

Encompassing the Reach of the Mind: The Comparative-Integrative Perspective

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My talk today is a highly condensed chapter from my book, *Comparative-Integrative Psychoanalysis* (The Analytic Press, 2007). I hope it will convey some impression of my thoughts as to why the comparative-integrative approach is best suited to encompass the reach of the mind.

Some analysts prefer pluralism. For them, neutrality means openness to alternative viewpoints. For others, the growing strength of misguided deviations and “mindless eclecticism” threaten the survival of psychoanalysis. These are interesting times.

Diversity is not new, but we have barely begun to explore its scientific and professional implications. Wallerstein made it the subject of his 1988 IPA presidential address, “One Psychoanalysis or Many?” “The Search for Common Ground” became the theme for the next IPA Congress.

Seven years earlier, Schafer advocated “comparative psychoanalysis” – something he characterized as “a virtually undeveloped intellectual pursuit.” Recent contributors to this literature include Greenberg & Mitchell, Gedo, Pulver, Slavin & Kriegman, and Hamilton. Believing we must understand and transcend diversity, I favor a comparative-*integrative* attitude.

According to Kuspit, the “peculiar failure of the field to heal its theoretical splits except by one side casting out the other and claiming to be ‘chosen,’ the way Napoleon

crowned himself, are more or less the same today as they were in the past.” No school has a monopoly on truth. Perspectives are hypothetical constructs. Partially derived from data, they also *determine* which data will be attended to. Referring to constructs as fictions, Schafer noted they tend to become myths. Like primitive religious beliefs, they are not open to challenge.

Belonging to a school, one works within a more or less closed system. A growing group views such impermeability as enervating. “To the extent that we isolate ourselves from a portion of the discourse, we are deadened,” Ogden asserted.

Theoretical embeddedness is largely unconscious. Comparative-integrative analysis transforms unconscious belief into conscious reflection. Conjugating disjointed discourses, this approach revitalizes our discipline—something much needed in an era of books bearing titles like *The Death of Psychoanalysis*.

Proscribed vocabulary in any theory is as telling as the recommended one, Phillips wrote. Outlawing ideas suggests they have dangerous power. We had better understand it. Too often, we react to such terms the way bees do when a bee that does not belong to the hive enters, performing an unfamiliar dance. This stinging reaction is surely not the best we can do.

Venturing beyond Schafer’s portrayal of “The Analytic Attitude,” Barratt suggested every school has an attitude. Each theory establishes constructs exempt from critique, making inferential leaps part of the acceptable dance in every hive of analytic activity. These pirouettes leave analysts who dance in other companies spinning in epistemological disbelief.

Our need to recognize inconsistency and incompleteness in our positions was stressed by Schafer. Schwaber criticized theory-driven jumps, advocating more careful listening and questioning. Rather than utilizing theory to enhance identity and security, Barratt advocated treating it with suspicion. A comparative-integrative attitude provides the best guarantee for the querying, tentative attitude these authors advocate.

The need to move beyond cherished tribal simplicities is increasingly apparent. If one has experienced more than one culture or religion, one is likely to have a more open mind. Familiarity with multiple theories similarly protects against the illusion that any single system is sufficient and always best.

Roazen favored Erikson's model that views people in terms of how many contradictions and tensions they constructively unify. Opposing this tolerance is what Erikson termed "the human propensity to bolster one's inner mastery by bunching together and prejudging whole classes of people." Analysts excel at this proclivity.

It is difficult to find an analyst conversant with more than one approach, Mitchell & Black opined. You do not understand your own theory unless you understand the alternatives, Donnel Stern argued. You do not really have a viewpoint unless you can contrast it with another.

Investment in transitional objects is eventually spread across the cultural field. Such phenomena, like religion, should not be questioned, Winnicott advised. One might argue that it is essential to query such sacrosanct domains, including each analytic subculture's inner sanctum. Otherwise, credos become sanctuaries for untested dogma.

