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**Meaning and Metaphor
in Psychoanalytic Education**

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It is more than an academic question if we ask, in the tradition of Theodor Reik, whether we can train someone to be a psychoanalyst or whether psychoanalysts are, in fact, born. Since we generally act as if we can train an individual to competently, and even occasionally to creatively practice this art form, I would like to focus on the latter alternative -- namely, psychoanalysts are born. (This position might endanger the financial viability of most psychoanalytic training institutes, but for the present I leave such a consideration aside.) If we speak of analysts as born to be such, I am not implying some divine election or a mystery cult priesthood. What I am wondering about is the implications, for our field, if we say that the capacity to practice analysis precedes any formal training, as such, and is, actually, a pre-requisite for effectively and creatively using the training at all.

By training I include the personal analysis, which although vital for any psychoanalyst to experience, is nevertheless subordinate to certain individual qualities: primarily, a capacity for personal honesty, a desire for cross-identification issuing in compassion and civility, and the possession of what we may call a playful intelligence. Unfortunately we have no way of guaranteeing the acquisition of these qualities, despite the length of any analysis.

The quality that I am going to emphasize today is the need for a playful intelligence; I mention these other qualities, however, as a context for understanding my reflections. Much of psychoanalytic education has undervalued the need for these overall character traits as prerequisite for practicing psychoanalysis; emphasizing, instead, content mastery and/or the completion of requirements. To pursue that line of thought, however, would be a different paper.

I will introduce my thoughts about metaphor and meaning by recounting a personal experience. Many years ago a colleague and I -- both new to the field -- were participating in a public discussion with a psychologist, a professor of phenomenological psychology, who was presenting his clinical work. At one point my colleague asked the speaker, rather pointedly, whether or not he believed in the unconscious. This was done either to test orthodoxy or make inquiry as to how psychoanalytic the presenter was. Although I thought I understood the thrust of the question, I was troubled by its turn of phrase. I had, a few years prior, left many years of studying and teaching theology. I wondered, upon hearing my colleague's question, whether I had stumbled, somehow, back onto an old route -- a route where the personal acknowledgment of belief in the unconscious, or the oedipal complex, for example, ultimately determined one's affiliation, or, more ominously, one's correctness. Such an approach is comparable to asking whether one believes that the scriptures are a product of divine revelation.

Over my years as a teacher and student of psychoanalysis I have heard, in various garbs, the same kind of formulation. Not infrequently I would hear colleagues talk about the acceptance of the oedipal complex as the core of neurosis, as a defining prerequisite for practicing psychoanalysis. Another shibboleth by which to prove whether one is a true psychoanalyst is the acknowledgment of a particular formulation for the concept of transference. I do not wish to beg the question by isolating certain religiously toned

words and to question their usage. The problem is more troubling than this. I understand the personal yearning we all share for a body of knowledge, for something to know with certainty. Although such knowledge has some functional usefulness, it is, in fact, intellectually and existentially dangerous.

Dangerous, because psychoanalysis is primarily a metaphor -- perhaps a key metaphor for understanding many of the other metaphors that comprise our intellectual, cultural and personal lives. Although we speak of psychoanalysis as a theory of the mind, a mode of investigation as well as a clinical technique, without understanding it as a metaphor we are in danger of knowing a great deal while understanding little. Any theory, or model of the mind, separated from its grounding as living metaphor is, in effect, an Eden laden apple, more seductive than the rise and fall of our libidinal fantasies.

