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The journal of *Language and Psychoanalysis* is a fully peer reviewed online journal that publishes twice a year. It is the only interdisciplinary journal with a strong focus on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of language and psychoanalysis. The journal is also inclusive and not narrowly confined to the Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

We welcome a wide range of original contributions that further the understanding of the interaction between Linguistic Analysis and Theory & Psychoanalytic Theories and Techniques. Any relevant manuscripts with an emphasis on language and psychoanalysis will be considered, including papers on methodology, theory, philosophy, child development, psychopathology, psychotherapy, embodied cognition, cognitive science, applied dynamical system theory, consciousness studies, cross-cultural research, and case studies. The journal also publishes short research reports, book reviews, interviews, obituaries, and readers' comments.

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- Short research reports, book reviews, and readers' comments should be approximately 500-2,500 words in length.
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- Manuscripts should be double-spaced, in Times 12-point font, and in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format.
- Manuscripts should follow the style conventions as outlined by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th edition.

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# Communicative Violence In Psychotherapy

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## Abstract

After some theoretical reflections on communicative violence based on the concept of the “double body” (Sybille Krämer) which explains why words can heal or hurt, we show excerpts from therapeutic session using conversation analysis as methodological tool to make subtle forms of violence visible. The problem of violence is not one-sided from therapist to patient but the inverse direction should be included, too. We detect that it is sometimes the “good will” of therapists to help a patient “overcome” a (supposed) “inhibition” to continue talk that contributes to symmetrical escalations in conversation causing trouble in turn-taking. Sometimes it is an up-to-now undescribed practice of patients, which we call “empathy blinder”. A mild and a more complex form of this pattern are described. Further examples are analyzed hoping to direct some attention to the problem of communicative violence. In general, we do not yet present solutions, more expositions of a problem widely under taboo.

## Introduction

In most cases, and all too soon, the keyword „violence” in the context of psychotherapy triggers that associative connection which views a (female) patient being sexually exploited by a (male) therapist. Then the connection to the public debate on the sexual abuse of children soon drags psychotherapy as a whole into an environment where it can easily or more easily be discredited and scandalised. As a matter of fact, however, since the beginning of the 1980s there has been a wide spread of sensitivity concerning this topic in the field of psychotherapy. Professional associations have established ethics commissions investigating such cases. Members have been excluded from their associations. The book by Phyllis Chesler (1972) had a worldwide impact, for this author, herself a psychotherapist, had interviewed women who had been exploited by their therapists. These narrations were impressive enough to trigger intensive reactions.

Among international psychoanalysis, in particular Gabbard (1994) discussed the topic and described that such incidents happen by a certain sequence: minor transgressions of limits – the session is prolonged, an arm is touched, the hand is held a little bit longer when saying hallo or goodbye – if they are not at once corrected, become the gateway to further steps, such as a more intensive touch, conversations after the session, the use of certain objectionable vocabulary, and thus gradually there develops a cycle of ostensive intimacies, which the patient must find ever more difficult to escape.

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It is no question that under no circumstances such incidents can be tolerated in psychotherapy, the after-effects are devastating, with local educational institutions the effects can be identified as far as in the second and third generations of course participants, and they are catastrophic for the public image of psychotherapy. Fortunately, such cases of misconduct are not as frequent as scandalisation makes us believe, but they are frequent enough. Gabbard (1994) estimates about 10% of all therapists – from all schools.

### ***Communicative Violence – Basic Considerations***

Making *communicative violence* a topic of discussion, however, is connected to different problems. Increasingly patients of both sexes, by pointing out to the well-known dangers of being sexually abused, demand psychotherapeutic treatment in the context of which they do not at all want to speak about sexuality. No exact figures are known about this phenomenon. If it is met, such a demand would result in the performance of psychotherapy being extremely limited; if it is not met, this may again be lamented as communicative violence.

Another problem results from exclusively focussing on male violence towards women. Discussing other kinds of communicative violence are found in the surgeries of psychotherapists, how they could be defined and delimited from other operations, proves to be an extremely difficult task, and the reason for this is treatment technique. These problems are interdependent with other more profound.

In psychotherapy process research during a long period of time data were generated by questionnaires, applied from session to session. Finally, it was discovered that not the in-session events were observed but another kind of cognitive objects, “opinions about” the session. Hence, we have a debate in what way audio- or videotaped data from session can be sampled and evaluated. The general shift from cognitive objects to conversational-interactive events of a session generated completely new observations followed by renewed theorizing (Buchholz 2012). Observing kind and length of pauses (Frankel, Levitt et al. 2006), the synchrony of bodily movements (Tschacher, Tomicic et al 2012) or rhythmization of talk (Buchholz, Spiekerman, Kächele 2015) during a session produced new insights in the interactional quality during psychotherapy. One consequence is that it is more and more indeterminable what is meant by *psychic* violence. It does make sense to talk of *communicative* violence, as such acts are committed by “talk-in-interaction”. The *psychic* or *mental* component could be considered as effect of such communicative processes, which remain observable. Thus, another question logically follows. Can and should violence distinguished from aggression?

Two authors exposed some difficulties with the concept of aggression (Bushman and Anderson 2001, Anderson and Bushman 2002). The distinction between “hot” or impulsive and “cold” or instrumental aggression cannot be maintained. It originates from the juridical world where one tried to establish distinctions between different crimes by means of a phase of “cooling down”.

If someone reacts aggressively to a severe insult or abasement within a short interval (30 seconds) one could assume that he was under the power of his uncontrollable impulses and this was considered mitigating. Another person, planfully attacking the aggressor

with a delay of two days should be considered as in full responsibility and, thus, punished more severely. These authors introduce their paper (2001) quoting George Bernard Shaw: “If you strike a child, take care that you strike it in anger, even at the risk for maiming it for life. A blow in cold blood neither can nor should be forgiven”.

This quotation illustrates on the one hand the hot-cold distinction convincingly; however, it shows how this distinction is based in mundane thinking and is related to the psychology of reconciliation and forgiveness. It follows, that this distinction is unusable for the motivation or explanation of such acts. The distinction itself survived long in psychology, e.g. in the debate about aggressive drive(s). These authors convincingly conclude that every aggressive act is composed by an expressive-impulsive together with an instrumental component. However, these components cannot be distinguished precisely enough. The distinction itself is not detectable in the events, but in our thinking about events.

The debates about aggression-as-drive produced another blurredness. The concept of aggression serves for both, the designation of something that happens (e.g. when talking of an “aggressive act”) and for the explanation of such acts. The result of which are unresolvable circular arguments, when e.g. an “aggressive act” is explained by an “aggressive drive” or “aggressiveness”. It is as to explain “having no money” by poverty. It was a release of this circular thinking when Collins (2008) proposed a microanalysis of violent situations; it is discussed with enormous resonance in the social sciences (Aho 2013, Mazur 2009). The basic assumption is the conceptual switch from personality explanations to an explicative situationism. There are describable and observable common features of situations that produce violence. Such components are: If a perpetrator is determined and has the technical equipment available, if the victim is present and weak and if bystanders are either not present or do not intervene. To this schema Collins (2009, 2013) adds a crucial emotional component. He observes in numerous examples how humans execute violence with an astonishing amount of incompetence, which is a piece of circumstantial evidence against the assumption of a “drive”. Humans do not express anger or rage in their face during fights but anxiety. This tension of incompetence (not being able to hurt) and anxiety (to be hurt) Collins designates as “confrontational tension/fear”. To overcome tension/fear needs special trainings. Confrontational tension/fear is accompanied by a sudden high increase of heart beat unabling untrained people to precisely and well-directed slap or punch an adversary or to use a pistol or gun skillfully. Most people are in an emotional “tunnel” and have to acquire psychological techniques to leave the tunnel in order to execute violence with competence.

A situationist approach could lead further in the analysis of communicative violence. One must not dive into the depth of personality before things are observed and described precisely. In psychotherapy and in process research we seriously lack precise observations rich in details, while the market of original interpretations flourishes. A recent example is the public debate, which kind of diagnosis could be ascribed to the co-pilot of the Germanwings flight who steered his aircraft with 150 people directly against a mountain in the alpes.

A study to “the pull of hostility” (Lippe, Monsen, Ronnestad et al. 2008) can be assigned to such a situationist approach. Out of a huge pool of transcribed treatments 28 were selected. Every therapist had a successful and a non-successful treatment therein. 14

therapists were studied this way. The sessions were evaluated in defined segments with SASB2 in dimensions like dominance or response by symmetric escalation strategies. As expected it could be shown that in those treatments where therapists respond to difficult situations symmetrically, e.g. to accusations with accusation or, in a weaker version, with justifications, treatment outcome was bad. However, as the same therapists had positive treatment outcomes, this could not be attributed to a personality trait of the therapist. The authors speak of a dance of escalation. It's powerfulness steers over individual-personal components.

We want to try a situationist approach here without to begin with an abstract definition of violence. We want to present examples that can be considered as having a violent potential and we expect from a rich description of such situations some analytic potentials. We want to analyze these examples in their own right without approaching too quickly to more general considerations.

Readers may allow us to add a further consideration. As humans understand themselves to be autonomous beings, already seeing a person offering help, as the therapist is according to his/her functional definition, is an enterprise that is prone to violation. Krämer (2007) has emphatically underlined man's "double body" in a sense which is of significance here. Not only human bodies may be *violated*. As human individuals always also operate by way of symbols, move within a cultural period and within a social, not only physical space, they may become interesting and may be desired or being labelled as boring and rejected. They may feel touched and are indeed touched, both by contempt and by being respected and attracting attention; the refusal of respect or even ignoring their personality in the sense of a basal withdrawal of resonance (Buchholz and Gödde 2013) is perceived as a violation – precisely because of this "double body", which may result in a verbal attack being perceived in the same way as a physical attack, triggering appropriate effects. That is why one may feel *poisoned* or purified after a conversation, besmeared or lifted up by contact, hurt, violated or loved by a glance in the other's eyes. It is such elusive moments which we intend to view at here: Moments of the volatile which often escape the perception of others, and later, when we tell what has happened, are rather met with disbelief instead of making us credible witnesses. We do not intend to practice one-sidedness and accuse the therapists right from the beginning, we will also present examples of the violent power of some of the psychotherapeutic patients. This does not mean siding with one or the other side, this is no unstable balance. It is due to the insight how risky the therapeutic enterprise is and that for this reason it is a good thing to have recorded elusive moments, because often they are not really remembered but just brought to mind as a "feeling" by those having been hurt by something they are often unable to determine, after all; sometimes "countertransference analysis" rather obscures than clarifies such moments.

This does not really come as a surprise, as inevitably the way of operating of psychotherapy intervenes, nay, must intervene, in the violation-sensitive field of autonomy, and this while at the same time displaying the virtue of doubtlessly respecting the patient, his/her political or aesthetical opinion, his/her way of life. However, this respect must be balanced by skillfully handled disrespect (Frei, Michel and Valach 2012, 2013). Therapists know that precisely way of life practices are co-responsible for

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<sup>2</sup> "Structural Analysis of Social Behavior" – a widely used multidimensional circumplex model developed by Lorna Smith Benjamin (1974).



lamented symptoms. Who tries to cope with sorrow by way of eating, to then seek treatment for his/her adiposity, will have to change his/her autonomous way of life to a certain degree; who fights loneliness by way of excessive promiscuity and then gets caught in a thus resulting cycle, cannot be therapeutically helped if his/her implicit “doctrine of the art of living”, demanding the satisfaction of every need, is not radically put to question.

Thus we arrive at the question of how far empathy may or is supposed to go? For example, from infant research (Braten 2007) we know that the withdrawal of empathy is experienced as a painful loss but may as well be applied as a means of enforcing obedience or punishment. However, is it not that precisely in therapeutic dialogues there is sometimes the need for a limitation of empathy? Moreover, can therapists always just “accompany” – or are they supposed to – or is it not that they also have the task of pointing out to harmful ways of behaviour, of explaining painful connections, of correcting attitudes that might resist the therapy? Therapeutic understanding requires certain preconditions.

These are the questions we like to discuss here, however we will rather be able to list the problems than to offer definitive solutions. By way of excerpts from transcripts from our own conversation-analytical studies we will discuss therapeutic dialogues (Peräkylä and Antaki 2008); we will not discuss rough, physical forms of violence but only the “small” forms of violent speech that are not even due to the speakers’ bad intentions but often to their noble intentions. The violent nature of their speech becomes obvious by the reactions. Thus, we make use of a methodical basic principle of conversation analysis (Schegloff 2007, Sidnell and Stivers 2013). Each statement has its own linguistic *form*, its *function* becomes obvious by the “second move”, the recipient’s answer. This way meaning is created locally and situatively, by each following statement getting its own *design*, which only makes the second speaker’s *position* understandable for the first one. We would like to use the same methodical steps – form and function, design and positioning – for those statements by therapists who try to “repair” damage, thus creating an emphatic gain that will be therapeutically helpful again.

### **Example: An escalation**

Let us look in detail at a German conversation between a male patient and a female psychoanalyst.<sup>3</sup> It is the beginning of the treatment, the patient tells about his girlfriend who up to then has acted as kind of therapist for him. Here we would like to focus less on the content (why we selected a segment that on first glance seems not understandable) of the conversation but on the way it is organised: who speaks how and after whom? In which way is the break dealt with? Whose is the next conversational move?<sup>4</sup>

P: well. (--) she has well (--) but somehow I couldn’t do that to her (--) that was justified, after all, you know it was no exaggeration or so and she didn’t (--) she prohibited me from doing it like women do (laughs) that hurts me I don’t like that (laughs) you know err (.) well

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<sup>3</sup> The German original is inserted in *italics* in order to enable reader to follow the German version

<sup>4</sup> We are very grateful to Christine Reuter, Göttingen, for allowing us to quote this example from her forthcoming dissertation thesis.

P: ja. (-- das hat sie ähm (-- aber das ich konnte ihr das irgendwie nicht (-- das war schon berechtigt also das war jetzt nicht übertrieben oder so und sie hat auch nicht (-- sie hats mir verboten wie es Frauen verbieten ((lacht)) das tut mir weh ich möchte das nicht ((lacht)) also ähm↑

(15.0)

T: well, she's afraid of losing you,

T: also die hat Angst dass sie sie verlieren könnte,

P: yes, (3.0) that well (9.0) but somehow it is yes she is

P: ja, (3.0) das äh (9.0) doch es ist irgendwie schon ja das hat sie

(27.0)

We would like to take note of three particular features of the patient's way of expression:

- a) Expressions such as "justified after all" are "intensifiers" of a weak kind. The patient assures himself, as if being in the position of another speaker, of this having been "justified after all" (similar to the description given in Streeck 2012)
- b) As Bergmann observed (1980), the form of the litotes is used also here, to emphasize a different, here: friendly, intention by way of contrasting it to something negative.
- c) The many self-corrections after starting to speak and then stopping show multiple speech plans and intentions that violate Grice's maxim of quantity (Grice 1975).

Here there may follow an analysis of form, design and positioning: the analysis of the *form* shows that the patient speaks from an external position; he speaks while at the same time evaluating his own statements. The *design* of his statement with its many restarts is hardly addressee-oriented; even when reading slowly one hardly understands what he wants to say. The *function* becomes obvious by the therapist's reaction. By the patient evaluating his own statements, at the same time he excludes the therapist from conversation. As also Streeck (2012) has described it as a mode typical for anxious patients, he rather talks to himself instead of to an addressee. Finally, this interpretation is also supported by the 15 seconds break after having stopped in mid-sentence.

At the same time, his speech ends with a "starter", this "you know well"; if on this occasion one breathes in and says "you know", one unmistakably indicates the intention to go on accompanied by a high pitch boundary tone. But this indication to go on talking is contradicted by the long break. The break indicates that the patient gives up on his turn. The multi-modality of the conversation falls apart; the intonation moves upwards, the sentence is not finished – all this indicates an ambiguity if this is a "transition relevant place" (Clayman 2013)? However in contrast the therapist may perfectly understand the long break as being granted the right to speak already now.

This is a situation in which the therapist can only make "mistakes". If taking the turn and starting to speak she reacts to one half of the invitation, by not taking the turn she ignores the other half. This is a typical "slot", from which soon the objection will be raised that the therapist constantly interrupts the patient (Streeck 2001). Here, the therapist takes her turn by immediately connecting to the last spoken word („well", "also" in German). She speaks as if continuing *his* words<sup>5</sup>. Doing so, she might believe to have verbalised in a helpful and sensitive way what the patient himself has not yet been able to express. She might believe to have helped with the dialogue. This is also because once again the

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<sup>5</sup> This much more prominent in the German version.

patient makes a break of 27 seconds that again is introduced by the same contradictory conversation format: an unfinished sentence with a high pitch boundary tone and at the same time a long break. Before going on with this example, we would like to insert a few theoretical considerations.

### The “interaction engine”

One should not shrink back from the expression “interaction engine” as suggested by Levinson (2006); it is not more mechanical than therapists speaking of a “defence mechanism”. Often Freud spoke of the “psychic apparatus”. Conversation analysts focus most of all on *how* the exchange between speakers is organised. Observing the *organisation* of the exchange means taking expression formats as answers by the participants to silent questions, questions such as: “Whose turn to speak is it now?” “Who chooses the next speaker?” “Which topic might suit now?” This way, very pragmatically, conversation partners solve the problem of not constantly interrupting each other. Conversation analysts consider their statements solutions for all questions permeating a conversation.

When Freud (1916) said that in psychoanalysis nothing happens instead of an “exchange of words” (see Scarvaglieri 2013), of course he did not intend to exclude the significance of gestures, gazes, facial expressions but to distance himself from nebulous assumptions that in psychoanalysis there happens a kind of hypnotic mesmerism, a kind of suggestive influencing by help of electro-magnetic powers or something. From Breuer’s famous patient, Anna O., he had adopted the expression “talking cure”. Indeed, the “exchange of words” has a certain, seemingly rationalist, logic that is transgressed by metaphorical expressions such as “verbal sparring”. That is why Bourdieu (1987, p. 148; 1990), when speaking about G. H. Mead, refers to the latter’s remarks on sparring between boxers. For Mead, and Bourdieu follows him there, this practice is really a paradigm of a “logic of practice”: each gesture triggers a reaction, “each posture of the opponent” is treated “like a significant sign of a meaning”. The logic of practice, says Bourdieu, was used already by Mead for transgressing the limits of an understanding of the “exchange of words” which interprets meaning just hermeneutically. Gumbrecht (1995, p. 136) reminds to Jorge Luis Borges referring to George Bernhard Shaw, by saying Shaw’s language was a “reinvention of the Middle Ages”, as he was writing a kind of English belonging to the time of Jack Dempsey (then world boxing champion). Boxing serves as a store of images for a metaphor, which is not seldom transferred into the sphere of conversation. Against this background, it does not come as a surprise when Lakoff and Johnson (1980) exemplarily illustrate their then innovative idea of conceptual metaphors by the example of “argument is war”. Also in the academic debate, the origin domain of war has often been exploited for metaphorical expressions (“he had to vacate his position”) of the more abstract domains.

These considerations can be continued in so far as stating a continuity (Buchholz 2011) from particularly the interaction of the child, which is dominated by gestures (Braten 2009), and its continuation as far as to using linguistic symbols. As it is well known, Mead adopted from Wilhelm Wundt “language as gesture”. Modern cognition-theoretical works on *enactivism* (Di Paolo, Rohde, Jaegher 2011), on *extended mind* (Menary 2011), on *embodied cognition* (Shapiro 2011) take their innovative nature precisely from vehemently distancing themselves from earlier, still modularistic or genetic concepts of “cognition”. Thinking and speaking are considered to be *embodied* (for psychotherapy

see Buchholz 2014), the earlier computer metaphor of mind is considered to have been overcome. “Embodied interaction” (Streeck, Goodwin, LeBaron 2011) might be considered the perspective which, when it comes to the “exchange of words”, is indeed able to take “sparring” into consideration, thus raising our awareness of violations by words in a way as Krämer has described it by the term “double physicality” (s. a.). However, if “trouble” occurs and one interrupts each other, there is a wide range of “repair activities” (Egbert, Golato et al. 2009, Kitzinger 2013, Sidnell 2007), which appear regularly and in an interculturally stable way as a conversational practice for each exactly describable situation (Stivers, Enfield et al. 2009). If these repairs do not work, “trouble” increases to become a serious problem – on the form and function of these repairs as well as on their failure we will soon say more.

Levinson (2006) shows how important the “interaction engine” has become in the course of evolution. Humans are very much both dependent on cooperation and particularly capable of it. The “interaction engine” makes sure that an expression has been heard and is answered as such (and not just as a kind of “noise”), that an indicating gesture has been followed by a look, that a cry has been heard as coming from need and not just as a kind of noise. Gradually, interaction was organised around cooperative principles.

Purposefully, Levinson speaks of an “interaction” and not of a “conversation engine”. Even if humans – such as aphasics – have only extremely reduced possibilities of conversation and one can hardly make conversation with them, interaction is definitely possible (Jakobson 1955, Goodwin 2000 und 2012, Heschen und Schegloff 2003, Mellies und Winneken 1990). This is the case even if humans cannot use sounds but must refer to spontaneous sign language – in case of speaking foreign languages, of being behind a window, or over distances.

Organising interaction around cooperative principles includes answering not to a speaker’s (visible) behaviour but to his/her invisible, initially short-term *intentions* and later long-term *plans*, and later still to *images*. “Interaction is by and large cooperative” (Levinson 2006, p. 45). Interaction produces chains and sequences that can be learned by any novice to a culture and which make it easier to reliably predict the behaviour of others. The decisive step is: Such chains and sequences are not based on abstract *rules* but on situative and local *expectations*. Thus interaction does not depend on language, as expectations and intentions may be secured also in a non-linguistic way and by way of cooperation. Interaction is “deeper a layer” than talking. Interaction creates actual and local roles in the context of situated, contextual production, pairs of roles such as “inquirer-answerer”, “giver-receiver”. These pairs of roles are determined by mutual expectations, so that there develops an interaction structure that is sufficiently stable for the solving of cooperation tasks.

This stability is created by momentarily binding individual gestures to accompanying verbal expressions, facial expressions and prosody (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 1996) – all this is bound up to a multi-modal stream of signals. The components of this bond are expected to fit together to a large degree, because otherwise a listener would not be able to safely understand the speaker’s intention. There is a physical basis for such an attachment (Franke 2008, Vuust, Wallentin et al. 2011, Dausendschön-Gay und Krafft 2002).

