

THE ENIGMA OF DESIRE 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELFHOOD

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ABSTRACT

This article is the second part of 'The Enigma of Desire', the first having been published in Issue No. 5, Winter 2006. While the Lacanian account of selfhood described in Part 1 represents a challenge to TA developmental accounts that are built upon the modernist concept of 'the self', it finds parallels with those TA perspectives that fruitfully employ a more postmodernist understanding of selfhood. The cocreative perspective developed by Summers and Tudor builds on postmodernist ideas first introduced to TA by Allen and Allen and is the first perspective within TA to coherently draw together ideas from constructivism, social constructionism and relationality. I outline some of the differences and parallels that arise between Lacanian and cocreative principles and then sketch an account of the construction of selfhood based on a synthesis of Lacanian and cocreative TA ideas within a relational ethic. Finally, I discuss four brief client vignettes in order to illustrate how this account of selfhood can be used to frame purposeful meaning in and of therapeutic experience.

COCREATIVE TA

The development of relationally constructed senses of selfhood described in Part 1 shares a number of themes with more postmodernist perspectives within TA that have emerged over the past two decades. Barbara and Jim Allen were among the first and foremost transactional analysts to introduce postmodern philosophies to TA (Allen and Allen 1991, 1995, for example) and many of the central themes of their project are drawn together within the cocreative perspective outlined by Summers and Tudor (2000). Not only does this perspective further develop the constructivist project as Allen and Allen and others have begun, it also builds upon principles from the integrative transactional analytic perspective that are among the first to coherently draw out an ethic of cocreativity that has become central to relational perspectives within TA. Summers and Tudor's perspective thus represents a comprehensive account of many important postmodernist principles, and offers an integration of constructivist and social constructionist approaches developed within the social sciences. There has been confusion concerning these latter perspectives within the TA literature to date, and the following brief outline of the developmental histories and principle tenets of these perspectives is offered here for clarification.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Constructivism is exemplified in the Personal Construct Theory (PCT) of George Kelly (e.g. 1955) and focuses on the ways in which we represent our worlds through the meanings we make of our experiences; our interpretive repertoires (Allen, 2003). PCT thus naturally compliments and parallels many of the central ideas developed in script theory, and foreshadows later developments within TA concerning cultural influences on the construction of scripts. From a PCT perspective, individuals employ culturally situated forms of symbolic representation to make meaning of their worlds; worlds that possess no inherent meaning in and of themselves. **Social constructionism** owes its inheritance to the writings of Lev Vygotsky (e.g. 1962) developing, more specifically, over the past 25 years in the social sciences and, most prominently, through the writings of Kenneth Gergen (e.g. 1985). Social constructionism represents a profoundly postmodernist paradigm, challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about our worlds, assumptions that are seen as reinforcing the interests of dominant social groups and involving issues of power and its (ab)use. It rejects modernist theories and methodologies as dogmatic and insufficiently reflexive, recognises that all knowledge is a product of historically and socially situated negotiations between groups of people, and strives for the redefinition of psychological ideas in terms of relational dynamics within wider social fields. Thus, from this perspective, scripts represent socially constructed narratives that provide templates for modes of living. McLeod (1997, page 83) offers the following comment on the way in which social constructionism has built upon constructivism in this regard;

...a therapy that fully acknowledges the significance of storytelling must go beyond ... constructivist modes of thinking and address the social and cultural dimensions of narrative. It is only by adopting a social constructionist perspective that the intrinsically social nature of narrative can be grasped: stories are not merely cognitive or individual products, but are shared. The story is created between teller and audience.

An important shift in emphasis that occurs when adopting a social constructionist stance, then, is that the dynamic process of storytelling replaces the construct of 'a story'; there is a focus on *process* rather than *object*. So, while the worlds in which we live are still seen as constructed, both by the individual and, crucially, by social dynamics, this construction represents a *relational process* in which the organising mode of language itself mediates our experience and in which the social dynamics of power are influential.

RELATIONALITY

These principles can be seen as forming core influences within both cocreative TA and the Lacanian account of selfhood described in Part 1. In addition, both cocreative TA and Lacanian psychoanalysis embody a fundamental ethic of **relationality**, an ethic that is itself clearly rooted in postmodernist principles, as Jon Mills, (2005, pages 157 - 158) has illustrated.

The relational turn has displaced traditional epistemological views of the analyst's authority and unadulterated access to knowledge, as well as the objectivist principles they rest upon. By closely examining the dialogic interactions and meaning constructions that emerge within the consulting room, relational psychoanalysis has largely embraced the hermeneutic postmodern tradition of questioning the validity of absolute truth claims to knowledge, objective certainty, and positivist science. Meaning, insight, and conventions of interpretation are largely seen as materializing from within the unique contexts and contingencies of interpersonal participation in social events, dialogical discourse, dialectical interaction, mutual negotiation, dyadic creativity, and reciprocally generated co-constructions anchored in an intersubjective process.

Relationality offers a philosophical or meta-theoretical ethic, a pan-paradigmatic approach to the therapeutic setting (Kellett, 2007) and, as such, promises to accommodate vital aspects of postmodernist developments within psychotherapy, providing a bridge between Lacanian psychoanalysis and cocreative TA through a focus on socially situated, co-constructed relational dynamics, and offering to act as a unifying metaphor in the synthesis of a postmodernist TA account of selfhood. As such, cocreative TA and Lacanian psychoanalysis share the following principles:

1. A common, though not identical theoretical grounding in constructivist and social constructionist philosophies; e.g. the recognition of relationally constructed 'realities'
2. A focus on processes instead of objects, which, nonetheless, maintains a powerful structural conceptual base; e.g. the dynamics of *relating* rather than 'the relationship'
3. A recognition of the temporal, or transferential nature of relating, acknowledging the role of unconscious dynamics
4. A recognition of the plurality of non-hierarchical domains of relationally experienced senses of selfhood; e.g. a recognition of the interactive mix of here-and-now and there-and-then relationally-based ways of being
5. An account of the role of social dynamics in an individual's senses of selfhood; a post-modernist account of script theory
6. The principle of 'we-ness'; an account of the ongoing relational (re)construction of selfhood in the present

SYNTHESISING PERSPECTIVES

I use the word 'synthesise', rather than 'integrate' here in order to evoke the *interaction* of differing ideas and philosophies, one that transcends the simple addition of two or more ideas, or the incorporation of one or more ideas within a single dominant idea that the word 'integrate' implies. This is in keeping with a postmodernist approach, recognising that Lacanian and TA

models cannot be evaluated in terms of one another. For example, the brief definitions of the Lacanian domains of the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic (RIS) offered in Part 1 illustrate the fundamental incommensurability between RIS and ego states (PAC); RIS does not map on to PAC. Yet a comparison of Lacan's topological representation of RIS with Berne's ego states offers a graphic illustration of some structural similarities between these models.

