregnant, Angela left her job to be a fulltime homemaker.

Angela grew increasingly phobic, suffering frequent panic attacks that prevented her from venturing outside the apartment. Jim increasingly felt himself to be a burden to her and that any expression of need depleted and angered her. Clearly, she was a woman with a limited capacity for caring, forcing Jim to take care of himself at an early age. He remembered vividly sitting at home after school, feeling as if he were a burden to his mother, who was limited in her capacity to nurture him, waiting for his father to return from work and regale him with stories of the day's adventures. He noticed the distance in his parents' relationship, but pushed it out of his mind, only occasionally glimpsing the uncomfortable truth that it was his special bond with his father that held the marriage together. Only later did Jim notice his mother's neediness and frailty, how little she had to give either to him or to his father. The image emblazoned in his memory was of his mother planted on the living room couch, chain-smoking cigarettes while riveted to the television. He resented his mother's indifference and self-absorption, but was too consumed by guilt at the time to entertain this feeling consciously. He did not want the responsibility of filling the void in his parents' relationship but he was forced into this role. He needed to be the "good son" who never did anything to disappoint his parents. His life was a balancing act dedicated to preserving a parental idealisation and maintaining family equilibrium, unfortunately at the expense of being the person he wanted to be. It was possible to gratify wishes only secretly, so they did not activate attachment insecurity or guilt. Guilt about his misdemeanours and shame at their discovery were acceptable costs to break free of the impossible strictures of his life. *Maybe it was acceptable to lie and deceive, even those with whom one is closest, so long as it did no serious harm.*

Discussion

Although he steadfastly denied any further transgressions, I cannot be sure about what Jim did and did not do—an anxiety for which I found no comfortable solution.



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Living with uncertainty is perhaps the most challenging aspect of working with offenders, especially those whose position provides ample opportunities to work without oversight. One cannot completely trust what is said, no matter how sincere; one never can assume being in possession of the truth. The psychoanalyst achieves little by remaining silent about the shadow this casts over the treatment relationship. Its meanings and implications must be tactfully explored and clarified with particular attention paid to dishonesty in the transference. This stance accords with Grossman's insight about how completely disavowal deletes salience and any appreciation of moral implications. It underpins states of mind that have been variously described as dissociative, hypnoid (Janet, 1889), somnambulistic (Sullivan, 1972), and psychosomnic (Stein, 2007). Disavowal promotes states of mind in which reality testing is maintained, but value testing is not; moral reckoning suffers when reality assumes an as-if quality.

Dissociation linked Jim's entitled expectations, attachment insecurity, guilt, and vulnerability to transgression. His father's moral flexibility and mother's depressed unavailability allowed him to conclude (both consciously and unconsciously) that it was permissible to break the rules. The latter point requires clarification. Jim's belief that transgressions were permissible was not unconscious; he did not embezzle without awareness of what he was doing, especially of its impermissibility. Rather, this knowledge receded into the background, rarely consciously entertained. Primary in his mind was the pressure of paying bills and of getting the best level of care for his wife. He felt stuck between doing the right thing and doing what he "must", so long as he was not likely to be detected. His actions reflected a moral compromise that never required clear formulation. What remained unconscious and unknown was the connection between this belief and his identification with his father. Cheating trumped shame for Jim as it had done for his father: it was acceptable as long as it did not threaten attachment bonds and family solidarity. It also allowed Jim unconsciously to remain loyal to his parents. Ironically, there was a family legacy of utilising deception to avoid shame and to elicit mirroring from significant others, for Jim, an experience vital to selfcontinuity and comfort. Mirroring quieted attachment insecurity and guilt. Ultimately, these strategies were self-undermining, as much the product of unconscious compromise as an expression of narcissism.

I have been careful throughout this chapter to differentiate Jim's presentation from that of NPD proper. He was not arrogant, parasitic, or sensation seeking; neither was he sexually promiscuous, drug and alcohol dependent, or, for most of his life,



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overtly antisocial. Rather, Jim's narcissistic needs were a source of inner conflict and shame. Specifically, his needs for mirroring and external affirmation coexisted alongside an authentic concern for others. Indeed, admiration made him uncomfortable and caused him to shy away from the spotlight. Consciously, he wanted above all else to be liked; he desired a continuous flow of positive regard, to be perceived as a "good guy". He readily would have exchanged this feeling for the money he embezzled and the consequences he now faced.

In Jim's mind, his wife's addiction and his failure to deal with it more forcefully was his undoing. However, the lack of oversight at the agency created opportunities to deceive without detection. He had felt powerless to confront his wife, to present her with an ultimatum in the same way that he found it impossible to take stands contrary to others' expectations all of his life; he could not risk any rupture in his sense of relational security. It was in this context that embezzlement became a feasible option. Fraudulence allowed him to pay his bills and reduce the unbearable stress he felt financially; it also allowed him to continue to enjoy the prestige of heading a high profile agency. He lived an impossible dilemma: to live or be loved. He could not envision living a life that afforded both possibilities.

These dynamics emerged in full force only by virtue of unforeseen circumstances—an enquiry from a donor handled by his assistant while Jim was on vacation. One unmonitored enquiry was all it took to expose his ruse. Because of the amount of money involved, Jim could not make immediate repayment and the board, after weighing the risks of discouraging future donations, took the unprecedented step of pursuing criminal prosecution.

The resistance of evil

There is a growing trend among psychoanalytic investigators to align perpetration with trauma. Studies of violent perpetrators in particular identify a high incidence of early childhood trauma. Stein (2007) for example asserts that violence is "... the inevitable outcome of severely damaging early interpersonal relationships" (p. 38). She proposes that evil is nurtured in conditions of dissociation, reasoning that violent offenders are more vulnerable to this defensive stance because of their early experiences. The persistence of dissociated states also makes those characterologically vulnerable to them more likely to engage in violent enactments.

Stein's argument departs significantly from mainstream forensic thinking in so far as it criticises the thesis that violent action expresses impulses no longer satisfied



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within the offender's elaborate fantasy life. It is as if the pressures that cannot be contained within fantasy life push through into reality. Stein, importantly, notices that the problem is not that such individuals possess too much imagination, but, rather, that these capacities are impoverished. Empirical data fortifies the claim of limited imagination; it suggests as well that defective reflective and symbolising capacities catalyse affect states into intolerable tension that can be discharged only through violent action. Such enactments express dissociated victimisation, communicating unthinkable trauma through disclaimed action. The real legacy of abuse is a lust for attachment rather than for sexual gratification. The perversity of this pursuit destroys the possibility of stable, mutual relatedness. To support her thesis, Stein marshals evidence from the narratives of violent offenders. One sadistic killer recounted his crimes in the following way: "I knew what happened when I woke up but I did not know if it happened for real or was imagined" (p. 97). Here, Stein sees dissociation preventing any assimilation of his thoughts and deeds within a narrative of the self that can be avowed. This failure of verbal representation increases the likelihood of enactment or, as Stein poetically asserts, finding expression through "the comforting pulse of gesture" (p. 25).

Yet, while the role of trauma might well be significant for violent offenders, other investigators caution us against moving too quickly from hypotheses to explanations of evil. Evil is plurality rather a phenomenon reducible to a single essence or cause (Bernstein, 2002). Many factors are relevant to perpetration, from the dissociated motives, beliefs, and perceptions to interpersonal, familial, socioeconomic, and cultural conditions. What inclines one toward perpetration and, especially, to a particular variant of evil, is simply beyond our present understanding. Why? At least in part because, as Sartre (1966) so evocatively noted, we are condemned to freedom. Freedom means never fully knowing why an agent acts or fails to act in a particular way. We may say that a rational agent ought to do A based on all available knowledge relevant to why agents typically do A given condition C. But this is a probabilistic inference that only goes so far. Freedom and choice preclude certitude.

The problem of evil, especially in its contemporary articulations, has to do precisely with our ineradicable freedom. What, for Kant, immunised man from the diabolical brings it about that he is always free to elect which imperatives to follow and which to abandon. In endeavouring to explain why one endorses or rejects a categorical imperative, why one acts one way rather than another, we are left in the unenviable position of being unable reliably to predict specific outcomes from



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antecedent conditions. It is more often the case that various outcomes are possible and none can be stipulated in advance with certitude. Action, immoral or otherwise, lacks coherence and comprehensibility.

While not entirely new, white-collar crime warrants inclusion within a contemporary understanding of evil because its iterations continue to evolve along with the expansion of electronic communication and the globalisation of the economy. Billions of dollars are exchanged instantaneously by keystrokes executed from virtually anywhere in the world. And, for all of the positive effects on commerce and the ability to communicate vital information, it continuously creates new opportunities for those who fail to honour the implicit ethical code upon which such commerce and intercommunication is possible.

Conclusion

White-collar crime is a complex, context-sensitive response to work and financial stressors that relies on deception. Although it occurs disproportionately in overtly narcissistic or antisocial individuals, most ethical violations are committed by individuals far less brazen, reckless, and character disordered. Because their violations are less spectacular, often occurring in practice areas that require specialised education and knowledge, these individuals rarely come to the attention of the criminal justice system. That they are products of limited imagination in no way diminishes their significance.

The material from Jim's treatment provides data about one type of white-collar offender whose psychopathology differs from the malignant narcissist or psychopath who present with borderline personality organisation. Kernberg (2007) rightly describes such individuals as incapable of maintaining social honesty or moral commitments, forming loving attachments, and appreciating the devastating impact of their actions. Some of the most disturbed of these individuals may be said to inhabit, psychologically speaking, an anal universe (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1985), a term used to describe an inner world in which all values have been abolished. Freed from normative restraints or concerns about how their behaviour is evaluated, such individuals are concerned only with evading detection and punishment. Their appreciation of values and norms is purely instrumental—one needs to know the rules and reality requirements surrounding one's actions in order more effectively to get what one wants.

The vulnerable narcissist lies, cheats, and steals selectively, usually when his or her financial security is threatened. While this threat might ultimately be more



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imagined than real, it is almost always a necessary condition of offending. He otherwise appears to live a normal life and inspires trust rather than suspicion in both colleagues and loved ones. As a group, white-collar criminals share a facility for rationalisation and deception. Although less topical in contemporary psychoanalytic theorising, rationalisation remains a powerful defensive process, one whose role in offending is primary. If it does nothing else, Milgram's famous work on obedience to authority demonstrates the range of egregious actions one is capable of when they can be rationalised and responsibility for them transferred to another.

Jim's life was guided by values to a significant degree, but also by a vulnerability to dissociation that precluded their full integration within his personality. The result was a unique combination of sincerity and a capacity for deception. He preferred truthfulness but, when threatened, he no longer felt obligated to behave ethically. Morality was compromised by anxiety; key perceptions, events, and meanings were discounted.

While integrity rests solidly on character and on those beliefs, attitudes, and inclinations that comprise individual identity, it is not reducible to these factors, especially as they appeared originally in early life. Rather, integrity emerges from a continuous process of reworking earlier experiences as well as external influences of all kinds in one's ongoing effort at adaptation. It simultaneously reflects continuity and rupture as well as openness and resistance to influences, both internal and external. It is at once a quest and an achievement. It is for this reason that dissociation is never completely the enemy of integrity. While the case material from Jim's treatment illustrates the untoward consequences of pathological dissociation, it does not follow that the capacities for reflection and deliberation ensure integrity. Contrary to Socratic wisdom, integrity requires more than the knowledge of the good; it sometimes involves a refusal to do anything other than what one believes to be right, a refusal, that is, to engage in further deliberation. In this way, dissociation may lead to action that is both compassionate and creative.

This perspective has much in common with a post-Aristotelian ethics of virtue, one that enjoys new relevance as we witness the emergence of an ethos that values wealth above all else. Disavowal undermines the capacities for reflection and moral deliberation because, in a sense, it leaves the individual with nothing to deliberate about. If accumulating wealth harms others, so be it!—a chilling



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reminder of dissociating operating at the social–cultural level.

From a psychodynamic perspective, it is essential to examine the domains, settings, and structures of inner life as well as the broad array of influences that promote moral flexibility. The psychoanalytic method is sensitive to the dynamics of ethical violation, focusing on how perpetration reconciles conflicts between the forces of self-interest and conscience. To be sure, the capacities for reason and reflection play an essential role in moral action, but these capacities always are set against the influence of early attachment figures and the cultivation of abilities that permit irreconcilable forces to be consciously entertained and refashioned, creating opportunities for synergy between old and new.

Note

1. GST assumes that the poor are disproportionately at risk for offending because of their inability to acquire wealth.

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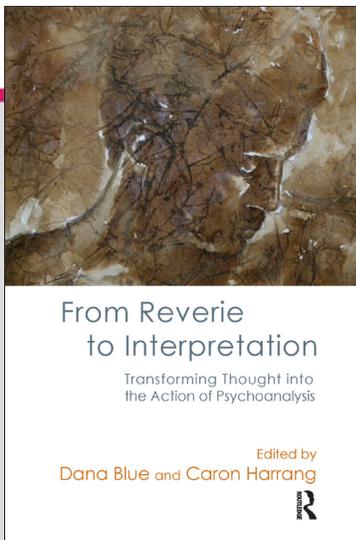
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CHAPTER

3

THE PRIMACY OF REVERIE IN MAKING CONTACT WITH A NEW COUPLE



This chapter is excerpted from

From Reverie to Interpretation: Transforming Thought into the Action of Psychoanalysis

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THE PRIMACY OF REVERIE IN MAKING CONTACT WITH A NEW COUPLE

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Winnicott cautions that we have to undergo a “critical personal experience” to deeply comprehend the patient’s psychic reality. Psychic reality is a term that refers to the total psychoanalytic situation of patient and analyst. Becoming identified with a couple means undergoing an emotional mood change similar in kind and quality to those of the couple in order to get close to their internal experience. How do we get close? I single out the *effects* of the couple communications over their content since communication carries the emotional impact of internal object relations. Cultivating a state of reverie is challenging because there is a conflict between the couple’s wish for oneness and the requirement of accepting difference. In reverie we suffer the fate of their old objects before new ones can be conceived. In the conflicted couple, *dialectic oneness* means fusion, or being-the-same- as, while separateness implies individuation and difference. Ordinary oscillations between romantic love and separateness are missing for couples that employ a narcissistic complementarity of sameness *or* isolation. We have our hands full from the outset.

Consider this comparison regarding emotional mood changes: I’ve been invited to a play while thinking about writing this chapter. My anticipation of the play is similar to the first meeting with a couple. There is no narrative and the script is not in my hands. Until I identify with the actors and relate to their story there is no emotional process to respond to. The characters have yet to emerge, so I wait and wonder. We attend a play because it was recommended, we read a review, or because it is a new version of a classic. Whatever the circumstances, we take our seat with a desire to be affected by the experience. An awakening entails a suspension of judgement about a future experience; being open, however, does not mean we are blank screens or neutral. Here, being without memory and desire is an unattainable ideal. As the curtain rises, we imagine. If we imagine before the play begins, we are within the self-boundary with little exposure to what lies ahead and so may risk interpreting from the inside out. Once the play begins we shift into secondary imagining, influenced by the actors and the play, or from the outside in. The two imaginings are prerequisites for reverie due to the availabilities of introjective and projective identification. What happens with a new couple referral? We do not expect an experience comparable to choosing a play, but we are willing receptors. We accept surrender and feel our way along. In the play or with the couple, the actors create the magic and we melt into the experience as the story and the characters move us.

We know that therapy involves surprises. Transference and countertransference



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exposures occur as vague discharges or defined moods. Countertransference valences are hardly neutral. Stored-up couple scripts intermingle with our internal pairs. A tinge of anxious anticipation arises before the couple materialises. When transferences replicate the bad object, reverie offers a buffer of caring about the patient's neglected past. Interventive choices draw on ideas about assessment and we rely on a practice model, but therapeutic moments are shaped by who we are, and by reverie. In an unexpected moment reverie connects the person of the therapist to the couple's here-and-now deficits in holding, but reverie may simultaneously evoke a deeper resonance with a couple's previous heartaches or unconscious yearnings. Even in an initial meeting we learn and gain from the couple's subjective responses to the setting. We aim for mutuality but complementarity locks couples into stuck relating. Reverie in the early going may be risky, as a couple may not yet have the capacity to take it in due to narcissistic preoccupations with guilt, revenge, and sacrifice. One technical point with narcissistic process is that reverie is likely to succeed when it matches moments of anxiety.

We rely on transference and countertransference in understanding unconscious process but realise that reverie serves the couple's emotional needs before a cognitive map may be drawn. When reverie eludes us we feel guilty and yearn for an internal supervisor that is forgiving of mistakes. Before we can benefit we must be able to deconstruct the nasty superego or ego ideal that demands obedience. We have to modify superego harshness when we lose the capacity for reverie. One harsh superego fantasy is that we must repeat analytic training until we are too old to enjoy the results. Supervisees have remarked that when studying with me they risk losing their practices as soon as they begin to think differently about their work. Knowledge is a sought-after comfort but learning from affective experience is strenuous and painful. My thesis is that clinical knowledge comes from the head, reverie from the heart.

Reverie grounds the emotional receptivity that makes meaningful connections possible. Reverie functions as the guardian of anxiety, but as we know its exquisite developmental contribution is not to inhibit or cut off anxiety from lived experience. Reverie sets the stage for meaning-making by assisting containment, but this does not ensure certainty. Reverie's role in comfort or soothing is in building trust, the core of a complex process of emotional restoration that promotes mastery of developmental trauma or neglect.



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The small voice of the child rises from the din of development because reverie restores its value. Reverie fuels the potential for passion. When passion is found, the child orchestrates his music and the beauty is twofold: first, the child's idiom restores the self so that the child can become his own good companion. Development from this perspective is a healthy narcissistic accomplishment. And second, the nurturing other, the therapist-as-audience, is chosen to be the listener. He receives the music as a gift. The gift represents a thank you in appreciation because the therapist-as-other has imagined that music can be born under favourable conditions, and we, of course, sponsored the concert.

Containment emerges from and is not identical to reverie. First, we function as the environmental mother. Reverie emanates from the psychosomatic realm of amorphous cognition. We are not so focused on the transmission of content but on the effects of patient communications. First we feel, and then we may think. With couples we emotionally receive their individual and shared experiences with our arms open. As receptors we are affected before we can think clearly; but when we can process their emotional reactions, and our own to them, we approach containment. Reverie is experience-near and primarily affective, while containment carries explanatory coherence of the couple's unintegrated and fragmented object relations.

In containment we process inchoate experience and send encouragement that there is more to their story than is known. Mentalizing emotional experience is uneven and subject to ghostlike influences; it happens in fits and starts. Containment functions as a central organiser, and reverie is the modifier of the other's anxiety. Containment tailors our thinking about a couple's problems and helps to determine the efficacy of couple therapy. Couples have the right, as do we, to determine which options best suit their needs. For example, some couples cannot tolerate exposure or are unable to share the therapist.

Problems with containment alert us to the couple's range of interactions, on a spectrum of chaotic to stable. Can they share the therapist's attention? Are we sensitive to the protective schemes the couple utilises to avoid humiliation or annihilation? Can we empathise; or do we intellectualise their defences and isolate them as facts forcing them to retreat or to flee? Are we used to relating primarily in dyadic interactions that may lead to taking sides or to the couple as a unit? Understanding reverie and containment takes us into the brains and guts, the mind and the body, of the clinician in readiness for beginnings.