## Back to the example

After these clarifications we may come back to the example, and now we at once realise the problem. By his unfinished sentence the patient makes obvious that he would like to go on speaking; however the long breaks contradict this expectation, they irritate the therapeutic listener: is she allowed to say something now? The conversation channels are not “bound together”, in the sense that the therapist could expect clearly decipherable intentions from the patient. Is this a “transition relevant place” (TRP, Clayman 2013), in the sense that the therapist being allowed to say something without causing “trouble”? Is it her turn now or not? This pattern is repeated immediately after this passage:

P: well, this may be you know I think it is still too fresh (--) to say so  
But↑

P: ja, das kann sein also das ist jetzt glaub ich noch zu kurz (---) um das sagen zu können aber ↑

(6.0)

T: but still this could (--) the thought just came to me if this well somehow I'm not saying (-) frightens Anny but isn't doesn't (.) simply pleasure (.) a pleasure for her.

*T: aber trotzdem könnte diese (---) war eben so mein Gedanke ob das nicht äh bei Anke ein bisschen ich will nicht sagen Angst macht aber doch nicht nur nicht nur erf Freude macht.*

Once again, the patient does not finish a sentence, once again he makes a longer break, thus inviting his conversation partner to speak, although he leaves his sentence unfinished. Once again it stays unclear if this is a transition relevant point. And once again the therapist continues by going on with the patient's last word, “but”.

“Speaker's turn-internal breaks” (Schegloff 2007) are found with many dialogues, here you get the described form. Just a few dialogue sequences later, and we see how the session escalates:

P: well I don't try to connect this to any kind of rivalry but (--) well I do perceive it if for example he somewhat gives expression to it you know (--) I think last time I told you about the weekend ten days ago (-) when the two really freaked out well (-) well ↑

*P: also ich versuche da keinerlei Rivalität rein zu bringen aber (-) äh ich nehme das schon wahr wenn das von ihm so zum Beispiel mal ein bisschen kommt also (-) ich hab glaube ich das letzte mal erzählt von vor zehn Tagen das Wochenende (-) da wo die beiden sehr stark ausgerastet sind so (-) äh ↑*

(4.0)

P: then (-) I somewhat thought he really wants to know what's going on or somehow he wants ↑

da (-) hab ich schon so ein bisschen gedacht er will schon wissen was los ist oder er will irgendwie ↑

(6.0)

P: well yesterday (-) yesterday the day before yesterday? We went to the hockey match on the car because now the two wanted to see and they came along and (-) I was sitting in the frontseat and took my arm around her (-) well seat and that was when from behind there was this little knock you know [ (?? ) ] ↑

*ja gestern sind wir mit dem (-) gestern, vorgestern? gestern sind wir mit dem Auto*

*äh zum Hockey gefahren weil die beiden jetzt auch mal gucken wollten und sind da mitgefahren u:nd (-) äh da hab ich (.) saß ich vorne und hab den Arm um \*Name\* (-) ähm Sitz gemacht und da kam von hinten so ein kleiner Klopfer also [(??)] ↑*

T: [(??)]

P: [(??)]

T: [(??)] leave my wife alone

[(??)] gehn Sie weg von meiner Frau

P: well, (2.0) well you know I'm sure he didn't mean it but from his side it was kind of a game ( ) that ↑

P: nja, (2.0) äh also von ihm her sicherlich nicht bewusst sondern es war so von ihm her so ne Art spielen ( ) das

(3.0)

T: mmh=mmh

Although the patient did not intend to make this “kind of rivalry”, nevertheless it is suddenly there: the spare brackets mark where there happens a fight for the right to speak<sup>6</sup> which could not be identified when many times listening to the tape. Both conversation partners are starting to say something, but only very shortly, each intrudes the other's speaking space, and then the rivalry, which was to be prevented is staged by the organisation of the conversation. The space of speaking, that is the metaphorical container “into which” rivalry is introduced.

Here, the therapist's expression formats take up the form of “quasi quotations” (Buchholz 2003). She speaks as if quoting the patient, as formulating for him, formulating what he is as yet incapable of saying. However, by this helpful attitude she overlooks that all she can do is „wrong”: either she follows the hints that the patient wants to go on speaking or that she shall take her turn – either way the patient could then accuse her of not having “understood” him. Taking turns of speaking is organised in a highly ambivalent way here. Thus, inevitably the therapist will be blamed, blamed for intruding into the space of speaking, for seemingly unjustifiably usurping the right to speak, which is why one is entitled to take it from her in the course of a small, escalating fight for the right to speak, and she will have to admit her guilt, for it was her who “started it” – at least this is the way the patient understands the situation. (Streeck 2001 makes a related observation.) Here precisely the helpful attitude contributes to the clash.

### **Example: Autonomy-sensitive repair**

Our next example comes from a psychoanalytical first interview with a compulsive neurotic patient, called the “student” (Thomä and Kächele 1985). In the first minutes the

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<sup>6</sup> Schegloff (1987, S. 207) starts his explanation of social organization by way of „talk-in-interaction” by the following description: „When persons talk to each other in interaction, they ordinarily talk one at a time and one after the other. When their talk is not produced serially in this manner, they generally act quickly to restore ‚order’; someone quickly steps in to fill the silence; someone stops talking (or several someones do) to resolve the simultaneous talk; or if two or more of the participants continue talking, their talk takes on a special character of ‚competitiveness’ (it is louder or higher pitched, for example)”. This fight for the right to speak, this „competitiveness” is the boxing match Bourdieu (2007) refers to.



P: *un:d da hab ich also viele verschiedene Fächer, (.) dis is schoma (.) für mi ganz positiv wenn i net immer auf öin so rumreite muss, gä?=  
T: =hm=  
P: =excessive, (-) I've also got many well ehm pleasant subjects; (.)  
=exzessiv, (-) i hab auch viele äh angenehme Fächer; (.)  
T. yes:?  
T: ja:?  
P: like (.) what I do I know, many sports things also, (.)  
P: so (.) was weiß ich viele sportliche Sache auch, (.)  
T: hm,  
T: hm,  
P: a cooking class and, you know, like media education subjects;  
P: n Kochkurs und halt so Medienpädagogische Fächer;  
T: ↓hm,  
P: and that: is quite good for me after all (?)=  
P: und des: tut mir eigentlich ganz gut (?)=  
T: = this is where you can better unfold your talents  
T: =da können sie sich dann mehr entfalten  
P: yes:,  
P: ja:,  
T: then law paragraphs don't make you feel (---)  
T: da werden sie nicht durch Paragraphen so (--)  
P: boxed in yes (-)  
P: eingeengt ja (-)  
T: !ALREADY HERE! you have even (1) .hhh almost felt boxed in? ↑right now? and then you took off that jacket?  
T: HIER HABEN Sie sich auch schon (1) .hhh fast eingeengt? gefühlt? ↑gerade? und sich dann die Jacke ausgezogen?  
P: pfff boxed in? I think it was rather the heat yes indeed (.) sure=  
P: pfff eingeengt? I glaub das war eher die Wärme ja doch (.) klar=  
T: =°yes?°  
T: =°ja?°  
P: =conveyed like [this  
P: =vermittelt auch irgendwie [so  
T: [indeed? yes, hm;  
T: [ja? ja, hm;  
(1)  
T: really? really? I !WELL! I could imagine that the room, you know;  
T: so? so? I MEI i könnt mir vorstelln das so der Raum:;  
P: well it is (.) quite small yes  
P: der is scho (.) ziemlich klein ja  
T: !SMALL! (-) I thought so: that you've got this feel[ing  
T: KLEIN (-) dacht ich so: dass sie das Gefühl gekriegt hab[n*



- P: [but this hasn't got we ha h with  
claustrophobia [it might even be smaller I wouldn't [mind  
P: [aber mit Platzangst hat des ja  
ha h aber nicht[s also der könnt auch noch kleiner sein des würde mir [nichts  
ausmache
- T: [no [yes, yes, no; bu:t; (-) maybe cramped;  
T: [nein [ja, ja, nee; a:ber; (-) vielleicht ingeengt;
- (1.3)
- T: >Oh this< (-) is a feeling I've got (.)  
T: >Ah des< (-) is a Gefühl von mir (.)
- P: hm (-)  
P: hm (-)
- T: i::f this:: is important that you take care if you feel cramped,  
T: o::b das:: das wichtig wäre dass sie darauf achten ob sie sich eingeengt fühlen,
- P: .hh perhaps I've i:gnored that much too long (.),  
P: .hh des hab i viel zu lang (.) verna:chlässigt,

The development of the autonomy-sensitive construction of a motivation becomes clearly visible if one notices how the therapist at first confronts the patient with the statement that he had “almost felt boxed in”. The statement is qualified by the word “almost” which serves for creating a soft conversational environment. He does not only use a soft formulation in form of a question for his construction of a motivation but audibly rises his voice (indicated by ↑) when saying that word which is supposed to link the current situation with the just mentioned one: “right now”. This might indicate that he is aware of the precarious confrontation. His rejection of the patient’s attribution of a motivation, who just the same presents an alternative motivation, “heat”, makes the therapist step by step retreat to his original position, however he maintains his attribution of a motivation as a situative assumption. At the end of this section it is the therapist who says: “maybe cramped. Oh this is a feeling I’ve got”. It stays communicatively unclear if here the word “feeling” means “this is the impression I’ve got” or if his “feeling” already refers to the then following recommendation, that is if it was important for the patient to take care of this feeling of being cramped. Such communicative vagueness has often been observed with conflict communication (Donnellon, Gray et al. 1986, Donnellon 1996). Here vagueness refers to the speaker’s perspective, thus getting a hidden meaning: The feeling of being boxed in, which initially is clearly attributed to the patient, is now revoked; the therapist so to speak admits a mistake, without clearly saying so – and the patient can be “satisfied” with this and can now himself continue with the remark that he had “ignored this much too long”.

### **The Correction Engine**

In the above quoted paragraph there is another autonomy-sensitive construction. The therapist’s construction of a motivation, which has proved to be wrong, is understood by the patient, again erroneously, in the sense of the therapist suggesting “claustrophobia” as diagnosis, to which once again he reacts by being slightly irritated, to then react by a clear, although incomplete, rejection “but this hasn’t got ha h with claustrophobia” – one must complete this by inserting “to do”. This correction is important for the patient because without such a correction he would have the impression of “not being understood

correctly”, which would give reason to the fear that without such a correction he would not provide the therapist with the necessary hints for a “correct” understanding of his disturbance. The therapist confirms this correction by a “no” – also here we may complete: “this hasn’t got to do with claustrophobia”.

The form of such a correction by the therapist has two functions:

- a) The therapist reacts in an autonomy-sensitive way and revokes his statement when the patient indicates his irritation.
- b) Revoking is itself an active information telling the patient about the therapist’s “positioning”; i. e. that the latter is ready to respect the patient’s autonomy and will indeed not authoritatively enforce options for an interpretation.

Both from empirical infant research and from the observation of mother-infant dialogues (Corrin 2010) we know quite well that by far the biggest share of everyday interaction with small children consists of such “repairs”. Sometimes mothers do not understand their children’s intentions and correct their own activities only after the children have continued to state their discontent. An appropriate interaction cycle may be understood as a contribution to developing a “sense of autonomy”; Emde (1988) was the first to point out that here, already at a prelingual state, there develops a mode of “relationship-on-relationship” conversation which in the realm of developed linguality would be called a “commentary”. In the field of social-psychological game theory, already Morton Deutsch (1958) pointed out that even under communicatively extremely restricted conditions, when the players may only make a few moves without seeing or speaking to each other, one tries to deliver such silent messages to be able to inform the other about one’s own intention to go on with playing cooperatively or competitively. This finding suits perfectly here; repairs are no “mistakes” but itself important means for an autonomy-sensitive conversation in a therapeutic context.

Such an analysis moves at the topical-semantic level, leading to mutual attributions and their corrections and proneness to mistakes. It shows how both participants continuously work on informing each other about their mutual positions as speakers, in a way which make the statements make sense, so that the *heard* meaning of the information can be ratified within a certain range of tolerance by the *expressed* intentionally stated meaning. Granted, each statement may be understood “in this or this way”; to make conversation progress, every speaker must be able to be sure that a certain range of agreement is not left or is at least corrected on time. Here we see how one correction is so to speak swapped for another one. We assume that the “correction engine” works on the basis of those principles as above described for the “interaction engine”.

### **Example: Intrusion**

The following example comes from the 152<sup>nd</sup> psychoanalytical session of patient Amalie, about which Thomä and Kächele have informed in detail in the second volume of the Ulmer Lehrbuch. The session under consideration here has already been analysed on several occasions (Erhardt, Levy et al. 2014; Kächele, Thomä 2003; Deppermann, Lucius-Höhne 2008; Kächele, Albani et al. 2006). These studies are based on the Ulm Transcription (Mergenthaler and Kächele 1988) which, however, has proven to be in need of correction in several respects when listening once again to the audio recording, which is why here we quote from a new transcription according to the GAT standard (Hepburn and Bolden, 2013). So much on the context of the here presented section:

The patient suffers from so called hirsutism, that is male body hair, which can hardly be treated medically, and cosmetically only with much effort. In despair, she had joined a monastery but then left it again to become a teacher. Then she had heard about the possibilities of psychoanalytic treatment. In the course of this treatment she gains so much self-confidence and courage that after some time she starts her first sexual relationship with a man, in the context of which she discovers bodily enjoyment. She starts the 152<sup>nd</sup> session by telling about a dream about which much has been written. She dreams that a black man is about to stab her with a knife from behind, and in this situation her skirt had moved up. Full of fear she had woken up.

While, when telling this dream, she seems to be the victim of male aggression, the tide is turning; in the course of the session she more and more develops an urge to intrude the analyst's head. She wants, as she emphasizes by rhythmically spoken words (see Buchholz, Spiekermann, Kächele 2015), to intrude the analyst's head, and when expressing this desire she colourfully changes between the metaphorical and the material meaning of the word "head". It is not at all that she just wants to intrude her analyst's "mind", but definitely she actually means the head. She remembers an "old story" of her father who, she says, had always been too soft:

P: it's a really old fear (3) that you can't stand it you know my father never stood  
[anything (2) you wouldn't believe how soft my father [is

*P: is ne ganz alte Befürchtung (3) dass Sie's nicht aushalten mein Vater hat ja nie  
was [ausgehalten (2) Sie glauben gar nicht wie weich mein Vater [ist*

T: [yes: [mhm

*T: [Ja: [mhm*

(2)

P: He didn't stand anything=

*P: nix hat der ausgehalten=*

T: =but then, it is even more important if my head is still  
really hard! This will indeed increase h::ow (1) well (.) >strong you will grasp<.

*T: =aber umso mehr ist dann wichtig ob mein Kopf noch  
wirklich hart ist! Das steigert ja dann auch di::e (1) äh (.) >Härte des Zupackens<.*

11 P: hhh.

T: F:or if it is hard then you must still:: then it is easier to find out (.) yes! How hard is  
it now, after all, isn't it?

*T: de:nn wenn er hart ist dann muss man ja noch:: dann kann man ja eher aus=raus  
(.) kriegen ja! wie hart ist er nun, nicht wahr?*

P: °yes° yes and you can grasp more strongly and=

*P: °ja° ja und man kann härter zupacken und=*

T: =exa:ctly=

*T: =Gena:u=*

P: =Yes!=

*P: =Ja!=*

T: =mh mh mh

P: and you can better (1) fight with the knife

*P: und kann besser (1) bis aufs Messer kämpfen*

Here the participants do not understand the knife to be a sex symbol, as might be suggested by a primitive reading of psychoanalysis, but definitely the patient connects it to her dream as an offensive weapon. However, whereas when telling her dream she passively fears the knife, here she changes her position. Her desire for a father who could stand something is not only accepted by the therapist but he offers himself so to speak as a “sparring partner” (from line 7 on). A few sentences later she wants to intrude the therapist’s head, when saying that sometimes she also sees other people and looks at their heads:

P: really very bad! Then I yes= and measured other heads

*P: schon ganz schlimm! Dann bin ich ja[=und hab andere Kö[pfe vermessen*

T: [YES [mm mm mh  
*T [JA [mm mm mh*

P: I did this (1) perhaps during my studies sometimes (-) then I had such a time (1,2)

*P: das hab ich (1) vielleicht im Studium mal getan [(-) da hatt ich so ne Zeit*

T: [Yes Yes  
T: [Ja Ja

P: and now it happened again (..) indeed triggered by you

*P: und das kam jetzt auch wieder (..) eben durch Sie ausgelöst worn*

T: °hm hm°

P: and THEN! =I=want=to QUITE (.) a small (.) hole in the head (.) in the

*P: und DA =will=ich=so ein GANZ (.) kleines bißchen (.) n Loch in den Kopf (.) in den*

T: °mhm°

P: Head! Hammer in the head (.)=

*P: Kopf! In den Kopf (.) schlag=*

T: =mhm yes=

*T: =mhm ja=*

P: =and put some of=of °my thoughts into it° °°like°°. This came to me

*P: und da ein bißchen was von=von °meinen Gedanken rein tun° °°so°°. Das kam mir*

T: mhm

P: the other day (..) if I could not somewhat exchange YOUR=dogma (.) for MINE P:

*neulich (--)) ob ich nicht ein bißchen IHR=Dogma (.) gegen MEINS austauschen kann*

T: mhhhhh.=mm ((rising voice))

P: Li=ke (.) li=ke (.) hhh. Li=ke I °°can°° °°imagine you (-)

*P: So=wie [(.) so=wie [(.) hhhh. So=wie Si::e (3) ich mir °vorstellen °°kann°°*

T: [ Yes Yes

T: [Ja [Ja

P: (-) putting your dogma (1) into mine  
P: (-) Ihr Dogma in meins (1) rein zu tun  
(2)  
P: and then the head found it easier to say than  
*P: und dann ging es mit dem Kopfleichter zu sagen als*  
(2)  
T: Yes  
*T: Ja*  
P: I °said° to myself already on (2) Wednesday (1)  
*P: ich hab's mir schon am (2) Mittwoch [(1) °gesagt°*  
T: [mhm And then also= also the  
intensification of your idea of joining a monastery would be a possibility to  
challenge me for a fight  
*T: [mhm Und dann wäre auch=wäre  
auch die Intensivierung Ihres Gedankens ins Kloster zu gehen eine Möglichkeit  
mich herauszufordern zu einem Kampf*  
P: mhm  
T: to (.) for a fight which also (.) during which then you wo=uld be GRASPED (.)  
*T: um Sie (.) nämlich zum Kampf der auch (.) bei dem Sie dann FEST=gehalten  
wür=den (.)*  
P: hhhh.  
T: not=only be grasped (.) GRASP and try how how >°how=much=I=can=stand°<<  
T: nicht=nur selbst (.) FESThalten und ausprobieren wie wie  
[>>°wieviel=ich=aushalt[e°<<  
P: [hhhh. [ Yes  
*P: [hhhh [Ja*  
T: but that then FINALLY! (1) during that fight I show how!=much I'm (.) interested! in  
you (.) NOT joining the monastery [but  
*T: sondern dass ich dann auch ENDLich! (1) in dem Kampf zeige wie!=sehr mir (.)  
daran=gelegen ist! dass Sie (.) NICHT ins Kloster geh[en sondern=*  
P: [to my mother  
*P: [zu meiner Mutter*  
T: =remain staying  
*T: =der Welt erhalten*  
P: oh yes probably indeed  
*P: ohja wahrscheinlich schon*  
T: =in the world  
*T: bleiben*

The passage which belongs to the context of communicative violence is the one where, repeating it three times and with rhythmic accentuation, she says this:

P: and THEN! =I=want=to QUITE (.) a small (.) hole in the head (.) in the  
T: °mhm°

P: Head! Hammer in the head (.)=

T: =mhm yes=

P: = and put some of=of °my thoughts into it° °°like°°. This came to me

Doubtlessly, such statements by the patient, if we take them out of their context, indicate a tendency towards violence. The ways in which the therapist makes his statements, however, provide the patient with access to this violence, which in her dreams she still perceived as a threat, as a realm of her own activity. Quite obviously, in the case of Amalie the therapist considers himself an active participant in the process, tailoring his statements in a way enabling the patient to indeed listen to them as being process-generated. Here, the therapeutic statements are no previously readymade “interventions” into a “problem”.

The conversation solves an important problem: on the one hand, people see the therapist because of disturbances which are classifiable as illnesses/disorders and expect him/her to know a way of healing or alleviating them. On the other hand, treating the patient in such a way, categorically considering him/her most of all a “case of ... (fear, depression, obsession)”, might make any therapeutic effort a failure right from the beginning. Precisely concerning his/her individual uniqueness and particularity, the patient would have the impression to be missed as a personality. Here, the process-generated formats of therapeutic statements solve the problem in an elegant way. They apply a form which presents itself less as advice or initiative but may rather be understood by the patient as an in each case conversational answer to that what she makes a topic of discussion. She may feel to be perceived as a unique individual, not as a “general case” – and that is an autonomous-sensitive therapeutic activity.

The patient, on the other hand, opens up access to meanings and accepts them to be opened up by the therapist who at the end of the passage mentions that the patient would like to see him in a certain position – as the one demonstrating that he is interested in her. By the hint that he might not want her to join the monastery but to stay in the world, the topic of love and sexuality is gradually prepared.

Here, the co-construction of the emphatic process can be reproduced in detail. The therapist’s accompanying, richly modulated prosodic statements will be observed in more detail in the course of a later analysis; their form seems to have most of all the function to tell the patient that the therapist is not afraid. Here, his lack of fear becomes a condition for violence to change; it is very beautifully demonstrated how violence could be a conversational co-construction in which a therapist could participate in the one, or indeed the other, way. This other way has always be called empathy, which can be observed here as a position working against violence to develop. Let us now move to another example, where empathy is mildly “blinded”, to move from there to the example of a strong communicative empathy blinder operating like a “flashbang”.

### **A mild empathy blinder**

More recently, also the development of *theory* has caught up with that what was practiced by psychoanalysis already in the early 1970s. The discovery of mirror neurons (Ferrari and Gallese 2007; Gallese and Goldman 1998) provided important stimulations in this

context, just as the debate on the Theory-of-Mind Theory (Stueber 2006, Breithaupt 2009, Breyer 2013). One might say that the common focus of criticism of this research is on empathy having previously been understood as a “one way street”. The experimental designs were made in such a way as to hardly allowing for emphasizing that for the emphatic party it is as important to get a correct understanding as it is for the one who is understood (Schlicht 2013). Empathy is not an epistemological but a mutual process of existential commitment, among whose means there also counts musicality (Buchholz 2014). Also for the therapist it must become important that his patient understands him when he is trying to understand her.

Thus, empathy as a jointly created communicative process replaces any theory of empathy being a “one way street”, with one party, by help of particular skills, empathizing with the other. Rather, empathy is understood to be a conversational coproduction jointly developed by the participants in the conversation. Heritage (2011) describes such co-productions in everyday conversation and demonstrates either strategies of the participants to, in a variety of ways, make others adjust to their narrations or strategies of reacting to certain narrations. For example, one such conversational strategy, that of “ancillary questions”, describes interested questions which obviously serve the purpose of enabling the listener to get an appropriate idea of that what is told; another strategy are those “response cries”, already described by Goffman (1978), by which one reacts if one is told about the painful procedures at the dentist.