PAC $\neq$ RIS

Berne played creatively with differing configurations of PAC, though the familiar model seen in figure 1 quickly became standardised and reified (Loria, 1990). Berne offers a number of rationales for this particular set up of ego states in his earlier writings, proposing a hierarchical order to PAC that is both developmental and value-laden according to the culture-specific idiosyncratic characteristics he attributed to each ego state. At one stage, however, he toyed with less common configurations of PAC, which figure 2 builds upon, and this creative experimentation has been used by others since as permission to continue to develop PAC models. Significantly, figure 2 bears a superficial resemblance to the topological representation employed by Lacan to demonstrate a crucial feature of the nature of RIS, illustrated in figure 3. Here, Lacan borrows the "Borromean Rings" that are associated with the coat of arms of the aristocratic Italian Borromeo family. These rings consist of three circles which are knotted together, despite the fact that none of them are linked. Lacan used this configuration of circles to illustrate how RIS are inextricably linked, yet fundamentally separate from each other.

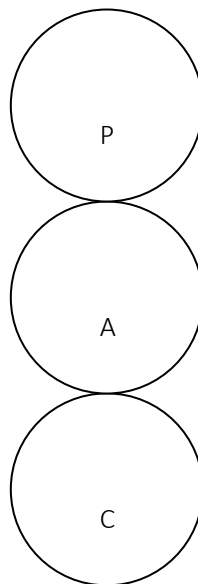


Figure 1: A Standardised Ego State Diagram

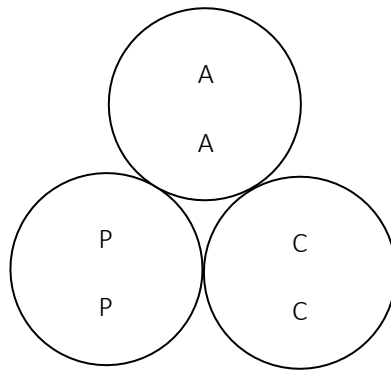


Figure 2: An Early Bernian Ego State Diagram (adapted from 1961, page 55)

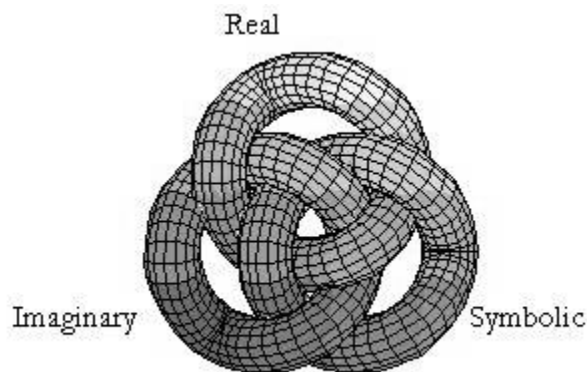


Figure 3; The Real, Symbolic and Imaginary as Borromean Rings

The dialectic tension between separation and knotting inherent in this representation of RIS finds some resonance with ego states. Unintegrated ego states may be seen as knotted together on structural and functional levels. Little (2006) for example, refers to the linking of Parent and Child ego states, and the concept of **contamination** provokes further thought on the ways in which ego states may be knotted. On the other hand, the functions and processes of **integration** that integrative and cocreative perspectives within TA assign to the Adult may well involve a *transformation* of fixated ways of being, a process that is very different to that of knotting, in which ego states remain separate and cannot be transmuted one into the other. While there may be no simple mapping between, or integration of RIS and PAC, then, there are clearly intriguing parallels and areas of cross-reference.

A POSTMODERNIST TA DEVELOPMENTAL NARRATIVE

Building on the Lacanian developmental account outlined in Part 1, as well as the model of cocreative TA and principles of relationality outlined above, the following narrative offers a postmodernist TA model of the development of selfhood.

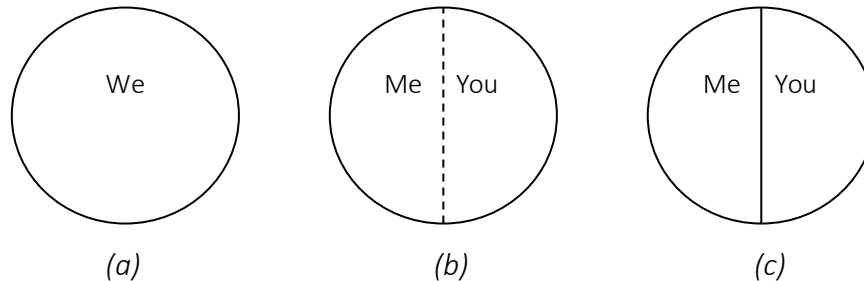


Figure 4: States of Individuation

Figure 4 depicts a process of individuation between infant and (m)other, representing increasingly differentiated categories of self-other relational senses of selfhood, characterised as 'We' in acknowledgement of the principle of 'we-ness' coined by Summers and Tudor. These figures represent *conceptual and phenomenological constructs* in the mind of baby and/or (m)other. In figure 4a, there is no conceptual division in phenomenological experience; in figure 4b, a permeable, occasional conceptual division develops; and, in figure 4c, this conceptual division becomes more impermeable or permanent. Thus, one trajectory of development is represented here by a shift from a merged sense of We to more impermeable psychological separation in Me/You; represented by the formula;

$$\text{WE} \leftrightarrow \text{ME /YOU}$$

Such psychological separating parallels, and is in response to the increasing *physical* separation that the newborn experiences in relation to his or her (m)other. Yet, following the dynamics of the mirror phase, discussed in Part 1, there is a fundamental misrecognition by newborn and, perhaps, (m)other in *equating* physical and psychic separation; while physical separation is a visible, biological given, there are emotional, practical and conceptual attachments between child and (m)other that represent invisible psychological connectivity; physical separation thus eclipses a secondary symbiotic attachment that is fundamental to the newborn's survival. Consequently, a sense of we-ness inexorably gives way to a bar or split in both selfhood as well as the child's secondary symbiotic attachment with the (m)other.