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Excerpted from *From Reverie to Interpretation*

Affective Linking in Reverie

When reverie is sufficient, affective linking and creative thinking are possible. When therapists care about the couple's pain it reduces anxiety, allowing the couple to pay attention to the therapist's ideas about their dynamic situation. Ideas can reduce preoccupation with conscious beliefs and lift unconscious material into conscious thought. Ideas decrease the hold that conscious thoughts have on the couple's repetitious and stuck interactions. Fresh thinking about underlying circumstances makes distortions and avoidances plausible. Thinking about thoughts explains how unconscious anxieties and defences prevent understanding. The couple dramatises disturbed relating and we link this to possible origins. Linking may take the form of confrontation, interpretation, use of a metaphor, or a storyline constructed to illustrate the repetition of a blind spot.

Affective linking through reverie is illustrated in the following couple assessment. The case material was obtained from both the phone intake and the couple consultation. My internal process is included. Because writing involves memory my thoughts and reactions are reconstructed.

Jan and Ben: the Telephone Contact

Jan called. Jan (sixty-three), employed full time as a health-care professional, and Ben, a retired college professor (sixty-eight) were in their sixth year of cohabitation. Each had been through two long-term tumultuous prior marriages and divorces. They have six grown children, three each, living on their own. Jan called asking for couple therapy after two brief, failed attempts at couple therapy in the last two years. Two failed therapies and two failed marriages each; I wondered about the number two and the elusiveness of the number three and whether marital and therapy failures had unconscious significance for this couple. I briefly mused over failures, the symbolic meaning of the third and the Oedipus.

According to Jan, the earlier couple therapy experiences consisted of the couple attending sessions for two to three months, expecting to leave at the end of each session feeling better than when they arrived. As soon as one of them felt criticised or Jan became angry, there was a blow-up, and they would not return. Jan used the word "dropped" to describe the two exits, and expressed worries that the relationship would not improve. She added that they loved each other and wanted to succeed. In her opinion, safety was a priority for Ben, since he was mild-mannered and feared anger in any form. Jan admitted she was very angry. The problem, as she saw it, was that she wanted a man who was attentive and



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caring—specifically, one who prepared meals, did dishes, and did not flirt with restaurant waitresses. Ben had been retired for ten years, while Jan worked full time running a home healthcare agency. I silently thought about Jan’s own frustrated wishes for care as she cared for her clients. Jan vented about things falling apart—again—in couple therapy and at home. The venting required careful and non-intrusive listening, while I was looking for a way to set up an appointment. I also wondered silently about Jan and Ben’s fears of being judged, something I would keep in mind when we met.

I acknowledged Jan’s concerns and encouraged her to make an appointment to discuss whether couple therapy might help, stating that fear was usually what accompanied couples into treatment and that I would pay attention to their sensitivities. She accepted this and asked for an appointment that week. As additional background, Jan had been in analytic therapy with a colleague of mine years before, reporting good results, and Ben had had short-term therapy after each divorce.

The Consulting Session

My in-the-room experience with the couple began with Ben, who engaged me as soon as he entered by reporting Jan had told him that I had in the initial phone contact said that I was not sure couple therapy was for them. If that were so, he impishly remarked with a mocking grin, his feelings would be very hurt. Knowing I had said something quite different, I silently turned to Jan, who appeared flustered and distracted. I experienced Ben’s challenge as a demand that I supply optimism, while at the same time I was absorbed by the way in which he play-acted hurt, and immediately felt confused. I thought the difference between my recollection of the phone call and Ben’s report was that his statement was supercharged by fears of another failure and the risk of being “dropped”, a feeling I felt they both shared. I also experienced Ben’s mocking tone as aggressive, though Jan had characterised him as “mild mannered”. Ben entered the space with a challenge: Was I going to find the couple unworkable and immediately discharge them, or, alternatively, could I change Ben’s mind and reassure him that my consultation stance was hopeful if benign? I felt pressure to respond, but was it up to me to reassure and clarify for him/them that we would immediately and securely work together right from the start? I noticed that Ben didn’t ask Jan if she agreed that this first meeting felt tentative, and guessed this might mean they could not yet share the anxiety of the context. Rather than addressing Ben directly while feeling confused,



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I turned to Jan and waited for her response, also wondering if she would sense my unverballed interest in her position, and waited to see if she would respond to my not-yet verbalised interest in her position.

Ben interrupted, smiled, said he was joking, and relaxed. I had broken eye contact with him and now Jan had my attention. She repeated her telephone agenda, elaborating her frustration and irritation at being ignored when she comes home from a hard day at work. I recalled listening to her over the phone and wondered if she felt I had held her better than Ben and needed to test this out now. I hoped she had found the phone contact containing enough but now with these different narratives on the table felt she was risking a blow-up with Ben right there. I felt tested in these early moments of exposure with this couple.

In every interview, I take note of how the couple share my attention. With Jan and Ben I felt the impending build-up of tension one against the other, and I remembered Jan's concerns about the way criticism could lead to breakdown. As Jan's level of upset increased, I gently asked her to pause. I noted that I had a beginning sense of the particulars that contributed to a feeling of not being taken care of in real, tangible ways, such as the presence of dirty dishes, and the absence of help preparing and planning meals, and other home organisation tasks.

Jan's hurt and anger only escalated, and she referred to Ben's habit of joking with waitstaff, and kibitzing with service people on the phone. Her jealousy was painful to behold. I had no sense of what Ben's grievances were as yet. Holding Jan's emotional fragility in mind I asked her to pause, as a way of bringing Ben into a potential conversation, knowing that this was one of Jan's major sore points. I had learned they did not talk through problems but withdrew, so this was a challenge. I was struggling with the adversarial tone of the exchange, where Jan appeared to be the "heavy", and Ben looked like the proverbial "deer in the headlights". I wondered aloud if Jan might feel, or even say, as she arrived home each night after work, something like "You give so little and expect too much". Jan allowed my intervention to stand.

Ben was wary but took up my invitation and began his version of the story. He believed that he was generally a good provider, doing dishes, and so on, but that his contribution was forgotten because of Jan's temper. Jan was listening but I wondered how long it would be before she might interrupt if portrayed as an angry woman, collapsing the fragile conversation. Ben continued speaking in my direction, occasionally glancing at Jan who looked at both of us as he spoke. I felt



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on trial, and wondered if Ben felt something similar, while Jan seemed to be watching for whose side I would take. Ben and Jan's laments were similar. He described Jan withdrawing from him to do paperwork, and never watching TV with him after dinner. Instead she read a lot while he watched alone. His tone was sad, Jan's was angry. I thought about the unshared losses of a partnership, losses papered over by angry reactions, withdrawal, and disappointment.

Ben and Jan began to speak of Ben's "friendly" manner with strangers, a habit that engendered jealous rage in Jan. Yet she conceded that Ben's kindly and respectful treatment of strangers was a quality she had admired from the start of their courtship. The couple seemed comfortable in this exchange, trying out conversation with one another, rather than in dyadic exchanges with me—a good sign. Ben felt sure he had always paid attention to and respected others, qualities he learned from his father. Ben's father operated a dry-cleaning store, and as a child he witnessed his father interacting with customers and their children with humour, tact, and personal interest—he was struck by his father's engaging persona. Father taught Ben that treating people fairly and with great interest was respectful, and was also good for business. Ben learned that Father used this approach not only with customers but with the phone company, bank tellers, and waitstaff in restaurants. He stated that people gave better service when you told a joke, asked them their first names, or where they came from.

As Ben elaborated, Jan watched with interest. She appeared less tense, as though her jealousy were temporarily contained by a story that more benignly explained that Ben's hurtful flirtatiousness and "out of proportion" attentiveness to others was based in childhood modelling. As I listened I spontaneously shifted my attention to Jan and asked, "Jan, were you ever the apple of another's eye?" Jan looked shocked, reached for her heart, and the tears flowed. She tearfully spoke of her grandfather's fondness for her, and how she felt he was the only person who loved her, and said he had died when she was eighteen. Ben's mouth opened in surprise as he gazed in Jan's direction with rapt attention.

I turned to Ben and said, "Ben I think your father taught you to put all of your apples in one basket. Jan was her grandfather's apple, and it ended too soon, but clearly she has been searching for a way to become yours. You find so many apples to juggle and please that making room for one special apple seems elusive." Ben then also reported that in addition to this interest in others, his father could never be wrong about anything. Ben could never disagree or get Father to respect his



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point of view. Obedience to his father's authority hid Ben's split-off seething and mistrust, just as his fear of losing the needed object was a problem in his relationship with Jan.

Ben and Jan ended the consultation with something to think about. They survived the confrontational portion of the session because the underlying deprivations and deficits had surfaced. Once my reverie helped reduce the conflictual exchange, a metaphor emerged that appealed to them and also reduced the sense of conflict. Ben's injured internalised object relations were embedded in a one-size-fits-all schmoozer approach that lacked the capacity for individualising intimacy. Jan's deprivation was grounded in inadequate love and affection in her primary relationships, coupled with the loss of her grandfather; her object hunger remained a source of deep insecurity and injury. The pair had a similar tendency to hit and run, and had trouble communicating their needs. A near-far oscillation typified their style; the underlying unconscious couple assumption was: "Because of past hurts and grievances, I do not trust my partner to provide an intimate relationship."

For Ben, Jan's grievances were taking him over. He had no awareness of how his history overdetermined the outcome of the couple's current strife. The impact of his father's approach would stall change until Ben could recognise the repetitions. Jan's anger hid her suffering and sacrifice. She measured what she gave, demanding love because she had never received it freely or adequately. Getting to know their own persecutory objects would take considerable work, but for now they were interested in continuing what we had started. As they left, each gripped my hand in appreciation and, I suspected, considerable relief that their beginning session might offer a hope that their third couple treatment might go forward. I too felt a tentative hope as they parted and wondered about what the next session would hold.

Reverie as a potential space

Reverie created a potential space. As each partner's unmet yearning to be special surfaced in my mind, the apple metaphor offered an affective link. Hurt, fear, and anger had blocked their empathy. And they needed a new opportunity to be known. I suppose the metaphor of "the apple of one's eye" was sufficient for the moment to produce a second session, but as I think on it now the apple may represent the tree of life, and the dangers of pursuing knowledge, and being banished from the Garden of Eden; scary stuff when thinking and working psychoanalytically. I



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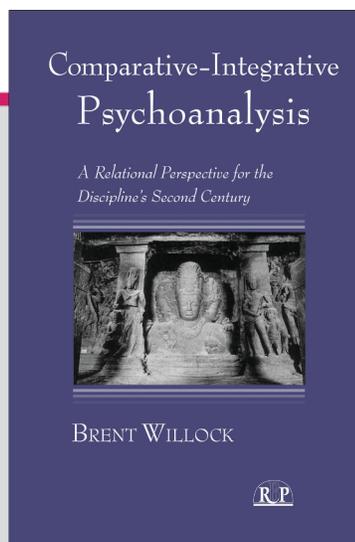
suspect that the therapist carries a wish to become known and to know himself, a primary motive to be considered in our choice of profession. Reverie is therefore a transformational tool and its enlightenment benefits us as well as the couples we treat.



CHAPTER

4

REVELATIONS FROM A TRIPTYCH OF DREAMS



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Comparative-Integrative Psychoanalysis
by Brent Wilcock

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REVELATIONS FROM A TRIPTYCH OF DREAMS

Excerpted from *Comparative-Integrative Psychoanalysis*

Sooner or later scientific thought will become the central subject of philosophical controversy.

—Gaston Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit*

Introduction

Periods of both smooth and disjunctive evolution have characterized the past century's developments in psychoanalysis. Theoretical conflicts have sometimes generated lively, fruitful debate. Other times, handled in a less amicable, dialogical spirit, controversies have culminated in feelings of estrangement embodied in dissociated schools of thought. These contrasting approaches and outcomes with respect to the confrontation between innovative and traditional ideas bespeak the promise and pitfalls that continue to characterize the path of our young science.

The current intellectual climate within our field and beyond (e.g., postmodernism) affords propitious circumstances for contemplating the nature of this oftentimes tumultuous evolution of analytic thought. Such reflection should enable us to better situate ourselves so that we might more creatively manage the future development of our discipline.

Enter the Self

A major participant in the recent evolutionary epoch of psychoanalysis has been Heinz Kohut. His seminal contributions fomented a great deal of excitement as well as controversy. Analysts wondered and debated whether his perspective could be integrated into the existing mainstream(s) of analytic thinking or whether it constituted a separate theoretical/clinical approach requiring distinctive organizational structures to protect and promote its development. Kohut's ideas and their mixed reception furnish us with an outstanding, contemporary opportunity to study issues central to the nature of the conjunctive and disjunctive possibilities encountered during the development of analytic thought.

The New and the Old

In his final contribution to the burgeoning, increasingly pluralistic, psychoanalytic literature, Kohut (1984) articulated some astute observations apropos scientific evolution. Every explanation, he wrote, "must not only be considered a gain, but also a barrier to further thought, a potential obstacle to seeing the new and appreciating the unexpected" (p. 125). Underscoring this assertion, he continued to say that progress in science "is impeded more by our commitment to old knowledge than by our incapacity to acquire new knowledge" (p. 125).



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Perceptive, important, and valid, Kohut's perspective on the relationship between new and old is, at the same time, significantly incomplete. In this chapter, therefore, I endeavor to demonstrate a crucial, seemingly opposite, but actually complementary proposition: Excessive commitment to new explanatory models and to innovation can also constitute surprisingly powerful obstacles to understanding that which continues to be valid and valuable in the preexisting body of knowledge. Scientific progress may be impeded as much by one-sided emphasis on innovation as by rigid adherence to convention.

Ironically, the core clinical case presented by Kohut in the very chapter in which he enunciated his insightful ideas on scientific progress can be fruitfully studied and utilized equally well to illustrate this opposite thesis. Kohut's case is especially fortuitous for this purpose because he carefully considered the relative merits of analyzing his clinical material both from the traditional and from his innovative, self psychological viewpoint. Processing his patient's productions from these dual perspectives, he concluded, *inter alia*, that this case provided no significant support for certain fundamental tenets of classical analysis (e.g., the Oedipus complex). My contention is that his conclusion (particularly with respect to the oedipal) was invalid (notwithstanding other merits in his approach). If my dissenting view is supported by reanalysis of his data, then the inability of such an outstanding investigator to perceive the abundant, phallic-oedipal material suffusing his analysand's productions would furnish an illuminating illustration of how a new clinical perspective and commitment to innovation can militate against the possibility of adequately evaluating data in terms of a prior theoretical framework despite one's best intentions.

Had Kohut merely been endeavoring to demonstrate the nature and utility of the self psychological approach without regard for how the classical perspective might elucidate the material, most readers would simply have found his perspective interesting, useful, or otherwise. If that had been his sole intention, it would not have been so startling to discover that he had overlooked so many classical interpretive possibilities. The fact that he committed himself to exploring his material from both perspectives (while also focusing on their possibly different understandings of resistance and defense) makes his inability to perceive copious oedipal manifestations striking, important, and above all, intriguing.

If fundamental perceptual and cognitive operations can be subject to such serious blocking in someone as knowledgeable of traditional analysis as Kohut, the danger



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of similar deficits manifesting themselves in analysts less expert, less conversant with classical thinking, is likely far greater. This probability has important implications for training. In this chapter, however, I am content if I can make a case for my primary hypothesis that the new can seriously impede access to valuable aspects of the old. I leave it to later in the book to explore in greater detail the nature of the processes involved in these impediments to clinical apperception and the evolution of analytic thought together with their pedagogic implications.

Caveat Lector

Conversation between self psychologists and analysts of other persuasions has often been and frequently still is problematic. Feelings frequently have run high. Mutual misunderstanding and suspicion, a sense of abuse, and excommunicative tendencies have often overpowered more constructive, collegial, communicative desires. Apart from the cruder forms of dismissal, merely questioning, let alone criticizing, one side rather than simply embracing and idealizing it has often been taken as tantamount to persecutory devaluation. Not surprisingly, such perceived or imagined degradation has oftentimes been responded to with correspondingly defensive counterattack. Once these processes are in motion, participants become increasingly hard of hearing.

As so often happens when one has something to say that differs from received wisdom, self psychologists have had to struggle valiantly against considerable odds to make space for their point of view. Due to the endless skirmishes and bitter battles they have faced and managed to survive, some self psychologists may feel slighted by a treatise, such as this one, that uses some work by their preeminent personage for illustrative purposes. I wish, therefore, to underscore that Kohut's writing has been chosen primarily because it is relatively contemporary and therefore especially well suited for exploring the idea that the new can block access to still important aspects of the old. This contention could be equally well illustrated with examples from other schools of thought. Such illustrations would, however, probably be less well known and consequently less evocative, engaging, and interesting for readers. Alternative vignettes would likely be regarded as more historically or locally significant rather than constituting cutting-edge concerns of real import to contemporary psychoanalysis.

If this book were to alienate any colleagues strongly identifying with Kohut's perspective, I would be chagrined indeed. This disappointment would be particularly intense with respect to those whose professional identities have been



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forged in the heat of battles that required individualism, character, and courage on the part of dissidents. My sympathies tend to be more with those who dare to think, speak, and advocate for interesting alternative points of view rather than with those comfortably ensconced in old positions who seek to protect themselves against disequilibria by branding upstarts as deviants in a malicious sense of the word.

My hope is that rather than seeing red, or even pink, recent revolutionaries will instead find the ideas in this book of considerable interest. Ideally, they will grasp that my views are not directed toward any single perspective but rather constitute a necessary, worthwhile challenge to our field as a whole. It would please me to know they understood my argument could be founded equally well on other important moments in the evolution of analysis. For example, Freud's shift from his traumatogenic, seduction theory to a more drive-based, intrapsychic, conflict model might have served these purposes almost as well. That exemplar from the end of the 19th century would, however, leave it to the reader to apply the lessons learned from that historic situation to current controversies. Rather than argue mostly from that relatively remote, now fairly safe past, if we can tolerate a more contemporary discussion, it will increase our chances of being able to apply the lessons we may learn to the most important period, that is, to the present and future, as we attempt to advance our knowledge base.

Should books be received more frequently on electronic monitors in the future, the preceding caveat could be programmed to pop up every 30 pages. In the absence of such cooling flashes, should anyone temporarily lose sight of this "heads up" and start to feel annoyingly alienated, perhaps the much maligned wonders of suggestion and conditioning will come to the rescue, bringing this message to mind, reducing the tendency to see scarlet, permitting the full spectrum of colorful thought to return.

In sum, this volume is not about the presence or absence of the Oedipal complex (or self-object transferences, or any other singular phenomenon). It is about the presence of complexity. Cognizant of our inclination to shift to a paranoid-schizoid, defensive, battle-ready posture, it is useful to endeavor to keep open the contemplative space of the alternative (so-called depressive) position. If we can make room for the depressive position to complement the paranoid-schizoid position, we may be able to play with ideas and make conversation, not war.



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Exit Oedipus (or not)

Three dreams that emerged over a 3-month period during the fourth year of an analysis constituted the heart of Kohut's (1984) illustrative case in chapter 7 of *How Does Analysis Cure?* Asserting that he used to be highly skilled at formulating in terms of incompletely resolved Oedipal complexes, and still could do so, he declared that such traditional conceptualizations were simply not borne out: Despite my openness to discern the Oedipal complex in this patient's analysis and thus come face to face with the resistances that constitute clinical manifestations of the defenses against castration anxiety, I was unable to discover this classically pivotal configuration, at least not in its role as a nucleus of psychopathology. I was not only unable to find evidence of a pathogenic Oedipal complex in the material pertaining to the three dreams I am examining, but also in the material that preceded them and followed them right up to the end of the patient's long analysis. (Kohut, 1984, p. 126)

In contrast to Kohut, Freud (1905/1953b) was unambiguous with respect to his belief in the importance and ubiquity of the oedipal complex; a footnote he added in 1920 to his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905/1953b) asserted this construct's continuing centrality to the psychoanalytic edifice: "The importance of the Oedipus complex has become more and more clearly evident; its recognition has become the shibboleth that distinguishes the adherents of psycho-analysis from its opponents" (p. 226). With these words, he inscribed a line in the sand with certainty and, one might say, panache.