Such everyday patterns can be identified also during therapeutic conversations, however they give only an incomplete description of the emphatic overall architecture of therapeutic sessions. Thus, here we would like to give an example of a patient making it really difficult for the therapist to comprehend a situation he is told. Strictly saying, this might even be called “empathy blinding”. If empathy is seen as the antipode to violence, also such examples belong to the context of communicative violence.

Also the here presented sequence comes from the first therapeutic session of the Ulm “student”. After a short welcome, the patient starts telling the therapist about his symptoms. He describes his obsession by the following words:

P: [ (Well you know) =behaviour you know like control obsession (..) and when like  
(.) for example (.) I step out of the front door (.) >not then< but when I enter [then I  
have a look

*P: [(ja so)] =verhalten also so Kontrollzwang (-- ) und wenn i ja so (.) zum Beispiel  
(.) aus der Haustür rausgeh (.) >dann net< aber wenn ich reingeh [dann guck ich=*

T: [hm: =yes

*T: [hm: =ja*

P: at the back=

*P: nach hinten=*

T: =yes

*T: =ja*

P: and I check if I have not forgotten anything or so

*P: und kontrolliere ob i auch nichts vergesse hab oder so*

The patient tries to describe his control obsession by way of an exemplary situation: “and when like (.) for example”. This announcement is followed by an image, that he “step[s] out of the front door”. After a micro-pause there seems to follow a correction and a new image of his attempt at describing the situation, when he “enters” through the front door. In this context, the correction of the first image or the negation of the first example, “not then”, is placed in such a way that it is presented only after a micro-pause and immediately following the next image. Here develops irritation, due to the vagueness of the presented image and the thus intended invitation to be literally able to visualise his symptoms: it cannot be decided if his control obsession is demonstrated by the example of leaving or entering the house. This mismatch or incongruence of presented intention and action and the thus resulting irritation is impressively described by Greenspan and Shanker (2007) as well as Buchholz (2014).

The form of this ambiguous format of expression has a function, the therapist reacts in a slightly irritated way, the further sequence from the conversation shows his efforts to get an appropriate image by help of the “ancillary question” – and his failure:

P: [ (Well you know) =behaviour you know like control obsession (..) and when like (.) for example (.) I step out of the front door (.) >not then< but when I enter [then I have a look

*P: [(ja so)] =verhalten also so Kontrollzwang (-- ) und wenn i ja so (.) zum Beispiel (.) aus der Haustür rausgeh (.) >dann net< aber wenn ich reingeh [dann guck ich=*

T: [hm: =yes

*T: [hm: =ja*

P: at the back=

*P: nach hinten*

T: =yes

*T: =ja*

P: and I check if I have not forgotten anything or so

*P: und kontrolliere ob i auch nichts vergesse hab oder so*

T: if you enter through the front [door

*T: wenn Sie reingehen in die Haustü[re*

P: [Yes when I leave it is not=

*P: [Ja wenn ich rausgeh net=*

T: = then you check what;

*T: =dann: kontrolliern Sie was;*

(1.2)

P: well, what, you know .hh

*P: ja was, also .hh*

T: and what do you look at then? If you?

*T: und wohin gucken Sie da? wenn Sie?*

P: To the floor, (.) usually

*P: aufn Bode, (.) in der Regel*

T: you look from the outside thus outside [you look?

*T: von draußen also draußen gucken [Sie?*



P: [no from the ins >>you know I really enter  
through the door or so<< [or (.) in front of the door after all  
P: [nee von dri >>also i geh scho in die Tür hinei  
oder so<< [oder (.)vor der Tür eben  
T: [hm hm  
T: [hm hm  
P: this now is quite a concrete thing  
P: *dis wär jetz a ganz konkrete Sache*  
T: †hm hm

Once again the therapist makes sure if he has correctly understood his conversation partner “if you enter through the front [door”, again the patient answers by the irritating, contradicting image “Yes when I leave it is not”. The way of agreeing by saying “yes” must make the therapist believe that the obsessive-compulsive symptom appears when entering through the door, the then following part leaves it open if “not” is meant as a tag<sup>7</sup> or a denial.

This “game” is continued, the therapist asks about the direction: “you look from the outside thus outside [you look?”, in the context of which also here it stays unclear if the view is imagined *from* the outside or *to* the outside. Once again, the patient reacts to this vagueness by a new perspective “you know I really enter through the door”, thus repeatedly triggering an irritation due to his new point of view “in front of the door after all”. The summarising remark “this now is quite a concrete thing” sounds almost ironic, and the therapist seems to answer this unintendedly unclear “concrete thing” by his high-pitched double “hm hm”.

Such examples are not a rarity during therapeutic conversation, but to our knowledge they are as yet unanalysed. This is a mild example of emphatic blinding, for the therapist it is made so to speak lastingly difficult to understand the architecture of the situation when the patient’s obsessive-compulsory symptom appears. In a comprehensive way, the therapist cannot “see” what happens; his efforts to receive information by help of “ancillary questions” (Heritage 2011) are rejected in quite an everyday-practical sense – here by a lack of empathy from the patient’s side; this is where the therapist gives up and postpones his need of further explanation to a later moment.

Here we would like to go on by a much more drastic example of a “communicative flashbang” from our study on criminal sexual offenders (Buchholz, Lamott and Mörtl 2008), to illustrate this way how in therapy situations sometimes things happen for which Heritage’s scheme (2011) is insufficient.

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<sup>7</sup> The term “tag” is used by conversation analysis for those “sweet little nothings” by way of which agreement is demanded during a conversation; other examples are “gell?”, “ne” in German, “isn’t it” in English, “oder” in Swiss German etc. (see Jefferson 2012). Translator’s remark: the patient speaks a Bavarian dialect, saying „net” which here is translated by „not”. Other than in English, in the Bavarian dialect “net” may as well mean something like “innit”.

The sexual offenders of our study were admitted for a social-therapeutic ward in prison, after their prospects having been judged as being sufficiently promising. There they participated in a completely video-recorded group therapy (for details see Buchholz et al. 2008). The therapists encouraged the participants a. o. to unfold the narratives of their offences, that is to tell about the offences for which they had been sentenced to prison. The example gives a conversation *following* such a story; one group member, Sepp, asks the one who has told his story, Otto, a question which refers to the narration of his offence. This narration has produced the information that the narrator, Otto, has been banned from making contact to his son.

Sepp B.: I would like to know – that thing about your son. Why are you allowed to see him only after he has turned 18? Or Sepp

*B.: Mich würde interessieren - mit deinem Sohn. Warum darfst du den erst, wenn er 18 ist, sehen? Oder*

(.)

Otto O.: Because it happened with my son=

*Otto O.: Weil es passiert ist mit meinem Sohn=*

Therapist K.: =What happened?

*Therapeut K.: =Was is passiert?*

(1)

Otto O.: After I well had abused him [once. Although it is not=

*Otto O.: Seit ich ihn mal äh*

*missbraucht [habe missbraucht habe (.) Obwohl es nicht*

Therapist K.: [pardon?=

*Therapeut K.: [Bitte?*

Otto O.: = true (-) He was only present.

*Otto O.: stimmt (-) Er war nur dabei gewesen.*

Therapist K: He was present?

*Therapeut K.: Er war dabei?*

Otto O.: He was present.

*Otto O.: Er war dabei gewesen.*

Therapist K.: Present

*Therapeut K.: Dabei gewesen*

Otto O.: All right, I will tell you once again how it happened with my son. We:ll:: *Otto*

*O.: Gut, ich erzähle noch einmal wie es passiert ist mit meinem Sohn. A:lso::*

Therapist K.: This is perhaps important after all.

*Therapeut K.: Das ist ja vielleicht auch wichtig.*

Sepp's question about the narration indicates (Heritage 2011, 2012, 2013) that his knowledge status is K- (K minus); by this question he shows that there is something he has not yet understood or does not know. To such a question we would expect a piece of information which balances the mutual knowledge in such a way as to equal the inquirer's knowledge to Otto 's. Such as a statement like: "because the court has banned me from him" or something like that. However, there is a break after the break following Otto's "or", and starting by "because" he gives an explanation which, by the formulation "because it happened" immediately negates his own actor's competence and

responsibility. The therapist reacts to this by quickly stepping in, and now Otto changes to a design, which accepts his own competence as an actor. It had been him, he admits, who abused his son. This way the reason why he is banned from seeing his son is at least hinted at.

Let us stop here for a moment. Otto answers Sepp's question by way of a kind of categorising activity, which rather refers to himself than to changing the inquirer's knowledge status. By the same move he refers to himself as a non-actor; he starts a complex transformation of his own position within the legal agenda: he changes from being an offender to being a witness. It is this irritation, we may assume, to which the therapist reacts by his overlapping "pardon?", and Otto answers as if the therapist had not listened. He repeats the last part of his speech and adds that "it is not true". His son had "only been present". If one listens to children, for example when they are saying "Now you are the robber", one may clearly observe their categorisation activities. The other is categorised as a "robber", however only "for fun". The category of fun is indicated by "now" – just leave it out, and you will at once note the difference.

In Otto's case one can leave out the word "only" – then his sentence is completely trivial: we may assume that somebody was present when being abused. What is the burden this "only" bears? "Only" indicates a change of the son's status, also he changes from being victim to being a witness who was "only present", and the way of having been present is transformed into being a somewhat coincidental witness. This transformation of position is called "footing" since Goffmann; one so to speak "has a different relation" to each other (Goodwin 2007). This kind of analysis might explain the way in which the therapist joins now. He reformulates "He was present?" and these three words are conversationally somewhat switched; three times in a row question and answer are exchanged without any change of content.

This leads to a particular effect. By way of this complex conversational operation Otto takes the speaker position of a *witness*, whereas previously Sepp has addressed him as a *perpetrator*. And there is more: the therapist confirms Otto's position as a witness and retreats to the position of a listener.

If one discusses scenarios of this kind with other therapists, not seldom they shake their head and wonder why the therapist did not take notice of this. However, one may be assured that such things happen several times a day to anybody working in the field of therapy; then it may be that we speak of an attack on thinking or on connections. To our knowledge it has as yet not been analysed *how* (by asking about the way) such attacks happen exactly. *If it is typical for them that as a participant in such a conversation one does not notice them, one will not notice them.* At least not as long as one has no transcripts at hand for an analysis but must rely on one's own memory for minutes which are sometimes taken down after a long day of practical work. However, it is these ways of confusing categories, which powerfully devaluates the hermeneutics of therapy. Theory calls this an "attack on thinking" (Bion 1963). This is a description of the *function*. A kind of behaviour we are not aware of as well as defence manoeuvres are conversationally staged, which way understanding, hermeneutics-based possibilities to answer are literally blinded. But it is not that this behaviour we are unaware of must always be worked out by way of analysis; our example shows in detail that it appears both at the visible and audible surface of the conversation if only we look at the details closely enough (Buchholz 2011).

## Concluding Remark

The selection of sequences has been purposefully restricted to those where violence can be observed within the context of speech interaction. Here it is less about damage caused by violating the boundaries of the private sphere but about subtleties of the therapeutic conversation for which the negotiation of closeness and distance, the roles of “leading and following” and the shaping of a professional relationship are essential. Both therapist and patient move within a conversational field within which they mutually influence each other’s position. Irritations are created by incongruent conversational hints, e. g. by rising intonation indicating that one is going to continue, to be followed, however, by a very long break which again signals that it is the other’s turn. On the one hand, such linguistic subtleties depict the shaping of the relationship, on the other hand a certain atmosphere of the relationship climate is only *established* this way. The corrections made in the context of such interactions may allow for new relationship experiences and, depending on the way in which they are solved, support or weaken the therapeutic relationship.

Intentions and attitudes are mutually investigated and communicated, in the context of which a common foundation of empathy may develop on whose basis interactive-conversational acts of violence can be balanced, which on the one hand influence this foundation and are on the other hand based on it, as it could be demonstrated by the example of Amalie and the rupture-repair cycle. In which way these conversations influence process and outcome of therapy must be analysed by future research. Also those communicative “blindings” may be supposed to be of significance which have not yet been analysed when it comes to the process of therapy. They are more than “face work” in the sense Goffman (1955) introduced the term. Face work means defensive maneuvers securing one’s own status against dangers of being blamed. “Blindings”, and in the strong form of communicative “flashbangs” are violent acts directed to others and thus, they damage. In therapeutic process they have not yet achieved necessary attention. Here answers will be created that cross over an understanding of therapy as a hermeneutic act. The fine-grained conversation analysis makes visible, what in therapeutic discourse is more hidden under too global concepts like transference-countertransference, resistance, attack on thinking, projective identification etc. Although we started from rough examples, our examples show the “pull of hostility” (Lippe et al. 2008). They demonstrate how complex the tightrope walk between autonomy-sensitive confrontation and verbal infringement is. The theme should be released from all scandalization. How a patient’s violence by an extremely skillful therapist can be handled shows the example of Amalia; the therapist arrives in a kind of tender tone, unexpected by the patient. That “blindings” on the other hand can actively obstruct empathy so deeply desired could be shown by other examples.

## Biographical Note

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# Aggression And The Telos Of Learning: A Psychoanalytic Study Of Significant Host-Foreign Language Acquisition

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## Abstract

With a focus on descriptions provided in Richard Rodriguez' *Hunger of Memory*, Alice Pitt's "Language on Loan" and Alice Kaplan's *French Lessons*, this article analysis the psycho-emotional situation of significant language learning for both: child and adolescent monolingual migrants, and host-foreign language students studying abroad. It is an examination of the unconscious meaning behind linguistic relocations. This work pays close attention to the manner in which acquiring a new language unveils subjects' affect and history of learning. It looks into host-foreign language immersions and acquisition in relation to our human nature, universal needs and responses to host-foreign language immersions and learning. Drives and defenses behind young language migrants' embodiment of a new language are discussed through questions of desire, identifications and need for individuation. Central to this paper is also the exploration of how significant learning, as a cognitive-emotional experience, is tied to differing forms of aggression. This work asks: What can migrants' and foreign language students' desire to learn host-second languages tell us about their inner realities and about the meaning they knowingly and unknowingly attach to an acquired host-foreign language? How may host-foreign language acquisition aid in learners' psychic growth? To what extent does significant learning become a module in young subjects' process of self-reinvention? And finally, and at the heart of this article, how is significant language acquisition tied to crises, identifications and matricide?

## Introduction

A topic debated during my doctoral defense touched upon the differences ostensibly marked between young migrants' and foreign students' host language acquisition. I remember how the phenomenological similarities between these learners were questioned and differences were brought to the fore. I suggested that the social and circumstantial realities that infringe upon both kinds of students create the ethos of their host/foreign language acquisition. I noted that such realities impact language learners' attitudes towards, and perceptions within, the target language. Founded on my own history, I described the manner in which young first generation migrants often feel a marked sense of doom by their exilic position. How becoming permanently uprooted from their known past and presumed future affects their needed sense of historical continuity. I proposed that for many underage migrants, following the initial excitement of being in a new land,

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their –possible- enthusiasm becomes tainted by the realization of their condition: for having been forced to leave the comfort of their native home, language, culture, and understood sense of self to become immersed within the terrain of the foreign other.

I contrasted my past perceptions as both, a child and later, an adolescent migrant with conversations I often have with my enthusiastic second language students. I highlighted their excitement when they approach me for letters of reference in support of their applications to study a foreign language abroad. I mentioned that unlike young migrants, exchange students have a pronounced sense of choice. For these undergraduate language learners, the prospect of living in a foreign land and culture is embraced as a temporary, welcomed and highly enriching experience. I compared my university students' attitudes with those of child and adolescent migrants and explained that for underage emigrants, migrating is barely perceived as a source of excitement. Their relocation is rarely interpreted as a privilege, even if in actuality it may be one. Instead, for those unwilling to migrate, their move is often felt as a long-term injustice, as a source of inner pain and inconsolable tears.

My memories of inner and social chaos were compared with my students' usual elation. I remembered how at the age of eight and later, as a seventeen year-old, I experienced no pleasure in unwillingly becoming a displaced child and later, an angry adolescent. There was no joy in leaving the comfort of family and friends to become a linguistic minority and therefore an outsider. The discussion brought me back to my times as a new migrant, when I felt embarrassed for being forced to speak without being understood. I was taken back to memories of feeling humbled for experiencing a need to belong while being repeatedly let down by my perceptual misfit. I recalled my attempts to interact with people my age while becoming marked by the absence of shared cultural histories, and of commonly understood signs, rules, words and sounds.

Months following my oral defense, on the night before my students' Spanish exam, I found myself struggling to write a cohesive opening for this article on host-foreign language learning and on its epistemological connection to crisis. Having no genuine notion of the paths through which my words would venture, I once again began to consider the circumstantial differences and similarities between the two types of language learners. I sat at my kitchen table feeling exhausted by the sight of language memoirs that stood before me. Even though they were migrant-narratives that depicted writers' memories of living between homes and languages, they were accounts that fell short of offering the taste of foreign language learning that Alice Kaplan's (1993) non-migrant, foreign language memoir evokes.

The thought of having to work with literature that only partially narrated the social and inner struggles of significant language acquisition<sup>2</sup> drained me, so my tired thoughts took

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper 'significant language acquisition' refers to the socio-cognitive, affective and transformational nature of learning a host language through immersion. Second language learning, on the other hand, makes reference to foreign language acquisition that is limited to language classrooms. Examples of significant language learners are migrants and foreign language students studying a foreign language within the compounds of its socio-cultural and linguistic reality. Specific to this paper, 'second language learners' refers to students who study a target language for a few hours a week, while living within linguistic and socio-cultural realities that

flight...I thought of my students' anxieties within and outside of our second language classroom, in connection to their commonly voiced desire to live within the compounds of a foreign/host language and culture. I felt a renewed sense of bewilderment by the antithesis of their in-class struggles and their hopes and daring considerations to study abroad. I then took a last look at my almost illegible notes and felt overtaken by a fleeting thought, which made me scribble:

For non-migrant, foreign language students, their choice to temporarily move away from their homes may create a space for them to escape from their realities, to hide and even reframe their identities under a more acceptable...perhaps even idealized light...

On the following morning, after coming home from giving my students their –much dreaded- exam, I noticed that without intending, my penciled words entered the realm of an initially unperceived problematic. The sentence bent on the uneven margin of my draft spelled a disjunction of meanings, one that pointed to the words 'choice' and 'necessity to escape'. The disjointedness of my words, which during the late hours of the night eluded me, led me to reconsider the concepts of 'need' and 'aggression' in relation to foreign students' efforts to embody a new language. Such insight created a space for me to reassess what may lie beneath the dynamics that give life to individuals' desire to become language migrants, to live in internal exile, and to reinvent themselves between languages. It allowed me question what may lie beneath their willingness to become estranged subjects within their own reality-driven narratives.

This accident of thought allowed me consider the relevance of not limiting my study to host-foreign language acquisitions that exclude the experiences described by foreign students learning a host language abroad. This slip of pen led to the examination of the nature of linguistic transformations undergone by both, migrant and non-migrant host-foreign language learners. Hence, while not disregarding the manner in which young migrants' internal and external exilic condition adds to the perceptual precariousness of their emotional lives, this paper pays close attention to the subjective meaning behind all linguistic relocations.

In this article I begin by setting a theoretical ground of the affective qualities of significant host-foreign language learning. While analysing the autobiographic narratives written by Richard Rodriguez, Alice Pitt and Alice Kaplan, I examine the psycho-social situation of linguistic immersions and host-foreign language acquisition. Such socio-affective moves are studied in relation to our human nature and "universal need for identifications, love, sense of belonging and temporal continuity" (Akhtar 2012).<sup>3</sup> I consider how host-foreign language immersions and host-foreign language acquisition lead to the interruption of such needs, rendering subjects' sense of inner chaos. I also conceptualize the crisis that stems from significant language learning and ask how the eventual synthesis of this socio-cognitive and emotional experience relates to our nature and development within and outside of language.

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differ from those of the symbolic code studied in foreign/second language classrooms.

<sup>3</sup> Expressed by the psychoanalyst Salman Akhtar in a 2012 conference held in Toronto, where he discussed migration, dislocation and trauma.

This work is a look into pedagogic and psychoanalytic theories of learning and trauma. I examine how host-foreign language acquisition compares to other forms of significant learning, and ask: What can young migrants' and foreign language students' desire to learn host-foreign languages tell us about their inner realities and about the meaning they knowingly and unknowingly attach to an acquired host-foreign language? How may host-foreign language acquisition aid in the natural and significant process of learners' personal growth? To what extent does significant learning become a module or constituent in young subjects' process of self-reinvention? And finally, and at the heart of my study, how is significant language acquisition tied to matricide, crisis and aggression?

## **Methodology**

This article links psychoanalytic and pedagogic theories of learning with interpretations of auto-biographic narratives of language acquisition. It focuses on the nature, constructions and meanings of adults looking back at their lived and imagined occurrences as child and adolescent language learners. My work is centred in the emotional and developmental meaning of significant language acquisition. It is a focus on subject reality and thus on the manner in which past experiences are perceived and therefore interpreted by writers.<sup>4</sup>

This paper studies the way in which autobiographic writings offer a view into writers' personal conceptions, perceptions, reflections, ideologies and understandings of host-foreign language immersions. I examine how lived and imagined incidents of language learning directly and indirectly unveil subjects' conscious and unconscious experiences. I consider the manner in which writers' retrospective and reconstructed occurrences offer an entrance to their private worlds, into constructions that are inaccessible with traditional forms of data collection (Pavlenko, 2007, pp. 164-165). The events described in *Hunger of Memory*, *Language on Loan* and *French Lessons* are not studied as facts, but as "system of meanings and interpretation" (p.168). These autobiographic narratives are analysed for the symbolic significance in their exposure to truths that are linked to the developmental telos of significant learning within language(s).

## **A Psychoanalytic and Pedagogic Understanding of Significant Learning and its Relation to Host-Foreign Language Acquisition**

In "Pedagogy and Clinical Knowledge", Britzman and Pitt present the manner in which the act of learning, as a cognitive phenomenon, taps into the learner's history of affect. They discuss individuals' response to new material and explain how foreign information, or data that does not fit within the learner's schemata, is felt as "a force that is not secured by meaning or understanding" (p. 369). They argue that the experience challenges learners' false sense of security and of mastery. The new data becomes involved within a dynamic that disables the subject's ability to make relations and therefore think (p. 366).