FIGURE & GROUND

Thus, while the aspect of development depicted in figure 4 may be seen as illustrating an emergence of primary individuation as a template for later autonomy, it can also be viewed as partial or incomplete, and of disguising a differing level of experienced reality, that of merger with the (m)other. This dialectic of separateness/mergence in position to the other forms the

heart of a paradox inherent in narcissistic relational dynamics (Johnson, 1994); a paradox that forms a common influence in human being, in differing ways and intensities. Thus, selfhood comprises a dialectic tension in which a sense of a separate Me is always dependent upon relating with You; *we are always relationally situated*. This dialectic can be accounted for when figure 4 is seen not (only) as a developmental *sequence*, but (also) as a model for *co-existent* potential domains of being, as Stern (2000) has proposed. A useful metaphor for this concept of co-existence is the principle of **figure and ground**, highlighting the always-already present link between relationship and separateness. What is figure can only ever be seen in relation to what is ground, and choosing whether to focus on figure or ground determines what *is* figure and ground; relational reality is born of *conception*. Thus, selfhood, at its very heart, is intrinsically linked to the other, and whether Me or You are seen as figure or ground is a choice of focus, a conceptual division in a fundamental we-ness.

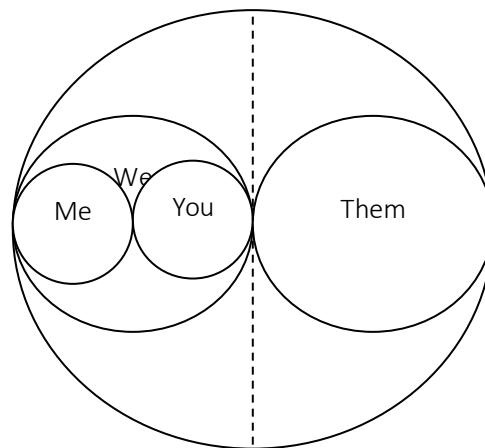


Figure 5: Group Me-You Selfhood

SPLITTING

Figure 5 illustrates a more complex, multi-level dialectic of separateness/merger; a structure that is attained, in part at least, through a process metaphorically similar to that of **cellular mitosis**; the process whereby cells multiply by division, or splitting. The concept of splitting is central to many psychotherapeutic theories. Within TA, one of the earliest references to these processes was made by Gobes (1990) and later developed by Tudor (2003) and, amongst the most recent to date, by Fowlie (2005) to illustrate the nature and dynamics of intrapsychic splitting and repression of traumatic relational experiences. Hargaden and Sills have discussed how self-states are 'walled off' within the archaic ego states, splitting-off aspects of internalised relational experience from consciousness. In line with object relational philosophy, they regard splitting as a defence against trauma, resulting in pathological personality structure. Lacan, however, argues that splitting is an *existentially given* process in the development of selfhood, both on physical and psychical levels, necessary and problematic; another dialectic enigma. For example, the identifications made by the child in the mirror phase are grounded in the act of

division (between the embodied-baby and the baby-imago, the Real and Imaginary) and result in an internal splitting of selfhood (between embodied senses of fragmentation and an idealised internal imago).

In figure 5, then, the conceptual bar or division in Me/You that develops in figure 4 here continues along multiple axes. Reflections of Me/You configurations kaleidoscope in regressive patterns embedded within each other. The seemingly discreet circles depict continuous domains of Me/You foci that orbit one another, morphing into figure and ground alternatively, each defining the other, both inseparable yet separate. This dialectic enigma of Me/You goes on to encompass others within the child's widening social matrix, forming the basis for **symbiosis** and **nesting**.

SYMBIOSIS

In more symbiotic senses of selfhood, Me/You may be experienced as an undifferentiated We, distinguished in terms of similarly under-differentiated others (Them). In this way, individuals merge into (stereotyped) groups, often ultimately split along good and bad dichotomies which mirror the idealisation of the imago in contrast to the experience of felt fragmentation of the mirror phase. This merger can be represented by the formula;

$$\text{ME/YOU} \leftrightarrow \text{WE/THEM}$$

The degree of symbiotic merger depends, in part, upon the child's response to the symbolic castration threatened by the Father, as discussed in Part 1. (Note that, where 'Father' is capitalised, I refer to the father function as discussed in Part 1, in contrast to the person of the father, always written in lowercase). Where this threat is insufficient to cajole the child into giving up the (m)other (and vice versa, perhaps) a heightened symbiotic sense of selfhood is more likely to be retained. Where this threat results in the child's (and (m)other's) good-enough renunciation of the libidinal realm of primary love, the child is likely to develop along a more autonomous developmental trajectory, facilitated by his or her consequent acquiescence to the Symbolic. Again, the Father's threat is relationally situated and not a property of the father, but also dependent on the (m)other's desire; where the (m)other is willing to relinquish the intense bond with the child, the child will have more chance of succeeding in bursting the symbiosis of primary love and of consequently investing in a more adaptively balanced developmental career.

NESTING

The embedded nature of Me/You reflections in figure 5 illustrates the concept of nesting, whereby aspects of selfhood can be seen as folded within meta-structural categories of selfhood. This touches upon another side of individuation, that of **collectivisation**. For example, the categories of 'Them' and 'You' can be variously nested within each other. On the one hand, aspects of another can be internalised in terms of wider cultural categories of groups of others

(Them) identified as similar in certain respects; “you are just like them”. On the other hand, such groups of others can be similarly identified with individual others; “they are just like you”. This fractal-like mapping of You and Them, another figure-ground dialectic, offers us a way by which to conceptualise some dynamics of racism, sexism and homophobia, for example, whereby individual traits of selfhood are identified with groups, and vice versa.

In this regard, then, there are significant parallels between the processes of differentiation outlined above and Berne’s model concerning the processes of individuation *within* groups. Berne (1963, 1966) elaborates the process of an individual’s increasing differentiation within a group in terms of their individuation from others and, most significantly, the group leader. Furthermore, his definition of a group imago was that of a psychic fantasy of dynamic relationships, a conceptual structure of the processes of relating; “A mental image of the dynamic relationships between the people in the group” (1966, page 364). Such an internal reflection of selfhood echoes Lacan’s imago of the mirror phase and finds resonance with the principle illustrated in figure 5 that senses of selfhood develop within a conceptual or psychic hall of mirrors, a dialectic reflection of Imaginary imagos of Me/You grouped configurations.

