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The Polyvocal Psyche: A Dialogue with Dr. Nathan Adler

Daniel Benveniste

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The following "dialogue" is actually a collage of reflections derived from comments addressed to an assortment of others. Having edited these statements from some of Dr. Adler's unpublished papers, transcribed lectures, and tape-recorded interviews I reassembled them here, in a dialogue that never took place, with the intention of providing a synoptic view of the thinking of one of San Francisco's most influential psychoanalytic teachers.

Dr. Adler began his work in 1934 as a social worker in public welfare and later, in behalf of the Jewish Community, in the State Hospitals for the mentally ill and in the State Prisons. He was closely associated with Siegfried and Suzanne Bernfeld, beginning in 1938, and after Siegfried Bernfeld died in 1953 he continued his association with Suzanne Bernfeld. Siegfried Bernfeld (1892-1953) was one of San Francisco's earliest psychoanalysts and the only one to have studied closely with Sigmund Freud. Adler was an analysand, student and friend of both Siegfried and Suzanne Bernfeld. He was informally trained by the Bernfeld's within the classical tradition, which he still maintains. Adler earned his Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the University of California at Berkeley in 1954. He is the author of The Underground Stream: New Life Styles and the Antinomian Personality (Harper and Row, 1972) as well as a number of papers on psychoanalytic topics. He is currently a practicing analyst, a clinical consultant, a member of Section 1 of Division 39 of the American Psychological Association, Professor of Psychology at the California School of Professional Psychology in Alameda and Vice President of the Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis in Berkeley. Nineteen-ninety-four marks Dr. Adler's 50th year in practice as an analyst in San Francisco.

The dialogue to follow begins with a discussion of Adler's training with Bernfeld and the San Francisco psychoanalytic scene in the 1930s and '40s. From there it leads to a discussion of the Americanization of psychoanalysis, the history of the self, the importance of language in the construction of psychic realities, and the notion of a polyvocal psyche.

- Daniel Benveniste

Daniel Benveniste - Dr. Adler, what was the psychoanalytic scene like in San Francisco in the 1930s?

Nathan Adler - The only person doing analysis in San Francisco, in the early '30s, was a Doctor Thompson, a retired lieutenant commander in the Navy. There was no institute. Thompson was not a joiner or an organization man but he had been practicing in San Francisco for some time and had gathered a small group who carried on within his tradition. Bernfeld and Berliner were the first two émigré analysts to arrive. (Bernhard) Berliner, a physician arrived in 1936 and (Siegfried) Bernfeld in '37. Bernfeld immediately began workshops for social workers and that's how I met him. I was a social worker, then, involved in the social work and organized mental health communities.

Dr. Ernst Wolff, Chief of Pediatrics at Mt. Zion and a patient of Bernfeld's, facilitated Bernfeld's involvement with Mt. Zion. Ernst Wolff and a key group of social workers including Irma Weil and Barbara Mayer Kirk organized the Mental Hygiene Society of Northern California. My wife, Elizabeth Hall, was the executive secretary and I, because of my work in the state prisons was on the board and its corrections committee. We published a periodical Beacon: The Bulletin of the Mental Hygiene Society of Northern California and sponsored public lectures introducing and creating a platform for psychoanalysis. I was editor of the Beacon, saw myself as a publicist and promoter for analysis, developing a public among teachers, social workers and physicians. We organized symposia and workshops at Asilomar, sponsored public meetings, and promoted mental health education. I facilitated the careers of young analysts in training, publishing their papers, referring patients, and helping to build their practices.

The mental health movement was one popular base. The other was the organization of study groups. Psychoanalysis in San Francisco won its first support among college and university intellectuals, social workers, teachers, and physicians.

Anna Maenchen arrived in 1938 and Emanuel Windholz in 1939. I sent Windholz his first two patients in this country and then brought him in as a consultant to the Jewish Committee for Personal Service where he supervised my jail and prison work.

D.B. - What was the nature of your psychoanalytic training?

N.A. - My psychoanalytic training was informal, unofficial and unaccredited. I had the experience of my casework in the state hospitals and prisons of California, my reading, my supervision with Dr. Windholz and later Dr. Bernard Diamond and my earlier experience as a case worker in the state welfare and relief system. I was in a reading group with Bernfeld for a couple of years where I would present my prison cases. I would bring along Danny Levinson - now the mid-life crisis psychologist at Yale, who was then interning at San Quentin - and Douglass Rigg the Deputy Warden of Care and Treatment and we'd review literature with the Bernfeld's and talk about prison cases.

In 1944, after the local institute classified Bernfeld as an "Honorary Member" (since he had a Ph.D. rather than an M.D.) and denied membership to his wife, Bernfeld gathered some of his students together, began to refer patients to them and provided supervision.

Bernfeld considered organizing a new society, but administration was not his forte, illness intervened, and nothing came of it. Originally there were five or six people involved in that study group and reading circle. Agnes Ain (Cummings) and I were the two who began getting referrals. After Bernfeld died, our study continued with Mrs. Bernfeld. We exchanged referrals and saw each other frequently.

There also were the Mt. Zion Grand rounds under (Jasha) Kasanin, before (Norm) Reider arrived. Berliner and Bernfeld, the residents and the visiting social workers were also present and one could begin to see the process of the "Americanization" of psychoanalysis. I recall Bernfeld being critical of clinic visitors Edith Jacobson and Frieda Fromm-Reichman, and later critical differences arose between Reider and Berliner. These were the first intimations of theories about "self," "object relations" and "ego psychology" which were to become more elaborated in the following decade.