Freud's radically innovative idea served as a keystone at the heart of his theoretical system. Kohut's conclusion that there was no pathological Oedipal complex discernable in his case and perhaps in others as well, for he did not appear to regard his analysis as particularly unusual, constituted a provocative challenge to the classical perspective. If valid, his findings could be construed as falsifying (Popper, 1959/1968), or at least going a considerable way toward substantially challenging, fundamental Freudian theory. Due to this potentially significant effect, his assertions merit careful consideration.

Prerequisite for either accepting or rejecting Kohut's iconoclastic conclusion would be a thorough examination of the three specimen dreams at the heart of his clinical presentation. Undertaking that review, I shall simultaneously explore the alternative hypothesis that Oedipus may have actually been staring Kohut in the face, repeatedly, but he could not discern this phenomenon because his innovative



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model inactivated core perceptual-cognitive processes despite his conscious openness to this fundamental, orthodox construct; his long-standing, thorough familiarity with it; and his conscious search for its possible manifestations. Again, if this hypothesis is supported, it would not be a criticism of Kohut but rather a useful drawing of attention to an intriguing phenomenon to which we are all prone.

The preceding Kohutian citation concerning the absence of the Oedipal complex, in addition to its relevance to my central hypothesis concerning possible inadvertent interferences between new and old, raises, en passant, questions as to whether his understanding of the oedipal may have been too heavily organized around the idea of castration anxiety. He may have given that significant component of the construct inordinate emphasis relative to other, equally important aspects of the complete complex (other affects, fantasies, object relationships, passions, multiple shifting identifications, etc.), to the detriment of his capacity to utilize this rich, multifaceted construct to elucidate clinical material. If one is mostly looking for “resistances that constitute clinical manifestations of the defenses against castration anxiety” (Kohut, 1984, p. 126) to decide whether or not oedipal dynamics are psychopathologically present and significant, one’s conceptual apparatus may have become too narrowly focused, too restricted to have much likelihood of obtaining samples of the much broader array of data (triadic object relationships, feelings of exclusion with relevant affective reactions, etc.) that could help answer the question.

Also en passant, some analysts felt Kohut may have had a tendency to bypass rather than interpret resistance (Levy, cited in Jessee, 1995). If so, this proclivity may also have contributed to his not coming face-to-face with oedipal resistance in this case. Despite the importance of such technical questions, for reasons of space, focus, and clarity, in this chapter I confine its examination primarily to matters of observation and formulation. Tantalizing technical questions must be temporarily sidelined other than to state my conviction that what one sees (and does not see) influences (significantly) how one can intervene.

The Interpretation of Dreams

Latent Manifesto

In presenting his three dream specimens, Kohut omitted most associations. If emphasizing what he elsewhere referred to as “self-state dreams” (1977, p. 109) reduces attention to associative material, this might be another way in which a



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new construct could curtail access to established modes of conceptualization and data collection that could otherwise illuminate clinical material. Nonetheless, as Freud (1916/1972) skilfully demonstrated (e.g., with the famous dream of wartime “love services”), one can learn a great deal from manifest content: “If we are acquainted with the ordinary dream symbols, and in addition with the dreamer’s personality, the circumstances in which he lives and the impressions which preceded the occurrence of the dream,” then, he opined, “We are often in a position to interpret the dream straightaway” (Freud, 1916/1972, p. 115).

Although some analysts might chastise Freud for being insufficiently Freudian with respect to the absolute necessity of collecting and utilizing abundant associations, a considerable clinical and research literature has supported the founder’s conviction that both the content and structure of manifest dreams can be richly mined (e.g., Brenneis, 1975; Erikson, 1954; Fine, Moore, & Waldhorn, 1969; Freud, 1900/1953a; Hatcher & Krohn, 1980; Krohn & Mayman, 1974; Langs, 1966; Palombo, 1984; Pulver, 1987; Rosenbaum, 1965; Saul, Snyder, & Sheppard, 1956; Spanjaard, 1969; Stewart, 1967).

Our oftentimes bivalent regard for the merely manifest was pithily portrayed by Erikson (1954) in his insightful distinction between actual versus advertised, idealized modes of practice. In his classic contribution, “The Dream Specimen of Psychoanalysis,” he noted: “Officially, we hurry at every confrontation with a dream to crack its manifest appearance as if it were a useless shell and hasten to discard this shell, in favor of what seems to be the more worthwhile core” (p. 17). In contrast, he observed, “Unofficially, we often interpret dreams entirely or in parts on the basis of their manifest appearance” (p. 17). With wry wit, bred of much experience, he underscored the significant gap between official and actual practice.

Believing real conduct to be more valid than prescribed doctrine, Erikson asserted that, on careful inquiry, the radical differentiation between a manifest and a latent dream “defuses in a complicated continuum of more manifest and more latent items which are sometimes to be found by a radical disposal of the manifest configuration, sometimes by a careful scrutiny of it” (p. 34). Reminding his readers that the Rorschach Thematic Apperception Test and other projective techniques had convincingly demonstrated that any behavior reflects the whole, he emphasized the principle that a continuum of dynamic meaning connects surface and core.



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In Lansky's (1992) contribution to his own compendium on *Essential Papers on Dreams*, he concurred with Erikson: "In actual practice, there is a tendency to use an interplay of manifest and latent content" (p. 14), he asserted.

In a study of analysts of various persuasions in the United States and Britain, V. Hamilton (1996) found that with the exception of a handful of Freudians and British Independents, the majority in all orientations no longer focus on gathering associations to individual dream elements. This "new normal" would, no doubt, shock and dismay many analysts belonging to what is now apparently the associational minority. V. Hamilton's data suggested that in clinical and educational settings today, analysts of diverse persuasions apparently feel they can work with predominantly manifest content to good effect. This reality does not, of course, negate the possibility that one might function to even better effect by collecting more associational material. In that regard, it was interesting to hear that more than one analyst in V. Hamilton's study admitted they did not really feel competent to work intensively with dreams. I address such intriguing findings more in later sections of this book concerned with psychoanalytic training.

Erikson (1954) believed compulsive adherence to official mantras deriding the manifest seriously "hindered a full meeting of ego psychology and the problems of dream life" (p. 17) to the detriment of both theory and practice. In a similar vein, Lansky (1992) asserted that such dogmatic rigidity had adverse consequences not only for theory and clinical practice but that the "legacy of contempt for and suspicion of" (p. 15) the manifest had also systematically undercut psychoanalytic research.

Studying clinical reports, one sometimes wishes for more associative material. Nonetheless, in the case I am scrutinizing, considering the variables cited by Freud (1916/1972) as frequently sufficient for meaningful interpretation, it can be said that Kohut provided ample information concerning his analysand's "personality, circumstances in which he lives and the impressions which preceded the occurrence of" (p. 115) at least some of the dreams. Furthermore, Kohut proffered not just one nocturnal hallucination, but a sequence of three (plus relevant historical and transference material). I will endeavor to meticulously mine these confluent, mutually enhancing data sources to explore Kohut's hypothesis and my own.



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Via Regia

Through the medium of three dreams, Kohut served his readers a concentrated glimpse into the complex psychic reality of his analysand. Their significance and utility reminds one of Erikson's (1958) astute comment in another of his penetrating contributions, "The Nature of Clinical Evidence":

The experienced dream interpreter often finds himself "reading" a dream report as a practitioner of medicine scans an x-ray. Especially in cases of wordy or reticent patients or of lengthy case reports, a dream often lays bare the stark inner facts. (p. 257)

My experience working with Kohut's dreams (including the progression of meaning evolving across them) strongly accords with Erikson's insight.

Each nocturnal phantasy presented by Kohut can be contemplated separately. Each contains enough food for thought to constitute a meal on its own. Alternatively, the dreams may be enjoyed as integral parts of a more encompassing, sumptuous, three-course repast. Both perspectives have merit. I approach the buffet both ways. With this in mind, let us venture to the banquet and delve deeply into Kohut's account to see what we can learn.

Primo Fantasia – A Discordant Nocturne

In the first dream, Kohut's analysand, a middle-aged lawyer, described[a] summer resort, a hotel or motel or bungalow. The patient, however, was sleeping not inside the building but on the front lawn. He was ill at ease, uncomfortable, thrashing about restlessly with the result that he became uncovered. People began to walk by. He was dismayed by the thought that they would see him partially uncovered. (p. 116)

First Approaches

The dreamer's initial words served to establish the setting for his phantasy. In a resort's relaxed ambience, one may experience some liberation from everyday responsibilities and constraints. Correspondingly, there may be greater opportunities for sensuous, motoric release.

The subsequent sequence of domiciliary images (hotel, motel, bungalow) suggests progression from large public places (suitable, nonetheless, for private encounters) to more intimate abodes. Restlessly, and unusually stationed vis-à-vis the more obvious living quarters, the dreamer may have felt excluded from cozier sleeping arrangements. Uncomfortably distanced, yet so close, his placement is analogous to



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a child's spatial/emotional relationship to the conjugal bedroom. From this perspective, his tense thrashing about may have embodied and enacted agitated, perhaps masturbatory fantasies, a means of coping with the stress experienced by the oedipal "outsider" (sexual arousal, separation, anger, loss, feelings of inferiority, vicarious participation, etc.).

Supporting the possible sexual significance of this dream, the patient worried that his body was becoming "uncovered," exposed to the view of others. From a transference perspective, those onlookers could include the analyst, a prominent proponent of intensive, "uncovering" therapy.

Discomfort about being observed is often proportional to conflictual, exhibitionistic desires. The night before the dream, the analysand had wanted to keep the lights on during intercourse. His wife thwarted this incandescent desire. Traditional thinking, Kohut noted, might postulate that the patient's frustrated exhibitionistic urge intensified and had therefore to be defensively censored, contributing to shame in the dream. Even here, however, Kohut downplayed phallic elements: "None of the patient's associations ever led to phallic or anal exhibitionism in early life" (p. 121).

Although Kohut discussed blocked exhibitionism in the day residue, voyeurism was equally stymied. In the dream, too, the analysand's wish to observe may have been frustrated by his being isolated, "in the dark" with regard to what may have been transpiring inside the bungalow. His voyeurism may, however, have been gratified later when, in the guise of passersby, he got to view the partially naked individual (in phantasy, perhaps more than one person) thrashing about, splendidly in the grass.

Both these partial instincts, voyeurism and exhibitionism, are centrally important to infantile sexuality. "Scotophilia is the main component in children's sexual curiosity," Fenichel (1945) noted. The counterpart, exhibitionism, usually appears together with it, he (pp. 71–72) observed. These component instincts went hand in hand in the analysand's first dream. His initial phantasy appears, therefore, to involve core issues from the foundational realm of infantile eroticism.

Consistently, Kohut overlooked or minimized the possibility not only of early partial instincts but also of oedipal elements. The patient's fundamental desire was not simply to observe a naked woman. "His voyeuristic wish was in the main that of watching the woman looking at him" (p. 120). Based on that sophisticated statement, one could say that the analysand (observing ego) wanted to watch two



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people (experiencing/performing self plus observing female) interacting sexually. This triangular fantasy might relate to or derive from earlier wishes to observe intercourse between another endlessly fascinating couple, his parents. This latter, committed, compelling investigation is an integral part of what Freud (1905/1953b) referred to as the crucial, engrossing, “sexual researches of childhood” (p. 194). From this perspective, the analysand’s desire to observe an aroused woman looking at him in all his naked glory—a central organizing component in his character structure and in the day residue—provides additional support for my hypothesis that the dream may represent a conflictual drama pertaining to interest in and feelings of exclusion from the primal scene.

Kohut was attuned to the significance of the sexual fantasies and frustrations between the patient and his wife on the night preceding the dream. He seemed less inclined to contemplate how such fantasies (and the dream) might relate to unconscious material, particularly childhood fantasies. Yet dream formation, in Freud’s (1916/1972) evocative analogy, requires cooperation between entrepreneur (day residue) and capitalist (repressed infantile wish). Attending to the day residue while minimizing the phallic, especially the oedipal, particularly with regard to early developmental roots, Kohut may have been expressing a preference to exercise his talents more at the entrepreneurial level.

In keeping with this possibility, Mitchell (1997) noted that, for Kohut, the most significant meaning is to be found in the way the analyst manages the surface. In contrast, reminiscent of Erikson, Mitchell emphasized that surface and depth, conscious and unconscious, meanings that are apparent and meanings that are elaborated, are mutually enriching. I too believe that insufficient attention to the relationship between manifest and latent, between data and theory, can be both theoretically and clinically impoverishing. This is not to say that important work cannot be done on either side of the street. It is, rather, to suggest that one can achieve even more if one takes the middle road, working both sides of the street.

Solo, Duet, Trio, Quartet

Traditional analysis has been criticized for being a one-person perspective. Self psychology (and some other orientations) have been said to promote a superior, two-person point of view. Examination of the first dream suggests Kohut had some difficulty seeing his patient in triangular terms. Classical analysis furnishes a constant, valuable reminder of the importance of “three-person” psychology— or more, if we recall Freud’s (1954) ideas concerning ordinary psychosexual



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bisexuality: “I am accustomed myself to the idea of regarding every sexual act as a process in which four persons are involved” (p. 289). With respect to those inevitable ghosts in the bedroom, there may be far more presences than even the founder fathomed. “Freud’s ‘four,’” Shengold (1989) opined, “is pitifully inadequate” (p. 35).

Controversy between monadic and dyadic perspectives is not new. Over a half century ago, Rickman (1950/1957a, 1951/1957b) had differentiated one-, two-, three- (oedipal), four-person (sibling rivalry as an oedipal side issue), and multibody (group) psychologies. Noting that traditional, academic, one-person psychologists were unable to predict much about two-person situations, he believed their knowledge was “almost useless in a clinical situation, particularly the analytic situation” (p. 221). Especially germane to the material I am considering, he commented that “A two-person psychologist who *shut his mind to those transference manifestations which brought in the third party*[italics added] would not be able to make many useful predictions concerning three-person psychological situations” (p. 222).

In contrast to the usual debate between allegedly one- and two-person psychologies, Morrison (1994) wryly advocated a one-and-a-half-person psychology. In his cleverly integrative notion, the subjective self is one person, whereas the “other” is partly an objectively perceived being, partly a created image. The half objective, half subjective other is composed not only of who she or he is as a person, that is, what she or he brings to the table, but also who she or he is imagined to be in terms of what needs and fears she or he is expected to fulfill. The other is inevitably imbued with transferences from the past, with qualities that are wished for, dreaded, or required. Morrison’s perspective might be considered as usefully reminding one of the transitional domain (Winnicott, 1952/1971b) between phantasy and reality.

Shifting emphasis from a natural scientific, objectivist model to a more hermeneutic, relational, constructivist framework, contemporary analysts speak less about prediction, power, and control than Rickman did. Still, it is the power of understanding that enables them somewhat to predict and control, that is, to intervene intelligently and influence patients. In this sense, Rickman’s warning about the cost of closing one’s mind to the oedipal dimension continues to be valid and timely. My emphasis, however, is not so much on shutting one’s mind but rather on one’s mind closing inadvertently. One might be surprised and intrigued if



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this unknown foreclosure were pointed out by a friendly critic.

Cultures that only have words for the numerical concepts one, two, and many may intimate that beyond dyadic intimacy (with its at-one-ment) lie the inevitably more stressful, triadic, and larger group experiences (with their propensities to split and exclude). In common parlance, two's company, three's a crowd. Triads and larger associations jostle one with new affects, conflicts, and challenges.

Concordant with Freud's hypothesis concerning the routine augmentation of the couple in the boudoir, groups appeared in each of Kohut's dreams. His analysand was always observed by some aggregate in painful, excited, and ambiguous ways. The omnipresence of the larger social unit might reflect the centrality of his patient's struggle with postdyadic object relations including conflictual wishes to be part of the group (primal) scene, participating, watching, being seen, stimulated, and seeking release.

Kohut only mentioned the primal scene concept once, and then only in a negative sense, ruling out the possibility that his analysand's voyeuristic-exhibitionistic features could have been derived from "frightening primal-scene observations" (p. 125). As with his previously noted, seemingly excessive emphasis on castration anxiety in his understanding of the Oedipus complex, here, too, Kohut seemed to focus exclusively on anxiety-laden aspects of the primal scene at the expense of appreciating its more complex significance (e.g., arousing, sexual, and aggressive features; its role in children's crucial sexual research including fantasies concerning who has which genitals, who does what to whom and why; dysphoria related to exclusion, etc.). If one is searching exclusively for indications of frightening primal scenes, one may overlook other significant signs of this entity including manifestations more attractive than repulsive, more saddening (re exclusion) than anxiety producing, and so on. Reduction in the richness of the primal scene construct curtails one's ability to utilize it to understand and assist patients.

Among analysts in the various relational traditions, Kohut would be by no means alone with respect to overlooking or minimizing the complex role of infantile sexuality. In a superb article on the internalized primal scene, Aron (1995), a leading relationalist, noted that such "concepts seemed to be underemphasized, if not altogether lost, in contemporary relational theory" (p. 250). The relational discourse came to be dominated by what Loewald (1979) called "The Waning of the Oedipus Complex." Moving away from a drive-discharge model and focusing on



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pre-oedipal phenomena, analysts working in relational traditions have shifted away from the sexual and oedipal imagery that had characterized psychoanalytic discourse for half a century, Aron observed. Aron lamented and labored to redress this loss. Infantile sexuality, primal scene, Oedipus complex, and other such constructs are important, clinically rich metaphors to be utilized by analysts independent of any commitment to drive-discharge metapsychology, Aron argued. Furthermore, relational approaches add depth and complexity to our understanding of these central psychoanalytic ideas, Aron believed. In terms of the direction of influence between classical and relational perspectives, it can be a two-way street.

End of First Movement

Convinced that mental disturbances (irritability, restlessness, fatigue, failure to concentrate) were caused by feces, the analysand's mother administered enemas to her children until they approached adolescence. Thereafter, they would have to attend to such matters on their own. Her theory and practice would, no doubt, influence her offspring's psychosexual fantasies during their formative years and beyond.

In nocturnal hallucination, Kohut's analysand exhibited the very sorts of disturbance (ill at ease, uncomfortable, thrashing about restlessly, tired but unable to concentrate on sleeping) that his mother liked to treat with enemas. His agitated display, right on the lawn, may have been unconsciously calculated to seduce her away from other affairs. Stimulating her desire to approach and even enter him, his subsequent submission to her potent, intrusive intervention might signify a cunning oedipal victory. This phallic mother (analyst in maternal transference) may have been depicted by the crowd (in the familiar manner of representing one by many) intruding into the analysand's personal domain as he thrashed about, partially uncovered. This seemingly unwanted invasion may have been secretly desired even though, consciously, the dreamer may simply have wanted the crowd to "butt out."



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Intermezzo – notes on reasoning scientifically

Along with the formulation of theory, challenging its own theories is the essence of any science.