Can one honor *and* question a tradition? Critiquing Freud's theory is one way of being determined by it, wrote Jessica Benjamin. "To acknowledge as well as oppose this

determination by a discourse of critical gratitude” is “to kiss as well as bite the hand that feeds you”-- a useful metaphor for examining all analytic belief systems.

Fish are not conscious that water constitutes their environment, a pundit opined. They would need to leave their aqueous milieu to develop an “analytic attitude” toward it. Like schools of fish, students of analysis need to voyage beyond the psychoanalytic ponds in which we were born. From a new perspective, we might be able to “kiss as well as bite” our alma mater. Fusing aggression with libidinous attachment to our school enlivens our relationship to it, facilitating healthy individuation.

In Grotstein’s view, infants experience themselves as “incompletely separated from a mythical object behind them...which rears and sends them forth.” This presence is the counterpart of Erikson’s concepts of epigenesis, tradition, cultural and racial identity. “We feel a sense of comfort that someone stands behind us in our effort to face the world.” For analysts trained in any of our limited schools, there are pleasures and liabilities to sticking with one’s background object of tradition.

Comparative-integrative analysis does not endorse leaping from some supposedly outdated paradigm to some revolutionary, new, improved model. A different shift is necessary—from a uniparadigmatic to a multiparadigmatic, dialectical perspective. This outlook is consistent with, and goes beyond, Luria’s assertion that scientific observation’s “main goal is to view an event from as many perspectives as possible.”

“Psychoanalysis is in a state of crisis because it has no sense of where it is going,” Laplanche proclaimed. Comparative-integrative analysis affords a direction, goal, and means for helping us emerge from this morass.

Psychoanalytic History

The followers of Hartmann, Kris & Loewenstein developed “a very strict orthodoxy,” Schafer remarked. It was professionally perilous to question it. This holds true for all orthodoxies.

“What is the role of the historian?” Bergmann queried. “Certainly not to re-fight old battles,” he answered. “The task is to supply a wider frame of reference than was available to those who created this history.”

Congruent with Santayana’s aphorism (“If we do not learn from history we shall be doomed to repeat it”), Rubin warned: “Psychoanalysis does not have a future if it fails to come to terms with or remains bound to its past. Psychoanalysis has to do with itself what it recommends for patients, namely, assimilate its past so it can understand its present and enliven its future.” I will examine some analytic wars and offer a framework for handling those conflicts.

Ego psychology’s triumvirate averred that: “Progress in psychoanalytic theory has led to a better integration, an ever closer connection of its various parts.” I am less sanguine about this being the status quo, then or now. In contrast to the relatively rosey view espoused by the trinity, Kuhn observed that science is “a rather ramshackle structure with little coherence among its various parts.”

Analytic theory resembles the situation immortalized by the blind fellows encountering a pachyderm. Where each chap stood informed, and limited his understanding. Touching trunk, one described the creature as serpentine. The leg man proclaimed the animal like a tree trunk. Individual theories have severe limitations; conglomerated, they provide a more comprehensive portrait.

Not one to shy away from sacred elephants, Mitchell challenged this tale's wisdom. Some investigators could be exploring giraffes rather than elephants. Integrative efforts might then portray a long necked creature with a trunk.

Rather than this chimera being a fatal argument against integration, I take Mitchell's humour as warning against *premature* synthesis. Such error, Lew Aron noted, is modelled on the combined parent, an infantile fusion providing the basis for monsters, nightmares and persecutory delusions.

Contraries coexist in the unconscious. If they influence each other, Freud wrote, "a compromise comes about which is nonsensical since it embraces mutually incompatible details." Mitchell's giraphant exemplifies such combination.

It is equally important to avoid the opposite error, splitting off contradictions. This mistake, modelled on attacking the primal scene to keep parents apart, is the advanced version of the combined parent. In healthy cognitive development, the primal scene symbolizes two contrasting ideas that can be held together, interacting without fusing or fracturing.

Affirmative splitting controls disorder until integration is possible. Greenberg & Mitchell utilized it to separate drive from relational theories. The time was not ripe for synthesis. It remained for others to build a bed capable of holding their two grand narratives.