By metaphor I do not mean exclusively a figure of speech but a primary route to what we humans experience as meaning. The metaphors of psychoanalysis, in either their traditional Freudian formulations or the other various alternative or complementary formulations, can either be experienced as discoveries, that is, Freud discovered the unconscious or transference, or as creative formulations meant to evoke and suggest an interesting way of organizing human experience. I do not believe that one discovers the unconscious or transference comparable to discovering the bones of Homo Habilis in the layered mud of Africa, or a purposefully hidden treasure. It is more useful to speak of the unconscious and transference, for example, as phenomena that are experienced as they are interpreted. They are created by interpretation. Even our understanding of the dynamic unconscious, with its notion of force/counter-force and the return of the repressed, is, obviously, not comparable to the forces/counter-forces in a gas driven engine. It is one metaphor, among many, indicating our paradoxical capacity to know and not know, to be aware and to turn away from awareness, the latter being, ultimately, an illusion. When we speak of such an illusion, in analytic terms, we speak of the return of the repressed.

I am speaking a commonplace when I say that artists and poets, in particular, are creators of the unconscious not infrequently more effectively than we analysts -- particularly so when our education does not encourage a playfulness with language and with theory. That Western consciousness, for a major portion of the twentieth century, was resonant to Freud's metaphors is well known. They have been profoundly useful for human reflection; hopefully they can continue to be so, only, however, if we understand that what Freud gave form to is what we have to give form to. The reality is that if we are not constantly recreating psychoanalysis we are, in fact, killing it.

What does that mean: we have to recreate it? Minimally we can say that unless we are constantly re-finding the metaphorical aspect of our knowledge, we can, all too easily, slip into a literal understanding of it. Any theoretical formula or model that does not impel us to wonder and reflection becomes a dogma. If we speak of transference, for example, it is important to recognize that knowledge is always provisional, just outside our reach, a little beyond our grasp. Such awareness can help keep our reading of the situation between patient and analyst -- modest. Minimally we should keep in mind that

there are many selves, which we all bring to the moment. When we speak of transference we are isolating in order to appreciate complexity. Great literature shows us that it is only in the poetic or fictional recreation of reality that we even get close to it. No wonder Freud said that Dostoyevsky was a better psychologist than he!

Transference is one such metaphor of recreation -- pathological when a particular mode of expression over-shadows the whole of our many selves, our many varied relationships. To the extent that we do not recognize a metaphorical reading of transference, to the extent that we do not teach it, we are destined, I believe, to fall into what Alfred North Whitehead (1929) calls the error of misplaced concreteness; mistaking an object as an ultimate reality rather than as a point of reference; attempting to understand a particular event separate from the whole context of its occurrence.

A metaphor is, as we know, that which evokes something else -- a use of analogy to promote a depth of meaning and emotional resonance, as when we speak, for example, of the evening of life. Just as a metaphor points to something else, locates the center of meaning somewhere else, we must remember that ultimately there is not, nor can there be, one definitive center of meaning. By the very nature of our capacity to use metaphor we are guaranteed continuous new meanings.

What do I mean by psychoanalysis is a metaphor? I referred to my colleague and I and the talk we attended and to his question as to whether the speaker believed in the unconscious. I think today he might have commented to the speaker that as psychoanalysts we are particularly interested in our capacity to believe in anything; we are particularly interested in the psychological processes that make any belief possible. To speak of something as unconscious is to context an individual's self-understanding. When we say that the unconscious is revealed or found as it is interpreted, we are describing an aspect of self-knowledge, which comes in many guises. Knowing ourselves is also to experience not knowing ourselves, turning our eyes away from or even refusing to see ourselves.

How can we speak of such paradoxical knowing? We can effectively use the model of the unconscious as long as we recognize and help our students to recognize that we are neither accepting a psychoanalytic dogma nor postulating a deus ex machina that attempts to explain such a paradox. In this sense the unconscious is always a metaphor for the inevitably hidden in human discourse and experience; for the hidden, which we both actively perpetuate and are arbitrarily subject to.