Roy Schafer, *A New Language for Psychoanalysis*

There were no indications that Kohut raised any of the preceding hypotheses about the first dream, not even to rule them out. He did not appear to consider that this nocturnal reverie might reflect intense interest in the parental relationship, understood in terms of early developmental, component instincts like displaying and watching (id) coupled with a painful sense of exclusion (superego prohibition); giving rise to a variety of compensatory fantasies aimed at reversing the dreamer's predicament (ego defense); setting himself at the center of a new scene emphasizing agonizing, exhibitionistic-voyeuristic gratification (compromise formation), tension discharge, restoration of narcissistic balance, and so forth.

These omissions are a wellspring for wonderment given that Kohut scrutinized his material from both classical and self psychological points of view. Had he simply processed his data with self psychological lenses, one might not be so taken aback by his not perceiving and discussing the cornucopia of classical interpretive possibilities. In the more comparative context he adopted, it is hard not to be astounded (and intrigued) by his assertion that despite openness to discerning the oedipal, there was no significant evidence for it, neither in the dreams nor anywhere else throughout years of analysis.

In the course of their investigations, scientists make bold conjectures. Subsequently, they subject them to rigorous tests, enabling them to conclude whether they stand up better than rival hypotheses (Popper, 1959). Basic to the scientific evaluation of evidence is a comparative process in which each side needs to be explored with comparable care and precision (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Similar methodological precepts were emphasized by Edelson (1984) in promoting eliminative inductivism to test analytic hypotheses by case study and other methods.

In the context of discovery (Popper, 1959), Kohut made bold conjectures. In the context of confirmation, he subjected them to processes of comparison with rival explanations derived from traditional theory. Unfortunately, in the instance we are considering, his devotion to the new appeared to have interfered with his capacity to access the old domain of appropriate alternative explanations. Consequently, he



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was unable to adequately create the necessary rival arguments, neither during the analysis, for the patient's benefit, nor subsequently for his readers. In the absence of a judicious process of comparison, his boldly asserted findings (nonsightings) about the Oedipal complex do not appear to meet the rigorous standards that accord with the basic and best canons of scientific reasoning. His assertion about the lack of significance of the oedipal does not seem scientifically sound.

Lest these comments be misconstrued as a critique of Kohut or his oeuvre, allow me to reiterate that the preceding difference of opinion is but a focal criticism. It is not directed at Kohut per se but rather at more general reasoning processes and liabilities to which all are vulnerable. Kohut merely provides an illustration that, because he is Kohut, is more interesting and compelling than would be a similar example selected from the work of "Jane Doe." This being said, one might otherwise replace the word, Kohut, with the name, Everyman.

The Psychoanalytic Research Tradition

Our concern with how commitment to innovation can block access to important aspects of the traditional and with how this interference can lead to unsound scientific reasoning that may seriously undermine the clinical inference process might be viewed in relation to a thesis advanced by Stepansky (1983). In his article on dissent and the psychoanalytic research tradition, he drew on Laudan's (1977) differentiation between global theories or research traditions (e.g., psychoanalysis) and the more delineated theories that fall within and exemplify such traditions. A research tradition specifies modes of procedure that constitute legitimate methods of inquiry and provide guidelines for the development of theory in accordance with the requirements of the tradition.

Stepansky asserted that Kohut understood psychoanalysis to be a research tradition radically discontinuous with the content of its specific theories. For Kohut, analysis as an investigative tradition encompassed no more than the specific methodology appropriate to its subject matter, namely, depth psychology, the inner life, the domain of complex mental states. That methodology he defined as introspection and empathy. He therefore regarded self psychology as a new theory solidly within the psychoanalytic research tradition.

Stepansky raised the crucial question: How does one know whether empathy is being employed scientifically in the analytic setting? Presumably one knows, he answered, when the analyst obtains data that in accordance with the analyst's understanding of psychoanalytic theory, can be ordered into explanations and



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interpretations that are therapeutically efficacious. Stepansky therefore believed an adequate definition of the psychoanalytic research tradition must incorporate not only a methodology but also an ontology circumscribing the ordering principles, that is, the theories that fall within the research tradition. In his opinion, Kohut neglected to provide an epistemological basis for imputing scientific status to explanations and interpretations proceeding not just from a data-gathering process, however precise and objective, but also from an ordering operation. By presupposing rather than critically elucidating the scientific status of the analyst's ordering of data, Kohut's perspective on the psychoanalytic research tradition provided no basis for ascribing validity to clinical theories that underlie the dynamic and genetic interpretations that proceed from empathic data gathering, he argued.

Stepansky concluded that self psychology can legitimately retain the psychoanalytic appellation to the extent that it can equate analysis with a research tradition radically discontinuous from the content of specific psychoanalytic theories. He, however, viewed Kohut's operational perspective as epistemologically incomplete because it addressed only the methodology that informs psychoanalytic observation and ignored the ontology that circumscribes the nature of distinctively psychoanalytic theories.

In his analysis of the dream material, what Stepansky described as Kohut's lack of concern with scientifically sound principles for ascribing validity (and invalidity) to clinical theories made it easy for him to slip scientifically and, perhaps, clinically. Insufficient attention to the manner in which empathic data gathering relates to explanatory theories made it easy for Kohut's commitment to the new to interfere with his capacity to access the old, thereby compromising his scientific reasoning and possibly his clinical efficacy.

On the basis of this single dream, one can raise serious questions in relation to Kohut's assertion about the lack of significance of the Oedipal complex in this case (and, by implication, in others). In fairness, however, it is necessary to examine all three dreams to see whether the totality of available evidence constitutes a significant challenge to Kohut's bold conjecture.

Second Fantasia – Hallelujah!

The climax of the first dream was heralded by the arrival of onlookers. The dénouement was not portrayed. Like the passersby, we were not privy to the narrative's unfolding. The door to the dream theater closed. Paralleling the position



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of the protagonist excluded from the bungalow, our situation only permitted us to wonder what might have transpired beyond that opaque portal. Fortunately, subsequent dreams enable us to reenter the analysand's fantasy world, affording opportunities for ascertaining whether the rival conjectures I proposed (bold as Kohut's) are additionally supported, or refuted, by further data in the context of confirmation/disconfirmation.

Proudly, the patient reported behaving more maturely during a recent disagreement with his spouse. Rather than becoming enraged, he cancelled an engagement to allow her to attend a concert with a friend. He proceeded to describe a dream about his law society:

Although he himself had not heard ... that he was to be honored, the man sitting next to him told him about it and also explained ... that, as a compromise, he was sharing the prize with someone else. The patient then went to the podium and was given the award; it was a camera. To the surprise of everyone, he lifted the camera and took a picture of the audience. The audience was stunned. (p. 116)

As in Dream 1, triangularity (analysand, spouse, companion) is suggested in the day residue. Once again, Kohut did not comment on this oedipal trend. The patient's wife and friend observed others making beautiful music while he stayed home. Significantly, however, he was no longer simply a victim of exclusion (from bungalow, illuminated sex, concert). Now he was the explicit maestro of extrusion (his, theirs). He orchestrated the scene so he would be separate from the couple when the lights went low. This time, he did not have to thrash about to discharge mounting tension, playing second fiddle to his wife's preferential attunement to her friend. Conducting himself differently, he exhibited his splendid new maturity to his analyst. Rather than feeling diminished by extrusion, he swelled with pride. Aggrandized by voluntary exclusion, he transmuted oedipal trauma into maturational triumph.

As in the first dream, the analysand distinguished domestic from public milieus. (Dream 3 blends public and private.) His concern with this distinction might have roots in earlier developmental efforts to comprehend boundaries between what was open and shared in his original home, particularly in his relationship with his parents, as opposed to that which was closed and from which he was excluded. Discriminations between public and private places (and acts) are often associated with corresponding notions of public versus private parts of bodies. Such highly charged zones of differentiation, exclusion, and privileged access frequently



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stimulate fantasies of transgression. Exhibitionism and voyeurism provide nifty vehicles for exciting, transborder excursions.

Mitchell (1988) made similar points when he noted that

The very privacy, secrecy, and exclusion in one's experience of one's parents' sexuality makes it perfectly designed to take on meanings concerning a division of interpersonal realms, the accessible versus the inaccessible, the visible versus the shadowy, surface versus depth. Sexuality takes on all the intensity of passionate struggles to make contact, to engage, to overcome isolation and exclusion. (p. 103)

Assuming both public situations (concert and award ceremony) may have been related (unconsciously equivalent), the patient may have arranged it so that in attending the law soirée, he could observe what others (wife and partner or, more fundamentally, mother and father) were doing at night. Instead of just his wife and her mate witnessing gratifying nocturnal events, he did so, too, with a gentleman at his side.

No sooner had the analysand accepted the reasonableness of boundaries than he found a way of traversing them, thereby compensating himself handsomely for any temporary loss that might have been incurred in his maturational advance. The very night the conductor mounted his podium, the patient, in scintillating symmetry, ascended his own podium to accept a prize. His developmental achievement—accepting the reasonableness of subordinating his desires to the needs of the couple—received ample recognition, perhaps with his wife, certainly in the dream, and subsequently, through proudly parading his progress before his analyst.

Having set the scene in prefatory associations about his spouse and friend going out, the analysand expressed, via the dream, that he would not long remain even a willing oedipal outsider. In Dream 1, he moved from periphery (vis-a-vis the bungalow) to the center of attention. In Dream 2, likewise, he injected himself onto the principal stage, assuming a key part in the evening's main event, transforming himself from oedipal loser to winner. No longer excluded from the inner sanctum (e.g., relegated to the lawn of the last resort), he was now securely inside, coupled with a friendly gentleman "in the know" (conceivably Kohut in paternal transference). This gentleman explained what might be understood as a message that the analysand would not instantly become a full-fledged oedipal victor. Rather, "as a compromise he was sharing the prize with someone else." He would not have to bear the guilt of full oedipal triumph nor the pain of total exclusion.



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Such compromise formations are a hallmark of oedipal resolutions (Brenner, 1955).

Arabesque

At the most highly charged moment at the law society soirée, the analysand deployed his prize to photograph the audience. One could understand their being surprised or amused; to be “stunned,” however, seems extreme. Kohut did not comment on this discrepancy. To a classical analyst, such strong affect might suggest the situation represented some unconscious scenario in which the emotional reaction might make more sense, for, as Edelson (1988) noted, psychoanalysis “especially raises questions about causal gaps ... about the inexplicability of the contents of particular mental states” (p. xxv).

In contrast, Kohut (1984) simply asserted that his patient

surprised and shocked them ... to convert the uncomfortable situation of being looked at into a situation in which it was he who did the looking and thus made those who looked at him feel uncomfortable. He (visually) counterattacked when he began to feel (visually) attacked; he embarrassed (shamed) others when he experienced the discomfort of being embarrassed (shamed). (p. 121)

Although Kohut’s analysis fits his understanding of narcissistic difficulties, it is not otherwise clear what led him to believe his patient felt mainly persecuted rather than gratified by this public honoring.

Classical analysts would consider this material differently. The analysand loved illuminated intercourse. Tending to feel deprived and diminished by his wife’s preference to keep him in the dark, in his wish-fulfilling hallucination, his frustration and belittlement were replaced by gratification and aggrandizement. He became a star. Basking in the limelight, he looked without restraint and was seen, reciprocally, in very positive terms. Finally granted his just desserts, he ate up the whole experience *con gusto*.

For his sacrifice the previous evening, the analysand was richly rewarded not only with peer recognition but also with a special viewing device. This prize provided the perfect means for enacting a desirable derivative of his core sexual phantasy. Through the eye of the camera, he was able to observe aroused spectators admiring him enthusiastically in his moment of glory. This experience was marvelously isomorphic with his most cherished desire of “watching the woman looking at him” (p. 120). Symbolic realization of this highly cathected wish might account for that moment having been so electrifying, so meaningful. His



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photograph would preserve this peak experience forever.

A fine evening of observing and being observed led to steadily mounting excitement. As he gripped his perfect prize possession, concentrating, escalating tension culminated in a divinely climactic experience. Erecting his gift from the gods (of the law society), poised to shoot, it would scarcely have sufficed for his audience to have been simply surprised, merely amused. The only concordant response capable of doing justice to the fantasy embodied in his stunning, phallic display would be for the audience to be correspondingly stunned. At their finest moments, law societies can be counted on to be attuned to such matters of balance and justice.

Veni, vidi, vici: The analysand came, saw, and conquered. Whereas life frequently frustrates, in the theatre of the dream, wishes can come true.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Classical analysts comprehend dreams by elucidating how manifest content reflects underlying wishes, particularly infantile ones. “Something is added to the day’s residues, something that was also part of the unconscious, a powerful but repressed wishful impulse; and it is this alone that makes the construction of the dream possible” (Freud, 1900/1953a, p. 226). In contrast, Kohut may have overemphasized attunement to conscious experience as opposed to unconscious processes requiring more theoretically informed inference (Levy, cited in Jessee, 1995; Richards, 1992; Stepansky, 1983). One can learn a great deal by focusing on the surface. If, however, one remains too much in the domain of the “entrepreneur,” one will likely miss some capital ideas. Without sufficient access to such core psychoanalytic principles, one is unlikely to fully understand the structure and meaning of dreams.

As with Dream 1, it was remarkable that Kohut did not entertain any of these possible oedipal interpretations (letting the women leave to have a gallivanting good time; enjoying watching turned-on spectators admiring him; sharing the prize, etc.). He did consider that sharing might relate to sibling rivalry. It might have served him well, however, if he had recalled Rickman’s (1951/1957b) remark apropos “sibling rivalry as a side issue in the examination of the Oedipus complex” (p. 220) or Freud’s (1916/1972) earlier reflection:

When other children approach the scene the Oedipus complex is enlarged into a family complex. This, with fresh support from the egoistic sense of injury, gives grounds for



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receiving the new brothers and sisters with repugnance and for unhesitatingly getting rid of them by a wish. It is even true as a rule children are far readier to give verbal expression to *these* feelings of hate than to those arising from the parental complex. (p. 333)

Sometimes we, too, may be more at ease with issues of sibling rivalry than with oedipal complexities.

Kohut noted the defense of turning passive to active both in photographing the audience and also in proceeding from being painfully observed in Dream 1 to inflicting observation in Dream 2. He did not, however, note the key progression from seeming to passively suffer exclusion in Dream 1 to actively deriving pleasure by excluding himself in Dream 2, then actively reinserting himself onto center stage (as he had also done in the earlier dream, although then in a more masochistic manner).

Despite awareness of the importance of exhibitionism and voyeurism in his patient's sexual life, Kohut did not articulate the parsimonious possibility that his analysand might actually have enjoyed the audience's admiration (in accordance with Freud's fundamental theorem of dreams as wish fulfillments). Although cognizant of the importance of looking and being looked at in his analysand's preferred foreplay, Kohut did not consider that being observed and admired in the dream might also have functioned as desirable forepleasure, spurring the analysand on to even greater feats of phallic exhibitionism. Seized with the idea that his patient may have experienced the audience's enthusiasm as traumatic, Kohut seemed unable to contemplate that he might, on the contrary, or in addition, have enjoyed the experience to such an extent that he may have been stimulated to strive for an even more stunning finale, reaching for a means of discharge that would enable him to leave the limelight not with a whimper but with a bang.

The analysand's dramatic exit was reminiscent of a patient of mine who, for a period of time, experienced emptiness at the end of sessions. He protested poignantly that he had to leave "with nothing but my dick in hand." Rather than experiencing such deflating dysphoria, Kohut's analysand chose to leave triumphantly, with dick/head/camera held high, proudly erect. To maintain a grip on his feelings, exerting control over the affectively charged situation, he may have experienced an irresistible urge to proffer a clever parting shot, a spirited spurt, more like a second coming than a dismal, anticlimactic, fading into the dark anonymity of the night.



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Patients with such vulnerabilities strive against succumbing to the rather depressive philosophy enshrined in the famous dictum, *Post coitus omnes animales tristes sunt* (after intercourse all animals are sad). Following an hour of analytic intercourse or law society celebrations, these analysands seek more uplifting options. Their counterdepressive strategies suggest mildly manic, defensive operations.

Although Kohut noted that the “camera is, of course, a symbol of the eye—of being looked at, of looking” (p. 121), he did not mention that this device can also symbolize a fascinating, phallic apparatus. Its protruding lens may be conveniently stimulated to stick out even further simply by fingering the right button in the appropriate manner. This intriguing, corporeal extension is ever ready to rise to the occasion, pointing toward others who arouse interest. It can, therefore, stand not only for the eye but also, as the vernacular would have it, the one-eyed trouser snake (the pet name bestowed by some phallic aficionados on their favorite character in the oedipal drama).

Although trouser snakes should usually be discretely concealed, this analysand enjoyed toying and flirting with the public/private boundary. Not wanting to be restricted to revealing his amazing prize possession strictly in camera, he wished to exercise his inalienable right to flash it occasionally in public in the pursuit of happiness. His wife subscribed to a more puritanical philosophy whereby private parts should not be so proudly aired in prime time. Genital appreciation ought be restricted, not placed in the limelight. Let there be darkness, she decreed. Slippery snakes should generally lie contentedly concealed beneath flat stones or other opaque objects rather than becoming uppity, getting their rocks off, basking brazenly in the warm, sensuous glow of the sun.

The Latin word *pudere*, to be ashamed, gave rise to our term *pudenda*, which signifies external genitalia. Kohut’s analysand manifested shame in Dream 1, maintaining the fig leaf of his covers at least partly in place. In Dream 2, however, he was unabashedly cocky (*impudent*). In contrast to his wife’s inhibitory, nocturnal philosophy, this prince of darkness was determined to assert and express himself. He seemed more enamored than she with the famous 1960s, Dionysian credo, “Let it all hang out.”



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Glissando – The Court Jester

Bisexual Brouhaha

After reflecting on the camera, Kohut reported some transference interactions. His analysand ended one session with unprecedented emotion, sharing that he could now converse freely with colleagues and relate warmly with his wife and children. He noticed he occasionally spoke with his analyst's voice, words, and humane attitude. These gains he attributed to his therapist's influence. Kohut responded that he was glad to hear of all this.

Launching the next session with a vigorous attack, the analysand alleged that dogmatic, sometimes deranged, analysts forced opinions on patients. Kohut suggested this tirade related to the analysand's gratitude in the previous session.

An analyst approaching this material from a classical perspective might hypothesize that the patient's new feeling of masculine, identificatory closeness may have stimulated homosexual fantasies, anxieties, and defenses. Although fervently desired, greater relaxation, openness, and emotionality might simultaneously have made the analysand feel more feminine—a vulnerable position to be in with a potentially “crazy” analyst.

The specter of a beloved, but possibly eccentric, unstable therapist forcing opinions on a troubled, dependent patient may have been reminiscent of the analysand's mother forcing her queer beliefs concerning enemas into him. He had come to realize that his mother was “a little crazy” (p. 142). He frequently viewed analysis in identical terms. Fear of rectal assault by a not always easily understood, phallic, intrusive parent may have stimulated a counterdependent, aggressively guarded, anal expulsive defense now manifested in his tirade about crazy psychoanalysts. These two sides of the coin (wish–fear, masculine–feminine, active–passive) recall the symbolism of the camera. Like other objects that can penetrate the surrounding, yielding medium while also having a capacity to contain (e.g., cars, boats, shoes), it can be a bisexual symbol. Both phallic and feminine, it is like the penetrating/receptive eye itself. In keeping with its feminine facet, the word *camera* comes from the feminine, Latin noun *camera*, meaning a vaulted room (enclosed, feminine space).