TEMPORALITY

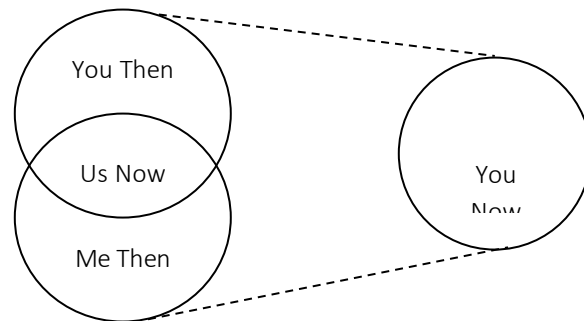


Figure 6: Temporal Me-You Selfhood

The structure of selfhood depicted in figure 6 represents a further development in selfhood, that of **temporality**, the concepts of past, present and future. Given the concept of nesting, Me and You can also represent We and Them in this model of selfhood. The conceptualisation of temporality represents a division in and of time and, as such, represents another development in selfhood facilitated by the process of splitting. Thus, in figure 6, a Me/You Now relationship (present-centred) increasingly incorporates past-centred Me/You imagos. Just as the Me/You sense of selfhood represents a figure-ground dialectic, so to do these present-past configurations, and this mix of past and present we-ness gives rise to *imaginable* future relationships. Taken together, these temporally dialectic aspects of selfhood form the basis of all proto-transferential relational configurations; fantasies of past, present and future Me/You relational memories and possibilities, such as You/Me as we might have been, or might be. I have

termed these relational patterns ‘proto-transferential’ since they represent the protocol (Berne, 1972) for primitive projections and introjections and, ultimately, all transferential dynamics.

As a depiction of selfhood, figure 6 illustrates how past relational experiences with others form a central aspect of the child’s sense of selfhood. Additionally, this structure can be seen to represent a template for relational dynamics *between* child and others, whereby a current sense of the other is experienced as a projection/introjection of the child’s sense of selfhood. In figure 6, the external other is still seen as a relatively unified figure, with past experiences of the internal other forming a distinct aspect of child’s sense of selfhood. This relatively uncomplicated view of the external other is drastically transformed upon the child’s acquisition of language and the emergence of an *encultured* sense of selfhood.

ENCULTURED SELFHOOD

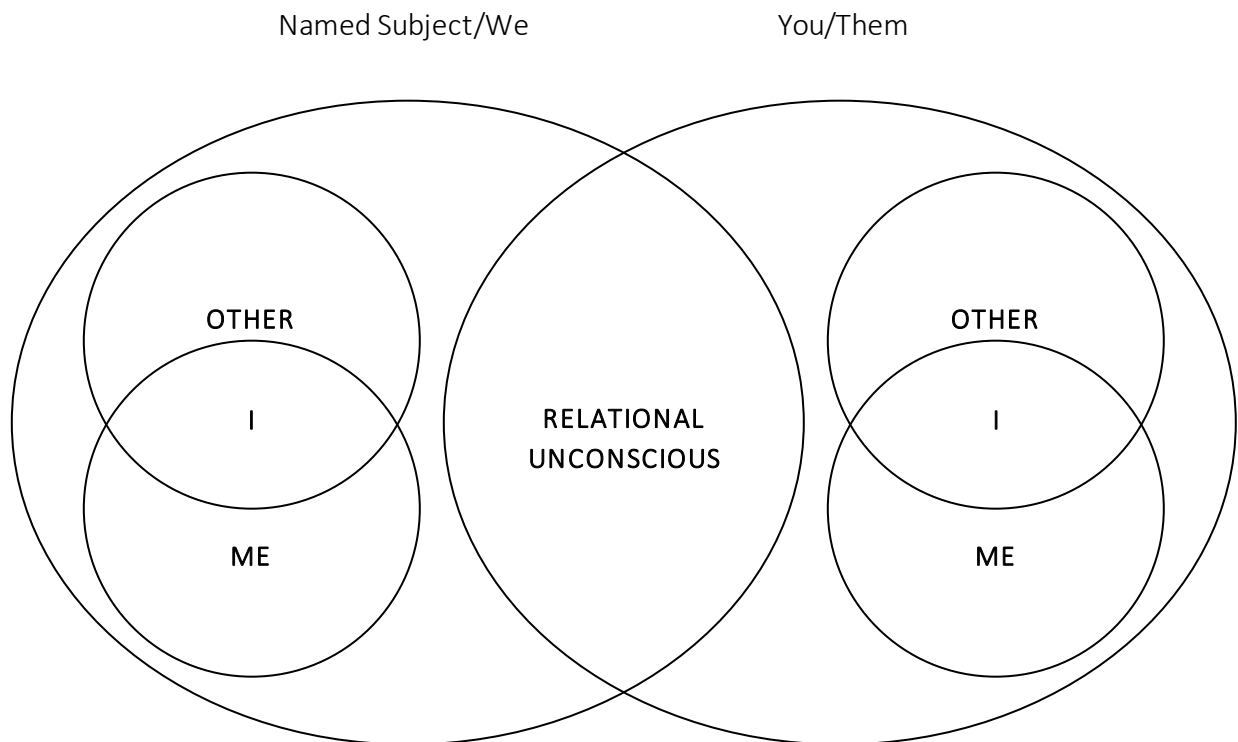


Figure 7: Encultured Selfhood

As outlined in Part 1, the child’s acquisition of language precipitates a restructuring of psychic reality. Language provides a ready-made differential system by which experience can be symbolised, and linguistic structure thus acts as a portal for the child upon the world of grow-ups. With this new mediating power of language comes new relational constructions; meanings that support the child in understanding him or herself and others in the context of how these others

understand themselves and others. Figure 7 illustrates this restructuring of the speaking child's relational experiences. I have marked this restructuring by introducing the concept of 'Named Subject' as well as re-terming of 'Me', 'Other' and 'I'. This re-terming is intentional for, while it may seem confusing to use the same terms to denote differing aspects of selfhood at different developmental phases, this re-terming highlights the *re*-structuring of previous experiences of selfhood that transforms the child into a subject of language.

NAMED SUBJECT/WE

With the acquisition of language, the child becomes identified as a subject in and of language, situating the child in a pre-given chain of signifiers that henceforth symbolises all meaning. One of the most significant and striking examples of this shift in identity is the child's recognition of and identification with given names; the most common public signifier of identity and one by which the child can nominate him or herself and others. Given names *en-title* the child and locate him or her as the product of his or her parents (surname and, sometimes, middle name), place of origin or class membership (such as certain European cultures) and/or characteristics attributed to the child by others (such as certain Native American Indian cultures). Names constitute a central and highly visible core of identity, and the child will now be attributed more and more identities during his or her ongoing development; identities such as 'female', 'psychotherapist', 'father', 'alcoholic' etc.