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<sup>4</sup> As explained by Pavlenko (2007) literary analysis draws from three interconnected types of information: subject reality, life reality and text reality. Subject reality is a look into how things or events were experienced by the narrator; life reality is a study of how things are and were, at the factors that influenced and still influence writers' ideologies and perceptions of events; and text reality is an examination of how occurrences are narrated by writers (p. 165).

Since the new information creates a “rupture of cognitive frames” (Felman, 1991, p. 56), the subject is left feeling anxious, helpless and, as a result, in a state of crisis.

Britzman and Pitt suggest that the interruption caused by the act of learning, by the break between the old and the new, between what is part of a continuous frame of experience and that which disrupts, uproot individuals’ known and unknown histories (pp. 371-372). This phenomenon, continue Britzman and Pitt, brings to light subjects’ memories and phantasies of learning and not learning, as well as their repression(s) and resistance(s) to learn. Equally important, awakening individuals’ history of object relations causes the inevitable rise of transference (pp. 368-369), as a force that, regardless of its connection with subjects’ forgotten past, is felt as one that belongs to the present (Freud, 1935, p. 395; Klein, 1975, p. 48). Britzman and Pitt claim that once the tension that emerges from the subject’s inner and outer realities becomes confronted through a negotiation between the ego and its environment, symbolization occurs and learners’ experience is brought into relief through significance (pp. 369-370).

Conceptualizing the shock and sense of crisis that emerge through foreign linguistic immersions makes it commonsensical to link Britzman’s and Pitt’s descriptions of significant learning with host-foreign language acquisition. Learning and internalizing a language becomes more than a socio-cognitive experience. Yet the commonality of such intricate occurrence explains why the attention given to the affective side of second language learning is not, in its strict sense, a contemporary concern. Erwin Stengel (1939) has also suggested that within foreign linguistic immersions, language acquisition becomes an “anachronic” act that uproots the subject’s past. In other words, the immersion into a foreign tongue places the subject back into a primary situation of language, taking the learner back to a forgotten history that preceded the use and/or proficiency of her first language. For this British psychiatrist and former migrant, when subjects are forced to communicate within a poorly known language, they re-live and therefore unknowingly respond to their infantile, repressed histories (p. 476).

Beyond theory, examples of the emotionality of host-foreign language acquisition are found in both, Pitt’s *Language on Loan* and Kaplan’s *French Lessons*. Beginning with Pitt (2013, p.40), when referring to her own experience as a foreign language student, she suggests:

... our history of having to learn intrudes. It reminds us of our helplessness and dependency, our fight with authority, as necessary as it may be, and our guilt at having abandoned our earliest loves –our parents and even our omnipotent child selves who could, if only in fantasy, make reality bend to our wishes and believe that infinity is ours to find in the starry night.

Likewise, when Kaplan (1993, p.128) shares her experiences as a foreign language student and a postsecondary foreign language educator, she calls the language classroom:

...the rawest pedagogy I have ever been in. A place where content means almost nothing and power, desire, provocation almost everything...Language learning can show up people's craziness in dramatic ways...famous stories about language learning...[are about] battles of the will with fierce parental overtones.

Pitt and Kaplan speak to the internal and external dynamics that are at play within the context of in-class language learning. Their assertions give rise to a conflict that, according to Jen Gilbert, "is necessary for intellectual development" (p. 6). Equally important, their testimonies move our theory beyond the hierarchic dynamics that are indeed present within second language classrooms and within all interactions between individuals of differing linguistic proficiencies. Their words also speak of an added crisis that relates to the individual's sudden change in identity. Their recollections move my discussion beyond language socialization theory and the problem of becoming a linguistic minority: highlighting the trauma that stems from having to perform one's own ignorance by having to speak a poorly-known language.

### **Significant Learning, Matricide and the Re-creation of the Self in Richard Rodriguez' *Hunger of Memory***

In *Reading Histories: Curriculum Theory, Psychoanalysis, and Generational Violence* Jennifer Gilbert (2010) explains that reading entails innovation and transformation, murder and reparation. Through reflections drawn from a conference she attended on curriculum studies, as well as discussions on generational violence and on Arendt's concept of natality, Gilbert suggests that reading exposes a learner to ideas that allow her to "imagine worlds beyond the confines of the known" (p. 67). Her argument is also grounded in André Green's and Alice Pitt's psychoanalytic theories on reading and its stark relation to matricide. Beginning with Green, Gilbert quotes: "to read is to feed off the corpses of one's parents, whom one kills through reading, through the possession of knowledge" (cited in Gilbert, p. 67). Gilbert links Green's words with those of Pitt, who, in *Mother Love's Education*, explains that: "reading enacts unconscious phantasies of murder and reparation...an "act that is no less violently felt than if an actual murder has taken place" (cited in Gilbert, p. 67).

Following these quotes Gilbert proposes that a subject's encounter with knowledge changes the reader's sense of self and her relationship with her parents (p. 67). Gilbert describes that following the phantastical violence engendered through the acquisition of knowledge, what drives the child's desire to continue to read and thus introject "food for the mind" is the unconscious understanding that the mother survived her child's act of violence (pp. 67-68).

This psychoanalytic notion is difficult to ignore when studying child and adolescent second language acquisition. Consequently when revisiting Pitt's (2006) discussion in her article *Mother Love's Education* I understand that, as unimaginable as these words may seem for readers who are new to psychoanalytic thought, it is not difficult to link this phantasy to any significant learning that entails, by its very influence, a perceived transformation. Matricide becomes a part of every child's developmental need to



transform by moving away from her earliest days and times of dependence from her first love object. As Pitt explains, in its psychoanalytic sense, this unconscious act gives way to the birth of a child's psychic reality, or a reality interconnected with aggression, symbolization, guilt and need for reparation (pp.87-88). Equally important, this creative replacement is needed for infants' development into speaking beings. Such developmental act is key to the child's loss of the unspoken self and transition into language; it is born through and within the child's membership to the wider community of competent speakers (pp. 88-90).

When looking closely into language-related narratives, the prevalence of this affective situation becomes evident. It is explicitly found, for example, with Richard Rodriguez (1983) in his memoir *Hunger for Memory*. In this well-known and highly controversial memoir, Rodriguez offers his reasons for opposing both, bilingual education and affirmative action programs in the United States. With a focus on his own education and his coming of age within the host, English language, this 1.5-generation Mexican-American migrant begins his narrative with descriptions of a happy, early childhood. In the initial sections of his text, Rodriguez reflects upon his childhood Spanish and his early interactions with his parents and siblings. Quoting from Rodriguez (1983, pp. 14-15):

*Español*: my family's language. *Español*: the language that seemed to me a private language. My parents would say something to me [in Spanish] and I would feel embraced by the sound of their words. Those words said: *I am speaking with ease in Spanish. I am addressing you in words I never use with los gringos. I recognize you as someone special, close, like no one out-side. You belong with us. In the family (Ricardo)...* I lived in a world magically compounded with sounds...delighted by the sounds of Spanish at home.

Rodriguez describes the turn of events that took place upon entering the American-Catholic school system. While reminiscent of that moment in time, Rodriguez narrates about his in-class silence and about the struggles he experienced as a monolingual Spanish speaker. He exposes the events of his life that took place before his linguistic and academic difficulties were overcome through the exposure to English in both at school and eventually at home.<sup>5</sup> One of the most prominent aspects of Rodriguez' narrative is not limited to the ease in which he acquired the host-English language. Instead, it relates to the excitement he eventually experienced through his exposure to English written texts, and to the manner in which the acquisition of knowledge -learned at school- resulted in guilt (pp. 28, 30) and in a silencing void between himself and his parents (pp. 24, 27).

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<sup>5</sup> Rodriguez explains that following his teachers' suggestions, his parents began speaking English in their home with noticeable Spanish accents and "ungrammatical speech" (pp. 19-20, 25).

In his memoir Rodriguez offers an incidental reverberation of Pitt's matricidal discussion. By introducing Richard Hoggard's description of a scholarly child, Rodriguez, who consistently refers to himself as a scholarly student, cites: "a scholarly boy...cannot forget that his academic success distances him from a life he loved, even from his own memory of himself..." (p. 51). Later in that same page Rodriguez adds: "...parents *become* the figures of lost authority...the scholarly boy cannot afford to admire his parents" (p. 51). Equally important, the isolating conflict and inner guilt endowed by Rodriguez' (1983, p.54) love for reading and for learning new concepts are highlighted when he writes:

I kept so much, so often, to myself. Sad. Enthusiastic. Troubled by the excitement of coming upon new ideas. Eager. Fascinated by the promising texture of a brand-new book. I hoarded the pleasures of learning. Alone for hours. Enthralled. Nervous. I rarely looked away from my books – or back on my memories...I slipped quietly out of the house. It mattered that education was changing me.

Rodriguez' school and library books not only opened doors to new knowledge: Texts exposed him to the acquisition and eventual internalization of the host English language. Reading and learning introduced him to an entirely new reality, to a wider community of speakers and, according to this writer, to a new and improved social status. For this 1.5-generation Mexican-American migrant, learning English offered him a subjective change, one which translated into an eventual break from the discrimination and poverty suffered by his own Spanish-dominant parents (see pp. 51, 56 & 58-59).

Yet for Rodriguez, encountering a world of a new language and of ideas that resided outside of his home created a conflict born from destruction and creation, or, quoting from Rodriguez, "loss and gain" (p. 27). His highly politicised narrative offers, nevertheless, concreteness through a rationalized example of the possible dynamics that give way to reading and thus to the violence defined by matricide: by an act that becomes intertwined with individuals' conscious and unconscious desire to give up their earliest childhood condition by altering their inner and social selves through learning.

### **Affective Aspects of Studying Abroad in Alice Pitt's *Language on Loan***

Similar to Rodriguez' memoir, in *Language on Loan*, Pitt (2013) offers her own recollections of learning German as both, a second language student in Canada and later, a host-foreign language learner in Germany. In her paper Pitt interconnects descriptions provided in Alice Kaplan's (1993) *French Lessons* with her own experiences as a foreign language student. She shares her view on the epistemological and affective significance of a learned –and internalized- foreign language. Pitt proposes that becoming a speaking subject in another language exposes the learner to the interminable play between constraint and creativity. She explains that the transformative nature of this specific learning act produces thrills and anxieties, loss and renewal, mastery and forgiveness. Second language learning, recalls Pitt, become "experiences of transfigurations" (p. 37).

In her article Pitt taps into the emotional quality of foreign language acquisition, suggesting that acquiring another language provokes “passionate, eroticized experiences that... might be akin to falling for poetry or music or visual art” (p. 42). Pitt speaks of the antagonistic feelings she experienced through the acquisition, and/or reacquisition, of German. Such is read, for example, when Pitt recalls feeling “enveloped” and “romanced” by the sounds of German (p. 38), and later feeling frustrated as well as impatient through her struggles to keep up with the challenges of becoming proficient in a foreign symbolic code (pp. 39-40).

Most of us know that if one truly needs to learn another language, the process of its acquisition gives way to an encounter with fears as well as thrills and excitement. Based on my own remembered occurrences, the act of significant language learning can easily turn into an experience that, in my opinion, can be equated with that of an indisputable roller-coaster-ride of confounding emotions. Yet in *Language on Loan* Pitt offers more than my recent claim. Her descriptions give voice to the pedagogical and affectual space that genuinely precedes linguistic expression, one that is lived by learners who desire a language that is only beginning to be inhabited. Following the stage that Granger (2004) highlights and terms as that of “silence” in second language learning, Pitt describes entering the phase in which the new language is no longer a source of distress, when it is no longer persecutory, feared and/or rejected. Quoting from Pitt (2013, p. 37):

The idea that children growing up in Germany saw a plate where I saw an abyss woke me right up to the power of language to represent the world. It was not God that created the world; it was language, and I had just been let in on the mystery. In that instant, the problem of translation vanished, and my German lessons became experiences of transfiguration.

Here Pitt describes the period in which the foreign language becomes appreciated for its symbolic and epistemological nature: when acquiring a subsequent symbolic code begins to offer its newest learners a creative alternative to self-expression. When learners encounter the much-anticipated space in which they can feel almost re-born through the world offered by the new language.

### ***The idealization of host-foreign language learning in Alice Kaplan’s French Lessons: A Module for Adolescents’ Self-invention, Symbolization and Individuation***

In *French Lessons* Alice Kaplan testifies to her memories of language learning and thus of the life-changing experiences within and outside of French, Kaplan’s acquired second language. In this memoir she offers phenomenological descriptions of her experiences abroad as a foreign language learner. She shares her personal reasons for hiding behind an adopted language: her necessity to escape from the emptiness caused by her father’s sudden passing and from the anxieties that resulted from the incompatibility she experienced with her sick and lonely mother. Readers may also note that her choice to

acquire and internalize the French language was not only fuelled by her loss and sensed crisis, but also by her adolescent need to idealize that which lied outside of her English-speaking world. Becoming immersed within the compounds of the French language, not only allowed her to move away from a confining reality she openly rejected, it also fed her desire to rebel and to become renewed through a genuine process of self-transformation.

Descriptions provided in Kaplan's self-narrative complement those of Winnicott (2005), who explains that the basis of all learning, as well as eating, is emptiness (cited in Britzman & Pitt, 2004, p. 365). For Kaplan, French became the language that allowed her to fill her inner void. As with Pitt (2014), Kaplan's acquisition of French became a source of nourishment, one that almost replaced her need to eat. As presented by Pitt (2013, p. 42) in *Language on Loan*: "She [Kaplan] more or less stopped eating, and she chased the language her fellow students spoke, but mostly she chased French".

For Kaplan, French was the language to cover pain, one that enabled her attempt to start over. Such attempt, however, was later affected by the guilt of her matricidal act, and her unconscious need to work through such developmental conflict. As seen in Rodriguez' memoir, Kaplan's text offers readers a glimpse of the way in which internalizing a new symbolic code draws the learner to a perceptually acceptable, new and often idealized reality. Specifically, in *French Lessons* Kaplan (1993, pp. 40-41) depicts the projection of an idealized transformation is conceivable under *Leaving*, for example, when she recalls meeting with Ted and feeling excited by the romanticised prospect of studying in Switzerland and incidentally, by becoming transformed by her welcomed adventure: "I loved imagining coming home, suave and seductive, before I even left...on the other side of the world...I would be a new person. I wouldn't recognize Ted anymore. I wouldn't even understand his [English] language".

One important aspect worth highlighting is Kaplan's imagined assumption of a sudden and complete linguistic shift. Another pertinent detail relates to the location in which she chose to bare farewell to her friend Ted and presumably to her monolingual, teenage life in Minnesota. Not only does her last reunion take place in a cemetery, but when she and Ted look for a particular place to kiss, they chose to lie beside and eventually over the corpse of a young woman who shared Kaplan's first name. In the final section of *Leaving* Kaplan (1993, p. 41) writes:

The marble on Alice Bergstrand's grave was refreshing. Ted's kisses came faster. I got dizzy from the cold of the marble, the warmth from Ted's mouth; I felt myself cutting, cutting through time and place, slipping through a trap door into another world... With my hands on the marble, I propped myself over him. His eyes were closed...I looked around me... I could see the lake with a few sailboats on it, across Lake Calhoun Boulevard. It wasn't my home anymore. It was a landscape.

For Kaplan, moving abroad signified an internal relocation of homes, a way out of her present life and a way into a highly romanticized reality. When preparing to leave, Minnesota becomes “a landscape”. It reflects a part of her rejected present and remembered past. The realization and idealization of a language’s transformative nature, of its ability to temporally pull her away from her understood past, turned her French lessons into an exhilarating experience (Kaplan, 1993, pp. 55-56).

This writer’s acquired French became her transitional language. French developed into the symbolic code that invoked her sense of inner growth: one that spelled while enabling the underlying intent of matricide. Such unconscious act moves the subject away from the old self and the oppressive love that signifies his or her first object and times of dependency. Such inner growth allows for the individual to find symbolization through the development of a new form of expression, of novel meanings, unfamiliar relations and, equally important, the transformational sense of becoming a new persona.

### **Desire and the bidirectional aggression in significant host-foreign language learning: What does it mean to identify with the aggressor?**

Relevant to my discussion of language learning is the dynamics of a complex, multidirectional intersection of aggression and desire. By looking closely into the act of host-foreign language acquisition, we can derive the presence of a well-defined violence that points to our nature and, borrowing from Freud, to our civilized discontents.<sup>6</sup> Within the process of language acquisition, aside from the aggression exercised towards one’s mother and oneself, there is a violent force that is projected from the outside towards the learner. This is seen in Kaplan’s narrative, specifically when she claims that: “It is violent being thrown into a new language and in having to make your way. Violent and vulnerable: in a new language, you are unbuttoned, opened up” (p. 139). This acknowledgement is also discussed by Pitt, who, in “Language on Loan” makes reference to the conflict and helplessness inflicted upon the learner when becoming submerged into the world of foreign language learning. Such helplessness and conflict, moreover, is perceived when subjects are immersed into a reality that, according to Pitt, uproots while exposing the “vulnerability of our human nature” (p. 6). Here we note how Kaplan’s and Pitt’s words address the aggression suffered by those who become immersed within the borders of a foreign language. It is a violence that, in agreement with Deborah Britzman and Alice Pitt, is constitutive of all significant learning.

Yet it seems incomplete to discuss the aggression that exists within the dynamics of host-foreign language learning without reconsidering the authority that emanates from a host language, and the threat perceived by learners through their social and inner “struggles to keep up” (Pitt, 2013, p. 39). In relation to this phenomenon, Britzman (2006) argues that when confronted with the vulnerability and helplessness inflicted by an object’s authority, subjects, in their attempt to turn passivity into activity and free themselves

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<sup>6</sup> In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Sigmund Freud while defining people as split subjects, describes subjects’ universal needs and outlines the known and unknown aggression that is innate to each and every one of us. Freud argues that such an aggression often becomes sublimated through art, and/or controlled by religion and by society’s codes of civilized, social conduct. Society’s imposition and governance over our natural inclination or nature, suggests Freud, is at the root of our human discontents (pp. 103-104).

from the oppressing aggressor, commit the libidinal act of introjecting all or parts of the object with the motive of destruction and defeat (pp. 45, 49-51). By applying this defense the subject becomes active and no longer feels like a victim; She breaks free from oppression and echoes the aggressor in her desire to dominate.

Within the terrain of foreign language immersions one can assume that linguistic minorities unknowingly turn passivity into activity. They commit the libidinal act of introjecting or absorbing all or parts of the foreign language and culture. Such unconscious act is seen with Rodriguez (1983, p. 52) when he describes his interactions with his primary-school teachers while considering his identification with authority:

I began by imitating their accents, using their diction, trusting their very direction.

The very first facts they dispensed, I grasped with awe. Any book they told me to read, I read –then awaited for them to tell me which books I enjoyed...it was the nun's [teacher's] encouragement that mattered most to me

Rodriguez' (1983, p. 58) memory of his own identification with his teachers becomes further evoked in that same section when he mentions:

When I was in high school, I admitted to my mother that I planned to become a teacher someday. That seemed to please her. But I never tried to explain that it wasn't the occupation of teaching I yearned for as much as it was something more elusive: I wanted to *be* like my teachers, to possess their knowledge, to assume their authority, their confidence, even to assume a teacher's persona.

For this writer, the embodiment of the host language was achieved through his identification with teachers who symbolized, while highlighting, the host linguistic and social authority. It is significant to also add that the undercurrent that feeds a subject's desire to master a new language is also unquestionable in Kaplan's memoir. Such is read, for example, when Kaplan (1983, pp. 93-94) describes her ranting interpretation of André's rationale for leaving her and worse yet for replacing her apparent love with that of Maité's:

It's because my French isn't good enough" and "It's because she is French." When he told me I couldn't understand his language, André had picked the accusation I was most vulnerable to. Afterwards I thought, "I'll show him. I know all there is to know about his language. I'll know his language better than he does, someday..."I wanted

to breathe in French with André, I wanted to sweat French sweat. It was the rhythm and pulse of his French that I wanted, the body of it, and he refused me, he told me I could never get that. I had to get it another way.

It is almost inconceivable for me to read these narratives without connecting them to my past and present experiences within languages. This focus makes me reconsider my own conscious and unconscious motives to learn, relearn and obsess with the language that as a child I felt as other. I assume it should be no surprise that as an undergraduate student I decided to drop psychology as a declared major to pursue the study of the Spanish language. Furthermore, as a young adult, I became obsessed with its sounds, rules and linguistic irregularities. Not only did I feel the pressing need to master the Spanish language, in time I switched my role within the foreign-language classroom: from student to instructor.

My academic choice allowed me to re-discover the Spanish language, to understand its grammar, its irregularities and thus to make it perceptually mine. Even though English is the language I currently live and breathe, Spanish turned into the language I truly know, the one held within my childhood tears and dreams, the one that reflects the otherness that will always exist within the inner compounds of my known and unknown self.

## **Conclusion**

Language is not a machine you can break and fix with the right technique, it is a function of the whole person, an expression of culture, desire, need. Inside our language is our history personal and political (Kaplan, 1993, p. 98).

As expressed by Kaplan, a lived language is a representation of the self, of the speaker's desires, wishes and histories. Through language subjects are able to transform themselves, understand and represent their lived and imagined worlds. An internalized language is also a vehicle through which individuals learn about their social and inner realities, about the essence that resides within the self and the otherness that gives away subjects' known and unknown histories. In this article I studied the socio-emotive and cognitive similarities of migrants' and non-migrants' host/foreign language acquisition. Similar to Pitt, Rodriguez and Kaplan, I chose to work within an area that speaks to my experiences and life within competing languages. I assume that the engagement with topics that are perceived as irreducibly ours often grants us with the drive to stay afloat within the difficulties perceived through our encounter with difficult knowledge. Yet the problem we could stumble upon when addressing circumstances linked to our own known and seemingly forgotten histories relates to the exposed and sometimes hidden affect that is at play with our qualitative interpretations.

It is not ground breaking to claim that when we are emotionally involved with a topic, we may unknowingly become influenced by a perspective that, instead of sweeping across the broadness of an entire picture, becomes partial in its one-sided view and understanding of events. A year following my defense I can now say that in spite of my experiences as a young migrant, a postsecondary second language educator and a translangual subject, my initial argument was lacking in discursive neutrality. When

discussing the phenomenology of foreign language learning, the thick, red line I traced dichotomizing the types of socio-linguistic and cognitive experiences –that of migrant and non-migrant language learners- obstructed my view. It blinded me of the universality of our common desire to belong and, at times, of our need to hide or run-away from experiences and situations that may make us feel confused, unsatisfied and possibly, incomplete.