The metaphorical nature of the unconscious is equally true of such concepts as resistance, transference, idealized self-object or transitional space, inter alia. We can also speak, in a Lacanian framework, of desire itself as a metaphor for the other -- the other as culture, the other that germinates desire within us; even the prohibition of desire is the other as superego. If we forget such considerations and proceed as if we can analyze desire as a singular possession we are in danger, as analysts, of mishearing. How so should we help our students to appreciate metaphor? Perhaps we should have more poets on our analytic faculties. They can help us appreciate what Italo Calvino (1974) means when, in his

masterful Invisible Cities, he writes it is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear (p.106).

If we proceed as if we can analyze desire as singular we are also in danger, as Winnicott has written, of confusing mind and psyche. As I have written elsewhere, when we speak of mind we can avoid limiting our understanding by not reducing it to brain, or imagination, or memory, or thinking in terms of problem solving; mind is more than singular, more than an individual's personal possession. Without understanding its communal base, as particularly but not exclusively exemplified in our use of language, without appreciating how we are given a sense of I-ness by the particular culture we live in, we can easily premise individuality and be blind to what mind stands for, in all its metaphorical referents.

Otto Fenichel, (1945) a master of Freudian theory, was acutely aware of the danger of analyzing the singular, of concretizing the individual, when he wrote: Neuroses are the outcome of unfavorable and socially determined educational measures, corresponding to a given and historically developed social milieu and necessary in this milieu. They cannot be changed without corresponding change in the milieu (p.586). Are we doing a service to the truth, and to our students, if we teach about defenses, about transference, about being alive, and talk as if we are describing phenomena solely locatable within individuals and expressed simply by that individual's personal history? If we can speak about the "I" as a cultural/imaginative construct, is not the "I," then, a metaphor for that culture and all the forces ñ intellectual, economic, artistic, religious and philosophical that constitute that culture? Just as the transitional space between mother and child is the ground source for civilization and culture, so the transitional space between analyst and patient should not be reduced to a figurative place inhabited by forgotten teddy bears, or a haven for solipsistic phantasies; it is the ground bed out of which, together, human beings, analysts and patients, locate their ever changing center. A center that is a ground space for meaning.

Meaning, as Erik Erikson(1963) noted many years ago, is relative to our life experiences, a point he noted when describing the achievement of human wisdom as manifested in our capacity to pass on life knowledge while simultaneously recognizing its actual historical relativity. Such a position goes a long way toward modifying our narcissistic need, both as teachers and students, to know, to have found the way; the Gnostic promise to be counted among the enlightened.

Ultimately, then, it makes no sense to believe in anything if that means forgetting the metaphorical nature of knowledge. Sir Peter Medawar (1982), the English research biologist and philosopher, is not alone when he reminds us that even in the empirical sciences a hypothesis is an imaginative preconception of what might be true (p.122). In this vein we can no more believe in psychoanalysis than we can believe in cybernetics. I do not mean that as a pejorative comparison. The only way we can practice psychoanalysis is, I believe, paradoxically, to recognize our need for a guided praxis while at the same time acknowledging the primacy of perspective over content. That Winnicott or Kohut, for example, have given us alternate perspectives, alternate

metaphors, does not negate Freud's perspective. We simply have alternative ways of approaching what we choose to call content, for example oedipal desires. Each new perspective is ultimately an act of creation, revealing more by placing what we are addressing in a wider context. Winnicott's (1958) famous dictum that there is no such thing as a baby (p.99) grounds oedipal desires, for example, more forcefully than any five year old's phantasies. Understanding the metaphorical basis of knowledge frees us of the Herculean burden of finding the truth. We can, instead, settle for a truth, or should I say several truths. Most of what I read about today from those who feel that they must kill Freud is their belated discovery that he did not possess the truth. Unfortunately in the history of psychoanalysis other Ur analysts have walked this path. When Winnicott chided Melanie Klein for insisting that those who recognized her contributions should use only her language he was arguing for the use of personal metaphors over collective allegiance, for a commitment to a humanistic science rather than a conversion to a new religion.