The Named Subject thus comprises an array of social positions, roles and functions and, as such, acts as a socially categorising signifier, a 'self' that becomes reified and appears 'real' and 'autonomous'. There are many linguistic actions that construct this illusion; for example, "My name is Juan" is easily re-termed "I am Juan", an everyday linguistic turn that *equates* a person with their name and binds the person's sense of selfhood to their given identity (see Korzybski, 1921 and 1933 for an original critique of this function of the verb 'to be'). This binding extends the misrecognition of the imago of the mirror stage, encoding this within the Symbolic. That is, the signifiers that constitute the Named Subject confer Symbolic legitimacy upon the child; the child now equates him or herself with cultural identities that are internalised and attributed to his or her very being.

OTHER

The aspect of selfhood denoted here as Other represents the relational functions that significant others have come to form in the child's sense of selfhood. Figures 4 through 6 have discussed the influences of the other upon the child's development of selfhood in some detail, and these influences are indicated here as central aspects of the speaking child's sense of selfhood. Thus, the child's inner world becomes populated by a teeming throng of others and their relationships with the child and each other. Thus, this Other cannot be separated out within the child-as-Named Subject; the Me/You dialectic discussed above fuses selfhood within the world of others.

I

The I of selfhood comprises the imago(s) of the mirror phase, and is thus premised upon a precarious split between idealised and demonised fantasies of self-image. There are parallels here between this aspect of selfhood and the narcissistic processes touched upon above. For example, on the one hand, this idealised I forms the bedrock of a person's publicly performing persona; while, on the other hand, the demonised I forms the often-hidden antithesis of this performance, invested with the person's sense of failure to live up to this ideal.

This aspect of I accords, to some extent, with the divided nature of A_1 as described by Hargaden and Sills and further developed by Fowlie (2005). Furthermore, the arrangement of Other, I and Me in figure 7 resembles their depiction of a third-order structure of the Child ego state, in which they suggest that the infant's sense of cohesive OK self (A_0) emerges from experienced interactions between an emergent self (C_0) comprising body-affective states (as well as an internalisation of experienced contact with the mother) and an internalised representation of the mother (P_0). The model outlined above shares some of these ideas, particularly Hargaden and Sills assertion that, "The infant's experience of the mutual interaction with a[n] ...other ... becomes, in our view, an integral part of the child's sense of ... self" (page 18). Nonetheless, while there are parallels between these models, they are not equivalent; Other, I and Me do not map onto PAC and selfhood is not reducible to an ego state or states of the ego.

ME

The speaking child's relational experiences from the position of an *embodied being* are represented here as Me; that is, this aspect of selfhood represents the child's physical, felt presence in the world of others, his or her experience of existing as a living physical body that effects and is effected by others. Again, as we have seen, this embodied sense of self is not a unified source of selfhood but itself constitutes a dialectic experience. As a result of the mirror phase, the child's embodied sense of selfhood is at odds with a visual identification that is yearned for and, at the same time, feared and hated since it, in turn, frames in relief the child's bodily experience as fragmented and lacking. Thus, embodiment is an enigma for the child; a source of pleasure and pain, satisfaction and disappointment, coherence and fragmentation.

YOU/THEM

The others in the child's quickly expanding social matrix are now seen by the child from the perspective of a Named Subject; that is, the child begins to understand others as he or she begins to understand him or herself; as a subject in and of language. Thus You/Them is understood in terms of experienced selfhood, a form of projection. At the same time, this projection interactively feeds back to further develop the child's own sense of selfhood, representing the processes of identification and introjection. You/Them comes to reflect relationships of increasing internal and external complexity with an increasing range of others

who, in turn, interact within and amongst themselves in complex ways that the child begins to symbolise, assigning meaning mediated through his or her language.

This exponentially increasing world of others, a vast big-bang of relational dynamics that reflects aspects of previous and new Me/You relationships *itself* becomes a central aspect of selfhood; the child's relationships with the worlds of others comes to inhabit the heart of the child's increasingly complex experience of selfhood. Concurrently, the child sees him or herself mirrored variously through the myriad eyes of this expanding constellation of relationships and, similarly, becomes able to reflect on him or herself from an increasing number of diverse perspectives. Thus, relationally situated imagos are divided and reflected over and over in such a way as to offer a repertoire of possible senses of selfhood that is fundamentally relational in nature.

RELATIONAL UNCONSCIOUS

The restructuring of psychic reality upon the acquisition of language generates a secondary phase of repression; secondary because it is not primarily the result of traumatic encounters with the Real, but rather a necessary sacrifice in order that the child become encultured; a subject of and in language. Henceforth, what cannot be represented in language finds no Symbolic meaning; there are no words for such experiences, which become literally un-speakable. Most significantly, but not exclusively, what is repressed at this time are certain aspects of the child's desire. As we have seen, one entry requirement to this civilising world of others is acquiescence to the incest taboo and, as part of this pledge, the child must renounce aspects of his or her desire deemed threatening to the social order he or she enters; for example, libidinal and murderous aspects of his or her desire for the parental partners. This sacrifice is achieved through repression and aspects of the child's desire that are renounced are split-off from conscious selfhood, forming the basis of unconscious desire. The realm of unconscious desire, then, is born of such repression and spills out of the previous structure of selfhood, generating a *relational* field in which individuals are forevermore situated and which haunts our conscious lives with elusive yearnings. This model of 'unconscious' as a relational realm of desire in which individual Named Subjects are situated thus contrasts with the modernist concept of *the* unconscious, which is seen as a property of the individual.

FRAMING MEANING

The value of therapeutic models is best measured by their productive usefulness in making meaning out of experience; that is, as "clinically useful metaphors" (Gobes, 1990, page 165). The following four vignettes illustrate ways in which the models of selfhood outlined above can be used as conceptual frames in therapeutic practice. The first of these, 'Dream On', offers interpretations of dreams by two clients that illustrate the dialectic of unconscious desire and the role of cultural values in forging group identity. The middle two vignettes, 'Catch Me If You Can' and 'Mirror, Mirror' explore the nature of enactment within therapeutic relating; a fundamental

process by which aspects of selfhood are relationally cocreated, (re)enacting past relational patterns and offering opportunities for transformative relational experiences that may forge differing senses of selfhood. The final vignette, 'In The Name Of The Father' discusses how religious belief can form a defensive function, illustrating the role of the Other within selfhood.