My preliminary view of the young, exiled migrant made me take sides. My own recollections did not allow me to conceptualize the affective experiences encountered by those who, regardless of perceived choice, also enter the world of foreign languages and desire: the affective world of idealizations, of linguistic dislocations, challenged identities and intersemiotic translations.<sup>7</sup> I am not denying how young migrants' precarious, imposed position taints their initial attitude towards their new situation and language. I am also not ignoring how the hostile perception of their newfound experience increases their sensed crisis. Yet considering Akhtar's (2012) words and thus understanding our universal need for love, safety, identifications, sense of belonging and continuity, we cannot refute that even among those who opt to study abroad, becoming immersed within the borders of the foreign becomes an experience that threatens their universal needs: their feeling of belonging, of emotional safety, their unconscious relation with their first loves and sense of socio-linguistic continuity.

With the narratives studied we know that Rodriguez' memoir served a political purpose of opposing both, bilingual education and affirmative action programs in the United States. Through his autobiography this writer justifies the rejection of his heritage language, explaining that learning English as a child aided in his education and career advancement. In his opinion his success was unrelated to his positioning as a Mexican-American migrant. Instead it was linked to the internalization of the dominant language and the eventual rejection of his mother tongue. Pitt's and Kaplan's narratives, on the other hand, testify to the emotionality of adolescent host-foreign language learning. Similar to Rodriguez, these writers and former foreign language students highlight the transformative nature of their host-foreign linguistic acquisition and foreign language use. Yet in spite of the different circumstances that inspired Rodriguez, Pitt and Kaplan to learn, internalize and claim host-foreign languages as their own, and regardless of the reasoning(s) behind their decision to share the construction of their past and present memories, studying their descriptions led to a psychoanalytic interpretation of the experiential commonalities in migrants' and foreign students' language learning experiences. Their accounts created a space for the analysis of the vicissitudes of significant language learning and its relation to crisis, trauma, creativity and aggression.

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<sup>7</sup> Intralingual translations are defined as translations between signs of the same language. From a post-structural perspective we understand that language and culture are not fixed or stable entities, thus one creates signification [with a Bakhtinian orientation: one creates one's own accent] from through plural, fluid, non-unitary categories that build upon the phenomenological production of diverging and often conflicting signs. Intersemiotic translations speak to this fluidity. Its focus is not limited to the one language. Instead, it looks into the meaning-makings that are communicatively produced and understood through the interaction and 'passage' between linguistic and non-linguistic signs, between language and cultures that, from a subjective perspective, are in contact with one another (Karpinski, 2012, pp. 3-6).



Whether host-language learners are involuntary migrants or voluntary language students acquiring a host language abroad, with foreign-linguistic immersions aggression is eminent through the loss and replacement of a language that is representative of their first loves. Aggression also emanates from the precariousness of individuals' vulnerability as learners, and from the uprooted fears and anxieties that become juxtaposed with their need for independence. For migrant and non-migrant host language students, significant language acquisition surpasses the act of encoding a new set of symbols and grammatical rules. It is also more than an introjection of new beliefs and ways of life. Significant language learning involves crisis, destruction, creativity and innovation. This act forms part of a telos or purpose that enables subjects to willingly and unwillingly, consciously and unconsciously, distance themselves from their old selves and earliest loves. The aggression experienced through significant language acquisition enters the arena of the many matricidal acts that are driven by individuals' universal nature, by their innate need and desire to grow and develop through the process of destruction, reconstruction and eventual transformation.

## **Biographical Note**

Fernanda Carra-Salsberg has been a postsecondary foreign language educator for the past fifteen years. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, her interest in language, culture, migration and identity formations stems from her repeated migrations as a child and an adolescent, and from experiences as a language pedagogue. She has taught English as a Second language and Spanish. Carra-Salsberg is currently teaching elementary and intermediate Spanish Grammar and Spanish for Native Speakers at York University, Ontario, Canada.

Carra-Salsberg has obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree with Honours in Spanish Language, Literature and Linguistics at York University, a Bachelor of Education Degree in Second Language Acquisition and History at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, a Master's in Arts Degree in Spanish Language and Literature at the University of Toronto. She has also completed a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Language Acquisition, Language Philosophy and Psychoanalysis at the Faculty of Education, York University.

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# A Holistic Approach to Regulating Negative Emotions

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## Abstract

If emotions are the link between the body and the mind, it makes sense why unregulated negative emotions (e.g., fear and anger), particularly when repressed by those who are suffering from trauma, understood as *dukkha*, can make them feel dissociated. The practice of mindfulness can serve as a bridge between the body and the mind; in combination with other holistic approaches, mindfulness can help trauma sufferers regulate their negative emotions, hence, allowing them to experience higher degrees of emotional resilience. To explicate the importance of working with negative emotions references will be made to the mind-body problem since it lies at the philosophical foundation of all the social sciences. Also, the relationship between the mind/consciousness and the body/the unconscious vis-à-vis selfhood will be discussed in relation to psychoanalysis, Buddhist psychology, and mind-body medicine.

## Introduction

If emotions are the link between the body and the mind, as Candace Pert (2004) argues, then the repression of negative emotions not only severs said link but also takes a toll on our health, as Henry Dreher (2003) shows. One of the main goals in this paper is to articulate some of the ways trauma sufferers can regulate their negative emotions and become resilient. To this effect, mindfulness,<sup>2</sup> along with other holistic approaches, is proposed as a remedy because it can serve as a bridge between the body and the mind.

For the purposes of this paper, some theories of emotion will be unpacked with reference to a brief unfolding of the mind-body problem, which lies at the philosophical foundation of all the social sciences. According to Dreher (2003), when it comes to strong (or negative) emotions, we basically have two choices: either to express or repress them. Indeed, our choices depend most of the time on a multifaceted interaction between several, nearly infinite, biopsychosocial factors. Nevertheless, if we accept Pert's (2004) wonderful premise that we are hardwired for bliss then it would make sense to argue that emotional expression and processing (or disinhibition) strengthens the healing system, which we can conceptualize as a mindful body, an embodied mind, or the amalgam: bodymind. We know we ought to express our negative emotions, but how to do so is the question. To this end, we will try to explicate an understanding of the complex nature of emotions by referencing literature on psychoanalysis, Buddhist psychology, and mind-body medicine to shed a light on the intricate relationship between the

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley (2012) argues uniquely that we ought to ground discursive (or critical) psychology in mindfulness following the 'affective turn'.

mind/consciousness and the body/the unconscious, which will be framed in the unfolding arguments as two sides of the same coin. An idiosyncratic understanding of trauma will also be explored with an emphasis on the following negative emotions: fear and anger, and their connections to shame and anxiety, which are but a few of the conditions that afflict trauma sufferers, and make them feel limited to say the least.

### ***Emotion: Energy in Motion***

Etymologically, the word emotion meant “a (social) moving, stirring, agitation” (Harper, 2014), which resonates with the purpose of emotions from an evolutionary perspective: a process that involves a response to some stimulus motivating us to take action. The relationship between emotion and movement in relation to trauma will be explored later on with reference to Tension and Trauma Release Exercises (TRE).

Even though all humans experience emotions, they are hard to define. Perhaps, before we attempt to define them, we ought to delineate between feelings, emotions, and affects since these terms can be used interchangeably albeit they do not actually signify the same thing. Eric Shouse (2005), using a Deleuzian lens, writes that “[f]eelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*”. By prepersonal, he is referring to the abstract quality and translinguistic nature of affects. Shouse (2005) then goes on to add that “[a] feeling is a sensation that has been checked against previous experiences and labelled. [...] An emotion is the projection/display of a feeling. Unlike feelings, the display of emotion can be either genuine or feigned. [...] An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential.”

In the more traditional literature, however, emotion is sometimes classified under affect along with mood, temperament, and sensation (Johnson, 2014), while other times, affect is classified under emotion and is equated with feeling as the subjective/mental experience of the more objective/bodily emotional process (Reber, Reber, & Allen, 2009). Clearly, there is unresolved confusion regarding the use of these terms, so for clarity’s sake we will be mostly referring to emotions to refer to subjective states that involve the body and the mind.

The history of psychology is full of different theories of emotion, a survey of which is beyond the purposes of this paper. In general, however, most of the theories of emotions, at least according to Johnson (2014), fall under three broad categories of evolutionary (or biological), social, and internal (or psychological). Psychologists agree on the fact that first we perceive some stimulus (e.g., a thought or a situation) then we have an emotional response to it followed by a bodily response. The main disagreement has to do with whether in the emotional process our perception is more cognitive/evaluative, or more non-cognitive/reflex-like. The empirical studies to this day are inconclusive regarding which theories are more valid (Johnson, 2014). What if the emotional process, unlike the presupposition of most psychologists, is non-linear in the manner of chaos theory?

To unpack what the primary emotions are and why we experience them, a classical place to start is Robert Plutchick’s (2001) psychoevolutionary theory of emotions, wherein eight primary emotions are laid out as necessary for our survival, namely: anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, anticipation, trust, and joy. Plutchick’s theory overlaps to some

extent with Jaak Panksepp's theory of primal emotions: SEEKING, RAGE, FEAR, LUST, CARE, PANIC/GRIEF, and PLAY (Panksepp, 2010), which is a much more sophisticated extension of Freud's theory of drives: libido and aggression. Perhaps, the fifty-one mental formations (or seeds) identified in Buddhist psychology represent an even more elaborate system that categorizes all of our potential or unmanifest affective traits and/or states into groups and subgroups (Plumvillage, 2014). This type of knowledge may not be empirical in the most conventional sense, but the 51 mental formations are a result of a millennium of contemplative practice and consensus, hence, it is valid experiential knowledge.

In an effort to refrain from writing about the regulation of negative emotions in a totalizing fashion, one caveat must be emphasized: we all deal with negative emotions in different ways as informed by our specific biology, cultural heritage, personality, social context, etc. So the push here is not for some universal solution to regulating negative emotions, but rather for establishing guidelines that could help many of us, who have had traumatic experiences in the past, become more resilient. Also, it is worth noting that negative emotions are not inherently bad, they ultimately have survival value as signals of maladaptation and danger. Negative primary emotions, such as fear or anger, are acute and present-oriented unlike disorders that are chronic, be they past-oriented (e.g., depression) or future-oriented (e.g., anxiety). Because trauma impairs the down-regulation of negative emotions (Xiong et al., 2014), trauma sufferers get into a habit of repressing their negative emotions in the face of life's stresses as a coping strategy, which can lead to a pattern of response rigidity.

### ***Dukkha as trauma***

In an interview with Tricycle Magazine (Shaheen, 2013), Mark Epstein shares some unique insights regarding his peculiar interpretation of the Buddhist term *dukkha*, which is often translated as suffering, anxiety, stress, or unsatisfactoriness; he argues:

[A] lot of what Buddhism is teaching is basically how to acknowledge all of the traumas that are around us. That's what the Buddha was talking about with the word *dukkha*, that everything is *dukkha*, what did he mean? The first noble truth. There is *dukkha* everywhere. There's trauma everywhere and we're all in this sort of in-between state where we know it but we don't want to admit it and then we're kind of stuck. I'm trying to address the stuckness or the pretense one might say. [...] We all want to be normal but we're all secretly traumatized in one way or another and pretending otherwise.

Epstein expands our understanding of trauma beyond the conventional pathological framework by reinterpreting trauma as a form of spiritual suffering that we all go through in life. Some have more intense experiences of *dukkha* than others, and/or experience it

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more frequently, but the fact remains that we are born into a world of pain and suffering. Now, the pain will always be there because we grow old, get sick, and die, but the suffering is optional and can go away; this is where healing comes in, especially when facilitated by the practice of mindfulness.

### **Emotional intelligence means integration**

Although emotion has been researched for decades, it was not at the center of major public debates until the publication of Daniel Goleman's (1995) internationally best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence*, which in many ways, along with Howard Gardner's (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* and other research along similar lines, challenged the Western culture's bias toward linguistic and logical-mathematical types of intelligence as exemplified by standardized testing (e.g., IQ) as opposed to other equally (if not more) important forms of intelligence, such as inter-/intra-personal abilities.

Psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist (2009) gives an explanation of this Western bias, informed by his research on the neuroscience of split-brain patients, wherein he argues that the West has historically favored the more detail-oriented left-brain hemisphere over the more whole-oriented right-brain hemisphere. If we accept his well-supported hypothesis then we may conclude that the mind-body problem, which has baffled philosophers and psychologists in the West for centuries, and Cartesian Dualism on which the problem rests, are inherently the result of too much emphasis on the left-brain hemisphere. This conclusion may not be applicable in other cultural contexts, where the emphasis is not on the left-brain hemisphere, or where the brain is not even conceived of as the seat of consciousness.

### ***The Mind-Body Problem: Thank you Descartes!***

Perhaps, it is appropriate at this point to state the current author's position regarding the mind-body problem. There is something appealing about the electromagnetic theories of consciousness, for electromagnetism (similar to bodymind) has baffled scientists for a long time because originally they had conceived of it as two separate phenomena that interacted mysteriously as opposed to two aspects of one phenomenon. Double-aspect theory (DAT) is a position that was championed by Baruch Spinoza and whose tenets are in line with some of the main teachings of the Buddha, particularly relative to the understanding of selfhood. According to DAT, the body and the mind are considered two aspects of one substance. To Spinoza, that substance is God; to the Buddha, it is ultimate reality, which is another way of saying *Śūnyatā*, or emptiness.

Reflecting on Epstein's idiosyncratic understanding of trauma, was René Descartes traumatized? Maybe. Was he suffering? Definitely. Was he anxious and stressed? Undoubtedly. Speaking of doubt, Descartes argued that we know we are alive because we can think about and doubt our existence, but who is the one who is doing all this thinking and doubting? Certainly, no homunculus. Vietnamese Zen master Thích Nhất Hạnh (2007) reformulated Descartes's famous *cogito ergo sum*<sup>3</sup> to "I think therefore I am not".

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<sup>3</sup> It is curious to note that Descartes (1998) equates 'meditation' with thinking, which is the opposite, of course, of the Buddhist understanding.

In other words, the trap that Hānh is alluding to here in a koan-like manner is that overthinking can lead us to get sucked into a procrastinatory and solipsistic downward spiral; and it is the exhaustion from this process of mental looping that can make us feel out of touch with our breath, body, the present moment, and all of reality. Said differently, why equate our being with neurosis?

Moving on from thinking to ontology, Hānh (2007) offers the following response to Shakespeare's Hamlet, "To be or not be, that is not the question". The logic in Buddhism is that ultimate reality is beyond being and nonbeing, beyond birth and death. According to the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism, the Right View is that of Interbeing, which is known more traditionally as *Pratītyasamutpāda*, or dependent origination. How can there be birth and death when energy, according to the first law of thermodynamics, is neither created nor destroyed under normal conditions? Birth and death inter-are just like the body and the mind inter-are, they are both two aspects of the same phenomenon: emptiness.

*Dukkha* (or trauma) is the result of our attachment to impermanent things like our self and its aggregates. We have established already that negative emotions have an evolutionary purpose: they help keep us alive. But what about attachment to negative emotions, is that not suffering? When we repress negative emotions, we turn our dynamic identity into a static one, and the repressed emotions can manifest as disorders or dis-ease (e.g., Irritable Bowl Syndrome) because ultimately they represent unexpressed energy. An example of a static identity, which is a product of overdiagnosis and pathologization, is identifying oneself as, 'I am that trauma guy'.

### **On selfhood: A Buddhist psychological perspective**

Instead of psychology's essentialist view of the self, in Buddhism there is no separate self; also known as *anattā*. This notion of not-self refers to the fact that the self is made up of non-self elements, as Hānh (1998) would say, namely the five *skandhas*, or aggregates of form (body), feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. In this particular Buddhist framework, when we use mindfulness we realize that we are made up of elements, which are similar to the tripartite structure of the psyche in classical psychoanalysis, subpersonalities in psychosynthesis, complexes in analytical psychology, and parts in Internal Family Systems Model (IFS), and that we are interconnected with everything that is. We do not identify ourselves with any one of the five aggregates, and we definitely do not attach ourselves to or deny any of them. Instead, we begin by being mindful of our breathing, by following our in-breath and out-breath. That way we can return to our body in the here and the now. With mindfulness comes concentration and insight, which are helpful tools that can aid us regulate negative emotions.

In the Plum Village tradition, there are fifty-one mental formations, or *samskāra*, which are conceived of as wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral seeds that we are born with and which exist in our Store Consciousness, or *ālaya-vijñāna*. Store Consciousness is one of the eight consciousnesses according to Buddhism, and in many ways it is similar to the Unconscious. The above-mentioned seeds can manifest in our consciousness for many reasons. If we experience anger in a situation, for instance, we can impulsively react to someone, or act mindlessly in way that we may regret later. Alternatively, if we become

mindful of our anger without attempting to suppress it, we can take care of it; this process can be described as a nonviolent, holistic approach to regulating negative emotions.

In the context of the Four Noble Truths, we can then examine our negative emotion by first of all recognizing and naming it: anger. Subsequently, we can concentrate on what gave rise to it as we follow our breathing. With consistent practice, since this is not magic, we may get an insight or two about the source(s) of our anger. Instead of blaming others or situations (i.e., secondary causes), we try to understand why anger manifested in our conscious experience (i.e. primary cause).

### ***Mindfulness: Emptiness-Based Emotion Regulation***

At first sight, mindfulness might strike one as a form of suppression, but it is a practice that over time can give us more freedom in terms of how we choose to act when faced with a given challenge, such as negative emotions. Nevertheless, since the emphasis here is on a holistic approach, mindfulness will be situated alongside other approaches, such as movement (e.g., TRE), while bearing in mind the importance of psychotherapy, psychoeducation, lifestyle changes, etc., which cannot be covered exhaustively in this paper.

Paradoxically, mindfulness as a practice is more body-centered than cognitive, albeit some psychologists have co-opted mindfulness by including it into their therapeutic approach (e.g., mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and dialectical behavior therapy). Mindfulness as a practice comes to us in the West from the rich and long history of different traditions within Buddhism, but the cognitive-behavioral approaches that many are familiar with remove mindfulness from its original context. Some of the things that are lost as a result are depth and meaning. Where is the affect that we have lost in cognition? Buddhism can be interpreted existentially as being nihilistic, or ontologically as being idealistic, but the deeper appeal, as far as this author is concerned, has to do with Buddhism's realistic and practical outlook on life.

In perhaps the most popular form of psychotherapy today, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT),<sup>4</sup> affect is completely left out in favor of cognition and behavior, rendering CBT a quick albeit superficial approach that addresses the client's symptoms without unraveling the underlying problem(s) that gave rise to said symptoms. CBT is a two-dimensional therapeutic model because there cannot be action without affect.

Hạnh (1998) uses a beautiful metaphor when he writes about how we can deal with our negative emotions. He compares anger to a crying baby who needs attention and care from her caregiver. The practice of mindfulness is the practice of soothing our suffering, like a mother taking care of her crying baby, but it is also the practice of watering our wholesome seeds of loving kindness, joy, compassion, and equanimity.

According to Hạnh (2013), "Reuniting body and mind, which become alienated from each other, reunites us with ourselves. Once we have come home to ourselves, we can be fully present for ourselves, fully present for others, and fully present for the planet" (p. 1).

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<sup>4</sup> According to Hofmann and Smits (2008).



This is a paradoxical statement since there is no essential or separate self in Buddhism. The self cannot exist in a vacuum, and it is made up of non-self elements (i.e., the five *skandhas*) as has been already established. Nevertheless, there is a relational or social self, which has a functional and integrative role. He argues, “[T]he key to happiness is being fully integrated in body and mind. Much of our suffering comes from an unnecessary division of mind versus matter” (Hanh, 2013, p. 1).

Hanh (2013) speaks of the body as our home. What kind of space is the body? Is it a temple? Is it a storage room? What kind of a relation do we have with our body? Do we take care of it? If so, how? If not, why? The energy of mindfulness, he argues, can help us make peace with our bodies, which is vital for those of us who have gone through traumas early on in life, because then the body is associated with shame. These types of self-reflexive questions pop up frequently during mindfulness practice.

### **Bodymind vs. spacetime**

Our body can only be in a singular place at any given moment, whereas with our mind we can be in the past, the future, or anywhere in our imagination. This creative power or near-magical ability of the mind is a double-edged sword because it can help us solve the most difficult mathematical problems and create artistic masterpieces, or it can be an overwhelming distraction making us feel anxious, insomniac, or depressed, especially when we have stuck, unreleased, or repressed energy in our bodymind. Therefore, Hanh’s (2013) emphasis on *presencing* is particularly important, “If you find yourself in the present moment, it means your mind and body are together” (p. 5). Again, this sheds a light on the possibility of the mind-body problem being a personal struggle with automacity, forgetfulness, or mindlessness. Remember Descartes?

There is a mysterious intelligence to the bodymind (i.e., it knows how to heal itself) beyond the level of the intellect, which often interferes with the healing process. If we trust the healing process and we surrender to it by letting go of the past, the future, and our projects, we can become free from our negative emotions, hence, transform ourselves. This is an insight regarding perhaps one of main the goals of therapy and it resonates with the essence of Buddhist teachings because mindfulness as a state of witnessing can help us accept our suffering and release it without feeling overwhelmed during the process.

This discussion on emotions would be incomplete without addressing consciousness as well as the unconscious, but these are loaded terms that mean different things in distinctive systems of thought.

### ***Psychoanalysis: A Tale of two Minds***

In psychoanalysis, repression is the basis for neurosis (or anxiety); it makes us more rigid as we feel paralyzed by too many choices. Maybe repression is connected to the Western bias for detail-orientation outlined above, and perhaps that connection is at the heart of the mind-body problem. But does repression exist or is it only speculation? It depends on how we define repression. David Archard (1984) writes of “repression or the repressed idea as the proto-type of the unconscious” (p. 33). For a more elaborate definition, Dino Felluga (2011) writes, “psychological symptoms are often condensations or

displacements (caused by repression) of deeper, unconscious impulses or buried memories”. Simply put, the goal of psychoanalysis is to make what is unconscious conscious, so if we can learn how to express our negative emotions in a mindful way then technically we would be freer, but it is a balancing act because how do we express our anger without overwhelming others and ourselves with rage? And how do we befriend our shame and embrace our vulnerability? The former has to do with our fear of rejection, while the latter may be our greatest strength (*cf.* Brown, 2010).

In *Integration of the Cognitive and the Psychodynamic Unconscious*, Seymour Epstein (1994) identifies two ways of knowing: one associated with feelings (Experiential System) and one with intellect (Rational System). Dissociation between the two systems outlined above, which we can loosely think of as the body and the mind, is a result of repression. According to Epstein (1994):

[R]epression occurs when a person has tacit thoughts or impulses that are too guilt arousing to be consciously accepted. [...] The repressed material then strives for expression, thereby generating conflict with the forces of repression and resultant tension and displacement, which is manifested in the form of symptoms, dreams, and slips of the tongue. (p. 716)

What is the possibility of Descartes’s legacy being an outcome of his neurosis and his unconscious emphasis on the detail-oriented left-brain hemisphere? This Western legacy of modernity of his, which gave us more problems and questions than solutions, is a legacy of *dukkha*. This is not an attempt to pathologize Descartes, but if we accept the First Noble Truth as a fact, that trauma is a given in life, then we can think of Descartes’s philosophy as a symptom of his suffering just like this paper is the product of blood, sweat, and tears.