We may choose to describe what occurs in the space between couch and chair as transference, or we may choose to describe it in terms of developmental lacunae leading to the formation of what we can call either an "I" or a "persona"-- as long as we understand that such "realities" are, as I have mentioned above, imaginative/cultural/constructs subject to the same ebb and flow of insight which time guarantees. When we understand transference as a metaphor, as I have mentioned, we are attempting to elucidate how we are contextual creations, made up of our many histories and our many desires. We can appreciate that when patients are, for the psychological moment, their forgotten childhood dreams, fears, hopes or expectations they nevertheless encompass more than meets the ear -- at that moment. Transference, in this context, is a metaphor for memory, for our need to speak the language we were spoken to, for the ambiguity of desire, and sometimes the absence of desire, as well as the different selves desires evoke. That we are all had by our history, and by what we do with that history, is not intrinsically a statement of pathology but of the dilemma of self-understanding. A transference neurosis, consequently, with its narrowing focus on who the analyst is, or is to be, comes about, I believe, precisely because the patient has lost the capacity to know the analyst as metaphor for what the patient needs. The patient collapses into the literal and thereby eclipses the metaphorical.

Finally, in the context of understanding psychoanalytic concepts metaphorically, I would like to briefly comment on the concept of regression. Thinking linearly promotes the image of regression as a back and forward phenomenon, as if measuring ego functions on a ruler. Thinking meta-phorically allows us to know that there is always another reading, always another affective memory that we can experience; all of which helps us appreciate that personal integration is not simply a landmark developmental achievement so much as an operative goal with constantly varying manifestations. Consequently how we conceptualize the notion of regression will either tie us to concrete thinking or enable us to grasp the complex simultaneity of human functioning. It is a truism that we live on many levels at once. The concept of regression can be productively understood as an ongoing attempt to capture the obvious complexity of our human functioning, paradoxically, by narrowing our focus.

Now if we come back to our question of education for psychoanalysts and its possibility, we can again try to understand Theodor Reik's thought that psychoanalysts are born and not made. Another way of saying this might be to state that one must be, in some way, a psychoanalyst before starting any formal training, if one is to benefit from such training. I believe Freud (1926) was thinking in this vein in *The Question of Lay Analysis* when he wrote that analysts should have a kind of sharpness for hearing for what is unconscious and repressed, which is not possessed equally by everyone... (p.219). He went on, as we know, to recommend that individuals with a background in history, or literature, or the psychology of religion undertake the study and practice of this new science.

By intellectual discipline and/or life experiences one must be able to transcend the immediacy of the present, the immediacy of the concrete. To be able to appreciate the intrinsic arbitrary selectivity of awareness that any language or cultural modes provide is to experience our symbolizing capacity and to set us loose from the illusion of certainty. To love the world and to experience personal competence, to value oneself and to be committed to the surprise, again following Theodor Reik's lead, of finding out who we are with honesty and humor, these are the qualities needed for the study of psychoanalysis. To study whatever insights a psychoanalytic perspective can provide, knowing, without depression, narcissistic injury, or intellectual cynicism that we are not able to hold truth except as a point of reference, such are the qualities we need if we are to find ourselves as psychoanalysts.

Winnicott had such issues in mind when he wrote that our first task as analysts with patients is aiding their capacity to play. If we do so, if we foster the play of metaphor, in all its ramifications with the self, the other and the world, we will have done more than we can possibly know. To use an old religious and philosophic metaphor, we will have freed the soul from the body, that is, we will have made life possible, free from living in a world of the concrete, the concreteness of things, the concreteness of thought.

Psychoanalysts are not only midwives of memory but harbingers of a new future. We can experience our profession as playfully expansive rather than tediously repetitious, as we understand that we live in a sea of meanings, as we understand that we live with a multitude of metaphors.

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1 Although Freud (1926) is speaking in the context of psychoanalytic knowledge versus medical ignorance he notes, in the best Socratic tradition, that: only a man who really knows is modest, for he knows how insufficient his knowledge is. p.232