Whereas paradigms suppress observations that might be subversive to their commitments, comparative-integrative analysis welcomes conflicting conceptualizations. Intrigued by different models, we struggle to appreciate what they might add to a more

comprehensive view of the elephantine phenomena we seek to understand and, perchance, transform.

To construct adequate theory, we draw on diverse ego functions: attention (versus selective inattention to different perspectives); comprehension (as opposed to dismissing foreign theories); discrimination (between different theories); and judgement (of their relative merits). Particularly important is the synthetic function.

Ego psychologists are not the only ones to appreciate this integrative function. Slavin & Kriegman noted that the cost of the human strategy for structuring the self in a provisional fashion, a sometimes precarious federation of self/other schemas, is the ever-present risk of disintegration and identity diffusion. Their understanding can be extrapolated to our pluralism wherein fragmentation has been fully realized. Their conclusion that “The maintenance of self-cohesion is... the ...superordinate principle of human psychic activity” also applies to the discipline.

Aron underscored the human need for both identity and multiplicity. Identity involves continuity, constancy, cohesion. Multiplicity denotes our need to accept internal differences, tolerating, even enjoying confusion and contradiction in our sense of self. The paranoid-schizoid position contributes multiplicity, difference, discontinuity. The depressive position provides integration. Both positions are as essential for disciplinary development as for individual maturation.

Splitting in Psychoanalytic Theory and Organizations

Close-minded, antagonistic theoretical systems suggest fixation in paranoid-schizoid mental modes. All that is good, true, beautiful, trustworthy is in one's orientation;

the bad, false, inelegant resides in someone else's. Each school is vigilant lest it be contaminated by foreign ideas.

Excessive splitting characterizes an immature stage in everyone's life and, perhaps, the life of a discipline. Unable to integrate diverse experiences, infants utilize such mechanisms to establish order and safety. At first such separations happen relatively passively, simply organizing emotional experience. Later, these processes are deployed more *actively*, to segregate good from bad. Our discipline has manifested both forms.

We have suffered from what Kleinians call, in primitive syndromes, weakness of the life instinct, the force that seeks connections and unity and counteracts disruption. Freud characterized the ego as having synthetic tendencies lacking in the id. Our discipline has been more id than ego, more unconscious than conscious. Opposing ideas dwell side by side, unable to synthesize.

Our divisions began with Freud's efforts to guard against deviations that might dilute and destroy his conceptual baby. As his wobbly scientific body struggled to come of age in a hostile milieu, he aggressively defended it. Adopting a stance that he said the ego uses with internal dangers, treating them as if they were external, he extruded dissidents.

Since the expulsions of Jung and Adler, many other developments exceeded our integrative capacities. Defections and schisms ensued. Factions dismissed alternatives as wrong-headed, simple-minded, crazy, dangerous. In these derogations, one recognizes processes akin to borderline devaluation and idealization.

“Each split ...is a lost opportunity,” Casement observed. If we are finally ready to progress beyond the sorry state of having left too many troops behind (in the upper trenches of PS), we will have to adopt more mature, ambivalent attitudes toward favorite and devalued schools. We will need to tolerate more complexity and internal conflict. Rapid rewards attached to a simplifying, externalizing stance will have to be surrendered. Greater capacity for ambiguity will promote a more salubrious, “depressive” position.

The time has come, Ogden suggested, to rename the “depressive position.” That term captures the loss of self-righteous, black and white, paranoid-schizoid thinking. Emphasizing affect, it hints at what is defended against. Ogden’s preferred term, *historical position*, indicates that rather than just living in the moment, one understands how the past operates in the present. One rejects urges to reinstate purity and simplicity by annihilating contradictory thought.

Augmenting H (the historical position), while lessening PS attacks on linking, will make us more cohesive. Exchanging rigid, pseudo-strength for flexible, adaptive power, we will become a less borderline science.