On the ghost of the mind-body problem, Archard (1984) argues that psychoanalysis, or what he calls ‘Freudianism’, is inherently dualistic; said dualism is known as the problem of two minds: the conscious and the unconscious. Sigmund Freud may have conceived of psychoanalysis as a metapsychology project but not without internal contradictions. Although he was initially trained as a neurologist, some of his theories were more philosophical speculations than hypotheses that could be empirically tested in the laboratory. In other words, there is a conflict between Freud the monist neurologist and Freud the dualist philosopher.

The unconscious in psychoanalysis often comes across as this abstract entity that exists in some mysterious realm in the mind. An alternative to this outdated rendition of the unconscious would be to conceive of it as literally the body, which takes us into the world of somatic psychology, whose adherents drew a lot of inspiration from the work of *l’enfant terrible*, Wilhelm Reich. Somatic psychology gave primacy to the body (and energy) instead of language (and meaning), as is the case in talk therapy. The term bodymind comes out of this tradition, and as a reconceptualization it is but one proposed

solution to the mind-body dichotomy. Perhaps, it would be even more sensible to conceive of a *bodymindworld* since we are enmeshed in an intricate web of relationships - à la Daniel Siegel's (2010) indefinable concept of *Mindsight* and its connection to what he calls "the triangle of well-being" (p. 11), which is comprised of brain, mind, and relationships.

### **Your body is your unconscious mind!**

In an audio book titled *Your Body Is Your Subconscious<sup>5</sup> Mind*, Pert (2004) rests her arguments on her previous work on the molecules of emotions and makes the case in many ways for this notion from somatic psychology of a bodymind.<sup>6</sup> Drawing from the field of psychoneuroimmunology, she argues that the role of emotions is to integrate so that the whole organism can act in a unified behavior; therefore, there are no good or bad emotions, but less and more challenging ones; ultimately, the key to resilience is regulation, or how often we express or repress negative emotions. When we bottle them up, they build up pressure because they are literally fluids on the molecular level.

In regulating negative emotions, the understanding becomes that traumas, and old memories in general, are mainly stored in the body/unconscious and not in some mysterious invisible realm. Pert (2004) emphasizes the primacy of emotions stating that they are essential for our survival, nevertheless; she claims that "[w]e are living in a culture where emotions are denied, ignored, suppressed". She argues that free will makes us unique among primates thanks to our having a frontal cortex, which is responsible for things like executive planning and mindfulness, and which fully develops around our early twenties. Studies on long-term meditators show them to have a very active frontal cortex; for example, Matthieu Richard was named "the world's happiest man" (Taggart, 2012).

Regarding her theory of emotion, Pert (2004) asserts that every psychoactive drug works because it mimics an internal informational substance (IIS) inserting itself into a keyhole or binding to a receptor made by said IIS. Drugs or emotions, through the release of neuropeptides, trigger different altered states, which have different memories, different postures, and different behaviors associated with them. According to Pert (2004), there is no fixed hierarchy in the psychosomatic network of information rendering it like a "systems tree" (Capra, & Luisi, 2014, p. 280), but she avoids defining information claiming that scientists do not really understand information because they belong in a metaphysical realm.

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<sup>5</sup> To delineate between unconscious and subconscious, Michael Craig Miller (2010) writes, "As for the term 'subconscious,' Freud used it interchangeably with 'unconscious' at the outset. [...] But he eventually stuck with the latter term to avoid confusion. [...] Although the word 'subconscious' continues to appear in the lay literature, it is rarely defined carefully and may or may not be synonymous with 'unconscious.'" To unpack the current understanding of the unconscious by most psychodynamically-oriented therapists, Miller (2010) argues that the consensus is that the unconscious does not refer to a neuroanatomical structure, but rather to "a complex, but familiar, psychological phenomenon".

<sup>6</sup> Which she defines as a field of information and energy.

Pert's (2004) most important claim is that emotions are the link between the body and the mind, and if that is the case then this is where the solution to the mind-body problem lies. Mindfulness can be thought of as a bridge between the body and the mind, which can help us deal with our suffering in general and our negative emotions in particular; therefore, mindfulness can be conceived of as one strong solution to the mind-body problem because it links the body to the mind through emotion regulation.

Mindfulness is always mindfulness of something because the mind must always have an object - breathing as an object brings us back to our body. The subject-object split, a variation on the mind-body problem, is a function of grammar as Friedrich Nietzsche has pointed out with his famous 'lightning flash' example (Nietzsche & Smith, 1996, p. 29) wherein there is a subject and a predicate although what is being described is one process.

We sometimes say, 'I am angry' when we mean, 'I feel angry.' In the first example, we completely identify with our anger, which is an ontological fallacy. In the second example, we recognize that we feel angry, but that we are much more than our anger, but the question remains: who is the 'I' that feels angry? It is the ego, which is part of the self or psyche. The ego is not equated with the self here because the ego is 'who we think we are', while the self is 'who we are', which constitutes the conscious and unconscious parts of our bodymind. But if there is no essence to the self as we have previously established then what are we referring to exactly?

What is being dispelled above is the myth of individualism, or the notion of a separate self, in favor of a relational self (*cf.* Gergen, 2009; Kwee, 2013), or a functional self. In other words, we are talking about a dynamic or flexible identity, or one that is in a constant state of flux. Mindfulness as a practice can help us return to this very realistic understanding of our impermanent self, so we can dwell in the present moment realizing that we already have more than enough conditions to be happy. By being mindful of our breathing, we return to our bodies and we can appreciate the miracle of being alive, which we tend to forget as we focus on other less important things. At the end of the day, what is more important than breathing?

### ***Shaking the Dis-ease***

Let us reiterate that emotion implies movement; we act based on our experiences of emotions. In addition to mindfulness, movement can help a great deal with the release of repressed emotions. Trauma therapist David Berzeli (2009, p. 5), who developed Tension & Trauma Releasing Exercises (TRE), theorizes that:

[T]he difference between the human animal and other mammalian species is that after a traumatic event has ended for animals in the wild, they utilize an innate 'trembling' mechanism [or tremors] that discharges this high biochemical and neuromuscular charge from the body thereby facilitating a spontaneous recovery from the traumatic event.

Berceli's finding supports the primacy of energy, understood as the body and emotions, which is one of the core tenets of body-oriented psychotherapy.

### **Mind-body medicine or: When will we lose the dash?**

Dreher (2003) dedicates almost an entire chapter in his book to the repression and expression of strong (or negative) emotions. He starts off the section on emotions as follows, "The interconnectedness of the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems surely suggests a unified healing system" (Dreher, 2003, p. 16). He goes on to write about the difference between chronic and acute stress, particularly in terms of their relative effects concerning immune functioning in humans; he argues that "people who experienced the shock of a serious accident and the attendant loss of control [aka trauma] had marked increases in levels of endogenous opiates, resulting in weakened immunity" (Dreher, 2003, p. 19). He then compares 'learned helplessness' in animal studies to repression in humans, which he defines as simply 'the nonexpression of emotions'. Clearly Dreher (2003) is not referring to repression in the psychoanalytic sense, but there could be an overlap between these two uses of the word, for in his model repression, as a freeze response, is mostly a conscious coping strategy (suppression?) but sometimes comes across as an unconscious defense mechanism following the theory of drives.

Later, Dreher (2003) then lays out his main thesis about the 'opioid peptide hypothesis of repression', namely that "habitual repression of strong emotions results in chronically high levels of endogenous opioids, which in turn cause immune deficits that reduce the person's resistance to infectious and malignant disease" (p. 20). Clearly, the repression of negative emotions can take a toll on our health, which is why it is important to know how to regulate them; something that Dreher (2003) does not explore at all in the chapter. Next, Dreher (2003, pp. 20-21) explains some of the reasons as to why we repress negative emotions as follows:

[I]n many social settings (e.g., family, school, work) we get the message the expression of strong emotion—anger, fear, grief—will exacerbate interpersonal tensions and hasten rejection or opprobrium. Our response is often helplessness, and our long-term coping strategy may be repression. [...] the release of opioid peptides is our organismic attempt to quell pain or at least to establish the bliss or bonding associated with interpersonal closeness. If emotional pain or loss is repressed and never resolved, the continuing synthesis and release of endogenous opiates may result, with unintended injurious consequences for our health and well-being.

He does not, however, address other strong emotions, which are wholesome, such as joy and happiness. Could their repression lead to health problems, too?

From an evolutionary perspective, repressing negative emotions can have survival value if we seek acceptance since rejection on one level can mean symbolic death, but we no longer live in small tribes, which alludes to the connection between stress and the city in late capitalism. The results from the biological studies though challenge our evolutionary tendencies, or in Dreher's (2003) words, "A long-term incapacity to express emotion is maladaptive because it disables people from protecting themselves in relationships, meeting their needs, and experiencing the full spectrum of feelings" (p. 21). He does not, however, address how we may express our negative emotions in appropriate ways. Perhaps, he has no solution in that area. Most likely, the solution is holistic and lies at the intersection between psychoeducation, psychotherapy, a healthy lifestyle, a supportive community, and an enriching spiritual practice (e.g., mindfulness).

In a language that brings Lacanian psychoanalysis to mind, Dreher (2003) defines illness as "a signifier that must be properly interpreted" then he explains that "illness signifies that imbalance, psychosocial, emotional, nutritional, physiological, reigns in the mind-body system and that efforts made to restore balance will yield benefits in both the psychospiritual and physical realms" (p. 21).

Where does energy fit into this conversation? It is something we all experience, but most of us will find it hard to articulate, if not impossible to empirically verify, since it seems to belong in the realm of metaphysics; phenomenologically, however, it can be understood as embodiment. To this effect, Pert (2004) talked about the vibrational principle behind the molecules of emotions, the idea being that we are flickering flames and not hunks of dead meat as some biological reductionists would have us believe, and that the brain is not always in charge. As a matter of fact, she spoke of chakra regions as mini-brains, which is a pretty unusual thought from a pharmacologist trained at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

## **Conclusion**

Negative emotions need to be expressed; otherwise, their repression could lead to various types of psychosomatic ailments. Psychotherapy (e.g., body-oriented psychotherapy), an enriching spiritual practice (e.g., mindfulness), movement (e.g., TRE), a healthy lifestyle, a supportive community, holistic medicine, and psychoeducation are all resources that can help us regulate our negative emotions and make us more resilient, especially if we feel dissociated from our body due to early traumatic experiences—not mentioning the challenges of everyday life (e.g., stress).

If emotions are the link between the body and the mind as Pert (2004) claims then mindfulness is the bridge that can help us connect the body to the mind by simply concentrating on our breathing. After all, "It's only in the here and the now that we can encounter real life, that we can be in touch with our body and the other wonders of life available in the here and the now" (Hanh, 2013, p. 83).

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## Book review

*The Examined Life*. Steven Grosz. London, UK: Vintage, 2014, xii + 225 pages, £8.99 (softcover), ISBN 978-0-099-54903.

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Two prisoners languish in adjacent cells, wishing to communicate with each other. They learn that the most effective way of doing so is by exchanging taps on the wall that divides their cells. The prisoners connect through the very partition that separates them. In this way, the philosopher Simone Weil writes of her thought experiment, “every separation is a link” (1952, p. 132). The apparent contradiction in this proposition holds pivotal intrigue for London-based psychoanalyst Stephen Grosz in his debut book ‘*The Examined Life*’. The paradoxical link-separation function of Weil’s prisoners’ wall forms the cornerstone on which Grosz builds his collection of vignettes, each a short meditation on a particular topic animated by Grosz’s professional and personal experiences. Subtitled ‘*How We Lose and Find Ourselves*’, Grosz’s elegant anthology of thumbnail sketches provides example after powerful example of the links present in the walls we construct to separate us from ourselves and from others. By examining how we are lost and found, ‘*The Examined Life*’ lays bare the project of psychoanalysis, profiling the ‘what’ of its theory and the ‘how’ of its practice in a way that combines accessibility with intellectual rigour and theoretical integrity, ensuring that the book holds appeal for a broad readership.

“This book is about learning how to live”, claims the bolded tagline on the back of ‘*The Examined Life*’. After adumbrating Weil’s prisoners’ wall scenario in the preface, Grosz details his understanding of what learning how to live entails: “This book is about that wall. It’s about our desire to talk, to understand and be understood. It’s also about listening to each other: not just the words but also the gaps in between. What I’m describing here isn’t a magical process. It’s something that is a part of our everyday lives – we tap, we listen” (p. xii). True to his introductory words, over the course of five broad-themed sections – ‘Beginnings’, ‘Telling Lies’, ‘Loving’, ‘Changing’, ‘Leaving’ – Grosz delights in considering the tension embedded in Weil’s prisoners’ wall, his pages thrumming with the strain of its dual functionality. Inviting the reader behind the soundproofed door of the psychoanalyst, the characters and scenarios Grosz introduces leave us in no doubt that tapping on such walls in an effort to be heard is a part of our everyday lives; that there are multiple ways in which we lose ourselves.

And yet what of being found? How do we come to listen? Grosz’s book is fuelled by an assumption: that we are only able to find ourselves through the very ways in which we become lost. By becoming familiar with our defences, we expand their role; the methods through which we seek the most extreme forms of separation have the potential to become the paths through which we acquire the most intimate insights and self-

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knowledge. Yet such potential is only realised through an examination of our everyday lives. At the centre of an examined life is a realisation: that in which we are most invested is that against which we are most strongly defended. Gaps are at least as significant as the words they abut. Greater obstruction is inseparably linked to deeper connection. It is one and the same wall; every separation is a link.

Throughout 'The Examined Life', Grosz deftly demonstrates that such a revelation does not occur in isolation. We need help finding ourselves. Learning how to examine our everyday lives may not constitute an act of magic, but it most certainly involves a process and an interpersonal process at that. Psychoanalysis is an opportunity to be led by a professional on a backstage tour of our psyche; to be guided through our own private archaeology. By being listened to, we learn how to listen. As our taps on the wall finally fall on ears that have been trained to receive them, we might realise not only *that* we are tapping but also *why* and *how* we've come to do so. We may begin to map out the dimensions of walls we have constructed and to see the ways in which they can be used to link us back to the world and ourselves, rather than separating us from these domains. By providing punchy illustrations of how, held and guided by a professional, we can learn to talk *and* listen, Grosz gracefully navigates the intricacies of this complex process.

Grosz gently introduces a diverse sample of material that aligns with the 'what' of psychoanalytic theory. With a propensity to show rather than tell (and unafraid to echo Freud's phraseology; "Experience has taught me . . ." Grosz writes in the book's very first chapter), Grosz places at his reader's disposal both specific psychoanalytic ideas and the broader tenets from which they stem, fleshing out with particular concepts the thematic bones of psychoanalytic theory.

Of all the psychoanalytic concepts that Grosz profiles, he explicitly names only splitting and transference. He defines both terms precisely and economically. In doing so, he ensures that lay readers will be able to understand these terms easily while those better versed in the psychoanalytic paradigm will remain content. According to Grosz, transference is "how we all construct each other according to early blueprints" (p. 201) while splitting is "an unconscious strategy that aims to keep us ignorant of feelings in ourselves that we're unable to tolerate" (p. 69). The latter is encapsulated in a story Grosz had told to him by Abby, a woman he sat next to on an aeroplane. Although Abby's Jewish father disowned her when she married a blonde-haired, Catholic man, it later emerged that he had been in the midst of a twenty-five year affair with his receptionist, a blonde-haired, Catholic woman. Abby understands the events through a maxim she imparts to Grosz: 'The bigger the front, the bigger the back'. Grosz uses Abby's maxim to further expand the notion of splitting, believing it to be "more telling than the psychoanalytic term. Splitting is thinner, less dynamic; it suggests two separate, disjointed things. Abby's saying captures the fact that front and back are a part of each other" (p. 70). In this way, Grosz opens out to his reader the richness and usefulness of the notion of splitting without allowing the complexities inherent in the term to alter the straightforwardness of his explanation.

Grosz presents a number of other concepts central to psychoanalysis in a similar way. Remaining unnamed, each idea is unfurled with an ease of explanation that adequately honours its intricacies whilst avoiding becoming overcomplicated by them. The subtle sophistication and skill exercised by Grosz in achieving this is evident in his depiction of acting out: "I believe that all of us try to make sense of our lives by telling our stories, but

Peter was possessed by a story that he couldn't tell. Not having the words, he expressed himself by other means. Over time, I learned that Peter's behaviour was the language he used to speak to me...our childhoods leave in us stories like this – stories we never found a way to voice, because no one helped us to find the words. When we cannot find a way of telling our story, our story tells us...we find ourselves acting in ways we don't understand" (pp. 9-10). So too is it found in Grosz's commentary on displacement. This discussion arises from his interpretation of the motivations behind the chronic lies told by his analysand, Philip, who had a history of childhood bedwetting that was never explicitly acknowledged by his mother, although she washed and folded his bedclothes every morning. As Philip's outrageous lies are never believed, his motivations behind telling them appear, on the surface, futile and malicious. Yet, according to Grosz, they serve an important function for Philip. When his mother was alive and he was a child, Philip's "bedwetting and her silence gradually developed into a private conversation – something only they shared. When his mother died, this conversation abruptly came to an end...Philip's lying was not an attack upon intimacy...It was his way of keeping the closeness he had known, his way of holding on to his mother" (pp. 42-43).

Such clarity and economy of exposition and explanation are found time and again in Grosz's treatment of other psychoanalytic concepts. In just one sentence, Grosz conveys to his reader the mechanism of projection and its potential for substitute satisfaction when he says to a analysand, whose husband has become the receptacle for the anger and frustration she is feeling towards their new child, "It'll be hard to desire Paul if you're finding it useful to hate him" (p. 107). Grosz imparts the phenomenology and hazards of alexithymia with a similar efficiency when he uses the analogy of leprosy to capture how his teenage analysand's internal world was tapered by a history of neglect: "Matt suffered from a kind of psychological leprosy; unable to feel his emotional pain, he was forever in danger of permanently, maybe fatally, damaging himself" (p. 26). With comparable and consistent parsimony and care, Grosz brings forth other concepts relevant to the psychoanalytic paradigm, including dreams and their significance, transitional objects, fantasy and its value in everyday life, humour and boringness and their use as defenses, repetition compulsion, attachment and mirroring, silence and its uses, optimal frustration, intergenerational transmission of trauma and being scripted into unconscious roles.

The specific concepts Grosz delineates are united by a number of broader psychoanalytic assumptions. Of these, the tenet reiterated most frequently and with the greatest strength is that our lives are always inadvertently duplicitous. "Consciously, Sarah wanted to meet someone and fall in love, but unconsciously, there was another story", writes Grosz (p. 128). Examples of these other stories fill 'The Examined Life' alongside the cover stories by which they are masked, highlighting the multiplicity of meanings that bind behaviour and interpretation, words and intentions, and conscious and unconscious processes. While, in relation to a particular analysand, Grosz asks, "What possible psychological purpose could his behaviour serve?" (p. 41), his insights throughout the book reveal that this question is far from particular just to this analysand. A female analysand, raised in poverty, ruins in the washing machine the Prada wool suit she delighted in buying for her daughter earlier that day. According to Grosz, this is no accident but, instead, a sign of unconscious envy. A male analysand shares intimate moments, but not sex, with a prostitute he has just started to visit. For Grosz, his analysand is not unwittingly committing a mistake (as he claims), but, rather, enacting vengeance on his partner, the depth of the bond she shares with their newborn child unconsciously awakening his jealousy. Similarly, Grosz suggests that there is more to

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paranoid fantasies than that which initially meets the eye. Over and above their apparent signalling of a delusional break from reality, paranoid fantasies serve a protective function: “It is less painful...to feel betrayed than to feel forgotten...the paranoid knows that someone is thinking about him...[and is] shielded from the catastrophe of indifference”(pp. 83-85). Through his exploration of the assumption that anything is rarely ever as it seems, Grosz makes clear that a psychoanalytic lens rarely allows for coincidence; we are always in excess of ourselves.

The interrelatedness of the past, present and future is another broad psychoanalytic theme that recurs in ‘The Examined Life’. “Psychoanalysts are fond of pointing out that the past is alive in the present. But the future is alive in the present too...the future is a fantasy that shapes our present”, writes Grosz (p. 157). The interleaving of past, present and future is especially noticeable in the pithy observations that Grosz makes about his analysands’ behaviours. “You hoped having a baby would undo the unhappiness of your own childhood” (p. 106), he says to a woman struggling with the challenges of new motherhood. Grosz questions an elderly professor who had only recently started expressing his homosexuality about whether “part of the power of being held by a man was that it undid the rejection, the pain he’d suffered from his father” (p. 78). Grosz paints a picture of the past, present and future forming a Borromean knot: bleeding into and exerting inseparable influence over each other in a way that transcends linear time.

Also featuring heavily in the book as overarching psychoanalytic themes are the dialectics of absence-presence, lack-desire and change-loss, alongside the paradoxes that they encompass. Grosz posits that we often have a harder time accepting one polarity than the other within these polemics, even though both are unable to exist in isolation. Take Michael for example, Grosz’s analysand who feels unable to be in a relationship with his girlfriend and is continually tormented by the absence-presence dialectic. For Michael, the person he most wants, upon whom he is the most dependent, quickly becomes the person he most avidly avoids. Michael experiences love as an impossible requirement, a demand through which someone wants more of him than he is ever able to give. Michael as a young man sees Grosz for one session before Grosz refers him on to a more experienced analyst. Twenty years later, Michael revisits Grosz and reveals that he misses his old analyst, who has died recently. “I can’t do intimacy, but I can feel lonely” (p. 54), Michael states, touchingly. As is the case with the other dialectics that Grosz vivifies, he imbues his portrayal of Michael’s oscillation between two extremes with a high level of sensitivity. This allows the reader to sense tangibly the spectrum that lies between these two polarities, increasing the relatability of the analysand’s situation and engendering understanding and empathy for the analysand in the reader.