Whether proudly exhibiting new capacities for warm, open, emotional, verbal intercourse with men, women, and children in front of his analyst or flashing his box-like device with its prominent, protruding, central aperture at the aroused,



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admiring audience, the analysand may have been tempted to drop his defenses, relax his emotional sphincter even further, leaving his little shutter ajar for more than a split second, allowing more than a little light to penetrate his dark hole, the symbolic portal, perhaps, to the unexplored, “dark continent” (Freud, 1926/1959b, p. 212) of his femininity. Such risky temptations may have stimulated anxiety/desire that his analyst, no doubt crazy like some others he had heard about, might in turn be tempted to force more than just a rigid opinion into him much as his mother had inserted more than simply her views about the anal etiology of mental disturbances into his posterior invagination.

Bridge over Troubled Waters

“Without any logical bridge” (Kohut, 1984, p. 122), Kohut’s patient proceeded to recount a vivid memory of a grueling mock court from his student days. Terrified, he had turned the tables on the usually brutally critical audience by pursuing a seemingly erroneous route and then revealing suddenly, to everyone’s surprise, that he had misled them. As a result of his cunning coup de théâtre, the usual critique following the trial bypassed the analysand to his great relief. From this tale, Kohut concluded that the analysand’s habit of shaming and stunning others when he feared being shamed and stunned was deeply engrained.

By now it will perhaps not be surprising to find that Kohut did not allude to the fact that his patient had, yet again, managed to underscore the triadic nature of his object relational conflict. On this occasion, triangularity was represented by the highly charged relationship between prosecution, defense, and audience. The latter entity—somewhat excluded, keenly observing, action-oriented—watched in a heightened state of arousal, ever ready to pounce on the other participants (with scathing criticism). Clearly the spectators got off on this passionate mode of involvement.

In a self-protective tour de force, the analysand may have led not only the mock court down the garden path but his analyst as well. This evocative trial memory emerged after Kohut interpreted the defensive (paranoid) need to mount a vigorous attack following unprecedented expression of warmth. The analysand’s previous therapist had been given to waxing enthusiastically about anality including anal orgasm. That gentleman’s orientation may have been reminiscent of the patient’s mother’s fondly held theory of the anal etiology of mental disturbances, with her corresponding passion for inserting tubes into posterior portals. Given the well-known associations between paranoia, homosexuality, and



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anality, the analysand may have had unsettling premonitions as to where Kohut's seemingly gentle interpretive line about his paranoia may have been heading.

Introducing the mock trial memory "without any logical bridge," the crucial *psychological* bridge may have been the need to hoodwink Kohut, to lead him astray with a stunning red herring, exactly as he had once thrown the prosecution off his tail. Adroitly conjuring up a time when, on behalf of the "defense," a clever stratagem had served him well in warding off intensely persecutory, phallic anxieties, these tried and true defenses appeared to have worked equally well with his second analyst.

Testing, Testing

In terms of control-mastery theory (Weiss, Sampson, & the Mount Zion Psychotherapy Research Group, 1986), Kohut's patient may have sprung a subtle test on his analyst when he launched his verbal assault after having expressed unprecedented warmth and gratitude. Correctly intuiting that this rant was reactive to that progress, Kohut interpreted this likelihood. By not having taken offense and not adopting a persecutory counterattack, Kohut passed that exam. Kohut's therapeutic skill was, no doubt, simultaneously reassuring and threatening to the patient because it would help him to relax, drawing him closer to his admired analyst.

Because of the continuing element of anxiety intrinsic to Kohut's having survived the tirade test, the analysand may have felt a need to resort to a new line of defense. The analysand may have felt compelled to create a subsequent, subtler exam. This second test, embedded in the mock trial memory, may have been intended as a real, continuing trial of his analyst, an experiment aimed at misleading Kohut away from more threatening issues. In Trial 2, we, the readers, become the keenly observing spectators in the case of analyst versus artful dodger.

Advocating for the defense of his status quo, the analysand would have wanted to win this *control-mastery trial* (a term that unintentionally but neatly evokes the sexualized, dominance-submission, transferential struggle). This desire to come out on top would obtain even if it mocked not only the analyst but also the analytic process, culminating in mere Pyrrhic victory.

At another level, control-mastery theory would posit that the analysand would also have longed to be found out. He would have yearned for a masterful analyst who could uncover his fantasies, skillfully penetrating his defenses, so he would not



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keep getting away with such rearguard actions, turning the same old tricks that kept him all too securely imprisoned in his ultimately unsatisfying, missionary position. Kohut may not have passed this subtle, second test. (Of course, he may have passed it on subsequent occasions.)

(Don't) See Me, Hear Me, Touch Me, Feel Me

Kohut selected this patient for publication to ground his effort at reformulating the concepts of resistance and defense. He presented his case for the superiority of self psychological formulation to the court of public appeal. In the halls of justice, his readers assume the role of the critical spectators in the case of Kohut versus classical analysis. He did not articulate why this patient seemed especially suitable for this project. Perhaps he sensed that this analysand's self-protective maneuvers were particularly pervasive, interesting, subtle, or challenging. The mock trial memory suggests this may have been the case as does the elusiveness to Kohut of the patient's psychosexuality, particularly his Oedipal complex. Kohut may have intuited that even though he never came "face to face with the resistances that constitute clinical manifestations of the defense against castration anxiety" (p. 128), such factors may, nonetheless, have been operative. Taking him literally, he never said those issues were absent, only that he could not discern them. Consciously, he believed these defenses and the underlying complex were simply not there. Unconsciously, he may have sensed otherwise. (It would be hard to imagine, for example, that Kohut did not, at some level, entertain the hypothesis of dreaded/desired sexual violation when he interpreted his patient's postgratitude assault on the analytic process, although one cannot know for certain.)

A prominent London Kleinian, O'Shaughnessy (1989), criticized Kohut's tendency to consider that when an Oedipus complex is not apparent, it does not exist and his consequently advocating a restoration technique. In contrast, she stated the Kleinian view that when an Oedipus complex is "invisible," it is not because it is unimportant but "because it is so important and felt by the patient ... to be so unnegotiable that he employs psychic means to make and keep it invisible" (p. 129). In reviewing O'Shaughnessy's essay, Chasseguet-Smirgel (1991) concurred that this was "a point no non-Kohutian analyst would want to question" (p. 729).

These considerations give rise to the following query: How can what is invisible to one analyst be so visible to another? The popular tale of the emperor's magnificent new duds may be relevant. Musing with respect to those who do not believe in childhood sexuality, Freud (1916/1972) noted that "It calls for real



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ingenuity not to see all this or to see it differently” (p. 316). Ingenuity perhaps or, I argue, an inadvertent epiphenomenon of commitment to a new theoretical model excessively separated from other frameworks. I take up these vital questions pertaining to seeing and not seeing in detail in chapter 2.

Common Ground

The analysand’s father was blessed with impressive “masculine assets” (Kohut, 1984, p. 130). The father had garnered many athletic and vocational trophies. Distant and forbidding, he was not an easy model for identification. In contrast, the patient had clearly come to feel closely identified with Kohut. This positive libidinal development stimulated intense fantasies, anxieties, and defensive processes apparently related to the admirable, exciting, yet potentially abusive facets of imposing masculine assets.

By Dream 2, the analysand may have been more comfortable identifying with men in general and with his father and analyst in particular. Receiving an award for career prowess, as his father had done, he shared the prize. As in the transference, this identificatory closeness with father (older gentleman sitting next to him) may have aroused homosexual anxiety, stimulating a need to seize control, sticking it to the audience counterphobically (especially to the gentleman/ father/Kohut). This sexually tinged fear of attack, provoking defensive counterattack, constitutes an alternative (complementary) hypothesis to Kohut’s assertion that the audience’s admiration was simply experienced as a shameful, stunning assault requiring retaliation in kind.

Kohut’s chapter sought to reconceptualize the fundamental ideas of resistance and defense. Classical analysis, the *fons et origo* of these concepts, continues to have much to offer to their elucidation even in analyses conducted primarily along other lines. Approaches estranged excessively from our rich tradition may miss crucial insights pertaining, for example, to phallic-oedipal, impulse-defense configurations. Restoration of continuing valid aspects of the classical perspective might eliminate some shortcomings, thereby magnifying the power of Kohutian formulation. Admiring looks and comments from analyst or audience might, for example, from a combined Freudian/Kohutian point of view, be experienced as pleasurable, even intensely so, and also as having potential to lead to shameful, stunning attack, especially if they are unconsciously associated with conflictual fantasies of (homo)sexual interest and invasion. Integrating self psychological with Freudian interpretation may afford more comprehensive, satisfying, therapeutically useful



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formulations and interventions.

Over a half century ago, Fenichel (1945) was among those who strove to integrate theories of instinct and narcissism: “Exhibitionism remains more narcissistic than any other partial instinct” (p. 72), he wrote. “Its erogenous pleasure is always connected with an increase in self-esteem, anticipated or actually gained through the fact that others look at the subject” (p. 72).

A quarter of a century before Fenichel, Freud (1920/1955b) himself, when he discussed the ending of infantile sexuality, observed that “loss of love and failure leave behind them a permanent injury to self-regard in the form of a narcissistic scar, which ... contributes more than anything else to the ‘sense of inferiority’ which is so common in neurotics” (pp. 20–21).

In a similar vein, Gedo and Goldberg (1973) noted that Freud regarded the threat of castration as a danger of narcissistic injury:

The gradual reduction of the child’s grandiosity comes to include his phallus last of all, so that phallic exhibitionism, as well as its counterparts in females, continues to be subject to the excessive vulnerability that characterizes every aspect of the grandiose self. ... A prerequisite for the resolution of the Oedipus complex is sufficient maturation along the paths of transformation of narcissism to permit the child to tolerate the mortification caused by the collapse of his phallic grandiosity. (p. 84)

More recently, Aron (1995), following Ikonen and Rechartd (1984), noted that the primal scene involves both narcissistic injury and relational deprivation. “It therefore serves as an internal structure regulating both narcissism and object relations” (Aron, 1995, p. 207).

This longstanding interest of Freud, Fenichel, Gedo, Aron, and others in integrating theories of infantile sexuality and narcissism continues to be an important project. My contribution, like theirs, suggests and supports the idea that these realms can be complementary rather than combatively opposed.

Terzo Fantasia – Affairs of the Heart (Crescendo)

His friend ... was with the patient during the analytic session ... lying next to the patient on the couch. There were other people in the room too, quite a few of them. Somebody seemed to have a heart attack. The patient sprang into action to help that man—an older person—doing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. (Kohut, 1984, p. 116)

Culminating a sequence of fantasies expressing increasingly overt sexuality, this third dream has prominent oedipal (including homoerotic, negative oedipal)



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elements. Dream 1 introduced the patient alone (albeit next to a dwelling, perhaps feeling excluded from parental sexual life, possibly attempting to lure phallic mother away from father to relieve loneliness, isolation, distress, and tension with her cure-all, penetrating enemas). Dream 2 presented sexual pairs more directly, generally as same sex couples. (The analysand cancelled an engagement so his wife and girlfriend could go out, then he sat beside agent at an exciting function. Later, he coupled with someone else, sharing a trophy.) In Dream 3, coupling and triangularity became even more explicit. The analysand lay intimately with his friend, whereas the older generation (analyst) was cast into the role of observer—a classic oedipal reversal.

Flashing a camera now seems tame compared to springing this epiphany on his analyst. The patient's overload of jealousy, excitement, exclusion, and homosexual anxiety appear to have been projected into the old man (analyst/father). Burdened by these highly charged evacuations, the elderly gentleman could scarcely contain the stimulation. His heart succumbed. As he went down, the perfect opportunity arose for the analysand to leap into action (as he did, less dramatically, in both previous dreams), going down on his analyst. Abandoning his mate to link up with the slightly removed, third party, the patient transcended separation, exclusion, and distress. In this grand finale, all passivity (feminine receptivity) was conveniently projected into the analyst as was all the dis-ease that had perturbed the patient in the original dream.

Although Kohut said nothing about it, consistent with his tendency to largely overlook sexuality in these dreams, mouth-to-mouth activity might be viewed as disguised eroticism, a splendid opportunity for short-circuiting the gap between the couple and the excluded one. Likely for defensive reasons, this event was portrayed as a medical necessity, like mother's enemas that may also have provided a sensational means for obliterating the generation gap, drawing one party away from other dyadic coupling. In contrast to such medically compelling rationales, only "psychotic" (p. 122) analysts would perceive passion in resuscitation, thrusting such gross ideas down patients' throats. If anyone were going to force anything into any orifice on anybody, the analysand preferred to be on top, in control, in the active, penetrating, heavy-breathing role.

Silent regarding the possibility of such sexual connotations, Kohut (1984) suggested "The revival of the father-analyst ... invited interpretation in terms of a death wish and reaction formation against it" (p. 146). He quickly dismissed that



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Freudian interpretation, asserting that “in reality, however, the active resuscitation expressed the patient’s wish to transform the analyst from an old, sick, dying man into a living, vital, and responsive ideal” (p. 146). Once again, Kohut’s view of traditional analysis underscored frightening, hostile oedipal elements (castration anxiety, terrifying primal scenes, and now death wishes) at the expense of other components of the complex, including erotic, loving aspects in all their complexity and depressive anxieties related to exclusion from the sexual arena.

By Dream 3, the analysand had come a long way from lonely thrashing. From isolation outside a room (exclusion, inferiority), he had progressed to a prominent position inside (phallic narcissism) and then to a triangular, oedipal, object relationship right in the consulting room. In this journey from the periphery, he finally fulfilled his ardent desire to include himself in all the frantic, carnal action, the paroxysms of the heart. No longer left to fantasizing and other solitary modes of release, he was, at last, passionately involved with a beloved, transference parent. He could shift attention freely from one partner to the other, as diverse needs and inclinations arose. Kohut did not say anything about this impressive progression.

The Complete Oedipus

The negative oedipal suggested in this patient’s material is but one pole of the complete complex. “In each case the two coexist in dialectical relation to each other, and the task of the analyst is to ascertain which the different positions are which the patient takes up as he assumes and resolves his Oedipus complex” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 284). In keeping with that idea, I described the progression of positions this analysand assumed, and resisted, in his dreams. Kohut appeared mostly to have missed these manifestations. The reason for this oversight may have been that constrictions in his oedipal model and, especially, his commitment to a new framework cut him off from these jewels of classical thought. With a particularly strong drive to innovate, the treasure house of traditional insights is subject to being misperceived to an excessive extent as *The Prisonhouse of Psychoanalysis*, to borrow Goldberg’s (1990) provocative phrase. Understandably, one would want to escape from a jail rather than attempt to integrate its ambience into postpenitentiary life.

With respect to these gems, particularly the one that could be described as the jewel in the classical crown, Freud (1900/1953a) warned that

The Oedipus complex can ... be developed to a greater or less strength, it can even be



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reversed; but it is a regular and very important factor in a child's mental life, and there is more danger of our underestimating than overestimating its influence and that of the developments which proceed from it. (p. 207) This investigation suggests Freud's cautions continue to be relevant.

To Err Is Helpful

In his splendid article on slips, Rothenberg (1987) encouraged analysts to do with their errors what creative artists do, namely, welcome and even court them. Mistakes provide a unique way for material from the unconscious to enter into art or therapeutic dialogue. Slips are not simply to be passed over, corrected, or understood. They can be used, woven into the very fabric of art or analysis. This approach to the value of error holds true for scientific dialogue as well. Rothenberg urged us to articulate our errors, that is, separate them, then connect them with the creative context. In that spirit, I separated Kohut's error from his study, allowing it to speak as another important voice. In the following chapters, I connect this voice ever more strongly to a broader context, a creative endeavor, the evolution of psychoanalytic thought. Neither phase of this articulation process constitutes personal criticism of Kohut. To the extent that he slipped, he merely revealed his humanity. His oversight provides us with a rich opportunity for learning. As can be the case with art, his error is arguably the most unique, important element in his entire chapter. "In formal logic, a contradiction is the signal of defeat: but in the evolution of real knowledge it marks the first step in progress towards a victory," Wittgenstein declared (as cited in Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 206). I contradicted Kohut's assertion that there was no evidence of significant oedipal conflict in his patient's dreams. The purpose for articulating this contrary position was not to imply victory or defeat for any individual or point of view but rather to point the way to victory for our field.

Awareness of this conflict between Kohut's data and his conclusion opens a path toward a significant advance in understanding crucial processes in the evolution of analytic thought. This contradiction is therefore, for me, the *pièce de résistance* in his chapter. It is the penicillin in his petri dish. With an eye toward this larger picture, that serendipitous opposition between his clinical material and formulation is not a phenomenon to be overlooked or dismissed as insignificant. It is, rather, one to be worked with and understood.



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Conclusion

Kohut was unable to discern any pathogenic oedipal manifestations in his analysand's dreams or anywhere else "in the material that preceded them and followed them right up to the end of the patient's long analysis" (p. 126). In contrast, I found each dream and the surrounding clinical material contained prominent, phallic-oedipal dynamics. Furthermore, dramatic progression over the three-dream sequence powerfully underscored the importance of the phallic-oedipal dimension.

This remarkable evolution across the dreams correlated with noteworthy, corresponding, clinical progress. Proudly reporting that he could now warmly engage in kind ways with family and colleagues, the analysand conveyed his advance in relational capacity from an awkward, tense, isolated condition (like outside the motel) to a more comfortable, although still somewhat distanced, position in which his needs to be attended to and admired were met (as at the law society) and, finally, to a closer, compassionate, more intimate, clearly postdyadic relationship (as in the triangular setting linking the bustling consulting room with the outside world).

Kohut's attachment to his framework and to ongoing innovation seemed to have interfered strikingly with his ability to tap into the revelatory and explanatory powers of traditional psychoanalysis. In consequence, his capacity to more fully comprehend his analysand appears to have been compromised. Powerful investment in promoting and extending the power and explanatory range of new formulations can insidiously close our minds to crucial, hard-won insights. Scientific progress may be obstructed as much by overemphasizing innovation as by rigidly adhering to tradition.

Kohut's difficulty evaluating the relative utility of classical and self-psychological perspectives, despite his conscious attempt to do so, suggests the cognitive processes underlying such constriction of thought operate outside our ken (cf. Gedo, 1984, p. 110). Mental operations always begin outside awareness, Freud (1912/1958c) maintained. Only some become conscious. In this chapter, I endeavored to bring a searchlight to bear on certain important, unconscious processes and their significant sequelae so that we can begin to gain greater control over them rather than being subject to their silent machinations. By increasing our understanding of such subtle operations, we can augment our



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chances of preventing, or at least catching, such crucial cognitive slippage.

The magnitude of discrepancy in perception and formulation between Kohut and myself is, in this instance, highly significant. This substantial variance brings one face-to-face with the core problem in clinical inference—reliability—the question of whether two or more independent investigators can make the same judgment as to what is (and is not) present in a sample of data (Bolgar, 1965). Dramatic divergence between qualified observers raises disturbing questions pertaining to the nature, soundness, and scientific integrity of the psychoanalytic enterprise. Opponents of analysis would readily draw disparaging conclusions about this state of affairs. We should be able to do much better than that in terms of making sense of, and learning from, this perturbing, intriguing situation.

In the next chapter, I therefore discuss how it could be possible for a superb, classically trained analyst not to perceive profuse, phallic-oedipal material, particularly when searching for it for purposes of comparative analysis. Beyond seeking insight into this enigma, in subsequent chapters, I utilize the knowledge gained from this investigation to explore and develop implications for psychoanalytic education, for clinical practice, and for forging a less disjunctive approach to the evolution of analytic thought and organizational structures.