DREAM ON

One client reports a dream in which she attends a conference that she knows I will also be attending. She imagines sitting in my chair and awakes in fascinated delight with the image of us both sitting in the same chair, impossibly occupying the same body-space. Another client recalls a dream where he comes for his usual appointment to find me sitting on his sofa. In this dream, he is disturbed by the implications of sitting on/under/within/around myself and so decides to sit next to me. He awakes with a sense of loss and yearning.

I once heard a joke that Freudian analysands have Freudian dreams and Jungian analysands have Jungian dreams. No doubt Lacanian analysands have Lacanian dreams and TA clients have TA dreams! While adaptation to the other in the therapeutic setting represents a common experience, this phenomenon may illustrate the play of unconscious desires within therapeutic relating; a dynamic relational field in which both client and therapist are implicated in each others sense of selfhood. For both these dreams illustrate unconscious desires concerning the dialectic of Me/You.

In the first dream, we find no simple introjection of a reparative (or otherwise) therapeutic influence, or straight-forward proactive transference by the client, but rather a complex desire in which embodied senses of selfhood and imagoes of selfhood are merged. An exploration of this superimposition of client-therapist led to our reflection upon the client's desire to psychically enter into myself as well as to take me into herself, a desire to be like her Imaginary perception of myself (imago) and a desire to be Symbolically separate as a subject. Perhaps, where these contrasting desires are seen in terms of properties of differing ego states, there is a tendency to work out which one is 'real' or 'healthy'; which is Adult. Yet, from the perspective taken here, this dialectic emerges from the knotting of the differing domains of selfhood; domains that are not viewed hierarchically or assigned normative values. Thus, these varying desires point to differing dynamics of selfhood situated within the domain of unconscious yearning that forms an existential enigma, one which the client, like all of us, must account for through symbolisation.

The second client had this dream as split-off desires were beginning to emerge within our therapeutic relating. Our attention became focused on the client's spoken and unspoken questions about the nature of my desire, and his fantasy that I was secure in my own sexuality; a projected idealisation he envied to such an extent that there was initially little room for the possibility that this idealisation represented a misrecognition. That is, the client assigned to me a pure heterosexual orientation that offered him a yearned for mirror, a projection that misrecognised both of ourselves. Importantly, the gender configuration of this therapeutic

relationship, that of two males, has a formative role in the client's disquiet. The culturally sanctioned normative position of heterosexual desire means that the first client in this vignette, a female, did not face the same conflict faced by this second client, a male. This conflict is culturally generated, internalised and (re)enacted in the therapeutic situation, itself situated within a heteronormative culture.

As we have seen, upon the acquisition of language, desires that find no relationally or socially acceptable representation are repressed in accordance with the individual's interpellation into *given* identity positions. That is, donning either a heterosexual or homosexual identity involves repression of those desires that are not consistent with these culturally-determined categories in order to construct a coherent sense of selfhood. In a real sense, then, this client has *lost* his homoerotic desire as a result of his heterosexual assignment; it has become inexpressible, something to be disavowed and its return feared. Our exploration of this dialectic tension lead to memories of childhood homoerotic play, in which the client had experienced being betrayed and shamed by another. Our subsequent deconstruction of the client's fantasies and desires lead him in time to own a good-enough heterosexual position that more fully acknowledged and accounted for this loss, in contrast to one premised on the defensive repression of such desires.

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

A client recalls the following memory; he is jumping up and down on his bed, gleefully calling his father a "fucker" as his father tries and fails to catch and punish him.

In recalling this moment within the context of the therapeutic setting the client renders the scene significant, alerting us to this memory as a narrative point of origin (Stern, 2000), a *fixated* aspect of selfhood that belies a fundamental paradox. On the one hand, this client, in so naming his father, appears to recognise him as a Named Subject and, thus, accept the structuring role of language; that is, the client matches a signifier (the word "fucker") with a function (the father's procreative role in the client's existence). On the other hand, the word "fucker" is provocative to the father since the child deploys this sexually-charged signifier as a forbidden attack and uses a display of triumph (laughing and jumping up and down) to signify the father's *failure* to discipline his child. That is, the triumphant child is constructed as such only in relation to the defeated father. Thus, the father is stripped of his power, rendered lacking by the client's very acknowledgement of his father's potency. By a powerful inversion, then, this moment crystallises the Father's lack by the very recognition of his function, and, in this way, the client displaces his father's dominant position and steals his power.

In this way, the client withholds acquiescence to the father's authority; the recognition offered is that of rebellion against, and not compliance with the law, and the client develops a sense of selfhood in which his membership of the grown-up world of others, in particular his position as a man is thus counterfeit. Thus, while the client continues to invest in an Imaginary imago, an idealised I, this comes at the price of an overly-lacking Other and a fragile position as a

Named Subject. Such fragility is common in Western cultures, touching upon narcissistic traits that lie at the heart of antisocial character styles. The client's idealisation, for example, appears to have been stroked by his mother's frequent playful comment that he was "silver tongued"; a sexually-charged attribute that locates I as desirable, exciting and manipulative. This attractive imago contrasts sharply with the client's objectification of himself (Me) as a "bottom-feeder"; a reference to a fish that feeds on debris that has drifted to the bed of the ocean, that the client used to characterise aspects of his sexual desire. Of course, the term 'bottom feeder' has many possible meanings and sexual associations, and throws into relief the poignant incongruence between an idealised and desired imago and a lacking, desiring embodied phenomenology; between aspects of the client's I and Me senses of selfhood respectively.

It is the client's embodied Me that often feels overwhelmingly guilty for no apparent cause, inadvertently signalling a shame that manifests itself as physical blushing; something we may regard as a 'symptom', the return of repressed guilt that arises as a consequence of the client's fraudulent membership of the world of others and resulting split in selfhood. Similarly, the client's many successful sexual conquests result in feelings of "flakiness", leaving a yawning yearning for intimacy that, in turn, feeds his desire. This yearning, opposed by the fear of loss, represents a powerful transference dynamic in the therapy; an enactment that propagates selfhood in the relational field and evokes within the therapist this dialectic of desire. In this way, this client *recruits* his therapist (Kellett, 2007) positioning me as an Other of selfhood in order to share or communicate a primary experience of selfhood and seek out a resolution to this enigma.

MIRROR, MIRROR

A client begins his session saying he doesn't know what to talk about. He eventually recounts a tale about feeling angry as a result of his waiting for a decision from his boss. He is angry because he did not express his frustration with having to wait so long, but rather acted as if he were happy to wait. This episode reminds him of his reassuring his family that he was fine at a time when he felt isolated and troubled. I listen without comment when, abruptly and angrily, he asks me what is wrong with me.