In the late 1930s a friend of mine commented that when Freud died, we would be surprised at the papers that would come out of the bottom of desk drawers and be published with all kinds of modifications of the psychoanalytic tradition - the so called "innovations" and "breakthroughs." One can say of psychoanalysis what Jefferson said of liberty, "Liberty has to be re-won in each Generation." And I'm convinced that psychoanalysis too has to be re-won in each generation. The lurch away from the unconscious recurs again and again.

The resistances to psychoanalysis recur. The same resistances have been around for years. Only the names and the labels change. Over and over again what we face in these changing names and labels is the swerve away from a critical psychology, which has only one commitment - to expose the emperor's new clothes and facilitate a radical confrontation with the established normative system. I believe that the marginality imposed, by the medical guild, on many non-medical practitioners, denied them access and fraternity and served to provoke new schools as these outsiders reached for other bases of legitimation.

D.B. - How do you situate Freud and what are you referring to when you speak of the "Americanization" of psychoanalysis?

N.A. - When Freud undertook his work, a task that has indelibly marked this century, he did so to disentangle the psychic from its mystification in the spiritual and the occult and to anchor it within a secular context. He was beholden to the school of Helmholtz and to its positivist reductionism, but he also acknowledged Brentano's sense of the intentional and Nietzsche's insistence upon will and actualization.

Trained as a neurologist, a physician concerned with the damming up of energy, seeking to elucidate its movement and anchorage, he was concurrently cognizant in the linguistic. He found equivalent the tropes of the metaphoric and metonymic and the mechanisms of condensation and displacement. Mechanism or trope - for Freud both were alternative figurations for examining the same ongoing process.

Situated between the Victorian and the Modern world, Freud presumed the primacy of the individual, yet remained fully aware of the linguistic context. He examined the corseted blue-serge uniformed actor who struggled with the consequences of alienation from both soma and community, was bound to a future time perspective, and, renouncing immediacy, was haunted by unthinkable and unsayable desires.

Freud's construct of the sexual is an elegant metaphor, which integrates the individual and the social, the private and the public, the proprium and the socius, desire and absence, the personal and the political. It delineates the way in which subjectivity is constituted and how commerce with the other is maintained. The Lacanian subject is in the interstices.

Freud chided the proponents of the mythology of an autonomous self-actualizing person and wrote in a letter to Jung, "Adler's ego behaves, as the ego always behaves, like a clown in the circus who keeps grimacing to assure the audience that he planned everything that is going on." (March 3, 1911 - p.404 Freud/Jung Letters).

He rejected such fictions of secondary process and on the way to Clark University, remarked to Jung, "We are bringing the plague to America." Little did he realize that the Americans would shortly ship it back in the form of an Americanized ego psychology, absorbing an Emersonian ethos, which veered away from the unconscious and sought to assimilate psychoanalysis to a general psychology in a rationalized world of identity crises, mid-life crises, and technologies for mirroring and sustaining a hypostasized self.

The repressed returns. In all revolutions the critics and the dreamers are overtaken by the managers and the bureaucrats. What is true for revolutions and their epigoni is also true for psychological theorists. Freud's critical and subversive formulae have been co-opted in the service of adaptation and adjustment. The turbulence of the unconscious is hemmed in by theories of object relations that shift from the intrapsychic parameters to interpersonal and environmental referents.

Americans celebrate "growth" and infinite improvability. When psychoanalysis came to America it was eagerly embraced as a new technology of adjustment and development able to overcome deficit and resolve conflict. Stripped of its European ethos, with its ironic and tragic perspectives, psychoanalysis, in the United States reoriented to developmental and deficit models offering restitution and support for corrective emotional experiences. A new construct "self," linked to the American ideology of individualism and actualization became salient in the place of the structural formulae of European psychoanalysis.

When Freud, fixed always on the primacy of the unconscious, invoked object relations, his emphasis was on the object as representation. The contemporary developmental and object relations proponents exclude or attenuate the unconscious and the irrational. In speaking of object relations their emphasis is on "relations" in social interaction, rather than on "object" and how it becomes constituted and represented. Their focus, it seems to me, is on the interpersonal, the ecological, the social, rather than on the intrapsychic conflictual issues.

The "Oedipus complex" which conceptualizes intrapsychically the issue of socialization and the other, is, we are told, passé and obsolete, or so a colleague has informed me. Once again there is the attempt to repudiate, or to attenuate the theoretical implications that Freud fiercely defended when he excluded from his society those who sought to dilute his critical and deconstructive theory and to make psychoanalysis an instrument of reconciliation and accommodation.

The systems of Jung, Adler, Rank, Klein, Fromm, Horney, Sullivan, Erikson, Kohut and contemporary trends in the feminist psychologies have all formulated varying positions on object relations, on the interaction between the subject and the world into which the person is born. The paradigms developed have been a function of the normative symbolic systems accepted as given and of contextual frameworks anchored in organismic, biological, and neurological assumptions. These paradigms presume the primacy of the individual and invoke reductionist and mechanical metaphors or, on the other hand, presume the dominating influence of the social and ecological imposed on the individual by language, history, and symbolic systems. Each of these formulations constructs its own grounding of ego and self. Objects and object relations are already representations tied into and deriving from particular communities. What is relevant is not the "object" but how it has been constituted.

The epigoni seek to anchor psychology in either interiority and its developmental unfolding of an immanent universal ontic process or to anchor it as response to environmental stimuli and treatments of deficit and restitution. These models conceive of a univocal unilinear development and fail to examine or appreciate the reciprocal and complementary inter-relations within a pluralistic and polycentered field.

D.B. - You take a rather critical stance. Where you stand with regard to the newer breakthroughs in psychoanalytic thinking and the emergence of the new schools and Institutes?

N.A. - New models, texts and schools represent internally divided communities, which the hegemonic centers treat as if they were invisible and nonexistent. These schools now demand recognition and too often they do so by proffering not discourse and dialogue but an alternative political correctness as constricting and falsifying as the one they reject.