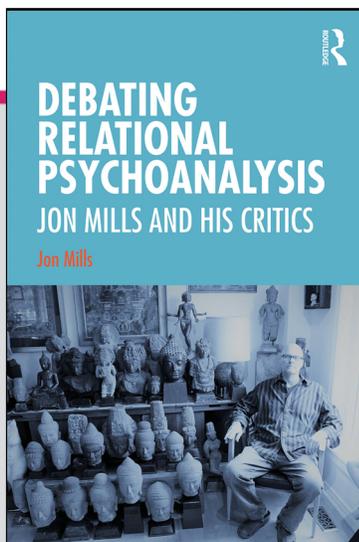


CHAPTER

5

INTRODUCTION

(RE)VISIONING RELATIONAL PSYCHOANALYSIS



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Debating Relational Psychoanalysis
by Jon Mills

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INTRODUCTION

(RE)VISIONING RELATIONAL PSYCHOANALYSIS

Excerpted from *Debating Relational Psychoanalysis*

The specific intent of this book is twofold: (1) to provide an historical record in one volume of the debates that had taken place for nearly two decades on my critique of the relational movement, including all the responses from my critics; and (2) to extend an olive branch to relational practitioners in the hopes that further dialogue may not only lead to conciliation, but more optimistically, that relational theory may be inspired to improve upon its theoretical edifice, both conceptually and clinically, as well as develop technical parameters to praxis that help guide and train new clinicians to sharpen their own theoretical orientation and therapeutic efficacy.

Since I started my critique, relational psychoanalysis, in its contemporary reliance on the notions of intersubjectivity, attachment theory, phenomenology, systems and field theory, and postmodernism, has blossomed from being a homegrown, United States East coast club to an international phenomenon with chapters in North America, Central America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Australia. One cannot deny the appeal and impact this movement has had on practitioners worldwide, and in a multitude of cultures and languages, without living in bad faith. The sheer number of professionals attracted to this school and style of thought empirically speaks for itself. In short, it's the hottest thing since sliced bread. So we must ask, Why? Although I address this in a number of ways throughout my writings, in retrospect, the mass appeal is obvious: we all want and value relationships. So, it is not unsurprising that many mental health professionals from diverse educational backgrounds would gravitate toward this perspective, and without having to observe orthodoxy or be formally ordained a "psychoanalyst." This level of inclusivity is historically unparalleled in psychoanalytic studies.

The reader may not be aware of the extent to these debates on the critique and value of relational psychoanalysis, nor on their divisiveness and acrimony, simply because the literature is so diverse and sprawling; one cannot keep up on every detail or burgeoning controversy unless you are attuned to these group microdynamics, identified with the movement, and/or subscribe to the copious publications the relational literature has spawned. Also, like fads, historical memory has a tendency to bathe in Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. But it may not be inappropriate to say that because of the public exchanges in writing and at professional conferences, these debates have historical significance in the development of the psychoanalytic movement as a whole simply due to their contentiousness and proclivity to question cherished assumptions, both old and



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new. And not unlike the early political skirmishes that led to the classical split from Adler, Stekel, Tausk, Jung, Groddeck, Rank, Ferenczi, and other pioneering thinkers, not to mention the historic Controversial Discussions over the Melanie Klein/Anna Freud debates that led to the formation of the British Independents, later followed by the French school, self psychology, the re-emergence of attachment paradigms, and most recently, neuropsychology, it is not necessarily a bad thing to challenge the conventional wisdom of our ancestors and new paragons that boast better approaches to theory and practice. After all, any discipline may only advance through critique and creative refinement. Although I am no longer interested in critiquing the relational school, and offer this volume as a means of putting matters to rest, it is my expressed intent that a continuation of critique and dialogue may only lead to improvements in relational thinking, especially with the tradition's recent turn toward self-critique and de-idealization of theory.

Controversy surrounding my critique

I have been referred to as “the most important and profound spokesman to critique the relational psychoanalytic movement” (Govrin, 2017, p. 309). How I got this epitaph is likely based on my original 2005 article that turned into my 2012 book, *Conundrums: A Critique of Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, which one reviewer called “a stimulating work that will enrage and provoke its readers” (Ridenour, 2012, p. 9). I won a Gradiva Award for Best Article given by the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (NAAP) in New York City, and later a Goethe Award for Best Book by the Canadian Psychological Association. The book received an outpouring of reviews, which led to a podcast interview on *New Books in Psychoanalysis*, and eventually an international conference held in Israel, the conference proceedings of which were later published in a relational journal. Let me tell you why I wrote that book.

After receiving my first doctorate in clinical psychology and initiating psychoanalytic training (having been supervised by Merton Gill), I was given a full fellowship at Vanderbilt University to complete my PhD in philosophy. Although I still read canonical texts in psychoanalysis, I was virtually learning a new discipline and had engrossed myself in classical readings in the history of philosophy, eventually specializing in late Modern philosophy, German Idealism, psychoanalysis, and the Continental tradition. During this time of study, I could not follow all the new developments in psychoanalysis due to my other commitments,



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but because I was introduced to Stephen Mitchell during my first graduate studies, and had read some of his early books, I decided to reach out to him. Through our correspondence, I was invited to write two book reviews for his then newly founded journal, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. When I began to read the books sent to me, I was a Fulbright scholar in the departments of philosophy at the University of Toronto and York University where I was completing research for my dissertation. Then Steve tragically died.

After I received my PhD, I began to immerse myself in the contemporary psychoanalytic literature I had neglected to read over the previous five years. This is when I grew increasingly aware of how various intersubjective and relational authors were borrowing concepts and terms from philosophy, often relying on secondary sources and annexing ideas out of context and without following protocols for traditional scholarship I was accustomed to expect from my formal training in philosophy. The broad summaries of key figures in the history of philosophy without bothering to consult the original textual sources was particularly an irritant, as I had been trained this was poor if not substandard scholarship. In graduate school, I had a very profound awakening and learned a most invaluable lesson—what it means to be a scholar is to always engage original texts. Unlike psychology, where the convention is to summarize what other commentators have said about key sources, the humanities, and particularly philosophy, requires that original texts be consulted, and often in their native language, in order to determine for oneself what a theorist really said rather than relying on hearsay from a secondary expositor who may be distorting the meaning of what was actually conveyed by the original author, hence portraying an *explanandum* as an *explanans*, inaccurately I may add. For this reason, I came to adopt a scholarly attitude that if original texts are not consulted and referenced directly, then we have no real epistemological means of knowing if one's interpretation of theory is plausible, let alone logical or empirically accurate or verifiable, hence of merit or is correct.

After digesting the contemporary literature, including the proliferation of studies on attachment and neuroscience, I started writing. I felt identified as a relational practitioner given that is how I saw myself practicing in the office (based on my training in Chicago where interpersonal and self psychological perspectives were dominant, not to mention the contemporary writings at that time), but not without maintaining the academic scholarly standards I had acquired in my formal philosophical training. After consuming a wide swath of works in the contemporary



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psychoanalytic literature, I published the 2005 controversial paper, “A Critique of Relational Psychoanalysis,” published in the APA Division 39: Psychoanalysis journal, *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. Little did I know what landmine I was stepping into, not to mention the politics behind the scenes that had been brewing before publishing this first critique paper.

I was surprised at first how this essay had immediately launched a storm. Later, I realized how going after sacred cows was not appreciated by many political camps within Division 39 who identified themselves as relational: this paper was an unwelcome trespass—critique was off-limits. Now, it is taught in psychoanalytic training environments throughout the world.

After the deluge, the editor of the journal had contacted me requesting my reply to many prominent senior analysts’ responses to my article which were quite critical, some even scathing if not scandalous, including being accused of ethics violations and committing illegal libellous acts. My response escalated matters and this led to a coup within the Division 39 governance where I was eventually censored by the Publications Committee from providing further written commentary to my critics (see Mills, 2012, pp. 141–158 for details). Although Neil Altman (2007), Jody Messler Davies (2007), and Irwin Hoffman (2007) were allowed to critique me in professional public space, I was not allowed a response. This provoked the editor, Joseph Reppen, to publish the following response to the censorship:

The preceding Commentaries are published as a consequence of a condition demanded by Drs. Altman, Davies, and Hoffman, and agreed upon by the Publications Committee of the Division of Psychoanalysis, that there be no response by Dr. Mills to their Commentaries published in *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. This stricture may not be in keeping with the spirit of openness of this journal under my editorship. Nonetheless, readers are free to draw their own conclusions as to the appropriateness of this condition. (Reppen, 2007, p. 406)

So there you have it. Why did I write *Conundrums*? Out of moral principle. Because I was silenced and not allowed democratic free speech within an established professional and academic organization, I felt compelled to conduct further research and expand my critique of relational psychoanalysis at a more in-depth level. And the rest is history.

Without getting into all of the gossip or betraying professional confidences and personal secrets, suffice it to say that I was banished from the relational community. The alliances I had forged and the so-called authentic relationships I



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thought I had developed all but vanished. The line was drawn in the sand. The relational enclave would not see me as their own, but rather as an enemy. Fortunately, I have a thick skin as I have always viewed myself as an independent thinker. A groupie I could never be. But many respectable and highly influential people came out of the woodwork to support me and helped to advance my career, for which I will be forever grateful and deeply appreciative. This was my crash course in psychoanalytic politics. Ironically, if Steve Mitchell were alive today, we likely would be friends, because I sensed a genuine philosophical spirit in our brief correspondence that was open to critique and criticism, or he would not have gone on to spur new directions in psychoanalytic discourse.

I must report that Altman, Davies, and Hoffman did not give their permission to have their 2007 Commentaries on my critique reproduced in this volume. The reader must refer to these articles independently in the published issue of *Psychoanalytic Psychology* (Issue 2, April) in order to read what they actually said in print. It was only for wanting to cull together the complete historical record and in full transparency that I invited their inclusion in the first place. I hope any bad feelings they harbor will come to pass.

Similarly, another related controversy arose during the production of this book when it was decided by the press that certain portions of my original 2005 critique article and my 2006 reply to my critics needed to be modified and/or cut due to potential legal liability concerns despite the fact that the original papers underwent a blind peer review process and were published in a leading APA journal. Not only were substantial controversial discussions omitted here, but the tone of my critique has softened. Therefore, readers will have to consult the original articles in order to fully savor the extent of the controversy. It is comforting to know how a free exchange of ideas can become legalized. Perhaps this is a good example of why Dick the Butcher said: "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers."¹

After *Conundrums* was published, an international conference was organized and held in Israel in 2015 titled, *The Relational Approach and its Critics: A Conference with Dr. Jon Mills*, which was sponsored by the Israeli Forum of the International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (IARPP) and the Department of Hermeneutics and Cultural Studies at Bar-Ilan University. The conference proceedings were then later published in 2017 in the journal, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. My article from that conference received yet



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another Gradiva Award from NAAP in 2018. As you will see in this book, the responses to my lectures at this conference by several panelists were quite sophisticated and challenging, hence providing their own critiques of my critique. As a result, there was genuine dialogue and new friendships emerged, which is what the true spirit of relationality is all about.

The relational turn toward self-critique

Before the Israeli conference and before I was aware of the turn toward selfcritique in some quarters of the relational community, I was deemed a principle critic of relational theory and practice. I always viewed myself as offering a critique from *within* the relational community when in fact I am seen as an outsider, like some Freudian in the closet. Yet despite my penchant for classical theory, by today standards I practice as a relationalist, at least in the sense of what is now dubbed “small r” rather than “big R” relational practice (Kuchuck, 2018). It was not until I examined the two edited volumes by Lewis Aron, Sue Grand, and Joyce Slochower, *De-Idealizing Relational Theory: A Critique from Within* (2018a), and *Decentering Relational Theory: A Comparative Critique*(2018b), that I realized I was airbrushed out of relational self-critique. In these two volumes, I am mentioned only once by Donnel Stern (2018, p. 30) who alerts the reader that he will *not* be “considering the philosophical critiques of relational psychoanalysis that have been mounted in recent years by North Americans (e.g., Mills, 2005c, 2012).” It is also an inconvenient truth that I am barely mentioned in reviews that I self-identify as a relational practitioner despite my numerous pronouncements otherwise (Mills, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2012, 2017b). Even most recently I am mischaracterized, set up for a gross misrepresentation of my actual views, and pilloried by a posterchild of the relational scene (Rozmarin, 2019), presumably due to political partisanship, to which I provide a corrective (Mills, 2020).

Despite the fact that I have been praised by some relational authors for vitalizing the ongoing conversation around critique in efforts to sharpen relational theory (Barsness, 2018, p. 321), and new postrelational critics have emerged since I initiated my earlier critiques (Govrin, 2016; Brown, 2017; Mills, 2017a; Axelrod, Naso, & Rosenberg, 2018), the relational community has largely sought to marginalize and displace me by simply ignoring my writings. I suppose this is not to be unexpected, as no one likes a gadfly. But this unfortunately draws into question the notions of integrity, honesty, and ethics (Naso, 2010).

For example, in the recent turn toward self-critique, arguments made by me years



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ago are presented as fresh ideas by relational authors, such as the need to engage in “self-reflection,” “critical self-examination” (see Aron, Grand, & Slochower, 2018a, p. 1), and observe how idealization of theory is a trope based on group overidentification and transference to theory. The notion of “excess” and “exaggerating difference” between other schools is now offered as counterarguments to critics of relationality (Slochower, 2018, p. 8), not to mention the indebtedness the relational school has to earlier psychoanalytic ideas they have historically inherited. And what about the analyst’s epistemology? “Might we overlook our patient’s need for us to *know*, to comfortably hold our authority” (Slochower, 2018, p. 20)? Yes, a point I have made repeatedly (Cf. most recently Mills, 2017b, p. 318), as well as questioning the ideal of mutuality and a lack of “self-restraint” on “speaking freely” (Slochower, 2018, p. 22). Examining the notions of “radical equality” (Mark, 2018, p. 81), decentering the unconscious (S. Stern, 2018), criticisms of relational scholarship and theory (D.B. Stern, 2018), and a critique of dissociation, multiplicity, and self-state theory (Orange, 2018) are topics I have covered at length (Mills, 2005a, 2010, 2012). These omissions represent, at minimum, shoddy scholarship and could be viewed by some as bordering on plagiarism, even if unintended or unconsciously informed, although, in my mind, it speaks to how selective our group identifications can be. In the spirit of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, what Marx called “ruthless critique,” has been replaced by friendly interviews and surveys of past narratives noting minor differences that are peppered with self-congratulatory, appreciative ceremonials among friends. That is not what I had in mind. What I had envisioned as radical reengagement via wrestling with many of the key assumptions and tenets of relational theory and praxis has still to materialize. But with this turn toward critical self-analysis opens certain clearings that were heavily occluded and resisted against in the past by earlier relational founders (as is typical of psychoanalytic history), and ushers in new possibilities for rigor and improvement. This new pronounced attitude of openness to self-critique should also include any critique, as critique should not be parochial or based on a political following due to the fact that criticism of ideas is open to universal opinion and worthy of analysis regardless of identification with a particular psychoanalytic school.

The future of relational psychoanalysis

Let us set aside the caricatures of the relational analyst, what I have admittedly raised in past writings to highlight differences, as I did with the caricatures of classical practitioners, hence emulating a style largely adopted by many relational



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authors. As Joyce Slochower (2018) currently observes is the popular opinion of relational critics:

We've been depicted as clinically impulsive, self-referential, superficial, foreclosing, or sidestepping reflective space. These are caricatures that exaggerate and distort. But in the absence of clinical thoughtfulness, they're the doors we're vulnerable to walking through. (p. 20)

What is interesting for me to notice in my own self-reflections on my previous valuations is the fact that I have been more critical of the relational community's lack of its own theory versus clinical attitudes, sensibility, and technique. I have in fact praised the liberation of relational praxis to classical technique, at least how it has been presented (if not distorted) in the literature. The liberation of customizing an intersubjective fit in the analytic dyad between two subjects is essential in a successful treatment rather than the superimposition of a structural model of rules or mechanical expectations and events that both participants must conform to before professional work is commenced. This is not the real world of lived experience, conflict and desire, nor the needs of the masses. Relational treatment parameters have opened up a new and vital space for attracting and treating the contemporary public which classical models have failed to achieve. Having said this, and before offering caveats and concerns, I wish to reflect on the future (re)visioning of relational psychoanalysis and what it may potentially achieve if sufficient attention is paid to a refashioning of its core principles, values, and developmental trajectory as a new psychoanalytic school of thought.

I do not think traditional psychoanalysis has a prayer's chance in hell of surviving in the future in North America. It simply boils down to money and time (neither of which are forthcoming in today's world for social collectives), but we are also faced with a millennial and postmillennial mentality of quickfix expectations, capitalistic impositions and greed, insurance and corporate directives and interferences, exploitation of consumer ignorance, political ideology, professional in-fighting, and every conceivable obstacle to entering into classical psychoanalytic treatment. The multiple-weekly patient attendance for analysis is now confined to those clinicians who are in training to become psychoanalysts in order to fulfill their institutional requirements, and/or for supervisory mandates, unless you are wealthy and have a proclivity for selfreflection, curiosity, and leisure. Psychoanalysis these days is weekly face-to-face psychoanalytic therapy with those who have appropriate clinical training, sensibility, and skill. Unlike other parts of the world, such as in Europe and South America, where the fee for service is marginally low in



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comparison to their North American counterparts, psychoanalytic clinical practice is destined to become a far less frequent face-to-face interaction, let alone to use the sacrosanct “couch.” The “frequency and furniture wars” are dead and buried. It is the education and mindset of the clinician in relation to the personality and needs of the patient within the unique therapeutic dyad that will determine the scope and depth the treatment will manifest, develop, or otherwise have to offer, and these are subject to many contextual contingencies that are part of any individualized treatment.

Negation versus Innovation

One of the main goals that lie ahead for the stakeholders of relational psychoanalysis is the need to develop more of a cohesive theoretical paragon and systematic guidelines to praxis that take into account how relationality is differentiated from other psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic models. In other words, What does relational psychoanalysis offer that other schools of psychoanalysis do not? Currently, it lacks formalization. It has made its claim to fame more about practice rather than theoretical orientation, explanation, or offering a philosophy of mind and culture. Relational theory is built on negation and anti-Freudianism: it seeks to replace drive theory but offers little novelty that has not already been offered by earlier psychoanalytic movements. Because of this, it suffers an image problem to psychoanalytic audiences worldwide who had already adopted relational principles in theory and practice. The exaggerations, distorted position statements, and manufactured misinterpretations attributed to classical authors hardly demonstrate scholarship. A most recent example is Stephen Seligman’s (2018) sophomoric attempt to dismiss “instinct theory” (pp. 119–120), itself a misnomer, by reclaiming the primacy of the “two-person” approach that has “dislocated” the “centrality of the endogenous primitive instincts” (p. 4), when he exposes his profound mischaracterization of Freud’s texts. When a so-called “new” paradigm is orchestrated based on the refutation of the old, when the old is not even accurately presented and articulated, let alone quoted, then original ideas lose their original radicality, significance, and understanding.

