

Book review

Metaphor and Fields: Common Ground, Common Language, and the Future of Psychoanalysis. S. Montana Katz (Ed.) (2013). New York and London: Routledge, 224 pages, £28.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-415-63172-3

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This edited volume is aimed at psychoanalysts belonging to different schools of thought. What all these analysts must have in common however is an interest in thinking through the importance of theories of metaphor and theories of fields as applicable in the context of psychoanalysis. It would not be a stretch to say that the basic concepts of ‘metaphor and fields’ are periodically reinvented by psychoanalysts of various persuasions who are not acquainted with each other’s work since they do not read or review the literature that is produced outside the school to which they belong. Montana Katz’s editorial intention in putting together this volume of seventeen papers is to make it possible for analysts of various persuasions to read, comprehend, and translate each other’s work without the need for endless reinvention and reduplication that comes from insular or parochial approaches to psychoanalytic theory and practice. The main theoretical source for these papers by practicing analysts is the academic literature produced by linguists, literary theorists, cognitive theorists, and field theorists in order to help analysts with a clinical orientation to make sense of their own assumptions, intuitions, and presuppositions about the nature of the human mind. While certain schools of psychoanalysis are better known for their preoccupation with the structure of language, field dynamics, and relational approaches to transference phenomena, Katz argues that these structuring concepts are useful for all schools of analysis. So while it may not be possible for all schools to work with the same conceptual structure, they should at least be able to translate their concepts without too much difficulty across a range of theories. This is like different painters painting the same scene, albeit with different stylistic approaches. There are a number of papers by Katz herself in this volume. Katz’s work serves not only to produce a sense of editorial cohesion, but to also throw light on the main concepts and processes involved in thinking about psychoanalysis in terms of metaphors and fields.

Most of the papers included in this volume are preoccupied with the differences between theories of metaphor and metonymy; they attempt to map these differences within not only the space of the analytic situation, but also within the forms of communication and cognition that constitute the existential difference between healthy and neurotic modes of being. This book should be of interest to linguists and cognitivists as well who will be delighted to discover how seriously their theories of language are being applied in the psychoanalytic realm. These analysts are basically claiming that the language of psychoanalysis cannot be deployed in clinical practice without a rigorous understanding of their linguistic foundations. So, in that sense, this volume is not a grudging acceptance

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of the importance of linguistics; it is a dynamic incorporation of linguistic concepts within the space of psychoanalytic concepts. Linguistic concepts serve to both defamiliarize and formalize psychoanalytic concepts in these papers. Among the areas that are being rethought here include categories like: psychoanalytic clinical data, psychodynamic research, the meaning of the mind, the relationship between theories of mind and theories of language, the concept of the talking cure, language and the affects, space and time in the psyche, and so on. It is almost as though the contributors to this volume came up with a list of theories in linguistics and a list of concepts in psychoanalysis and then decided to match the two lists to the extent possible so that no combinatorial possibility remains unexplored from a theoretical or a practical point of view. Many of these papers have been previously published in psychoanalytic journals; this helps to demonstrate the extent to which linguistic theories have percolated into theories, journals, and institutions of psychoanalysis in not only the Anglo-American world - as was the case in the past - but increasingly in Latin America as well. This is one of the books that takes the contributions of Latin American analysts seriously and includes a number of references to what is happening in Argentina, Mexico, and Uruguay. It is commonly overlooked that the future of psychoanalysis will be increasingly determined by the colossal clinical markets in Latin America irrespective of which school of thought an analyst may belong to. It is therefore important that the theories, techniques, and tools of psychotherapy being innovated in this part of the world should move into the analytic mainstream. Latin America is also interesting because of the passionate forms of the transference that we witness in these clinics given that patients in these parts of the world are not in any way disillusioned with psychoanalysis as is sometimes the case in North America. Why this should be the case is an interesting topic for research in itself. It is common knowledge by now that most soap operas in Brazil include characters that are in analysis, are analysts, or would like to be in analysis sooner or later to make sense of their lives. It is therefore becoming increasingly difficult to envisage the future of psychoanalysis without including Latin America; this volume, I must point out, takes a crucial step in that process of clinical and theoretical inclusion.

The contributors to this volume are also interested in incorporating field theory within psychoanalysis; this should not come as a surprise since, like Lacanian theory, the concepts of 'metaphors and fields' has percolated into all schools of psychoanalysis. Lacan's work is often described as the 'Freudian field' or the 'Lacanian field' – understanding and articulating the differences between these fields is common amongst Lacanians. An interesting question in this context is whether the concept of a field is itself a metaphor; and, if yes, what are the implications of invoking the 'field' as a figure of speech? What is it that field theory can help analysts to understand with greater clarity? Does the concept of the field relate to what is 'inside' the space of the clinical situation? Or, does it subsume what used to be known as the 'discourse' of psychoanalysis. What, for instance, is the difference between a field and a discourse? I get the impression that the incorporation of theories of metaphor has made more headway within different schools of analysis than theories of the field. There is still some uncertainty as to whether the concept of the field is just a metaphor or whether it is rigorous enough to displace the concept of a discourse, and what the advantages of doing so might be. Some of the contributors to this volume, for instance, have attempted to synthesize the theories of the field with those of metaphor and process. It will not be possible to find anything lacking in this volume in terms of rigor or thoroughness in thinking through how the main concepts in the title relate to each other. The typical generic form of a paper in this volume is to start with the definition of a linguistic

concept, delineate its history, apply it in the context of psychoanalysis, and then argue for its relevance to a general theory through the invocation of some clinical data that it helps to make sense of. An additional theoretical move might also be to go beyond the metaphors and fields model of analysis, and introduce another concept, category, or typology altogether to individuate an analysts' contribution.

This book will appeal mainly to readers with an academic temperament – especially those who appreciate the need to understand the relationship between theories of language and the main concepts of psychoanalysis; and who, furthermore, are haunted by the prospect that these forms of linguistic research might be lost to clinicians who prefer to proceed on the basis of intuition and improvisation rather than on the basis of the research that is readily available for incorporation. It will therefore serve as useful study material in advanced courses on theoretical and clinical psychoanalysis. I would also recommend this book highly to sociologists and historians of psychoanalysis since it will give them valuable insights into how psychoanalysis is both thought about and practiced in the Latin American markets. Readers might also want to think about why each of these contributors has specialized in a particular area of psychoanalysis, and how that relates to the demands of his or her clinical practice in these markets. That kind of approach to reading this volume of papers will provide them with both the clinical and theoretical rudiments for any further research that they may want to do on the sociology of the psychoanalytic symptom. This is all the more important given the disappearance of formative forms of the psychoneuroses like hysteria in the Anglo-American world; and their transmutation into a host of psychic disorders in the classificatory schema of contemporary psychiatry. I want to conclude by stating that taking the Latin American clinical markets and their preoccupation with psychoanalysis seriously will help historians and sociologists to reconstruct the genealogy of psychoanalysis in the Anglo-American world. It will also help us to re-think, as Katz and her contributors promise us, what we mean by the concepts of metaphors and fields within theories of psychoanalysis.