Alongside Grosz’s exploration of the ‘what’ of psychoanalytic theory sits his elucidation of the ‘how’ of psychoanalytic practice. Throughout ‘The Examined Life’, Grosz provides a nuts and bolts account of psychoanalytic practice, making clear to the reader the work of an analyst. Any reader wondering what it is that an analyst does or what the process of psychoanalysis entails will have a deeper understanding of answers to both of these queries by the end of Grosz’s book. The premise that the therapy room is a microcosm of an analysand’s everyday life forms the background against which Grosz outlines the process of psychoanalytic practice. “It seemed to me that Francesca wasn’t simply reprising her mother’s role as the betrayed wife – she was also putting me in the very same position she’d been in as a child”, Grosz reflects about the dynamics that drive his interactions with one analysand, “Was she, unconsciously, involuntarily,

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communicating to me the frustration and isolation she'd once felt?" (p. 60). Similarly, Grosz hypothesises that, in her exchanges with him, another analysand "wanted to feel that she was the busy mother and I, along with her husband, was another demanding child" (p. 104). Through examples such as these, Grosz reveals the inextricable links between that which occurs within the therapy room and that which propels the world outside of it.

At various points in 'The Examined Life', Grosz expounds on some of the responsibilities that he believes form part of the psychoanalyst's professional skill set. Acknowledging his temptation to persuade an analysand to take a certain path when she faces a decision, Grosz writes that his job as an analyst is "instead to find a useful question" (p. 128). Myriad examples of such questions can be found in his work. Rather than providing an answer to his analysand's question about why a particular memory from her past has resurfaced in the session, Grosz responds with another question: "Why do you think?" (p. 89). Grosz purposefully asks for clarification from a analysand who is questioning his sexuality, "I'm sorry...I don't understand. Why do you think you're gay?" "So you don't think I'm gay?" the analysand responds. "I'm trying to understand why *you* think you're gay" (italics in original, p. 47). Grosz adopts a similar position when faced with an analysand who is trying to work out whether to leave her long-term boyfriend: "You don't think he'll make a good dad, do you?" she asked. "What do you think?" I asked. "He can change, can't he?" "What makes you think he wants to change?" I asked" (p. 153). Grosz shows the usefulness of an analyst meeting analysands' questions with further questions, maintaining neutrality while drawing analysands' attention to the possible reasons driving the questions that they ask.

Grosz likens the job of an analyst to that of tour guide when he reflects on a poignant journey he undertook with his father to the sites of his father's childhood in Hungary: "Sometimes, like Alex [the tour guide], I take my patients back to the place they started from, using whatever landmarks remain. I too help them pace out an invisible but palpable world. At times, I feel I'm a tour guide – part detective, part translator" (p. 187). For Grosz, analysts in their role as part detective, part translator – as conduits through which the past is unearthed and worked through – should adopt a stance that embraces benign harrying. Grosz likens an analyst's work to that of the ghosts in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. In their haunting of Scrooge, Dickens' ghosts provide motivation for him to change by making alive to him material from the past that he has been working hard to avoid. By dismantling the fantasy that a life lived without loss is possible, Dickens' ghosts bring about the realisation in Scrooge that he has the agency to make change in the present moment and force him to repair his relationship to elements from the past that have caused conflict and hurt on account of being lost, forgotten or prematurely terminated. "If, inadvertently, a patient lets me know what haunts her – the thought she knows but she refuses to think – my job is to be like one of Dickens' ghosts: to keep the patient at the scene, to let it do its work" (p. 115), states Grosz. Such imagery brings to mind the words of Epstein (2004) who, drawing on Hans Loewald, writes that, "the therapeutic process...is one that encourages...transforming the *ghosts* that haunt the present into *ancestors*" (p. 200, italics in original). Grosz makes clear that, by inhabiting the role of such a ghost and by engaging in a more benevolent haunting, an analyst is best able to scaffold analysands' reparation with their past and, in so doing, catalyse change.

In an excerpt Grosz includes from a conversation he has with a friend, the friend asks Grosz whether he takes difficult analysands personally. Grosz replies "Sure. I get

irritated, but hopefully I'll find the reason the patient needs me to be irritated. My job is to listen, then check what I'm hearing against my emotional reactions..." (p. 175). Grosz provides plentiful examples of this particular job of the analyst; a bespoke listening that involves hovering evenly between the content and the process of the conversation that transpires in analysis. "Matt's situation was alarming but, as he talked, I began to notice that I didn't feel particularly alarmed. Nothing seemed to be missing from his words; his speech was energetic and clear. But I found it difficult to get involved in his story...every attempt I made to think about Matt's story, to take note of his words, was like trying to run uphill in a dream", writes Grosz of one analysand (p. 24). Grosz uses passages such as this to highlight this vital craft skill of the analyst; that, at any time, she must be attending both to the on-the-ground subject matter of an interaction and to the higher-level dynamics of an interaction. Grosz's proficiency at this skill is especially evident. "I was angry because of something that had happened in my own life – and, as a result, there were times when I thought that I might be putting something of my own problems into Francesca's analysis", Grosz (p. 57) writes about one of his sessions. About another session with an analysand who harboured a secret and was acutely aware of making awkward remarks in social situations, Grosz states, "I tried not to show it, but I think he sensed how I heard this – that he could say the unsaid thing about others, but not himself" (p. 76). Through examples such as these, Grosz's high levels of self-awareness and self-reflexivity strike the reader. He is acutely aware of how forces that stem not only from the analysand but also from the analyst *and* from the analyst-analysand dyad shape the dynamics of an interaction. In her synthesis of the false dichotomy often constructed between emotions and rationality, McIlwain (2009, p.16) proposes that "rationality lies in having full acquaintance with feelings, [being] reflectively aware of the messages they have for us, rather than living palely and ignoring or suppressing them. To be rational is to be alive to the way emotions tinge our memories and our view of life..." Throughout 'The Examined Life', Grosz as an analyst seems rational in exactly this way, fully alive to his feelings and cognisant of the way in which his emotions shape his memories and experiences.

Although Grosz has a strong presence in 'The Examined Life', at no time does he fall prey to bestowing upon himself the status of guru or faultless expert. While a less humble analyst could readily occupy a grandiose, omnipotent seat, Grosz is unafraid of exposing his vulnerabilities to the reader. Grosz opens the book with the sentence "I want to tell you a story about a patient who shocked me" (p. 1). Throughout the text, Grosz generously shares a measured amount of doubts, regrets and self-recriminations with the reader. Grosz then closes the book with a sentence as refreshingly unassuming as his opening line: "Now, so many of the patients I saw when I was young are gone or dead, but sometimes, as when waking from a dream, I find myself reaching out to them, wanting to say one more thing" (p. 215). Phillips and Taylor (2009) define kindness as "the ability to bear the vulnerability of others, and therefore of oneself" (p. 6) and the reader is left with an impression of Grosz as a supremely kind analyst. Grosz is not ashamed to be found wanting, to tell of when an analysand has walked out of a session, when he feels he hasn't enjoyed what would typically be defined as 'success' or of when he feels he has made a mistake. Grosz portrays his analysands with deep respect, curiosity and compassion, honouring the accomplished character of their humanity and the complexities of their lives. Grosz, like the analysands he portrays, is present in 'The Examined Life' in a way that is radically, fallibly human, embodying a unique combination of strengths, weaknesses and vitality that calls to be held in high esteem.

According to minimalist artist Carl Andre (2005, p. xvii), “No matter what we say, we are always talking about ourselves”. Grosz speaks to the truth of Andre’s statement in ‘The Examined Life’ by neatly unpacking the ‘what’ of psychoanalytic theory and the ‘how’ of psychoanalytic practice. Opinions differ, however, on exactly what it is that we are saying about ourselves and the best ways in which we can decode this. The greatest strength of Grosz’s book is that his prose is as easy to read as his thoughts are sophisticated, his exploration of psychoanalytic theory and practice containing insights that will benefit readers who range from those completely unfamiliar with the psychoanalytic paradigm to analysands, practicing analysts and psychoanalytic scholars. In doing so, Grosz transforms into a link material that has previously acted as a wall, opening up psychoanalytic theory and practice to a broader audience while ensuring that his message is clearly imparted to those who were already listening out for the taps.

## **Biographical Note**

Based in Sydney, Australia, Andrew Geeves is a researcher, teacher and trainee psychologist whose passion for psychoanalytic theory and practice was sparked over a decade ago. He particularly enjoys the unashamed curiosity of the psychoanalytic paradigm; the ways in which its questions honour the rich mysteries of being human and speak to the wildness of the lives we lead.

## **Acknowledgment**

In memory of the luminescent Doris McIlwain, no stranger to inhabiting the fullness of her feelings.

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## Book review

*Cleft Tongue: The Language of Psychic Structures*. Dana Amir. London, UK: Karnac, 2014, 176 pages 162 p. (paperback) ISBN 9781782200420

Reviewed by Michal Ephratt, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
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I willingly accepted the challenge of reviewing *Cleft Tongue: The Language of Psychic Structures* for *Language & Psychoanalysis*. The book was written by Dr. Dana Amir, a psychoanalyst, clinical psychologist, poet, literary scholar and lecturer at the University of Haifa (Israel). *Cleft Tongue* is her second book. Her first, *On the Lyricism of the Mind* (2008, in Hebrew), based on her doctoral dissertation, was awarded the Bahat Prize for an Original Academic Book (2006). *Cleft Tongue* centers on internal grammar: what the psychic language is and how the mind creates itself through its unique language.

I'll say from the start that in *Cleft Tongue* Amir attains the finest integration of language and psychoanalysis, thus reflecting their merger in real inner life. This indivisible unity becomes apparent from the opening lines of the book, inviting and tempting the reader to delve into it (p. xi):

This book is an attempt to think through psychic language, in its diverse forms and modes of expression, both within psychic structures as well as the inter-personal realm. What kind of rapture does psychotic language create? What is an autistic syntax? What are the body's forms of expression and how do they render themselves to interpretation?

Thinking about variations in language and their modes of expression within local constituents and entire discourses, and particularly within specific languages – their forms as well as their meanings – is the bread and butter of the linguist and linguistics, investigating verbal (human) behavior. To use Kuhn's (1962) terminology, "standard linguistics" (this term is in itself a generalization) observations differ from the observations in *Cleft Tongue*. In this book generalizations are based on the incorporation of endless singularities, while linguistic taxonomies and generalizations are a balanced flattening of whatever fails to conform with predetermined concepts and definitions (norms concerning amount, rules, etc.). While linguistic practice is invested in sorting objects, Amir's observation of the psychic language, "does not signify entities but rather

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that which cannot be attained” (p. 2). As we shall shortly show, *Cleft Tongue* protects and preserves singularity, uniqueness and absence within its generalizations.

As is clear from our journal’s title – and from *Cleft Tongue*, language, aside from being an important tool serving psychoanalysis, occupies a unique place in psychoanalytic theory and practice. The key position that language plays in the analytic space derives from perceiving language and speech as symptoms and perceiving symptoms as languages and speech (Forrester, 1980, p. 131). Speech is the chief medium of the psychoanalytic session, hence acquired its name “the talking cure”. Even in its prior (hypnotic) phase Freud (1890, p. 283) asserts that “Words are the essential tool of mental treatment. A layman will no doubt find it hard to understand how pathological disorders of the body and the mind can be eliminated by ‘mere words’”.

Freud and his associates and successors through the varied directions in which psychoanalysis has developed (e.g., Jacques Lacan’s (1966) views on language and psychoanalysis) depicted the fundamental role that absence plays in the life drive and the death drive, and the genuine association between absence and language. This holds not only in cases such as the child of the urban legend, who was considered reticent because as long as the soup was warm enough he did not encounter lack, therefore had no motivation to communicate. The indispensable link between language and absence goes back to earlier, preliminary pre-verbal stages preceding separation and individuation. The establishment of language and its nature is determined by experiences of multiplicity and distinction which involve lack: I/not-I. This is the foundation of Amir’s (pp. 1-2) approach:

Language is first and foremost a depressive achievement involving both the concession of what cannot be articulated – and the giving up of the symbiosis with the other by acknowledging him or her as a distinct subject. Indeed, acknowledging separation is simultaneously the driving motivation to speak as well as an essential condition for establishing language. [...] Indeed, establishing language enacts a similar ambivalence to that which takes place in the process of mourning, as it implies both an adherence to the object as well as the capacity to let go and recreate it within.

Language as the work of mourning is created from loss. It does not eliminate the gap (it does not bring back “the thing itself”) but it may act as an opening to internalizing the lost object by restructuring it and making it significant for future experiences (see Amir, 2008). The following is an example of the role played by encountering absence in motivating the establishment of language. Freud tells of his grandson, who at the age of one and a half, when his mother, to whom he was attached, left for a few hours therefore was not available to him, used to stand up in his cot, throw a toy and call aloud “o-o-o-o”. Freud – noting that the child did this with an expression of interest and satisfaction on his face – interpreted this call as the German word *fort* (gone). Freud then noticed that when doing this the child would throw a wooden reel tied to a string out of his sight (behind the

curtain of his cot); he then hauled the object back, hailing its reappearance with a joyful *da* (here). The boy repeated this act of playing over and over. Freud interpreted this child's "disappearance and return" game as a way to compensate himself for his mother's absence; but also, as Freud (1920, pp. 14-15) explains in accordance with the pleasure principle, "her departure had to be enacted as a necessary preliminary to her joyful return".

A living language is one that maintains a dialogue with the other; it allows grief and separation from the lost object by recreating it internally in the mind. When this process is missing or is not brought to an end, these experiences remain detached and isolated. Speech is the means and condition which enable forgetting (Forrester, 1980).<sup>2</sup> A living (psychic) language, says Amir, is a language that is capable of exceeding itself and observing itself. It is a language that has the power to bring about change.

The nature of mother-tongue and how children acquire it is a major linguistic topic (see e.g. the debate between Skinner and Chomsky: Chomsky, 1959). Amir's investigation ascribes mother-tongue<sup>3</sup> a predominant role in establishing the psychic language as well as its desecration. Amir details three essential functions of the mother-tongue (pp. 5-6):

1. Being a non-persecutory context that dilutes the objects' threatening being, the mother and mother-tongue enable its naming and its linkage to other objects;
2. Endowing the child with her or his proper name, the mother and mother-tongue consecrate the child's singularity.
3. Presenting the father as a non-traumatic object, the mother and mother-tongue enable the father's presence to erect a buffer between private and public, and to enable the child's transition from individual language to common (corresponding to the shift from first-person to third-person in emotional speech).

For each of the above functions Amir stipulates the part played by the (good-enough) mother in enabling language growth, and the part played by a persecutor mother in desecrating and attacking growth. Amir poses two phases of an attack on language, contrasting living psychic languages (therefore considered non-languages): concrete language – emptying desire of its object, and pseudo-language – emptying the object of its desire.<sup>4</sup> These (non-)languages are not arbitrary but are evoked by diverse purposes,

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<sup>2</sup> The reader is encouraged to see Amir's (p. 137) analysis of an interaction cited from Alterman, in which the beggar interprets the music-box-man's need to learn the words of his own song as a fault, while Hananel (the protagonist) interprets the situation by saying: "You forget them because you already remember them."

<sup>3</sup> Amir uses the term not to denote the national language of one's birth but as a term referring to the internalized mother's emotional language (p. 143 n. 1).

<sup>4</sup> Sic., unfortunately this was misphrased in English translation of the book (p. 3).

which sometimes may even clash. Concrete language attests to a maternal object that gave names to things (therefore enabled concrete language), but lacking emotive language it did not give names to feelings or offer emotional meanings. Pseudo-language indicates a deceptive maternal object, which is filled with words that [might] have been exposed in silence, therefore instead of creating foundations of speech it creates no-speech. This is considered empty speech.

Language is a vital factor in creating boundaries and establishing links within them (between I and non-I, between presence and absence, between the present and the past and the future, between reality and imagination). Such a public language is entrusted to the father (“Name of the Father”, and see pp. 129-130). Through the father’s separate relations with the mother on the one hand and with the infant on the other, the father acts as the Third introducing the concept of otherness to the mother-child uterine symbiosis. Amir (p. 7) says that only a mother who experiences the father’s figure as non-violent, “would enable a free flow between the singular and common registers of speech in a way that serves the child authentic needs.” This position makes it the mother’s role to enable the father’s status as a buffer. Mother-tongue and language play a crucial role in the emergence of social order in the oedipal phase.

Clearly, from the second function of the mother-tongue, the endowment of a proper name to the newborn – also part of the formation of the child’s psychic language –enjoys here illuminating references and descriptions. Amir maintains that our proper name is the first gift we receive from the other, as well as the first symbol of otherness. While showing its worth as a gift, the book also deals with the desecrated exploitation of the name to debase the self, resulting in an urge to reject naming and in abstention from speech. One must keep in mind that this is not limited to a name already in use (an existing name, a name already given) but to every occasion of naming. Each proper name given to a newborn equals a unique narrative composed by condensation and displacement of internal and external elements. When the newborn is at the center of the narrative the chosen name is a blessing. But when, for example, the narrative grounding the choice of a name is driven by parental narcissistic disorders – such as crude jealousy, lack of separation, lack of parental empathy or inability to enter intimacy; when the choice of name serves to glorify the parent – then such a name is a desecration: the child is born into a name and a world which is not his/hers (see Nadav et al., 2011).

Concrete language and pseudo-language then are two basic forms of delay in the development of emotive language. Concrete language is the product of the absence of a developmental soil for creating emotive language, and is characterized by the absence of singularity as an attack on the bonding/connection: emotions do not obtain a form of language. Pseudo-language is the product of a language that was created but then was desecrated. This is a refusal to be in touch with language, hence refusal to move on to a common/plural language. Pseudo-language is characterized as a defensive verbal construction: talking with no experience. Pseudo-language does not fight a void but prompts the denial of existence. Its containment is a barrier between the speaker and her or his singularity, reflected in a fluent yet hollow language: a language that separates, syntax without link.

The book explores in depth discourses of five mental categories. Each chapter presents the pathological etiology and its verbal manifestations, accompanying such presentations with clinical illustrations. Amir stresses that her intention is “not only to outline the

dialectic far-end textures [...] but also to identify these typical syntactic zones in their simple, everyday manifestations in ordinary language and in the non-pathological” (p. xii). Carefully reading the chapters in light of the two types of non-language, the reader will notice that some dispositions are clearly identified with one of the two non-languages, and in others variations of the two show up together. In line with her explicit intention, Amir makes use of vignettes extracted from treatment sessions alongside literary works. We now review chapters 2-6 in succession.

**Chapter 2: The split between voice and meaning: the dual function of psychotic syntax** (pp. 31-48). Amir views the psychotic personality, or psychotic potentiality, as the product of a destructive absence of the mother’s wish for the baby as a new subject (a separate subject, the fruit of desire of both parents). This absence, Amir explains, results from the totality of the mother’s wish for her own birth (by her mother). In such a scenario, the mother cannot fulfill her role as an emotional regulator and as the generator of a mental space that is coherent, protective and meaningful for the infant. The child’s way to survive in face of his mother’s death wish is to develop a torn and distorted representation of the self, of parents and of the world. This is manifested in delusional discourse, “[o]nce prohibited the construction of an autonomous syntax, the subject creates a ‘non-syntactic’ syntax by means of which an illusion of continuity is generated” (p. 36). Amir explains the formation of psychotic hybrid language (by people who are not psychotic) as the attack of the mother-tongue on the birth of an object language (of the child). The mother does not allow the growth of the child’s language but imposes on him her intimacy. That which is embodied in the hybrid language is an incompatible mixture of fancy lexicon and infantile syntax (e.g., with no causality and context). Language embodies the child’s split and reconstructs the mother’s split. This is a shadow language, a language without a personal voice and with no meaning (because the meaning of their language is exposure and confrontation with the mother’s death wish). Such an exposure threatens falling apart. The psychotic language is voiced (and heard), but bypasses meaning hence is used not to link but to neutralize and dismantle.

**Chapter 3: The chameleon language of perversion** (pp. 49-66). Perversion is described as a desperate attempt to distinguish life from the primal scene (between parents), which is experienced as dead by the compulsive eroticization of the psychological emptiness and death. Such eroticization is designed to arouse excitement that is experienced unconsciously as a false alternative. This is fraud that looks true and truth that looks fake. It is the seduction of the other and the use of the other and the relationship with him (such as sex) not as an end but as a means of control and subjugation. The perverse subject recruits the false and deceptive use of the other’s language in the service of this seduction to trap the other and fuse with it. She or he uses the other’s verbal language (and symbolic means such as gestures) as if they were their own. The perverse subject infiltrates the other, adopting his language as a chameleon language. In this way the perverse subject penetrates and conquers the other without his presence as a foreign body revealed. The perverse person adopts the other’s syntax in order to capture and arouse him. According to Amir, to avoid contact with the insufferable inner content pseudo-language generates an artificial syntax set up on the other’s language. On the other hand, the perverse subject uses the selected other and his language to appropriate him for the needs of the perverse subject. This can result in total identification, whose impact works here almost as a compulsive force, akin to attraction-repulsion relations toward the uncanny, forever experienced as insufficient. This dialog is ever experienced as barren (not alive) and leads to repetitive circularity (which replicates the primal scene). The

pervert infiltrates the other and his language to ensure his own existence; he transgresses boundaries in order to feel them. By trapping and fusing with the other the pervasive subject simultaneously creates himself as a subject and creates the other as an event to which the subject can testify. But this is false, since he is a witness to an event of another and absent as a witness to his own event.

**Chapter 4: The psychic organ point of autistic syntax** (pp. 67-90). Following Francis Tustin, Amir explains autism as “‘not knowing’ and ‘not hearing’ which are the result of the traumatic and premature recognition of the infant’s separateness from the mother” (pp. 68-69). She stresses the inability of the autistic encapsulation to be an envelope and to cast an experience of protection. The child with autism lacks the ability to play with language (sounds and words) and with objects. Imaginary play, transitional objects and language, are all the development of transformational means allowing the infant to tolerate separateness and absence. But for the child with autism flattening of objects, compulsive repetitive use of words and ritual manners, lacking distinction between them (including perceiving them as the thing itself and not its substitute) – all carry a shallow static fetishist quality, aimed at avoiding the experience of the lack of movement (and of life). Amir applies different imageries to illustrate this phenomenon. She makes use of the musical organ point, which unlike its musical role as a leading musical sound, in the (inverse) autistic analog does not maintain relationships with other sounds nor even have any polyphony whatsoever: it stands single and detached. Another image is that in place of a framework that allows the developing child to negate the presence of his mother in order to create for himself the representation of the mother’s disappearance (see above – *fort da*) the child with autism erases without representation that which threatens as destruction.