Another embarrassment is the insistence that relational psychoanalysis constitutes a “paradigm shift,” oratory devised by Mitchell in order to fuel revolt against so-called classical dogma by practitioners who were more interpersonally trained, such as at the William Alanson White Institute. This is overinflated (if not



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grandiose) hype. The misattribution of paradigm shifts in science brought to bear on psychoanalysis betrays the historical and actual conditions inherent in the philosophy and institution of science proper. Paradigm shifts only apply to the natural sciences. According to Kuhn, theories and methodology in the social sciences are *preparadigmatic*.

In his Preface to the second edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn (1970) recounts how surprised he was to discover, during his time at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences, that “the practice of astronomy, physics, chemistry, or biology normally fails to evoke the controversies over fundamentals that today often seem endemic among, say, psychologists or sociologists” (p. viii). This is to say that the social sciences do not undergo paradigm shifts because they have no proper paradigm to begin with that meets the criteria of natural science, physics being the exemplar. Science can at least agree upon fundamental conjectures and laws, which must be refuted or overturned to create new paradigms. The social, and to a lesser extent, the human sciences, which psychoanalysis by definition is part of, is a failed emulation of natural science, not because it should not be attempted, as Kuhn argues, but because the social sciences simply do not presently meet the standards of natural science, not that they should not try or may not one day succeed in. This is why claims of paradigm shifts in the humanities and behavioral sciences have met with rancor among actual scientists who conduct experiments, test, and measure phenomena in the natural world, and who have adopted a customary view of what constitutes authentic science. Of course, psychoanalysis can claim to have its own theoretical and methodological paradigms which undergo evolution, devolution, revolution, and supersession, but they would not meet the strict criterion attributed to the hard sciences. Despite Freud’s (1940) insistence that psychoanalysis is a “natural science” (p. 282), by today’s standards, this would be a category mistake.

Psychoanalysis in general is guilty of speaking to its own coterie regardless of theoretical orientation, but when theory is built on negation it can suffer from its own lack of self-development, creativity, innovation, and progressive enrichment. A good example of this is the invented “myth of the isolated mind,” wrongfully attributed to Freud, and the so-called absence of a two-person psychology classical psychoanalysis has purportedly omitted from its canon, when there is no textual evidence *at all* in Freud’s *Gesammelte Werke* to substantiate this (false) accusation. Furthermore, there is no such thing as a “post-Cartesian” psychoanalysis, as if Freud’s sophisticated theory of mind is boiled down to a freshman introductory



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textbook description of Descartes' philosophy (itself wholly inaccurate) and then conveniently retrofitted to repudiate Freud. Freud was no Cartesian (see Mills, 2012, pp. 90–94), and I bet most relationalists don't even know why. Springboarding off of the misinterpretation of classical theory to then erect a “new and improved” rendition of the human condition and its application to the consulting room is not the positive theory building that is needed to establish a more solid theoretical, philosophical, and methodological foundation the relational movement requires at this stage in its history. The revolution now needs evolution as the epigenesis of its modest beginnings.

Uniformity of theory?

How could relational theory become more novel and original to set it apart from its earlier ancestors? Of course, this is a question I cannot answer. Some attempt to establish a uniformity of theory may help, even among a sea of diversity, difference, and plurality of authors' voices. To get us started, we may ask, What is the essence of the relational platform? What unites like-minded practitioners? What does relational sensibility, theory, and praxis stand for that is:

1. Descriptive,
2. Coherent,
3. Expository,
4. Generalizable,
5. Meaningful, and
6. Pragmatic, namely, useful?

Steve Kuchuck and Rachel Sopher (2017) alert us to an attempt to reclaim the unconscious in relational theory, which I applaud. But how does a relational unconscious look like that is any different from previous incarnations of classical and postclassical iterations? Here, I imagine, the creative intellect could, in theory, fashion a logic of unconscious process that prioritizes relational dynamics in a systematic manner, but without having to appeal to the strong revolutionary language of jettisoning our archaic primacy on what psychoanalysis originally offered to humanity, namely, an encompassing interpretation and explanation of universal unconscious processes inherent in our embodied individuality and social collectives. I have attempted to show in a philosophical context how relationality is ontically prepared by an a priori presubjective unconscious ground that allows



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for the birth of conscious subjectivity and agency actualized through relational principles (Mills, 2010); but the full development and articulation of a theory of the relational unconscious is still to be actualized.

If no uniformity of relational theory is possible, even when attempting to allow for diversity by integrating difference and plurality, then fertility may be found in a radical rejection of uniformity. This is the postmodern position, which, as I will argue in this book, has its own endemic problems. But offering a theoretical groundwork for a “postmodern psychoanalysis” will at the very least be an attempt to organize a coherent framework of thought.

Relationality faces the same dilemma as do other psychological theories, methodologies, and systems of therapy as it attempts to embrace and incorporate the new “integrationist” pulse. We not only see this trend, if not academic requirement, in all droves of discourse in the history and systems of psychology, but contemporary predilections in theory and practice suffer various tensions and inadequacies of incorporation that have traditionally been seen as separate subdisciplines of the behavioral sciences: namely, insight-oriented, Gestalt, phenomenological, existential, humanistic, behavioral, cognitive, systems, interpersonal, emotion-focused, and the like. As the biological and neurosciences gain empirical ground in medicine and popularity, psychoanalysis must keep up with the times. Relational perspectives have enthusiastically embraced the broad diversity of many important scientific, philosophical, and political developments in culture and society including, but not limited to, offering a psychoanalytic theory of development based on attachment theory and infant observation research, cognitive science, affect regulation and mentalization, trauma studies, social-political activism, and distinct views on feminism, race, gender, sexuality, LGBTQ communities and the Trans movement, cultural differences, immigration, diasporas, sex-trade, the ethical turn, and ecopsychology, not to mention the disenfranchisement of identities and eroding national security in the globalization of technology, geopolitics, and economic disparities. As relational psychoanalysis flirts with political social philosophy, it may find new vistas in a marriage with philosophy, particularly Critical Theory (Mills, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). As a human science, psychoanalysis will prosper in the future by engaging other disciplines and discourses in the sciences and humanities by bringing a critical dialogue, critique, and reformulation of its principle hypotheses and assumptions to bear on those ideas that lie outside of its traditional scope of reference and engagement. Whether interdisciplinary encounters will lead to further disciplinary and



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subdisciplinary refinement is an open possibility, but I doubt it will lead to transdisciplinarity simply because most specialists cannot absorb the scholarship of other disciplines due to many prohibitive factors, including a lack of time for new studies and academic and institutional politics that thwart transdisciplinary publications and scholarship.

Toward a theory of technique

Is it possible to have a consensus on common therapeutic assumptions, principles, technical procedures, instruction, delivery, and on the forms of therapeutic action that are uniquely relational? According to Kuchuck (2018), “each Relational analyst defines and practices the perspective in his/her own particular way” (pp. 343–344), making relational theory and praxis susceptible to radical subjectivity, particularization, idiosyncrasy, and/or relativism. If this is the case, what sets the relational practitioner apart from other leanings, technical approaches, and schools? Although every clinician comes to define concepts and practice in their own individualized way, this does not mean they are devoid of a solid grounding in certain preferred theoretical orientations and techniques adopted in the consulting room that follow particular methodologies introduced in training and refined throughout independent practice. Despite the fact that certain therapeutic sensibilities, attitudes, preferences, viewpoints, and susceptibilities saturate the clinical milieu with wide variation and overlap in training, the question remains, What is exclusively relational?

To my knowledge, Roy Barsness (2018) provides the first comprehensive text on core competencies in relational practice based on Grounded Theory Analysis of qualitative data obtained by interviewing fifteen (N=15) self-identified relational psychoanalysts. Although the sample size is small and limited in generalizability, it provides a wealth of in-depth coding and analysis of data around defining characteristics, organizing principles, delimiting theory, and integrating categories and their properties into a set of central explanatory concepts. What emerged from his qualitative analysis are three primary categories, namely, (1) *positioning*, (2) *reflecting*, and (3) *engaging*, which were further grouped into seven core competencies including (a) therapeutic intent or purpose of treatment, (b) nonauthoritarian, collaborative therapeutic stance or attitude, (c) deep listening and immersion in the analytic process, (d) relational dynamics between the past and present (the there and then and the here and now), (e) patterning and linking, (f) repetition and working through, and (f) courageous honest speech and



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disciplined spontaneity. In fact, the study did arrive at one broad core category: *love*. I will let the reader reflect upon whether these clinical factors are transdisciplinary values shared by most if not all psychoanalytic schools of thought by adopting at least some of these identified core competencies, hence begging the question of what is uniquely relational; yet the focus on the interpersonal field and the therapy relationship between the clinician and patient may be decisive features that differentiate relational practitioners from other forms of psychoanalytic treatment. With the centrality of “love” associated with the kind of relationship the analyst engenders, it is appropriate to remind the reader that several early analysts, such as Otto Gross, Jung, Ferenczi, and Ian Suttie, to name a few, focused on love and tenderness between patient and analyst, and this was also a core feature of Binswanger’s (1962) Daseinsanalysis where he re-appropriates Heidegger’s notion of care or concerned solicitude as an extension of love in the therapeutic encounter.

Barsness has done a great service by attempting to categorize and systematize fundamental relational practices that may inspire further research, progress, innovation, and development in clinical theory and technique. Perhaps the direct and mutual sharing of emotion, feelings, thoughts, desires, and sometimes fantasies for each other in the treatment is the most controversial yet liberating dimension to relational practice. While classical perspectives are quick to curb the use and proclivity of self-disclosure of this type, specifically analyst self-disclosure or self-revelation, as it willows the traditional frame, if not seen as taboo, these factors are inherently risky and can lead to unpredictable outcomes at best. Although the use, scope, parameters, and limits of analyst self-disclosure are hotly contested, this is not a new phenomenon and has a prehistory in experimental technique dating back to Freud.

Karen Maroda (1991, 2010), a relational practitioner who has offered extensive guidelines for when and when not to make personal disclosures, is very sensitive to this issue as am I. The future of relational psychoanalysis would profit from debates and a more nuanced critique of analyst self-disclosure and revelation as this seems to be where the meat and contention lies, if not the Achilles’ heel. As with all clinical judgement, context is everything, but examining the conditions within therapeutic encounters, clinical phenomena, and demarcations to therapist self-disclosure will help us consider best practice approaches grounded in solid rationale apprising when disclosure or revelation is warranted, ambiguous, excessive, and/or prohibited. The same caveat may be said for when and when not



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to make an interpretation. This issue also interweaves with professional ethics and jurisdictional legislation based upon where one practices. These are the types of controversial discussions the relational community should welcome and tussle with (from critics and adherents alike), as justification for clinical practices and orienting principles to method and technique are what is relevant to all psychoanalytic schools.

On clinical theory

Because therapeutic praxis and technique rest on certain theoretical, philosophical, and empirical assumptions about human nature, the analytic process, and therapeutic action, they necessarily derive from and inform clinical theory. Because the assumptions we make, assert, or take for granted guide our approach in the clinic, interventions can either substantiate, reinforce, nullify, or refute our assumptions and conjectures. Therefore, clinical theory is intimately associated with the types of interventions we employ, experiment with, avoid, or suspend based upon treatment effects and utility.

Let us examine a recent example of clinical theory operative in erotic revelations and in the transference-countertransference dynamic. Andrea Celenza (2007) tells us that “all therapy revolves around one basic question, ‘Why can’t we be lovers?’” (p. 3). Elsewhere she adds: “This question must be reckoned with and will involve the use of erotic arousal in the dyad” (Celenza, 2010, p. 66). Continuing this theme, she further asks us “to wonder why there might be an absence of sexual desire with a particular patient. Why does this patient fail to erotically arouse, and might this be related to the issues of the treatment?” (Celenza, 2014, p. 20), something she calls a “universal longing” (p. 23). Taken at face value, this clinical assumption is not only naïvely reductive, it is palpably absurd because it simply is not true. This is not a theoretical speculation that libidinal forces and fantasies are innate in all people and are mobilized in the therapy, at least on some unconscious level, but that “all therapy revolves around” this “one basic” premise.

How is it possible to make such universal statements? Perhaps these propositions are designed to be cute or clever, theatrical, even amusing, playing on the trope and specter of the unconscious. Granted that erotic transferences and countertransferences are common, especially in formal analyses that entail multiple-weekly sessions (where fantasies are magnified and nurtured through the artificial social arrangement that does not reflect one’s real life with others outside of analysis), these are exceptions to the norm. When we are told that an



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absence of sexual desire in the analyst for the patient suggests that something is wrong with the treatment, hence insinuating the therapist's deficits or incompetence, then this makes dogmatic ontic assertions that are simply indefensible—a transference to theory. And when we are asked to ponder why a patient “fail[s] to erotically arouse” the therapist, as if there is something wrong either with the analyst or patient, and that the treatment has suffered, then this begs the question and fails to demonstrate why this is so. When this pronouncement is placed in the context of why my appallingly homely male patient fails to “erotically arouse” me in session, the answer is obvious. This question would never enter my mind if it were the last thing in the world.

One cannot draw a generalized universal statement of this magnitude unless it is experienced by the therapist for every patient. And how could this be possible? Where is there such salience in clinical work, let alone empirical evidence to validate such a blanket statement? But if an analyst holds this clinical theory that every therapeutic relationship will have to reckon with *a fortiori*, by necessity, then it is easier to imagine how we would project our own theories and psychic energies in this belief and quest to find it universally true. Perhaps Celenza has this issue more often than others, especially if she is looking to support her clinical theory, or finds herself in many eroticized treatment milieus due to the people she takes into her practice, but I highly doubt this could be the case for all her patients. But to her credit, she at least gives guidelines for when and when not to address erotic revelations and offer countertransference disclosures by the analyst.

Clinical theory is the most plastic and fluid of our professional constructions, open to conceptual analysis, experimentation, experiential muse, critique, and play, and to this end is perennially open to revision and reformulation. Relational thought has much to contribute to this burgeoning area in how theory guides technique.

Moving forward

I hope these debates do not take a backseat in psychoanalytic history, let alone become displaced or suppressed by the relational school, as nobody likes to be criticized and hence resists change or engagement with antagonists. There are many contemporary authors who I admire for their courageous writings, honesty, integrity, leadership, and vision for the future of the profession that anticipates and adapts well to the current climate of mental healthcare service delivery, that is, what people are genuinely looking for and are in need of when they seek out therapeutic help, and relationalists portend social realities that are likely to come



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to fruition in our tempestuous and often unpredictable times. It is my hope that the relational movement will improve upon its theoretical, clinical, and applied edifice as it faces and embraces critique, as there can be no progress without selfexamination, reflection, and reevaluation.

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1. William Shakespeare, *Henry VI*, Part 2, Act IV, Scene 2.

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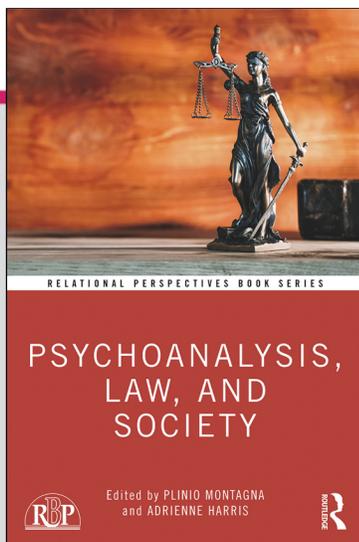


CHAPTER

6

THE TRAGEDY OF THE EARTH'S COMMONS

PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE LAW



This chapter is excerpted from
Psychoanalysis, Law, and Society

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Introduction

Greed, secrecy, and competitive strivings have been with us long before the time of Esau and Jacob. Conflicting legal claims to resources have concerned land use rights, water rights, mineral rights, or rights to the airspace above skyscrapers in New York. Securing legal rights over resources has repeatedly instigated armed conflicts, and the genocide of indigenous peoples. There is currently widespread human and nonhuman suffering due to overuse, misuse, and abuse of earth's land, sea, and atmospheric resources. Due largely to our use of fossil fuel resources, the climatic system itself now moves toward a less stable state that is much less conducive to human life. How can psychoanalysis shed light on this process of unrelenting ecosystemic destruction? How can we learn from other branches of psychology, sociology, and the earth sciences to contribute to finding a way out of this impending and unfolding disaster? What is the interaction of the legal system of environmental protections with conscious and unconscious motivations and defenses?

In this brief chapter, I will introduce the concept of "the tragedy of the commons," a theory put forth by Hardin, a biologist, who explained the motivations of individuals overusing resources held in common with one's group (Hardin, 1968). The psychoanalytic concepts of vulnerability and interdependence, in relation to the nonhuman environment, and our manic, omnipotent strivings to be free of this interdependence, will be discussed, with an overview of Searles, Freud, Jung, and contemporary analysts' thoughts about this. The rights of today's children to a livable, stable future environment, as being brought to court in *Juliana versus the United States*, will be discussed. The need to use both a hermeneutic approach and an action-oriented approach in response to the current climate crisis, as advised by Lifton and others, will be put forth.

The tragedy of the commons

The climate crisis can be understood as the end result of an initially rational choice made by many individuals holding resources in common. Hardin asks us to imagine a pasture which is available to a community of herders for grazing their animals. It is in each herder's best economic interest to graze as many animals as possible on the land, to eventually derive income from the sale or trade of one's animals. Due to typical drops in the populations of herders and animals from natural and human causes, the carrying capacity of the common land is maintained, even when a herder adds an additional animal. However, when the population of



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herders and animals grows to the land's carrying capacity, the addition of one more animal benefits the additional animal's owner, but detracts in a small measure from the health of all the other animals, and degrades the landscape, again in small measure. The herder who has added the one animal makes a gain of +1, but their loss is much less than - 1, so it is in one's economic interest to continue adding animals to one's herd. Continuing to deplete the commons by adding additional animals is therefore the "rational" choice. The herder with a conscience, who sees the longer-term dilemma, and chooses to not add more animals, is actually worse off economically than the non- conscientious herder. However, the "rational" choice, to add another animal and therefore provide more economically for one's self and offspring, actually worsens living conditions for all offspring in the long run. Thus, the "tragedy of the commons," and the need to regulate the use of resources which were initially held in common, and unrestricted, by communities. Hardin also pointed out that human population growth greatly accelerates the malevolent effects of this tendency toward overuse.

The secondary tragedy, at this point in time, is that regulatory agencies are not adequately regulating the extraction and use of fossil fuel resources that are the primary drivers of climate change. This is termed the "pipeline problem," as opposed to the "tailpipe problem" of consumers using fossil fuels. Hardin would likely point to the economic gain of the fossil fuel companies, as well as the economic gain, and health, of individuals surviving longer in homes heated and cooled with fossil fuels. Added to these are the economic gains of individuals using air travel for business; and the economic gains of individuals driving or riding vehicles to work. But our government, and legal system, could have used the knowledge of science in overseeing a broad transition to a fossil- free future in the 1990s, when the science of global warming was unequivocal. Sustainable infrastructure could have been developed by now, safeguarding generations to come, as well as safeguarding innumerable plant and animal species on land and in the seas. The data about human- caused climate change was documented by the 1940s (Fleming, 2009), and became increasingly clear each decade thereafter. A recent article about the many missed, and dismissed, opportunities to take appropriate action to curb fossil fuel use in the United States (Rich, 2018) during the 1970s and 1980s paints a tragic picture of political and economic self- interest prevailing over the preservation of our ecosystem. Furthermore, the US government, in recently opting out of the Paris Agreements, and in failing to address this crisis in time to alleviate the current and coming climate tragedies,



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has abdicated its basic duty to protect life.