To what do these differentiations speak? and Why at this time? What can we discern examining the contexts of psychoanalysts from 1890-1920 and contrasting them with the current fractionization and segmentation - the proliferation of schools, the challenges of the self psychologists and the object relations school who maintain that they transcended the obsolete, parochial views of the past?

Kohut posits a centered self, presumes its stability, persistence and reliability. Lacan discriminates between this hypostatic ego and the subject, sees ego as function, "egoing" in a world structured by language and symbols which are constituted and established prior to the subject, and are imposed like a mold into which the subject is poured.

The ego in its intending and synthesizing function is also a way of not seeing. It remains immersed in its unconscious denials, disavowals and negations. It is the sum of the biases, which any perspective imposes. For the ego psychologists, resistance is a measure of ego strength and reality testing. Lacan focuses on the scotomization - on the ego as an historical contingency. Lacan sees not only the synthesizing ego, he also sees the subject, as the reciprocal of desire, filtered through the Imaginary, confronting always its alienation. The Lacanian subject is not centered and indivisible. It is momentary and dispersed.

In this sense the ego is layered like an onion, accretions of the other, crystallizations of identifications, which Peer Gynt sought to peel away to come upon the essence of self. And after the last layer of the onion? The black hole of naught. What is present for the subject is absence, as the subject wanders through the corridors of memory with the ache for and of the other, with the confabulations of self contrived and proudly displayed, trundling the ego through the echo chambers of longing and desire.

D.B. - I can see what you mean when you describe "the sexual" as an elegant metaphor, when you recast defense mechanisms as tropes or figures of speech, and increasingly situate analysis in language. But I'm confused by your critique of the self and this notion of a subjectivity that isn't centered, is defined by its relation to its absent other, and so on. What are you getting at?

N.A. - Embedded in our culture, as we are, most of us presume as self-evident such notions as the "individual", the "ego," the "self;" believe that these words correspond to an essence of human existence; that these constructs are universally valid, rather than historically shaped and legitimated. We need to be reminded that when Luther affirmed, "Here I stand, I can do no other", when Descartes justified, "I think, therefore I am." when the 19th century poet declaimed "I am master of my fate and captain of my soul." they were inventing and anchoring those personas and the ideology which naive psychologists today view too uncritically and fail to see in context.

These constructs "the ego," "the self," "the individual," which we take for granted were not always manifest. The Oxford English dictionary cites nearly 30 new compounds with "self" originating between 1580-1610. Hamlet's soliloquy "to be or not to be" ruminates through 12 lines composed entirely of infinitives without once invoking the word "I." (Steven Bygrave, 1986, Coleridge and the Self: Romantic Egoism, St. Martin's Press, p.9) Shakespeare stands at the Renaissance crossroad between an older cosmology and a new order. Instead of the medieval imitation of Christ, the human begins to be constituted as a singular, secular subjectivity. Continuing into the 1700s and the early 1800s we find the first usages of the word "ego," celebrations and recriminations of such behaviors and states, and the elaboration of a new lexicon of introspection enriching the English language (as in Shakespeare's time) with words such as "identity," "characterization," "conscious," "idiosyncrasy," and "individuality."

The self began to crystalize in the Augustinian world, with the first wandering monks, and their separation from the community. With their loss of community and their renunciation of this world for another world, the monasteries became breeding houses for

the invention of interiority. That tendency became most insistent in the Renaissance. The self is a schema, with its formulation of interiority, congealed in isolation, in absence, in stimulus deprivation and hunger, cut from the other and from the reciprocal and the relational. The self becomes salient in dismemberment and the loss of membership. Fundamentally, this is what is meant by castration anxiety.

It is in the 17th century that the self as a formulation begins to become central, and hyphenated words like "self-confidence" or "self-respect" enter the English language. At that time a new mode of analysis begins also in mathematics, with Leibniz's "monads," that postulates the individual as the substantial entity from which other categories are derived, and construes the individual as having an initial and primary existence. For Locke, legal and civil rights are founded as "natural laws" and issues of consent and of contract become relevant as discrete individuals engage in commercial relations. From the Renaissance and the varying developments since then (in the Reformation and with the Romantics) we can trace the varying visages, from the person as the imitation of Christ (which is what the self was in the Medieval world) through shifting typologies and roles, seen as monads, unique, singular, essential entities or as mathematical and quantitative functions, as agentic masters or as rootless, alienated anomic flotsam.

In the process we also see the ways in which self becomes equated with privacy and with secrecy and with concealment; the ways in which a shameful desire needs to be sheltered from the gaze of the community. As one 17th century preacher put it, "The murderer and the adulterer are alike, desirous of privacy." In the 18th century, Diderot saw the proliferation of furniture with secret compartments as a sign of the age's moral deterioration. For Rousseau, a society with no privacy would be a society with no vice. The issue is not one of valorizing and maintaining the fiction of the cohesive, bounded, monadic self but rather of demonstrating that it is a fiction; emphasizing the ways in which it is a part of the politics and expression of a particular time, an indoctrination that we need to examine. Subjectivity is neither mode nor monad; it is constructed in the tensions of complementarity and in the reflection of its negation. It is not an entity but a statement of a relationship.

D.B. - This retrospective vision of the self sounds "modernist." How do Modernity and Postmodernity fit into all of this?

N.A. - The Modern and the Postmodern paradigms presume two distinct orders, invoke different constructs and variables so that much of the difficulty in understanding Lacan comes from the failure to recognize that the underlying assumptions have shifted and that Lacan speaks in an entirely different register and key.