The term “syntax” is used throughout the book. Some of its uses suggest unequivocally that Amir’s use of the word does overlap with its conventional linguistic sense (i.e., the grammatical structure that is beyond word level, such as phrases, and their role in the sentence). “Syntax” referring here to unchanging rules of the language (not necessarily in the syntactic level) becomes apparent from Amir’s discussion of autistic language (p. 79, and see p. 144 n. 3). Opposed to these unchanging rules are soft particles of the language, such as emotion, humor and intonation, which fill the syntax with meaning. Evidently, these particles change from person to person and from one context to another. Amir relates the difficulty of the child with autism to integrate soft particles with hard ones to autistic speech seeming syntactically accurate (grammar rules) but emotionally barren. Amir rightly refers to the selective mutism among children with autism (in the face of people with Asperger, who talk incessantly, reference to autistic mutism has been frequently suppressed). By creating a world in which the other has neither part nor meaning, the child with autism “locks outside” the non-I. The person with autism uses people, words and things as (auto-)sensuous objects. This attracts him or her to rigid syntax, harsh words, consonants and rigid rhyming. Those do not nurture meaning, spatial and temporal relationships, or otherness. They are all, as it were, clutched and squeezed in a clenched fist. Here too Amir does not confine her discussion to pathological cases but shows their emergence also among non-pathological subjects, for example, the use of a dyadic autistic language among spouses, siblings, and therapist and patient: not to innovate but to fixate a repetitive pattern. All that such a dyad creates is a rigid surface impenetrable to meaning (even not idiosyncratic meaning). In such a state there is no internal space for working-through mental processes. This is a language

statically clinging rather than dynamically intersecting. It is a false dyad excluding variation or otherness.

**Chapter 5: The inner witness** (pp. 91-110). Amir relates the quest for a witness to the trauma to the third function she has attributed to the mother-tongue. The subject hopes that testimony will retroactively extricate the traumatic experience from its isolated stagnation, and that by confronting it through its transformation into a narrative (constituting a reporter, a story and a recipient) the traumatic experience will transform from a black hole into presence. Amir emphasizes the mother's role in providing a tolerable and timed amount of helplessness that is essential for creating an inner witness, that is, the ability to exceed the initial victimization situation, face it and give it meaning. The witness is not only a victim but a victim with a voice (and meaning). When such deviation is not possible, helplessness eradicates the role of the witness (as first person). The chief role of the testimonial function of the mind, says Amir, is not limited to the ability to maintain a continuous sense of spontaneity and vitality but is also to be able to cope with later traumas, utilizing the ability to alternate between the victim position and the witness position. In the absence of such ability the representation of the trauma and a vivid experiential link with it are not possible. The internal becomes discourse portraying autistic or psychotic syntax, to buffer the individual against the trauma and that same individual against himself. This is perjury language, language lacking partition, language negating itself, presenting forged similarity and total symmetry between self and other, and between interior and exterior (none of these holds a place of its own). In such a discourse the subject-object are not distinct, the event forms the testimony, and the testimony could equally form the event. Inability to deviate from the actual present (remember the past and envisage the future) is an experience of sterilization, manifested in a hollow syntax that does not allow extension. Amir presents the discourse of the characters in Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* as an example of false equal relations and of syntax and discourse devoid of a witness. She concludes regarding the extreme situation of no relationships and its reflection in the absence of syntactic relations (subject-object) by saying that every sentence can be read or recited equally from beginning to end as well as from end to beginning. What keeps the protagonists of *Waiting for Godot* together is anticipation of the third as a witness to their existence, thus ending the process of their elimination. Is this not the experience of Job (42: 1-4) when he turns to God as the subject supposed to know ("*sujet supposé savoir*")?

Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

**Chapter 6: Nausea as a refusal of a mother-tongue: the psychosomatic, metaphoric, metonymic, and psychotic expression** (pp. 111-132). From its beginning psychoanalysis distinguished three modes of signification (somatization): the primary mode is physical symptoms; next comes behavior such as acting-in and acting-out. The third mode is

speech, which is the most advanced (culturally it requires language with all it entails). As mentioned, this is also the basis for the psychoanalytic “talking cure” approach. The bodily psychosomatic symptoms are the most primitive; they do not reach representation in the inner world. According to Amir, within the flow of somatic phenomena there is also a degree of symbolization hierarchy (“physical syntax”): from conversion as a living and concrete metaphor for the repressed contents (which is most accessible to interpretation) all the way to opaque (not transparent) psychosomatic manifestations. The latter are metonymy resulting from primitive and limited shifting from the psychic scene to the physiological (bodily) scene. Beside these two types of psychosomatic manifestations, Amir identifies a third type: the psychotic psychosomatic expression of no-symbolization. Opposed to the metaphorical expression, the psychotic psychosomatic expression carries no meaning. Unlike the metonymic expression it does not preserve a continuum.<sup>5</sup> The psychotic psychosomatic expression does not allow any construction of an experiencing I. Such expressions are not an escape from the traumatic but a weld with it. This produces an illusion of union without lack.

In this chapter Amir discusses the experience of nausea as having to do with the absence of boundaries. It is simultaneously an expression of fusion and of distancing, demonstrating a psychotic psychosomatic event. The feeling of disgust is associated with excessive closeness and the need to “restore” it by repulsion. Amir links this nausea with dealing with separateness and separation from the body of the mother. Nausea may represent the wish to separate and the wish not to separate. This is a case of a physical phenomenon transforming into an object in its own right. It is not the repetition of signifiers but the repetition of the collapse of the signifier in face of the referent.<sup>6</sup> Amir talks about the generalizing and comparing double-phased use of language (and words): one is facilitation of the experience of propagation by binding it under a single name (title); the other is differentiation and singularity. Naming as an experience of otherness allows transformation from an experience that is bodily to an experience of a first-person speaker. Amir says:

Given that distance becomes possible only through language, when the latter is rejected the individual finds him or herself facing an archaic incestuous maternal object, lacking I outline, an object with whom proximity by definition is over-proximity, satiating to the point of nausea, suffocating in its sticky surfeit which fills up all space (p. 128).

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<sup>5</sup> Amir (p. 117) sets out the discussion on somatization from Jakobson’s (1965) view of metaphor and metonymy as polar opposites, and Lacan’s (1966) view of metaphor as an organizing way to construct meaning and of metonymy as a way to resist meaning.

<sup>6</sup>The very shift from the axis of the signifier to that of the signified is a metonymic shift of contiguity or synecdoche (of the part and the whole), and not a metaphorical shift owing to resemblance.



**Epilogue: Interpretation and over-interpretation** (pp. 133-142). The book's epilogue is devoted to language as the work of interpretation. Amir identifies interpretation in the therapeutic context not only with the content itself (naming) but more with subtle modes of balancing the interpretation and its object: the way the interpretation presents that object to the gaze. According to Amir, interpretation at its best, which is also the only interpretation, is an open interpretation that reveals the pure individual: by subtracting the general from the individual, interpretation allows access to that part of the individual that is not the case of the rule. Its aim is not to conquer but to create motion between the subject and himself and the subject and the other.

### ***Cleft Tongue: Language & Psychoanalysis***

A book review sets out to make the readers curious, thus to influence them to read the book. Due to space limits, this review focused on presenting the very specific nuclei of the book. The reader is warmly invited to discover the case studies and analysis of literary works vividly illustrating the different inner worlds and their idiosyncratic psychic language. Among these, I have left to the reader's perusal Amir's discussion – covering every phenomenon and dialect language – of the therapist's corresponding and constitutive language, either as a reflection or as a grip and a bridge, as otherness or as a dismissal of seduction.

As explained, language as symptom and symptom as language have been acknowledged as central to the study of psychoanalysis. Thus, the contribution of *Cleft Tongue* lies not in proposing the issue but in its careful unique and integrative investigation as the psychic language and its parlance, looking at their forms, contents and functions (the three chief tasks of the linguist) and doing so not as a technical analysis of an arbitrary code but from the etiology in which they are created (for connecting or disengaging, separateness or intimacy, cure or perpetuation).

*Cleft Tongue* free of the taxonomic linguistic methods, offering a rich reasoned and broad perspective of the speaking subject and his language in the inner-subjective and inter-subjective spaces. This interaction space is not a flat space but a dialectical space in which non-communication is also communication, and at times, as in the case of black-hole, this could well be the only way of communication.

As seen above, *Cleft Tongue* also grants its readers a view of language as entirety: listening to upper-tones with analytical smoothly floating attention, listening without memory and without desire, departs from the direction and practice of traditional linguistics. Instead of comparing with norms, definitions and rules its starting point is the broadest unique entirety, making out its meaning for the individual and for human existence. For Amir, the only interpretation is the one revealing purified individuality (p. 141). Psychoanalysis is by its nature both a therapeutic tool unreservedly aimed at a particular individual engaging in her or his intimacy and singularity, and an all-encompassing human-social theory, ranging from unique singularity to its meaning in the universal context. The book moves between an outright rejection of concepts such as norms and definitions and delineating their outline. This results in a complete picture, aptly reflecting self (addresser) / other (addressee) relations, which exploits all the structural and semantic apparatus and means familiar to us by subtly exceeding them.

## **Biographical Note**

Michal Ephratt is a professor in the Department of Hebrew Linguistics at the University of Haifa, Israel. The major focus of her efforts is in the study of silence as means of communication. Her research interests include also linguistic models in non-linguistic disciplines, particularly psychoanalysis, and language in real-life setting, such as verbal iconicity and personal given-names.

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## Interview

Interviewed by Chris R. Bell<sup>1</sup>  
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### ***Three Approaches to Psychological Reality: An Interview with Dr. Antoine Mooij***

During the fall of 2012, my first semester in the newly developed doctoral program Psychology: Consciousness and Society at University of West Georgia, I happened upon a remarkable book that was to become a continuing source of inspiration and guidance for my studies in psychology pursued as a human science – Antoine Mooij’s *Psychiatry as a Human Science: Phenomenological, Hermeneutical and Lacanian Perspectives*. Human science psychology emphasizes the centrality and irreducibility of psychical reality, of first person subjective experience, even as it recognizes its overdetermined character in the multiple causal networks of evolving nature and culture. As I was becoming acquainted with the diverse methodological approaches to accessing this psychical reality in my coursework, I was very often left with the impression that these approaches were characterized by irreconcilable differences in both philosophical commitments and rhetorical styles, and that an integrative approach combining the best of the human science traditions was neither possible nor desirable. Antoine Mooij’s *Psychiatry as a Human Science* demonstrated to me without a doubt that an integrative approach involving three of the most historically important human science traditions – phenomenology, hermeneutics, and Lacanian psychoanalysis – was not only possible, but indeed unexpectedly illuminating, as each approach built upon and presupposed the others in an almost dialectical fashion. Experience, meaning, and reflexively accounting for the formal effects of language on what Lacan would eventually call *parlêtre*, or speaking-being, constitute three moments of an atemporal unity, each of them distinct, but none of which can be thought without the others. I contacted Dr. Mooij in the fall of ‘14 proposing the idea of an interview by email. He very kindly accepted this offer, and I posed to him some of the questions that had been foremost in my mind while reading his work. Perhaps my greatest curiosity of all was why a psychiatrist would be interested in psychical reality in the first place, given modern psychiatry’s increasing disregard of the subjective dimension in favor of objective neurophysiological explanations and interventions. This interest indeed had to do with Dr. Mooij’s own life history, professional training and background, something of which he graciously shares in our following correspondence.

**Chris Bell (CB):** Two of your books have recently been published in English, *Intentionality, Desire, Responsibility* by Brill and *Psychiatry as a Human Science: Phenomenological, Hermeneutical and Lacanian Perspectives* by Rodopi. Both of these studies are notable for emphasizing a human sciences approach to the psychological

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subject, or the experiencing person, in the fields of Law and Psychiatry. Such an approach may be considered non-obvious in an era that prizes the utility of natural science. Why is a human science approach important for these fields today?

**Antoine Mooij (AM):** Before answering the questions I would first like to speak about myself. I studied medicine and philosophy, but during that time I already wanted to be a psychiatrist. The education in philosophy (rather classical) has helped me tremendously in psychiatry. I trained as a psychoanalyst, wrote a thesis about Lacan, which introduced Lacan in the Netherlands. The book (*Taal en Verlangen, Language and Desire, 1975*) has been the first introduction to Lacan's philosophy for a long time, both in the Netherlands and in Belgium. Back then I also met Lacan, and spoke with many Lacanians. However, I have always avoided Lacanian institutions. In the Netherlands some tact is necessary when speaking about Lacan; in general people are rejective (it is different in Belgium). I have also done a lot of work in the fields of phenomenology and hermeneutics; in the Netherlands these are traditionally incorporated in philosophy, but also in early psychiatry (Rümke). I have been working as a psychoanalyst, psychotherapist, and in addition to that I was director of a forensic psychiatric clinic, the observation clinic of the Ministry of Justice, which focuses on the determination of criminal responsibility (Pieter Baan Center). I was there to supervise the diagnoses, which then fed my interest in personality disorders. I've gained a lot of experience. I also taught psychopathology to law students and philosophical anthropology to students in philosophy (respectively as a professor and an honorary professor). Summing it up: there are a lot of connections in my work, because I find that opposites are often magnified in academic discussions. The contradictions are there, but they are not always as great as they are made out to be.

**CB:** Can you share a bit about your own history and intellectual trajectory? How is it that a medically trained Psychiatrist could become a defender of a decidedly non-medical approach to psychological subjectivity?

**AM:** Secondly: But doing all that I do choose for psychic reality. The biological aspect is also important for psychopathology, but in my opinion that importance is being overrated. Speaking in computer terms, I think the problem is often not to be found in the hardware, but in the input (as a result of which the hardware is disrupted, this is why psychopharmacology can be very useful). Certainly, I consider psychopharmacology an important asset. The way it is used nowadays is a different question. Anyway, the psychopathology of today is in imbalance. Moreover, the unilateral orientation on biology has not brought much gain for the practice (especially regarding medication). But it seems a little more balance is growing. It is moving towards both nature and nurture.

**CB:** In *Psychiatry As a Human Science* you provide a unique account of space and time orientations of clinical subject positions in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Can you speak to how you arrived at this compelling analysis?

**AM:** Thirdly: within the realm of psychic reality I am choosing for an integrative approach, not as a primary goal, but as a result of the determination of one-sidedness and parallels. A deficient me, moi, (schizophrenia) in Lacan's thinking, does not differ much from an ipseity-disorder (Sass) or a deficiency of the anti-predicative atmosphere (Blankenberg). Through the anthropological psychiatry I have encountered the importance of time, and through Binswanger the importance of time and space. I tried to insert that into the Lacanian scheme (which I have also varied and which in my opinion

corresponds a lot with the classical nosology). To my surprise, this turned out to fit quite well. Certainly regarding phobia, which is largely a space problem: not daring to take up space (this is reflected also in the German word Angst, angustia, narrow space). And although some anticipatory anxiety is always present, time is mainly the near future and the danger threatening there, right now, coming from the outside (hence the panic). This is different from compulsions. Here the danger comes primarily from within (primarily one checks him/herself) followed by an overall control of the area (through the height dimension, and living in anticipation). As a side note, I am thinking of the compulsive personality (OCPD), not so much of the pure OC disorders. At any rate, I consider this psychopathological scheme as a supplement to the classifying diagnostics: finding out where the problem of the person concerned lies, for the purpose of a structural diagnosis.

**CB:** In what ways has your work as a forensic psychiatrist influenced your theoretical perspective on psychopathology? Did your interest in forensic psychiatry predate your interest in psychoanalysis, or rather did your interest in psychoanalysis lead you to work as a forensic psychiatrist? What research areas or questions do you see as remaining outstanding or requiring further elucidation for the field of forensic psychiatry?

**AM:** In forensic psychiatry the question of responsibility, criminal responsibility, is central. Obviously, in different legal systems (and states) this is interpreted differently; in the Anglo-Saxon world it often takes the form of the insanity defense. Specifically, this is often a cognitive interpretation of the McNaghten-rule: a defect of reason, in the sense of not knowing the nature and quality of the act one is doing. This rule can be applied well to psychotic disorders, in which cases the insanity defense is sometimes accepted. In these cases the DSM-IV/V system can be used. There must be a causal link between the disorder, a mental state, and the offense (see the McNaghten-rule). However: in Europe and in the UK, the category of diminished responsibility is also applied (diminished responsibility). This is also used in some states of the US (to determine the criminal sentence). Often personality disorders are the issue. In these cases the transition from the DSM-IV/V cannot be made directly, as personality disorders do not describe a mental state at a precise moment; instead they describe a habit, a disposition. If anyone wants to decide on diminished responsibility, they would have to form an opinion on the mental state of the moment, to make a situational analysis, and to make a structural analysis of the person. The DSM-IV/V axis II does not offer a structural outline, therefore a DSM diagnosis must always be complemented by structural consideration (and a life history). In other words, forensic psychiatry has shown me the special importance of structural psychopathology (such as Lacan's). Psychoanalysis has thus strongly influenced my vision of forensic psychiatry. (NOTE: The therapeutic efforts are independent from the forensic evaluation: these could involve medication, behavioral therapy, and possibly psychodynamic psychotherapy.) My interest in psychoanalysis thus preceded that in forensic psychiatry. It came first. But forensic psychiatry has offered me the opportunity to bring hermeneutical psychiatry into practice. That is why forensic psychiatry appealed to me: it offered the possibility of providing a very nuanced diagnosis that does not get stuck on the DSM level. It is difficult to say what the future will bring in terms of research. Definitely it is important to indicate the constraints of the predictive value of the current risk-evaluations (HCR etc). They may be valuable at a group level, but not necessarily at the individual level. Conceptual work is still needed: including that related to criminal responsibility.

**CB:** You mentioned that through your work in forensic psychiatry, you developed a particular interest in personality disorders, which constitute types of subjectivity that, from a psychoanalytic perspective, are neither classically neurotic nor psychotic. It would seem that psychoanalysis has had more difficulty with establishing the coordinates of this type of subjectivity than psychiatry, which addresses the condition on the basis of a spectrum or continuum. What do you feel has aided your work, either theoretically or practically, in conceptualizing this category?

**AM:** I always have had an interest in personality disorders (see above). It is true that psychoanalysis offers little in this regard (exceptions: Kohut, Kernberg). Lacan offers nothing at all. In my book I am especially trying to conceptualize personality disorders from a Lacanian perspective (Lacan did not do this, and the Lacanians often do not either). I do so by limiting them to three, with perversion (now seen as a personality disorder) as the core, and the variations, the modulations thereof, in the borderline and narcissistic positions. Splitting, or disavowal, is the central concept.

**CB:** On a more pragmatic level, how would you describe the daily routine of your work as a forensic psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and academic? When do you do your work? Where do you do it?

**AM:** I do not work anymore, I am retired. I worked half-time as director of the forensic psychiatric clinic of the Ministry of Justice (responsible for reporting), half-time as a psychoanalyst and psychoanalytic psychotherapist, and was a professor for one day per week. The last ten years I have no longer worked as a psychoanalyst, but only as a psychoanalytic therapist, and I was a professor for two days a week.

**CB:** What have been some influential books for you?

**AM:** Books, that's a tough question. Influential: Lacan, *Ecrits*; Thomas Mann.

**CB:** You mentioned that you are writing a book comparing the neo-Kantian philosopher Ernest Cassirer with Lacan. Can you speak about why you were inspired to carry out this project? What do you see as the similarities between Cassirer and Lacan's thought? What do you think each author may be able to add to the other's perspective?

**AM:** Cassirer and Lacan have completely different backgrounds (Kant, Freud), but Cassirer shows that Kant's thought anticipates a theory of symbolization and Lacan shows that Freud's thinking leads to a theory of symbolization. First agreement: symbolization is not duplication. We represent being, the real, but in such a way that it creates a world. Being itself, the real, which Lacan also calls the "Jouissance" is closed shut. Cassirer says exactly that. Second agreement: symbolizations form a system, systems (like: language, justice). Cassirer speaks of symbolic forms (language, myths, justice). Lacan combines these symbolic forms to what he calls: symbolic order. However, there are three major differences. First point of difference. With Lacan this symbolic order comes from the outside, and forces its terminology, images, ways of interpretation and regime onto the subject from the outside. At first that subject is thereby alienated by the qualifications forced onto him from the outside (*je est un autre*). Only secondarily the subject may be able to relate to it: am I what they say I am or should be; but what do I want myself? This conflict is not presented by Cassirer. Second point of difference. Cassirer works from the concept of meaning (signification), so everything eventually can

be summarized in a certain sense. Lacan works from the concept of the signifier, which makes just such a synthesis impossible. Third point of difference. Lacan, especially the late Lacan, tends to substantialize (the Real). Here Cassirer is able to correct Lacan. What is the point of this? The comparison may help to better understand Lacan, bring him closer, but can also help to correct a certain one-sidedness of Lacan (especially of the late Lacan). It is useful to place Lacan in a broad context, from which he himself has been drawing. Then it shows that Lacan does not offer a closed system, but is open to, and may be connected with other traditions (as I have tried to show in *Psychiatry as a Human Science*). Also he can be connected to DSM IV/V, deepening it: structural diagnostics as an addition to a classifying diagnostics.

**CB:** Do you feel that the emergence of social media and the increasing technological mediation of communication have led to distinct types of psychopathology, or simply exacerbated previously known types of psychopathology?

**AM:** I believe that the development of social media gives rise to a worsening and increase in certain disorders (in the spectrum of the personality disorders), but not to new types of disorders (as has been suggested). The importance of the image and the virtual accessibility of everything and everyone, the decline of authority, do have consequences for the nature of modern subjectivity. That leads to a greater prevalence of narcissistic and borderline issues. The system does not specifically change. A structural approach constitutes an internal system that transcends time. A different time leads to a different prevalence, but not to a different system.

**CB:** What do you see as the future outlook for talk therapies in general and psychoanalysis in particular? Relatedly, what are your thoughts on psychotherapies such as the Open Dialogue form of psychotherapy originating from Finland, that attempts to eschew a dyadic clinical encounter in favor of a more guided group-oriented / social approach to crisis intervention and psychological well-being? What do you see as the benefits and drawbacks to this approach?

**AM:** I'm basically open to all forms of psychotherapy (certainly CBT). Psychoanalytic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis definitely have a limited scope (requires being open to the inner life, some reflection). The importance of a psychoanalytic perspective is always and first of all a careful examination: what is the relationship with the parents, guardians, what are the forces someone grew up in, what is his place in the whole, how does he place himself in life now (position of the subject)? For that kind of research, that type of treatment, a dynamic approach would be better I think. But I do not want to be dogmatic.

**CB:** What advice do you have for people interested in psychoanalysis? What would you say to skeptics?

**AM:** Psychoanalysis is much less strange and connects more with our own lives than we think. Culture is still permeated with a psychoanalytic sensibility (although nobody recognizes this as psychoanalytic anymore): the importance of psychological reality, of the relationship with significant others. It is a fact that nowadays in psychiatry and psychology this thought is not very strong (because they so badly want to be biological). But humankind is not only a biological being, but also a social being. And the core of the psychoanalytic vision is: how this biological, vital aspect compares to the social, cultural dimension (parents, siblings, society: the Other).



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