Though adherents of perspectives tend to derogate the others, all agree that mixed-models confuse apples with oranges, composing sloppy, inelegant, unappetizing, fruit salads, Shane noted. In comparative-integrative cuisine, if one selects a good balance of ingredients, cutting off coarse, overripe spots, one can create a delicious, nutritious dish. A mixed model need not be mixed-up.

Our discipline has sufficient ego strength to progress beyond splitting and repression. We can tolerate diverse bodies of thought. Theoretical apartheid is waning. Intercourse, even marriage, between different constructs is no longer a cardinal sin in all

quarters. Closed systems may be the wicked, incestuous ones. 'In house' schools of thought, journals, and conferences encourage loving ideas selected on a narcissistic basis, rather than promoting more mature modes of object choice.

**The Discipline's Uncertain Steps Toward (and Away from) a Comparative-
Integrative Point of View**

When analysts believe they know what is developmentally and therapeutically important, their theory might be termed 'phobic,' Rubin averred. It restricts where they can travel intellectually. When analysts endow a less threatening theoretical phenomenon with special significance to ward off danger unconsciously associated with other things, their theory is "fetishistic." Contra Kohut's concept of the coherent self, Loewald averred that individuals exhibit "powerful resistance against...integration."

In the North American, ego psychological milieu, Kernberg was one of the first to challenge received wisdom, incorporating Kleinian ideas into his theory of borderline conditions. His daring may have been facilitated by having experienced multiple cultures. Born in Vienna, raised in Argentina, he matured in the U.S.

One of the few *native* North Americans open to Klein was Ogden. He believed one cannot fathom *Freud* without knowing Klein. She highlighted aspects of Freud's work that we might have missed. Dialogue between orientations is *mutually* beneficial.

Another North American, Schafer, suggested Kleinian and Freudian schools have distinctive ego psychologies, centred on object relations. He had come a long way from earlier statements, such as, "Klein and her so-called English school...carried the reifications of metapsychology to a grotesque extreme." In contrast to Schafer's evolved position, his mentor, Rapaport, declared that: "The 'theory' of object relations evolved by

Klein and her followers is not an ego psychology but an id mythology.” Bearing in mind Schafer’s warning that schools of thought are collections of constructs that easily devolve to mythic status, Rapaport’s comment was not completely inaccurate, but might have generated less animus if he could have acknowledged that his own system had also calcified into mythology.

Freud recognized the capacity of constructs to morph into myths. Characterizing his mental topography as “fiction,” he cautioned against undue attachment to it. “The theory of instincts is...our mythology,” he confessed, “a working hypothesis to be retained only so long as it proves useful.”

Myths do not relish reclassification as working hypotheses.

When heavyweights like Schafer and Ogden added muscle to Kernberg’s endorsement of Klein, totally negative views of the dark lady could no longer thrive. Social psychologists study the power of celebrity endorsements. Similar processes pervade our field. Freud struggled against suggestion. He preferred thinking. In our organizations, suggestion plays a profound role.

Schafer considers London Kleinians *Kleinian Freudians*. His term is comparative-integrative, but he does not see himself that way. “I do not believe common ground can be found,” he declared. “It is best to regard the two approaches as incommensurable.”

His conclusion is particularly intriguing for having appeared in the very article in which he documented underappreciated kinship between contemporary Freudians and Kleinians, thereby contributing to their rapprochement. Why, then, would he deplore the quest for common ground? That search, he believed, implies differences are regrettable,

to be leveled in the pursuit of “a single master text.” We should, instead, celebrate distinctions. Conflict prompts each school to recognize, then work on its incoherence and incompleteness. Sublimated aggression, he declared, has wonderful uses.

Schafer’s stance deals aptly with the initial phase of the dialectic (thesis versus antithesis). His position is less suitable for the subsequent stage, synthesis. The sublimated aggression of comparative analysis is necessary, but insufficient. It must be coupled with the sublimated Eros of integrative analysis.