The Modern viewed the person as a discrete entity. When the unconscious was granted validity, its locus was internalized, in an individually bound and spatial metaphor. In the Postmodern view the unconscious is structured like and resides within language, in the Symbolic systems, part of the social matrix into which we are born and it contains the disavowed reciprocals of common sense.

The Modern presumes the autonomous, synthesizing intending ego with its conflict-free nucleus. Picaresque Tom Jones, at the beginning of the Modern world displaced the imitation of Christ. He continued to change costumes in the novels of Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Turgeneff and Dostoyevsky and yet his centeredness, his internal armature appeared consistently to be present. It is contemporary literature after Joyce that confronts us with the diffused and decentered persona. The Postmodern understands the subject not as substance but as function, an epistemologic moment whose representation is constituted retrospectively, as a memorial event. Fugue states, depersonalization and derealization are only the extreme conditions of a process most of us manage, most of the time, to evade and deny. It is only when the social itself becomes turbulent, and the contextual supports for our fictions are disrupted that we confront the actual decenteredness of the self, the fission between I and the me which is presented to the subject by a reflecting culture. In the Postmodern, the self is understood as the adverbial gerund that seeks to pass as a noun. (We are indebted to Roy Schafer for alerting us to these Mythic nouns, which serve as hiding places. It is also noteworthy that before Lacan, G.H. Mead, Cooley and C.S. Pierce already noted the functions of the Mirror stage in making the self.)

The Modern modality, physicalistic and positive, presumes a knowable reality. Crossroad ages seem always, as in the time of Abelard, to renew again a nominalist vision and to say that the veridical reality is unknowable. The nominalist and the postmodern say that language does not mirror or represent reality. Names and words are tokens, which can be variable, shifting in meaning, arbitrary in value and contextual. The Postmodern focuses not on substance and structure but on process and interaction, on fields and systems in their indeterminacy. The Modern presumes correspondence for its representations. The Postmodern attends to the dialogic, the linguistic, and the variable reading of texts. It defines the Imaginary register as idiosyncratic and subjective, embedded in ideology and in information processing.

The Modern presumes the primacy of the person, the sacred as limit setting and the world as segmented. The Postmodern attends to the event, to the word, to desacralization and to deconstruction. The modern presumes unity, centeredness, and identity. It re-instates God as holism. The Postmodern is aware of fragmentation and the decenteredness at the heart of an illusory ego.

The Postmodern ethos, after Hitler and Stalin, beyond the Enlightenment and the dream of reason formulates the crisis in representations and legitimations which crossroad cultures confront. At such times, people become aware of the arbitrariness of the sign, see that meanings are not fixed or shared and that rather than engaged in a commerce with the veridical, they traffic with tokens. Anamneses are no longer assumed to be authentic life histories and are recognized instead as apologies, narratives of consolation and texts of justification. In such times one also hears of technical interventions of "mirroring" to maintain or to re-establish a homeostatic steady state.

D.B. - What do you think are the forces driving us into this Postmodern era?

N.A. - As this century winds down from its euphoric dreams of modernity, after two world wars and genocide, as we confront and review our recurrent hubris, the Postmodern perspective challenges the presumptions and values that we formerly accepted as self-evident and in the nature of things. The Renaissance shift to the secular, the redistribution of power articulated in the Protestant Reformation, the changing power relations between persons in their work and their community, the segmentation of roles, the shift from a shame culture to a guilt culture -- all these were preconditions for the precipitation of a sense of interiority and of an internal locus of control. These historic circumstances re-enforced the mythology and the fiction of a singular, discrete self, masked the process of subjectivity as a relational process and led the modern construal of a bounded self to the derangements of "alienation" and to the narcissistic self for whom contemporary self psychologists and object relations theorists provide first aid stations.

D.B. - What is this linkage you suggest between Postmodernity and the role of language in the location of subjectivity? and What role does Lacan play in all of this?

N.A. - Lacan plays a deconstructive and critical role. He does represent a reaffirmation and a return to Freud. He was critical of the enthusiasms of those émigrés who celebrated their exposure to the American dream with an innovative "ego psychology" and a "self-psychology" that confuses armor and intentionality. Rejecting the consoling fictions of a centered self, Lacan, insisted on the primacy of the unconscious. After the derangement of two world wars, an occupied France, after revolutions and genocide, he was persuaded of the constructionist grounding of reality and the fluctuating paradigms that constitute the Real. Seeing the human suspended always in the habitat of language he was able to translate the Newtonian "mechanisms of defense" demonstrating their equivalence in tropes. He shifted from the somatic to the semiotic, from the biological to the linguistic. As a consequence of this paradigm shift and alternative metaphors, new parameters become relevant and significant.

Rather than ego and self as entities, subjectivity and its contextual embeddedness becomes central. And behind construed objects and their relations as figure, we become aware of lack, absence and desire as ground. The subject, no longer a monad, is constituted in shifting relationships from the semantic hermeneutic concern with the signified and the effort to extricate its meaning to the semiotic relevance of the signifier and to its interpretation.

Lacan insists upon the alpha and omega of Desire, contrary to the illusion of presence, the beckoning and shimmering mirage, the echo in the box canyon, the unutterable name that Moses stuttered so that he would not disclose the true name, zero, and the ultimate home, void, the secret that there is no secret, and the tantalizing mockeries of meaning, the vortex of absence into which one emerges - the first black hole, and then, the last.

In the Americanization of Psychoanalysis and in the empiricist ethos of the British, the focus fell on that which makes and sustains the armor of the ego and reifies the self and that which constitutes the holding environment and the corrective emotional experience. Opposed to this, Freud, and after him, Lacan, attend to what the armor defends against, to the underbelly that has been disavowed and denied, to the polyphonic others whose

desires clamor for gratification and fulfillment. That was why Freud maintained that analysis must proceed in a climate of non-gratification, of unanswered and unrequited desire and surrender.