Again, there is a powerful and multilevel enactment in this vignette, illustrating how selfhood is cocreated in and through the processes of relating. From a very young age, this client worked hard to pacify his anxious parents by attempting to be self-reliant and undemanding and hiding his needs, anger and sadness, and then repeats this coping strategy with others, for example, at work. This structure of selfhood gets repeated in therapy, but, on this occasion, only up to a point, since the client *does* permit himself a brief affective complaint in his question. He goes on to identify that my perceived failure to offer him immediate comfort is what is wrong, and we extend this to his sense that I am not looking after him adequately since my routine invitation for him to begin sessions by sharing with us what comes to mind feels to him like an onerous and lonely demand.

While he recounts his story, I think about what he has said in past sessions about his relationship with his mother and father. His mother appears to have suffered from a borderline depression, his father left home when he was three years old, and his step-father, who arrived some five years later, appears authoritative and persecutory. Motivated by differing desires, then, neither his mother nor either father-figure appeared interested in him, indeed, he seems to have been an inconvenience to them, and it is this lack of compassionate interest that is transferred into our relationship. I have been experientially aware of the projective aspect of this transference; increasingly feeling tired and irritated with this client over the past few months, thus being positioned as the inadequate Other. These feelings crystallised the previous week when the client mistakenly turned up when I was on holiday; an action that the client has notably failed to address so far in this session. Thus, the client came when 'not wanted' and I am reflecting upon this experience of untimely demand when his question interrupts my thoughts.

The client's complaint about my perceived lack of response can be seen as a dialectic action. While this bid for active engagement challenges his habitual acceptance of other's discounting his existence, he also discounts the possibility that I am actively engaged with him, though not on a level he has yet experienced; that of being held in mind and reflected upon. Thus, in addressing me as he experienced being addressed by his parent-Others, the client introduces an introjective transference into our relating, recruiting me into a differing position of selfhood; an aspect of Me/I. By asking what is wrong with me, the client effects "You are bad because you do not care", representing both a bid for a mirroring contact at an early developmental level and a re-enactment of the rejection experienced with his parents. Both these aspects thus involve a misrecognition of the other, and I, in ostensibly misattuning to the client, misrecognise something of 'We' also.

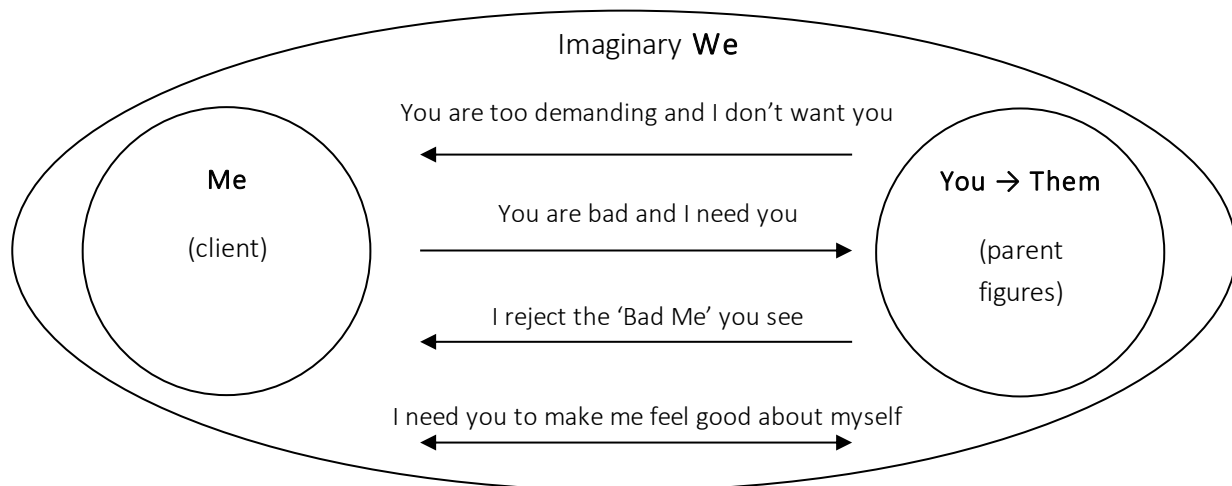


Figure 8: Interactive imagos in the co-construction of selfhood

This vignette offers an illustration of the regressive mirroring outlined above. One aspect of this mirroring represents the client's identification with the imago he saw reflected in the eyes of

his parents; a reflection of an unwanted, overly-needy baby, coloured, inevitably, by the parents' projections of aspects of their own sense of selfhood. In figure 8, this reflection is denoted by "You are too demanding and I don't want you", though it is important to recognise that such a message is a linguistic reconstruction of a non-linguistic relational experience. The child too acts as a mirror for the parents, and while they would have seen an inevitable need and desire in their baby, they also saw his mirroring of their rejection of him, denoted in figure 8 as "You are bad and I need you". The parents thus not only reject the need placed upon them by their child, but also his reflected image of them as lacking parents, a lack interpreted as bad. This rejection represents a primary repression through projection; the parents attribute badness within their sense of selfhood to the child, denoted as "I reject the 'Bad Me' you see". Thus, the client's parents model the very strategy that the client adopts in attempting to construct an OK sense of selfhood, one that requires another to act as the recipient of projected bad senses of selfhood and, potentially, provide a good mirror of the client, denoted in figure 8 by "I need you to make me feel good about myself", a two-way relational need.

Such *interactive* relational engagement is well known (see, for example, Sameroff, 1991 and Thomas and Chess, 1977), and is at the heart of the development of selfhood. For example, as we have seen, the rejection of the bad self-image that the parents gaze mirrors provides the basis for the client's development of projective transferences. Thus, the client's heightened paranoia that played a part in his breakdown prior to presentation, originates, in part at least, from his defensively adaptive strategy of splitting-off such bad and rejected senses of selfhood and attributing these to others, as his parents modelled and as is re-enacted at the moment of his complaint within the session. Thus, figure 8 represents an intra- and interpsychic relational pattern, a template of selfhood as well as certain primary processes of relating for this client.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER

A client powerfully invests in a Christian-based faith. She struggles with trusting others, a struggle which is enacted within the therapeutic relationship, claiming that her true support comes from God and that, ultimately, her fate lies in his hands.

