

RUNDBRIEF: TAKE II

Stuart Pizer, PhD

Paola and Jany, with your Rundbriefe: Take II project, you stitch together past, present, and future; structure and process; group and individual; ideas and actions. And you invite our “personal and spontaneous,” freely associative, gathering in.

As I understand fractals, their organization is self-similar. Not self-replicating. Mixing metaphors, I think fractals are more like what Loewald meant by “creative repetition” as opposed to static “replication.” “Chaos” entails a complexity of cohesiveness: the butterfly in Rio. So, I think of the structures of our institutes and institutions. The more rigid, or dischaotic, the less flexibility, change, and inclusiveness. But there is order. As they said in Italy, “the trains ran on time.” At cost. The cost of “you don’t fit.” Then again, dismantling structures exposes our institutions to a more colloquial chaos: who is left standing after the shootouts? Gangs, f(r)actions, oligarchs can hijack an unruly institute. A game of “Choose Your Power,” if power is the aim of social organization (as we witness all too much, here, there, and everywhere).

Thoughts arrive nonlinearly. But I will have to string them out here on “paper.” Risking the embarrassment of self-reference, I turn personal. And local. I am an Adjunct Analyst Member of BPSI. That means I didn’t graduate from an institute of the APsA. It also means I could teach “Relational Psychoanalysis” to ATP, or Fellows. But not to Candidates in Training. Although I am one of the early authors of Relational Psychoanalysis as it emerged, with a book and 21 papers, some assigned nationally and internationally in training institutes. Frustrating, although a small matter in the scheme of things. Nevertheless, a caste system in operation. Functional? Or an instance of rigid (read that as dumb) power structure. But I’ll turn now from the carping of the privileged.

One psychoanalytic institution that seems to be working pretty well at being supple and relevant while being its recognizable self is the journal *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. At meetings of the editorial board, a distinct decision was made to foster diversity of contributions; to devote issues to race, implicatedness, migration and displacement, gender complexities, structural caste systems, and war. And voices arose within the editorial board protesting that the journal would lose readership by crowding out psychoanalytic clinical process accounts. I respect how the editors have worked hard to include and maintain both. It is a continuous fractal effort to, as Bromberg would put it, “remain the same while changing.”

As Paola and Jany write, “Psychoanalysis tends to develop theoretically through interaction with other communities, and... psychoanalytic concepts can be enlivened through thoughtful cross-disciplinary dialogue.” So, I would suggest that the last three pages of “The Bluest Eye” be part of the Self-Psychology curriculum. Three gut wrenching pages can teach how the self is comprised of “the reflected appraisal of others” (George Herbert Mead, and then H.S. Sullivan). And teach how the social ignites desire (even self-diminishing desires). “Left out” whets the appetite, even the appetite for being colonized. The social squelching the freedom and potential to construct a self. Such a powerful quote from Reich: “Suffering comes from society, so we are in fact fully... entitled to ask why it creates suffering, who has an interest in that.”

One promising community is the Psychology and the Other venture. Arising as it does from a Levinasian sensibility, it gathers an interdisciplinary assembly of thinkers around an ethics of care and responsibility that invites explorations of impingements of the social on the mind and thoughtful initiatives toward the social.

In 1975, naively fresh from graduate school, I co-authored a book, *Psychology and Social Change* (Pizer & Travers, McGraw-Hill), in which I wrote: "Psychotherapy remains a service enjoyed disproportionately by the 'elite.' Psychology can responsively and responsibly contribute to constructive social change only if psychologists as people do not fail to recognize the implications of their own social origins; and only if training and practice change in sensitive conjunction with changing social needs."

What possible directions for psychoanalysis? I would wish for a Levinasian infusion. An ethics of care. An ethos of "To recognize the other is to recognize a hunger. To recognize the other is to give." Levinas declares this from a philosophical position, a belief that ethics precedes and awakens subjectivity. From within psychoanalysis, I think of Sullivan's quaintly put "empathic linkage" and the "tension of tenderness" evoked by "the tension of need." Trevarthan's essential unity. If there is an intergenerational transmission of trauma, might there be an intergenerational transmission of ethics? Are we as analysts tugged inside by our encounter with states of pain or distress? Are we activated to bring forth from ourselves something to offer to the state of the other? Not as a virtue but as our embeddedness in community and interdependence? And `why does this spirit go missing?

When we invoke Winnicott's "Use of an Object" paper, we tend to focus on "Hullo... I destroyed you... I love you." But how do we reckon with his next sentence, which he places in parentheses: "(All the time I am loving you I'm destroying you in unconscious fantasy.)" In the face of this, how do we determine how we choose to treat others?

Paola and Jany tell us that the CPC experience makes clear that while "much pain is inflicted by those in power to prevent those with less power from coming together," "much healing emerges from that coming together in community."

I think psychoanalysis will survive. At least I hope so. I hope it survives as a place of welcome, of making space, of engaged presence, focused availability, articulation and care. I also fear the embedded centers of power, malice, and aggrandizement, and the dangers that arise from fears of complexity or failures to hold complexity.

Gravely ironic (nightmarishly fractal?) that we engage this Rundbriefe exercise as we are surrounded and flooded with the horrors striking Israelis and Palestinians, Ukrainians, American Democracy, and our collective dream of future.