This is what the epigoni continually repudiate in rejecting Freud's formulations on the death instinct, rather than acknowledging the alpha and omega of castration. They still seek what Lacan has called "jouissance." They presume an ultimate gratification that will salve and heal the primary separation and achieve a holistic Utopia. Thus they turn again and again to soft and hard pornographic strategies to anchor their diffused identity.

Crucial in approaching Lacan is to see that he inverts the primacy from the individual to the social. In examining psychoanalytic revisionist attempts to cope with the social what I mean by, "the return of the repressed" becomes manifest. Adler for example, in dealing with power relations was certainly concerned with the social and tried to re-instate the social. Sullivan talking about the social construed a mechanical, binary interaction. Erikson is also locked into a binary system in which a dialogue between the individual and the social is formulated and no attempt is made to account for how the social is constituted.

What one gets with Lacan, that I think is a fundamental and constructive advance is his wrestling match with these ghosts of Adler, Sullivan and the others. Lacan conceptualizes the social moving away from the solitude of the monadic and from the binary and anchors the social in the cultural and the linguistic. He finds a way to account psychologically for the interaction between the individual and the communal in a systemic, field oriented way. That is Lacan's achievement, overcoming earlier binary and mechanistic formulations.

It is a positive element that Lacan, as opposed to object relations theorists, is able, through Heidegger, to formulate the sense of the self as a negative term. Sartre, following Heidegger makes a distinction between a thing for itself and the thing in itself. The thing in itself is object, thing. The thing for itself knows itself by its lack, by its want, by its sense of absence and by its desire. The self becomes crystalized, always, as a negation and as a minus sign. Does this begin to answer the question asked regarding Winnicott and the true self and the false self, which in a positivistic mode looks for the authenticity of the Real? In contrast to positivistic presumptions the Real remains that which is unknowable and the self becomes, in a truly dialectic sense, the negation of the negation. The self is a function of negation. Sartre's "the thing for itself" is carried further by Lacan such that it becomes this self defined by negation, defined by absence, defined by lack.

The Lacanian system makes us aware of the co-optation in object relationships. Here is the crucial word. Every time an American speaks of object relations we have to be able to talk about "abject relations." In other words, we are known not merely by that which we incorporate and internalize, we are also known by that which we repudiate, reject and disgorge. We are a function of our disgorgements as much as our internalizations. Opposed to mirroring and holding is the issue of disengagement. For example, the school of "tender loving care" therapists say "my job is to help you maintain your identity." Erikson formulates "identity crises." Levinson denotes "crisis in life stages." These

reifications demand that time stop and persist. They are invoked as if they were veridical rather than the secondary consequences of and products of our culture. These clinicians apply Band-Aids upon their reifications instead of seeing that one of the fundamental functions of therapy is to disengage from the hypostasized so that one can find the degrees of freedom in process, live in the streaming whitewater instead of grappling for the illusion that one is moored in the safe harbor of each moment's retrospect.

Language discriminates and assimilates, differentiates and gathers, names and negates, links and cuts. Its figurations shape perceptions and perceiver. But in extricating the subject from the other does one end in that singularity that the bourgeois order insists on? Does one become the Nietzschean super man, or can one find disengagement without separation, retain membership, affiliation and obligation while maintaining autonomy?

Language as medium presumes, intends, and seeks to persuade the other. Words and the objects to which they point are saturated with otherness. They are intersubjective and cannot be a neutral medium. One assumes such a neutrality and universal interchange only when banalization of the coin of the realm masks the hegemonic and the conventions of the official legitimated significations.

The Kohutian system, like most object relations theories, conceptualizes the individual as monad. It presume boundaries already present as they emerge from the amniotic sea. The Lacanian system does not acknowledge such monads, presuming instead a constant interaction within a field. It attends to the function of language and institutions as habitat, the Symbolic system in which one lives. The Kohutian system sets up polarities of ambition and idealization and fails to recognize that ambition and idealization are secondary constructs, dependent on who one becomes to survive in relation to the other or examining how the other has brainwashed one into appropriate forms of ambition and idealization. The Lacanian speaks of the desire of the other and the way in which one acts out that desire.

Such a formulation is not new. Back in the Sullivanian days Adelaide Johnson remarked that delinquents acted out their parents unconscious. Lacanians take this position of Johnson a step further; not only do delinquents act out the parents unconscious, all of us always act out the desire of the other. Freedom is the capacity to disengage from such acting out of the parental unconscious and to develop one's own subjectivity. In the Kohutian system, the splitting involves the splitting of the good from the bad. In the Lacanian system splitting involves the splitting of the self from the other.

Is Kohut the psychoanalyst and chaplain of the narcissistic culture that Christopher Lasch talks about? Is the celebration and salience of contemporary object relations theory to be accounted for as a consequence of a narcissistic consumers' culture?

It is the task of psychoanalysis as a critical psychology to overcome the banality of secondary process, and to expose the unconscious which has been denied, disavowed, negated, isolated, repressed, and whose traces have to be decoded in manifest speech. Such a psychology must be sensitive to the heteroglossic and the polyphonic that, prior to

Bakhtin, the canon excluded, the decenteredness and plurality of the segmented self, as well as the pluralistic otherness of the other.

Psychoanalysis is an historical science, rather than a natural science, a discipline preoccupied with the study of subjectivity in its vicissitudes and relationships whose changing parameters are a function of their contexts, a scholarship that instead of developing a binary model, counterposing subject and object, person and society, and the object relations commerce between them, examines that dialectical action in a field process. It is as Bernfeld said, a *Spurenwissenschaft* - "a science of traces" - which seeks to assess shifting texts and their multiple readings and hegemonies.