The following discussion represents one possible interpretation of the role of God in this client's structure of selfhood in line with the ideas presented in these papers. As such, I focus on the function of an internal god-signifier, an Imaginary Other that plays a Symbolic role for the client. In doing so, I take no position on the existence of an external God. If such a God exists, it exists in the domain of the Real and, as such, is outside direct human knowing; a phenomenon that "passeth all understanding" (The Bible, Philippians, chapter 4, verse 7) and one which is, most certainly, outside the scope of this paper. Neither do I intend to imply that all religious beliefs serve the same functions as those discussed here. There are many Gods, many systems of belief and many purposes that these can serve.

This client positions God as an idealised Father, fulfilling a yearning for a relationship with a good figure that simultaneously defends against internalised relational experiences with her sexually abusive biological father. That is, she represses and splits-off remembered relational experiences of an abusive Real Other, and cocreates through others in her church fantasised relating with an idealised Imaginary Other. This structure illustrates a number of significant aspects of selfhood;

1. The client's Other as representative of culturally-forbidden experiences (incest) forms an intolerable aspect of selfhood that the client represses and splits-off in order to construct a cohesive sense of OK selfhood
2. The cocreation of God plays a role in the process of repression *and* serves as ongoing protection against the return of the repressed. An Imaginary God the Father here vanquishes the Real, abusive embodied father who has transgressed the Law and, in taking his place, guards against his return; the father is punished for his sins, cast out and disavowed
3. God is *also* positioned as an authoritative and fixed signifier; a Symbolic Father that guarantees meaning that is beyond question. God thus comes to occupy the position of the Law for the client; the Name of the Father, whose final injunction, as we have seen, enacts a "No!" that forms the emotional impetus for the child's application for membership of the wider world of grown-ups
4. This "No!" is enacted on two fronts. First, against the transgressing father, representing one component in the process of repression. Second, against the client becoming intimate with earthly others, a defence against the fear of a repetition of relating in which the client experienced a loss of selfhood
5. Internalising others for this client then, is experienced as threatening; first, since others exist in the Real, intimate contact with others lies beyond the client's capacity to safely control and; second, such an internalisation risks the return of repressed senses of selfhood, even to the extent that such an internalisation feels like a violation (a form of projection). Thus, this client deploys God as a protective sheath against the birth of threatening intimacy and the (re)emergence of painful senses of selfhood

This latter point leads to a further aspect of the client's repressed Other, one that represents a profoundly disturbing dialectic of desire for this client. The client initially experienced both sexual enjoyment with her father, as well as a certain gratification at winning her father's desire over her mother; being the object and *cause* of her father's desire made her special. This aspect of selfhood represents a fusion of a highly attractive (Imaginary) imago and an unacceptable and transgressive (Symbolic) aspect of selfhood, creating a powerful dialectic at the heart of the client's desire. Such a dialectic represents a common if not inevitable dynamic of

selfhood for people who have had similarly transgressive relationships and illustrates the following:

6. The second deployment of God's "No!" outlined in point 4 hides a punitive function directed at the client herself; she may not enjoy intimacy with others because of her own transgression; that of *enjoyment*. Such an injunction fails due to the client's desire for intimacy, and intimate relationships are thus experienced as conflicted
7. The client's Imaginary sense of being special is preserved through her unique relationship with God. This relationship is purged of sexual desire, which is substituted with an Imaginary, non-sexual love that is beyond representation and signification because it is outside the Symbolic

This client thus deploys God as an Other that contributes to the construction of a cohesive sense of selfhood by maintaining a delicate balance in the repression of transgressive relational experiences, sublimating desire, signifying a guarantee of safety and protection and regulating relating with others in order to support this system of selfhood. In this regard, it is important to recognise that the client's belief system represents a fundamentally contrasting paradigm based around a different anchoring signifier to that of humanistic psychotherapy. For Christian beliefs, this signifier is 'God the Father' and 'The Name of the Father' represents the Law; for humanism, this signifier is 'Human Nature' and 'Self-Actualisation' is its principle. From this latter perspective, the client's choice of paradigm represents an act of autonomy and self-actualisation that imposes a double-bind on her therapist; one that parallels a fundamental dialectic in the client's sense of selfhood.

FINAL WORDS

In these papers, I have reviewed differences between modernism and postmodernism, particularly with regard to notions of 'the self' and 'selfhood'. I have introduced some central terms in the Lacanian lexicon and some Lacanian concepts concerning the formation and function of selfhood. These ideas have been synthesised with cocreative TA to develop a postmodernist narrative of the formation of selfhood, and I have delineated models by which selfhood can be conceptualised. Finally, I have discussed client vignettes in order to illustrate how these models can be employed to usefully make sense of the phenomena of selfhood as this emerges in the various processes of therapeutic relating.

I have intentionally omitted discussing therapeutic practice in these papers. Theory informs practice in diverse ways; forming the bedrock for the development of a reflexive practice, enhancing existing practices and methodologies by widening or focusing the framework of conceptual understanding, or challenging certain practices by indicating alternative predictions concerning therapist-client actions such as interventions, relational configurations and, ultimately, the structuring of therapeutic process and desired changes. Lacanian analysis, for example, has a broader system of categorisation when compared with TA, one that provides a

relatively unified and wider remit for therapeutic technique (see, for example, Fink, 1999). Within TA there are a number of recognised 'schools' (Barnes, 1977) which have developed specific practices based on a variety of theories, some of which are relatively similar, complement or appear incommensurable with each other. The play between theory and practice, as the play of selfhood within therapeutic relating, is a central aspect of psychotherapy and a valuably creative process by which meanings and senses of selfhood are forged. Thus, I do not believe or wish to suggest that specific practices necessarily follow from specific theoretical models.

Shifts in the way therapeutic experience is conceptualised and framed have gradual, often subtle and unpredictable effects on practice. Theoretical developments act, as it were, as a dye added to the existing hue of practice. At first, the dye added stands out in marked contrast to the existing colour, yet as it is slowly mixed and synthesised, this contrast fades as a new colour emerges that is neither the same as either of the previous colours, or a simple commingling of the two, as with oil and water. Furthermore, a colour may emerge from this synthesis that cannot be intuitively predicted on the basis of the previous colours, as when blue and yellow produce green. Thus, new ideas and ways of making meaning can, initially, stand out in the practitioner's mind, eventually melting into a practice that shifts unpredictably as a result of this synthesis. All therapeutic theory represents ideas in progress and, as such, can neither be complete, nor offer any final words on the subject of human experience. What is most important, I believe, is that, as practitioners, we are willing to engage with ideas in a continuing creative exploration of the unending enigma of selfhood.

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