Novel Resolutions

Conflict is best resolved by creating conceptual containers allowing for the tensions of diversity. It is “useful to think of ourselves as multiple personalities, and of our internal worlds as more like a novel than a monologue,” Phillips remarked. Each character has different projects. Some become muted. Resolution requires “forging of incompatibles.” Similarly, Rivera stated that personality integration involves growing ability to call all voices “I,” disidentifying with any one as the whole story. Hanly & Hanly proposed that, “Good analysts should do, with explanatory hypotheses...what writers do when they hold in mind the interplay of several narrative perspectives.”

Hosting the battle between the Anna Freudian thesis and the Kleinian antithesis, the British Institute, rather than silencing voices, allowed three to coexist. Potential for synthesis was represented by the Non-aligned Group.

Even before those Discussions, Kleinian views had influenced the Freudian system. Anna Freud considered reparation, a linchpin of Kleinian theory, an “indisputable...part of current psychoanalytic theory.” Through pluralism, London Freudians became more aware of the early origins of object relations, phantasy,

aggression, defense, transference, and the multiple functions of projective identification and countertransference. Kleinians became more cognizant of the mature oedipal complex, ego psychology, and the historical and ongoing role of reality.

Isaacs wished “all this nonsense about ‘Kleinians’ and ‘Freudians’ be given up.” When asked if he was Kleinian, Bion retorted, “I’m no more Kleinian than Melanie was. She always thought of herself as Freudian.” Grotstein believed Bion’s position was, “Once Kleinian or Freudian, it’s no longer psychoanalysis.” Limiting oneself is impoverishing.

At the growing tip of the Kleinian development, one sees Kleinian Freudians. Schafer contrasted them with Traditional Freudians. It might be more valid to call them dialectically transformed, Contemporary Freudians. Calling oneself Traditional Freudian or Kleinian indicates one has not kept up with the dialogue.

Eventually, terms like Kleinian Freudian and self psychologist will only have historical meaning. Fragmented states of incompatibility will wither away. Heirs of pugilistic partisans will mothball ancestral coats of arms. They will simply be analysts. They will no longer misunderstand patients or others so frequently or profoundly.

Our relationship is often not so much with theories, but with figures representing them, in the transference sense, Bernardi believed. Accepting pluralism implies renouncing a fantasy that an only heir (theory) corresponds to an only father (Freud).

Advocating a new language, Schafer realized he posed a dual threat: object loss (the version of analysis one values and loves) and narcissistic loss (personal unity, worth, and satisfaction associated with thinking in familiar ways. “One cannot but fear, resent, and resist such a call for change.”

Conclusion

Freud warned “against taking sides in a quite unnecessary dispute. In scientific matters people are fond of selecting one portion of the truth, putting it in place of the whole and of then disputing the rest... In just this way a number of schools of opinion have already split off from the psychoanalytic movement.”

Our field has not found it easy to heed this sage advice. Freud, himself, did not find it easy. He played a more active fragmenting role than his phrase, “have already split off,” would suggest.

Following Kuhn’s counsel that historians must describe and explain the congeries of error, myth, and superstition that have inhibited the more rapid accumulation of the modern science text, this paper examined how calcified constructs and mental modes impede progress. A comparative-integrative approach was proposed as a methodological remedy for faults in the structure of our discipline. Tentative steps toward, and away from this solution were identified.

Our science is at least in its adolescence, a time of possibility and danger. To advance our identity, we must bring contradictory theories together, subjecting them to all the “formal operations” we have. Rising to the “historical position,” we need to bring synthetic function to warring and incommunicado (cold warring) factions. If we fail, we will continue floundering fragmented, torn asunder by bellicose points of view. If we succeed, our discipline will shine brightly in the pantheon of mature sciences.

Like the Sphinx with her riddle, Wallerstein queried: “One psychoanalysis or many?” “The fate of psychoanalysis will stand or fall on the strength of its theory,” proclaimed Rangell. Fragmented theory cannot be strong. A creative response to

Wallerstein may help repair a field riddled with contradictions, enabling us to forge “a psychoanalysis for our time.” Though many replied to Wallerstein, we continue plagued by divisions. In this confusing situation, the comparative-integrative perspective provides the following answer: Out of one psychoanalysis came many. Out of the many shall come one. *E pluribus unum.*

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