Psychoanalysis is a theory of the subject, a technique and a discourse examining what is said, who the multiple voices are through which we speak, how what we say is heard, how it can be heard, and who the multiple others are to whom we speak. It cannot establish absolutes or universals and must be embedded in socio-cultural and historic dimensions and in the modulations of language rather than in single somatic anchorages.

The psychoanalytic technique, of which I speak, is not a dyadic talking cure with the analyst as a persona, but the choral working through of a heteroglossic and polyphonic process. Using the insights derived from the transference, the therapist acts more referee than player, while the analysand engages and confronts his others, unpacking the signifier and tracing how it shifts from one signifying chain to another.

Psychoanalysis promises neither resolutions, nor engineering for adaptation. The limits of the psychoanalytic engagement depend upon the narcissism in both analysand and analyst, the relinquishment of desire, the capacity to confront castration and to acknowledge the ultimate core of the unknowable, the distortions of desire and the capacity to confront absence without consolation.

Only those who do not cease to interrogate their desire, and who can concede that knowledge of the unconscious has no closure and that it cannot be acquired once for all time, are prepared to meet the psychoanalytic challenge and the critical nature of it's psychology. Such a psychology researches the grounds of coherence rather than the technologies of control. It asks how objects are constituted, and how, in maintaining coherence, transference serves the recursive and maintains constancy. Such a critical psychology, in its interventions and confrontations, disrupts earlier fictions and mythologies. It does not presume a therapist as agent and activist, rather it implies an alternative mirroring and a transparent tain in which fictions and illusions are overcome.

D.B. - You speak polemically of Ego Psychology, Object Relations theory and Self Psychology. I disagree with some of your characterizations but I also see your point. There's always more than a grain of truth to such characterizations, particularly when the theory falls into the hands of the disciples. But what about Lacan? You take a critical view of all these other theorists and seem to elevate Lacan to some rather extraordinary heights. Why are you not critical of Lacan?

N.A. - But I am! Lacan's achievement was to overcome the earlier binary and mechanistic formulations and account for the interaction between the individual and the communal in a field oriented way. But one has also to consider the return of the repressed in Lacan too and to ask, What are we to make of the fact that Lacan is at home with Heidegger? What are the consequences of a Heideggerian influence on Lacan? I venture to suggest that one of the ways of seeing the return of the repressed in Lacan is to begin by recognizing the difference between Freud the secular Jew and Lacan the ex-seminarian Catholic. It is not an ad hominem to question whether what one finds in Lacan are the religious concerns that preoccupied Jung. Can we say that as Kohut is the return of Adler, Lacan echoes Jung? Jung was involved with a lost, absconded god with whom he sought to make connection. Lacan's Other (not the petit a of the Imaginary world but the Symbolic A) takes on the form of the generalized Other. This interest in generalized Other, in the sense of desire, the sense of absence, seems to me to represent an equivalent hankering after god. (After all, it is not the alternative either-or of either absence or presence. These terms make sense only in their dialectic and reciprocal complementarity.) To say "Fort" is also to say "Da." Lacan's Heideggerian and Catholic seminary influences with their god seeking texts and sub-texts, resonate with his notion of the desire of and for the Other.

As a consequence of Lacan's conceptualization of the primacy of desire as opposed to the primacy of the Oedipal complex, Lacan distances himself from precisely that which is critical and subversive in psychoanalysis. To focus on the Oedipal complex is to focus on the relationship between individual and the community and the need to overcome and struggle against this process of acculturation and socialization, which the Oedipal metaphor implies. In assimilating Heidegger and his presumptions of lack and want and desire, one slips back into universalism without history, longing, alienation, the asocial human condition of want as Heidegger talks of it. Such a view removes from want the onus of the critical and the challenge that is an essential part of psychoanalytic thinking. Does this focus on desire rather than on the Oedipus complex represent a new kind of split from the other and in this split is Lacan speaking out of his Catholic ex-seminarian self?

Elizabeth Roudinesco (Jacques Lacan & Co., 1990, University of Chicago Press) remarks on Lacan's earliest relations and mentoring by Edouard Pichon one of the twelve founding members of the first French psychoanalytic society and its president from 1935-37. Pichon, whom one cannot accuse of liberation theology was also royalist, a chauvinist and probably an anti-Semite! Lacan's mother was a mystic, his brother a Benedictine monk, and he had been a seminarian. It is interesting to note that Catholic priests in France found Lacanian analysis congenial just as their counterparts in this country opt for Jungian analysis. Lacan's appointment as a member of the Société Psychoanalytique de Paris in 1938 was sponsored by Pichon. While his contact with Pichon and seminarian background were an influence that seemed to be articulated at times, Lacan was also shaped by the Surrealist literary movement, which was antichurch and construed the unconscious in terms of language. Lacan's hankering after the other can be contrasted to the perspective of the cantor in the Hassidic short story, by Peretz, who refuses to lead services on Yom Kippur in protest against God's injustice and promises to continue his strike until his demands are met. Freud knew that Hassidic world, that world where one

said, "I have a complaint against God and I'm taking this up for judgement and demanding a settlement." In the Lacanian system, there is no such argument. Instead there appears to be the concern about God's absence and the need to become reconciled to that fate. For Lacan the other is like Jung's collective unconscious, a communitarian element. The social in Jung seems to be more saturated with the possibility of deistic elements. Lacan, in his sense of the Other approaches the same kind of totalization of the Other. He lapses from what he begins with in a positive sense, that is, "deconstruction" and the sense that behind all deconstruction there is always another deconstruction. Instead of noting the infinite variability of deconstruction in the Derridian sense, Lacan's other is totally Other and doesn't seem to be engaged in conflict or contradiction. Lacan's focus on desire, rather than on repression and the return of the repressed, neglects the dialectic of negation and the primacy of contradiction. He approaches Jung's binary nondialectic system where negation is assimilated into the duality of presence and absence.