From an analytic perspective, we (in the USA, at least) are now in a similar position to an adolescent with a neglectful caretaker. One could use stronger terms by saying that rather than providing for the basic human rights to clean air, water, and a sustainable ecosystem, the caretaker/ authority/ federal government has, in important ways, abandoned the child/ citizen, leaving them to a certainly darker future. This, while abdicating responsibility for doing so, and instead urging people to doubt the science of climate change.

The realization will gradually or suddenly dawn on people that we have been misled by the fossil fuel companies, who are currently proposing a carbon tax with the loophole that they cannot be sued for climate-related damages. The energy industry/ Republican party has been engaged in an agnatology campaign, using psychological tactics to attempt to convince the public that the science of climate change is faulty (Carter and Woodworth, 2018; Mann and Toles, 2016). Or, at the least, that there is enough uncertainty that the entire theory can be thrown out. Failing that (and this can be expected as the climate situation worsens), the US government may lean on the human tendency to expect a return to normalcy after periods of upheaval: that there will be some weather extremes, but we can ignore the problem, and the environment will find a new but reliably good enough steady state afterwards. This is not what climate scientists know to be true.

In recent years, many individuals have come to understand the perilous, worsening situation we are in, with tipping points approaching or passed, and some have tried to speak up about it and influence legal, public policy (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014). There is an inherent trauma to this situation, as when Dora spoke up about her abuse, and her expectation of more, only to hear from a patriarchal Freud that she brought it on herself, and it's not so bad. DeMocker has described the situation as similar to parents of teenagers continuing to bring out more kegs to the drunken adolescents at a party in the family home (DeMocker, 2018). Would we blame the kids here?

Vulnerability and dependence

In "Civilization and Its Discontents," Freud noted that human suffering came from three sources: our bodies (which are subject to decay and infirmity); from interpersonal relations; and from the "outer" world, which may "rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction" (Freud, 1930, p. 77). Freud believed that suffering that came from the "dreaded outer world" could be



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defended against by “becoming a member of the human community, and, with the help of a technique guided by science, going over to the attack against nature and subjecting her to the human will. Then one is working with all for the good of all” (Freud, 1930, p. 77). Vulnerability to the nonhuman was seen as a temporary societal state, on the way to scientific mastery of protections against objectified, nonhuman elements. Freud was grounded in Enlightenment principles, seeing the progress of civilization as the journey from “primitive”/ indigenous ways of life; through agrarian modes of living, and a reliance on religious institutions; and culminating in a rational, science-based, atheistic society of nationstates. This was in line with the dominant anthropological theory of unilinear cultural evolution, which saw indigenous peoples as barbaric, and as mentally inferior to “civilized” individuals. Franz Boaz, in his studies of indigenous peoples on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, disproved this theory in the late nineteenth century (Rohner, 1969). However, many westerners carry unconscious shadows of this belief, if not conscious biases in line with it.

Despite his Cartesian leanings, Freud nonetheless was flexible enough in his thinking to bring therapy into the urban environment of Vienna on his walks with patients. The analytic frame could occur in a restaurant, or when Freud was away on summer vacation in the Semmering Mountains of Austria. His flexibility was not practiced by American “Freudian” analysts for decades. The idea of bringing the therapy out of the office and into the outdoors was written about by Stefano more recently in his work with children (Santostefano, 2004).

In contrast, Jung privileged indigenous peoples as holding an innate environment-suffused wisdom that was largely inaccessible to modern peoples. He saw “civilized” peoples as having little conscious or personal relationship with the nonhuman environment. Jung traveled to Taos, New Mexico, and to Tanzania and Uganda to live with and learn from indigenous peoples. Jung was ahead of his times when he wrote in his autobiography:

What we from our point of view call colonization, missions to the heathen, spread of civilization, etc., has another face— the face of a bird of prey seeking with cruel intentness for distant quarry— a face worthy of a race of pirates and highwaymen. (Jung, 1962, p. 248)

This echoes the tragedy of the commons: the exploitation of resources (and the indigenous peoples dependent upon those resources) by those wanting economic power. This exploitation denies the interrelationship, and interdependence, of all



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aspects of our ecosystems. It objectifies nonhuman elements, and indigenous peoples, in a doer– done- to relation, playing out an I- It dynamic as opposed to Buber's I-Thou. It avoids feelings of vulnerability and interdependence with ecosystemic elements.

Orange has written about this in her recent text about the tragic suffering of indigenous peoples, from the days of chattel slavery in the USA, through current populations affected by the climate crisis (Orange, 2017). Those currently affected include residents of low-lying islands who are losing their lands; subsistence farmers who cannot subsist on land stressed from extreme weather events; and migrants fleeing wars related in part to dwindling natural resources. She sees climate change as a social justice issue of major proportions, requiring empathy with the suffering of those already impacted by both our use of fossil fuels, and our systematic disregard of the ecosystem.

Unlike indigenous peoples who consciously and intimately depend on the earth environment, and are therefore vulnerable to its changes, individuals living in post-modern cultures can ignore, deny, or minimize their awareness of, and dependence upon, the climate, water, air, plants, and animal life that sustain us. As Searles noted in 1960, more than 99 percent of what we interact with is nonhuman, yet our psychological theories ignore this aspect of interrelatedness (Allured, 2014; Searles, 1960). In his 1960 text, Searles wrote:

It is my conviction that there is within the human individual a sense, whether at a conscious or unconscious level, of relatedness to his nonhuman environment, that this relatedness is one of the transcendently important facts of human living, that – as with other very important circumstances in human existence – it is a source of ambivalent feelings to him, and that, finally, if he tries to ignore its importance to himself, he does so at peril to his psychological well-being. (Searles, 1960, p.6)

Much as we have a tendency to deny psychological dependence on those intimately involved with our care, we also deny our psychological dependence upon physical environments that set our circadian rhythms, develop aspects of reality testing, and provide relief from anxiety (Searles, 1960). Searles later theorized that the psychoanalytic community was under the sway of what would now be termed the social stigma bias, avoiding speaking about the environmental crisis due to fear of censure by our colleagues (Searles, 1972). When a colleague of mine recently spoke up about the dearth of conference presentations on the climate crisis at an open microphone portion of a plenary address (IARPP, New York



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City, 2018), one of the conference organizers responded, “Maybe we are all feeling overwhelmed.” Maybe this is an understatement.

Searles boldly spoke up about the environmental crisis in 1972 because he saw the destructive forces inherent in society as potentially leading to ecocide, and suicide for humanity. He implored analysts to study the unconscious processes at work in this crisis, and theorized that extinguishing life for our children and future generations would make us victors in the Oedipal struggle: upcoming rivals for our spouse would be denied a full life and therefore a chance to replace us. Searles saw our apathy about the crisis as having depressive undercurrents, like “the psychotically depressed patient based on suicide by selfneglect (Searles, 1972, p. 366).” Searles suggested that up until recently, humanity lived in “meaningful kinship” with the nonhuman world, and each person found individual, unique ways to differentiate from the nonhuman on the journey from childhood to adulthood. In 1972, he saw the civilized populace as, instead, merged into a technological world that was powerful, complex, and overwhelming.

In Searles’ view, omnipotent strivings are projected onto this technoworld, and the mature understandings of loss and inevitable death are not achieved. Rather than experiencing the human conflict between our vulnerabilities and our omnipotent, invulnerable longings, Searles saw us as projecting this conflict into the struggle between vulnerable ecosystems and technology’s destructive impact. It seems clear that both are real conflicts needing awareness and thoughtful action.

Weintrobe saw our struggles with the environmental crisis in a similar way: we have two basic parts of the self, one that loves reality, is aware of our ability to harm, and wants to make reparation; and a second, narcissistic part that hates the limitations of reality, sees ourselves as “special,” and is prone to magical thinking (Weintrobe, 2013). The more degraded the environment becomes, and the less predictable the climatic system becomes, the more difficult it is to face this very real aspect of interrelationship and dependency.

Dependence upon our ecosystem can be experienced as castrating, regressive, and overwhelming. The climate crisis developed in part because of a disavowed dependence on the ecosystem, and false dichotomies between the human and the nonhuman. It continued because fossil fuels promised both economic benefits and lifestyle pleasures, which together often led fossil fuel users to a less vulnerable societal position in relation to those not using them. The crisis is partly about a lack of imagination of the potentially mind- numbing implications of the



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catastrophe, especially in the USA. The USA by history was distant from New World threats, and had, until the Second World War, seen itself as invulnerable to catastrophic external threats. The current US administration belittles personal and national vulnerability. Scientists who can understand deep time, and are trained in envisioning vastly different geological ecosystems, cannot easily convey their larger perspective, which took years of training to hold in mind. Bureaucratic inertia, citizens' fears of confronting the dysfunctional authority/ federal/ regulatory system, and short- term economic self- interests compound defenses against knowing/ feeling. Disavowal and manic invulnerability can become the standard defenses in holding fears at bay.

I have written before about our avoidance of our dependence upon the ecosystem, and our manic flight away from a psychological rootedness in the earth (Allured, 2018a). The ancient Greek myths of Pegasus and Icarus both convey the theme of the desire for an escape from ties to earthly struggles and connections. An exploration of our greatest fears related to our dependence upon the earth and its ecosystems seems most timely right now. It would be helpful to confront the fallacy of the individual self, a Cartesian error that can contribute to denying and dissociating our active participation in the whole ecosystem. An acceptance of our psychological and physical dependence upon the ecosystem can re- activate a yearning to re- connect with nonhuman landscapes, and listen to what is occurring in them. Metaphorically, if we are not paying attention to our mother, how can we know what she needs?

Winnicott was the first to propose that not only did the baby depend upon the mother, but that the baby was not an individual unit of being (Winnicott, 1975). Likewise, it is time to shift our analytic theories to reflect the fact that *there is no person without an ecosystem*.

This is as true *psychologically* as it is physically. To ignore the ecosystem in our analytic theories is to ignore some of the most profound and meaningful aspects of the psyche. Ignoring the ecosystem in our theories, at this point in time, is as dysfunctional as ignoring the blaring sirens Winnicott spoke up about in the "Controversial Discussions" in England during the Second World War. We are of the nonhuman, in our basic elemental chemical nature, our animal instincts to reproduce, and our ancient mammalian attachment system (founded on the mammary glandular system, with the suckling/ let down reflexes in partners). We are constantly suffused with the inflow/ outflow of nonhuman elements: food,



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breath, warmth, cold, light, musical vibration, vocal cords singing or crying our pain, the resonant vibration of a lover's voice, a thunderclap, excretion. In honoring Sullivan's humble, equalizing statement, "We are all, more simply, human than otherwise," I will elaborate, *We are all, more simply, nonhuman than otherwise.*

This enlarges our sense of self rather than denigrating it. Whether we see our uniquely human aspect as frosting on the cake, the fly in the ointment, or an aspect of divinity, it is not in a binary with our nonhuman aspects. Human and nonhuman interpenetrate, and co- create each other, especially at this time.

The one percent of our genetic makeup that distinguishes us from chimpanzees, which includes enlarged frontal cortexes, has brought us to the brink. Our human-with- human interactions (remember, these comprise less than 1 percent of what we are interacting with all of the time) are what psychoanalysis in the USA has traditionally focused upon. *Do we psychoanalysts want to continue to be "the one percenters"?* Or can we find a way to help our patients, and ourselves, engage with the joys, struggles, and fears of being in kinship with this earthly home? How can we hold in mind the needs and rights of those to come after us, who have had no part in altering, for the worse, the ecosystems they will be born into? What can we do, besides casting our votes, to stop the wholesale diminishing of their futures? And how will they feel towards us when they realize what post- modern generations have done?

Activism: confronting our disavowals

In 2015, 21 children, and their guardians, filed suit against the US government. They claimed that through governmental actions or inactions pertaining to climate change, their rights to life, liberty, and property have been violated (*Juliana vs. the United States*). The suit also claims that the US government "failed to protect essential public trust resources" (Ourchildrenstrust.org). Joining the plaintiffs were a nonprofit organization called "Earth Guardians," and, finally, climate scientist Dr James Hansen, who signed on as guardian of "Future Generations." Their lawsuit hopes to force the US government to put in place a national plan to phase out fossil fuel use, and draw down excessive levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide that threaten the lives of future generations.

The Trump administration and the US government filed to have the case dismissed. This was initially denied. In mid- July of 2018, a second attempt to dismiss this landmark case was rejected. Recently (July 30, 2018) the US Supreme Court unanimously voted to preserve the start date for this lawsuit against the federal



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government, to be held on October 29, 2018.

Our strongest human instinct is to protect the life of our vulnerable offspring. With these children coming to the courtroom, our protective instincts come before the law. If the legal system will not protect the future livable environment for these children, then, what is the point of the law? When is it time for the analytic community to actively oppose the foreshortening of our children's futures? And, based on our understanding of the psyche and defenses, what is the most effective method?

Randall sees the problem of effective action as located in our typical binary narratives about climate change (Randall, 2009). She writes that we experience two primary climate change narratives: 1) the narrative of future losses, or losses occurring in faraway environments, that are horrifying and dramatic; and 2) the narrative of solutions, which typically does not address the enormity of the changes that will be involved to effectively deal with the climate emergency. The narrative of solutions often exists independent of an awareness of losses. Randall offers that this splitting protects the public psyche from a current, emotional experience of the crisis (which, now in 2018, is more difficult to ignore, or locate elsewhere/ in the future). She and Brown present an analytic model of the use of grief and mourning, in small groups, to raise awareness and to help individuals work through conflicts about relinquishing aspects of self, culture, and security that are obstacles to appropriate action (Randall and Brown, 2015). Splitting may be breaking down as the climate crisis worsens, but this "parallel narratives" framework can help analysts understand how the climate emergency is typically held in a semi-dissociated psychic state, when no therapeutic or interpersonal holding environment exists to contain anxiety, mourning, and fear. Actions which are relatively ineffective in reducing the climate emergency (though they may be useful in addressing other environmental problems), such as recycling plastic bottles, can be seen at times as a desperate defensive attempt to feel less guilty and helpless in regard to climate change.

Lifton begins a discussion of the concept of environmental guilt in his book *The Climate Swerve* (Lifton, 2017). Lifton described the great guilt felt by the scientist, Arthur Galston, whose research was crucial in the invention of the herbicide Agent Orange, which was used with devastating impacts on animal/ human and plant life in the Vietnam War. Galston made many visits to Vietnam and China, and became an outspoken, dedicated antiwar activist arguing against the use of toxins such as



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Agent Orange. Lifton notes that Galston was “deeply troubled by the part his work played in extending war into environmental destruction,” and that he spoke often about “his sense of guilt and responsibility” (p. 12). Lifton refers to this psychological development in Galston as “an animating relation to guilt.”

Lifton, whose initial studies involved research into the survivors of the Hiroshima attack, sees a specific type of defensive operation at play in facing the twin crises of nuclear holocaust and climate destabilization, terming this “psychic numbing.” It is presumed that this numbing must have occurred among scientists who developed the nuclear bomb in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and among fossil fuel executives of today who work to promote the extraction and use of fossil fuels. Fossil fuel executives did not join the oil companies to destroy humanity. The rationale of providing for a “better way of life” and lifting people and countries out of poverty may have underlay the motivations of many long-term leaders in that industry. Lifton notes the difficulty of “imagining the real” future scenarios of climate change, especially if one’s livelihood currently depends upon fossil fuels. He compares “psychic numbing” to the practice of animals “freezing” in the face of likely imminent destruction. If we think about this, it becomes apparent that we clinicians need to provide a place to contemplate the unimaginable, to mourn the great losses, and to turn feelings of helplessness and paralysis into responsible, reparative actions.

The discipline of psychoanalysis was founded on the principles of hermeneutics, and analyzing rather than acting. However, if we cannot liberate our patients, and our own, efforts to save our lives and those of our children, we have missed a crucial opportunity. Lifton sees both personal action and political change in the face of ecocide as necessary. How do we inspire effective action in our patients without shaming, blaming, proselytizing, or moralizing?

Andrew Samuels tackles the tricky issue of psychoanalytic activism by expanding our view of the meaning of “active engagement” with the patient/ client (Samuels, 2017). This includes an exploration of political and social systems that have helped and constricted individuals. Samuels offers that psychic wounds and constricted self-states can have their genesis in the darker sides of socio-political systems. These systems may involve racism, sexism, ageism, income inequality, all of these, or other factors, including climate denialism. Certainly, those who are appropriately terrified, anxious, or depressed as climate change unfolds have been affected by the darker side of politics. Finally finding one’s voice with an abusive



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caretaker or spouse is often a crucial step away from fear and depression on the way to agency and empowerment. Likewise, becoming aware of ways that one engages in racist behaviors can lead to more effective functioning, and a greater ability to connect with those of different backgrounds than one's own. In a similar way, working towards personal or political engagement in work that mitigates environmental destruction can decrease dissociated, or conscious, feelings of helplessness, guilt, and fear.

Samuels sees a lived focus on social responsibility as contributing to individual "psychological vitality." He sees what may appear as apathy or depression regarding social issues to be, instead, failed activism. Likewise, Lertzman found that many individuals she interviewed regarding degraded local environments who initially seemed apathetic were actually experiencing an arrested mourning process. This "environmental melancholia" foreclosed more active engagement with the issue (Lertzman, 2015). And, Orange's concept of the "ungrievables," the individuals who have suffered and died to provide for our lifestyles, can be extended to refer to the nonhuman environments that we dare not think about for fear of feeling overwhelmed (Allured, 2018b). Psychoanalysis sees the relinquishment of narcissistic entitlement as a marker of psychological maturity, leading to the development of appropriate guilt, feelings of loss, and subsequent social responsibility to make reparation for those we or society have harmed. These reparative strivings conceivably exist within all of us in latent or unconscious ways concerning the environmental crisis. As analysts, we can work to develop these strivings in ourselves, as role models for our patients.

On my office waiting-room wall, across from framed diplomas and the "no smoking" sign, another sign reads, "This house is powered by the sun."

The photovoltaic panels that produce all the electricity for my home and office are not easily visible from the street. Lately I have been ready to "come out of the closet" about my love of the environment. The office sign is my coming out statement, part of my narrative about my ongoing dependence upon both the nonhuman environment and sustainable human permutations of that environment. It is a call to personal agency in moving toward a livable future: mine, my children's, and the future of all children alive today.

Conclusions

- Certainly, large-scale immediate legal regulation of carbonemitting technologies is necessary to avoid ecocide and the extinction of our, and



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innumerable other, species. Governmental oversight of radical systemic industrial change, similar to that in the Second World War, is necessary. The more aware, on both emotional and cognitive levels, we are of this ourselves, the greater help we can offer our patients in this regard.

- We need to understand our own defensive strategies concerning this crisis, and begin to experience the great losses already occurring, in order to not project disowned affects onto patients who need clinical help to process their environmental concerns.
- We also need to be familiar with specific information and resources to help patients who are ready to take reparative action. Paul Hawken's book *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming* (2017) clearly lays out many effective strategies to draw down atmospheric carbon and reverse the precarious path we are on. Whether our patients decide to compost, eat less meat, drive less, fly less, bicycle more, run for a political office, donate to a political campaign or environmental organization, grow vegetables, or all of the above, our analytic offices can provide a crucial holding environment on the way from psychic numbing to the ability to hold this crisis in mind, and actively respond.

The climate emergency is both a legal, regulatory problem and a personal, psychological problem. It was born within a socio-political structure that rewards the economic exploitation of the nonhuman environment, and "others" that environment. Psychoanalytic theory helps us understand the tragic mistakes of the past, the perilous point of the present, and can help in the psychic/ societal task of developing a sustainable future.

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