Does Lacan represent solely the return to Freud or does one find also in Lacan a return of the repressed, the revival of Jung in contemporary clothes? What are the implications of these systems in terms of the dialectics of accommodation in changing worlds?

Lacan helped us move from the somatic, the organismic and individualist reduction to the semiotic, to sustain psychoanalysis and the unconscious in a new paradigm without dragging along the Cartesian and Positivist ballast. But did he carry additional baggage with him that needs to be examined? Sometimes Lacan returned us to Freud and sometimes he sought to transcend Freud and when he did that, he lost the critical discursive components, so that this French Freud becomes nihilistic and, in his own way, may be as accommodating as the American ego psychologists?

D.B. - With all this deconstruction of the self going on, I'm getting a little dizzy. So, help me out. What's the bottom line? or is there no bottom line? If the self isn't real, what is this thing that I think of as my self?

N.A. - In the post-modern era when we can orbit in weightless space beyond the valences of ideological gravity, the self has finally to be recognized not as substance but as one of the central fictions of contemporary ideology. To call it a fiction is not to be pejorative. Jeremy Bentham in 1776 examined the constructs we invoke in physics and in mathematics as fictions, constructions in terms of which we arrive at meaning. The self as a fiction seeks to deny contingency. It postulates an interior anchorage, grapples with lack in a secular world and with the absence of God, The self is the ultimate attenuated form of the constancy hypothesis; it becomes a prosthesis for this constancy hypothesis to achieve maintenance and orientation of the person in the world.

With so much transience and change, with the secular decentering and the persistent need to deny and evade mortality, with the craving to re-establish a lasting order, the severed umbilicus itches to be linked again and that leads to the hypermotility of polymorphic and pornographic games or the ritualism of constriction and perseverance.

The manipulation of the boundaries of the body, the shifting borders of body/group arrangements, the variations in fashion and clothing, in the customs of hair and perfume, in libertine and puritanic modalities, or in the current epidemic of tribalism and fundamentalism we witness such modulations in an orienting and interacting anchoring of identity. As Mary Douglass remarked, attitudes toward the orifices of the body become metaphors of the relation between the individual and the community.

The centrifugal forces of state and corporate existence find their complementarity in the Bacchanalian and Dionysian rites of instant community. Presence, no longer outside, moves to a reified interiority, to the phallic Greenwich Meridian that has taken the place of the severed umbilicus of relationship and community.

Heinz Kohut and Daniel Stern look to the spume of self not as a transitional object, but as a central nuclear being; confusing what is physically discrete with what is psychologically complex, interactional and polyvalent. They avow ascriptions of autonomy and alterity related to intentions and framed in momentary affiliations and memberships or their derangement. Jerome Bruner, in his recent Acts of Meaning writes, "Selves are not isolated nuclei of consciousness locked in the head but are distributed interpersonally. Nor do selves arise rootlessly in response to the present, they take meaning as well from the historical circumstances that gave shape to the culture of which they are an expression." Selves, in short, are not discrete, and singular. They are interactional. They are not univocal, but polyphonic and choral and they are embedded in alterity. The self is a specter and a reflection of the other.

The self is a choir of voices. Language is a polyphonic structure and when we listen to a patient we need to recognize the patient not as singular, univocal and monad (the fiction and mythology of the last 400 years) but as a choir of voices – as polyvocal. The therapist and the patient need to discriminate whose voice is speaking, when the patient achieves subjectivity and when he is a puppet, spoken by the other.

The self is a colony of selves. That need not imply the old baggage of parapsychology or spirituality, mediums and the occult. It requires only that we identify the Cartesian and Kantian roots of interiority and the a priori transcendental ego. As constructionists, we don't talk of "the mind" but rather of "minding" in particular times and contexts. Rather than looking to an intrinsic mind, the constructionist looks to the social and historical determinants of consciousness and the multiple sources of identification that congeal into identity.

There is a continuum from the hypertrophied centeredness, on the one hand, and the fractured splitting of the multiple personalities, that preoccupied Pierre Janet and is being touted again by the current multiple personality faddists. Constricted, tight self boundaries are a function of the intolerance of maintaining incompatible and ambivalent desires and attitudes concurrently. The more centered the self, the greater the narcissism and the more active the denials and projections. Somewhere, in between, there is a "normal" range of decenteredness with its tolerance of ambiguity and polycentered orientation that do not threaten diffusion. To say that the self is choral does not imply multiple personalities and split characters who disassociate the various masks of being.

All of us as decentered selves, in various times and places, deal with this interactional colony, this twenty mule team of selves, which we try to drive. And who is the driver and who is the mule can and does vary. We tell our story in many voices and constantly rewrite our autobiographies.

We narrate fictions that become ways of sustaining and orienting us to particular habitats and creating a mythology of the person. The self as narrative is retrospective construction with varying saliences in shifting contexts. We say "self" instead of noticing the punctate and the interactional and the relational. The constancy hypothesis is a fiction of duration and reliability. We mistake the process of scrutiny and reflection and intending and name it as agent. We make a noun - "self" - of what should be a gerund, a process, and we become prisoners of the nouns we make.

D.B. - But what about our intrinsic unity, our wholeness? I am me and you are you. Isn't that obvious?

N.A. - As obvious as our brainwashed condition allows. No person can be singular anymore than ants and bees are singular. We survive only in a communal suspension. But where for the bees such linkage is reflexive and automatic, for us that automaticity is replaced by language which binds us as inexorably to orders of perception and meaning and, for the last 400 years, to our maintenance of the illusory fictions of self and singularity. First and last we become and we remain the feedback of the other. The unique, the specific, the singular, the indivisible, is what we mean by individual. Can we fit that into the typical, the stereotypic, the brainwashed, the socialized, forever caught in a process of recursivity shuttling between point and other? Subjectivity requires a platform to stand on and names and words to make the figurations it plucks out of the ground and surf. Subjectivity becomes by way of negation, by the infant's no saying and by the discrimination of the "nots" from the confirmations of signification and shared participation in historically specific institutional memberships.

Reification got us the hypostatization of id, ego, and superego. What Lacan achieved in getting back to speech and its functions and to Freud's anchorage in the linguistic was to shift the orienting perspective to the role of the Imaginary and the Symbolic and the Real. This shift in perspective that these new parameters achieve just such a topological warp, like a Mobius strip, that alters fundamentally how we are to view and understand the ego. Rather than the archeologic stratification, the shift to the new registers anchored in speech makes it possible to expose and examine the process of interaction between the person interacting with the other and the intrapersonal and interpersonal recursive action as well. The Imaginary order involves the private fantasies and desires as well as mirroring. The Symbolic order is a product of the shared public meaning and the established representations. The Real order is not knowable except by the network of language, which shapes what we think we can grasp and know. Mostly the Real is manifest as the obstacles with which we collide - the barrier which limits our aspirations and desires.

The Symbolic order channelizes and brackets polyvocality. The signifier imposes itself on the subject. The Symbolic order makes shared meaning and imposes a stereotypic

uniformity on the subject's voice. Speech orders the Symbolic. The idiosyncratic use of speech reflects the Imaginary. Speech becomes the net we drag through the ocean of the Real and determines the catch we retrieve. How the subject is construed and constituted is a function of the signifier and the history of the individual's induction into speech.

Speech is always a function of feedback. And the feedback is always a function of what messages you're sending to me. All speech is dialogical, not only in the way I address you but which puppet master is pulling me now as I speak. Is it Mama or Daddy or the ego ideal or superego or one of the other introjects I contain.

All of these elements speak one at different times and as they speak we assume a singular unified voice, but it's a fallacy. That singular unified voice is more like a chameleon who depends on the cushion he lands on to determine his color and his voice.

D.B. – Well, this is interesting theory but what of the clinical implications?

N.A. - As a teacher of psychotherapy, I too often hear students say, "My task is to validate their feelings." or "I need to establish a holding environment." "I wish to provide a corrective emotional experience." These are all these emergency wayside stations for the embattled reflective self?

Rather than promoting a "supportive" dialogue, the analytic process must inevitably lead to a frustration that undoes rapport and to the establishment of the transference neurosis and its demands. The patient's desires are frustrated. He begins to see in the transference that his dialogue is not with the therapist but with that cohort of others internal as representations and identifications, his desires and the desires of the other, while the therapist, like the referee at the net, calls the play and the scores. One does not support the ego so it can cope with the unconscious. It is not the analyst's task to reinstate the adjusted subject.

If a patient is speaking and I ask, "Who's talking here?" The patient might say, "This is my grandiose self, this is my ego ideal, or this is my father's voice. As the dialogue shifts, as the value shifts, as the comments shift, he's taking out other introjects. One moment he's talking as the ego ideal, the next he talks with his mother's admonitions or his mother's reassurance. These voices play different games. Each game he plays is a shift in introjects as if the introjects are so many megaphones that he talks through. You know, "personality" in its etymological meaning refers to the persona, the mask on the Greek stage. We speak our voices through our persona. Instead of seeing the persona as a singular role, one needs to see the actor with a multiplicity of roles, and megaphones. But even then, he isn't speaking, he is being spoken.

This is the Lacanian notion that you're being spoken by the other. Who is the other who speaks you? And which identification do you assume at which moment? Which voices possess you to the exclusion of other voices? These are the clinical questions to ask.

I suppose, ultimately, what one can say without reifying a self is that one of the tasks of therapy is to bring the person to their own appropriate subjectivity instead of responding or

enacting the desire of the other. Nobody talks without their speech being shaped by the addressee.

I don't merely send you a message. The process of speaking is not an objectified expression. It's a dialogical dance. It's a tango. Speech is always a tango. It is always addressed to the other and shaped by the other.

If you attend to your countertransference and dismiss the assumption that speech is univocal, you can sit back and relax and say, "Okay I've got a choir in the room. Which voices am I getting out of this choir." And then in the most detached way you begin to identify a cluster of voices in the person and therapy moves forward and the patient transcends the voices of the others and achieves her own subjectivity.

At birth a mask, a caul is pulled over you and you see the world through that mask. That mask and that caul is language. Language cuts and shapes and orders our experience. The line used to be "ontology recapitulates phylogeny." One ought to say, "ontology recapitulates philology" (our being recapitulates our language).

In the 1940s Bernfeld said that the unconscious died in America and it was going to take fifty to a hundred years to rediscover it. In the intervening half-century we've witnessed the Americanization of psychoanalysis. Meanwhile the paradigm has shifted from the somatic to the semiotic; from the individual to the social and symbolic; from the universal to the historical; from the person as proprium to the person as socius; from the positivistic and empirical to the hermeneutic; and from the presumed unity of the self as entity to a subjectivity as a relational sign. Wundt and his cohort noted the two roads to the study of psychology "naturwissenschaft" (natural sciences) and "geisteswissenschaft" (the sciences of the mind). After a long Anglo-American detour along the former, some of us may be prepared to return to the crossroad of the "geisteswissenschaft" and proceed along that path, neglected these last fifty years.

The passages used in the construction of this article were drawn from two taped interviews, five unpublished papers and one previously published interview.

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