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The Relational Turn: Foundations, Early Conversations, and Expansions

In this course we will study the emergence of Relational Psychoanalysis, focusing on the foundational ideas that underlie this paradigm shift in psychoanalysis. We begin by delving into the roots of relational thought in the confluence of interpersonal and object relational theories, feminism, self-psychology, constructivism, as well as the influence of Ferenczi's work. We will consider how these various tributaries led to the development of a view of mind as a shifting kaleidoscope of self-states and a theory of therapeutic process that emphasized unconscious dialogue, dissociation, and enactment. We then turn to clinical implications of relational theory, reading papers on mutual influence, the analyst's role, intention, subjectivity and use of self. We will then trace the expansion of the relational discourse from the early feminist critique to the interrogation of gender, sexuality, and race; themes that are at the core of the "social turn" in relational psychoanalysis. The course draws extensively on original sources and papers by the founding generation, augmenting contemporary contributions particularly with respect to socio-cultural discourse. Throughout the semester we will compare relational theory and technique with preceding and contributing models, underlining areas of continuity, difference, and innovation. In addition to weekly readings, candidates will be asked to bring in their own ideas and clinical work to use as backdrop for discussion.

Part 1: The Relational Turn: Theoretical Tributaries Coalescing in a New Model of Mind and of the Analytic Process

Week 1: Introduction and Overview

We begin with overview pieces that lay out the relational understanding of the patient's needs and delineate the meaning of relationality. We will also read a chapter that looks back on the history of relational psychoanalysis from its early inception in 1983 to the current moment, 40 years later.

Bass, A. & Schwartz Cooney, A. (in press). Relational Psychoanalysis, in *Textbook of Psychoanalysis, Third Edition*, (Glen Gabbard, Bonnie Litowitz, Paul Williams, Adrienne Harris, Eds). New York: APA Press.

Mitchell, Stephen & Harris, Adrienne. (2004). What's American About American Psychoanalysis?. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. 14. 165-191. 10.1080/10481881409348781.

Optional:

Ghent, E. (1992). Foreword to *Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Skolnick, N.J. & Warshaw, S. Analytic Press; Hillsdale, NJ.

Goals: Students will gain an overview of the core ideas underlying the Relational turn.

Week 2: Theoretical Antecedents: Object Relations

This week's readings explore theoretical antecedents of Relational Psychoanalysis in the Object Relations theories of Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn, and Donald Winnicott.

Klein, M. (1946). Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms, *IJP*, 27, 99-110.

Fairbairn, R.W. (1958). On the nature and aim of psychoanalytic treatment. *IJP*, 39, 374-385.

Winnicott, D.W. (1960). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *IJP*, 41, 586-595.

Optional:

Greenberg, J. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983). Object Relations and Psychoanalytic Models. In *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Mass. 9 – 20.

Goal: Students will understand the contribution of object relations theories in the development of relational psychoanalysis.

Week 3: Interpersonal Theory and The Self in Psychoanalysis

Interpersonal theories contributed to the development of relational thought in placing real relationships and the experience of self at the forefront of psychoanalytic inquiry. Self-psychology, though advancing on a separate trajectory, dovetailed with these core concerns.

Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), Interpersonal Psychoanalysis. *In Object Relational and Psychoanalytic Theory*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. pp. 79-115.

Mitchell, S.A. (1991). Contemporary perspectives on self: Toward an integration. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 1, 121-147

Optional:

Morrison, A.P. (1994). The breadth and boundaries of a self-psychological immersion in shame: A one-and-a-half-person perspective. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 4, 19-35.

Goals: Students will understand the contribution of interpersonal theory and the psychology of the self to the development of the relational paradigm as well as the tensions between the differing contributing perspectives.

Week 5: Feminism and the Relational Turn

The Feminists, a group of theorists with broad multi-disciplinary backgrounds interrogated traditional psychoanalytic, developmental, and socio-cultural notions of gender and sexuality, contributing depth and complexity to the relational vision of human subjectivity and its myriad expressions. Their early queries, which were grounded in the zeitgeist of their time, anticipated the contemporary discourse on intersectionality, race and difference.

Benjamin, J. (1988) *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*, Chapter 1. Pantheon, 1988.

Dimen, M. (1995). The Third Step: Freud, the Feminists, and Postmodernism. *Am.J. Psychoanal.* 55/4: 303-319.

Harris, A. (1991). Gender as Contradiction. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 1(2):197-224.

Optional:

Gonzalez, F. (2012). Loosening the Bonds: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of the Group. *Stud. Gend.Sex.*, 4, 253-267

Week 5: The Influence of Constructivism and Ferenczi's Innovations

Social constructivism laid the philosophical groundwork for the relational turn by challenging positivism and classical assumptions about analytic knowledge, objectivity, and authority. Ferenczi's long suppressed writings sketched out a radical model of mutual influence and elasticity of technique.

Hoffman, I.Z. (1991). Toward a social-constructivist view of the psychoanalytic situation. *Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, 1, 74-105.

Aron, L. and Harris, A (2010). Sandor Ferenczi: Discovery and Rediscovery. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 7, 5-42.

Optional:

Hoffman, I.Z. (1992). Some practical implications of a social-constructivist view of the analytic situation. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 2, 287-304.

Goals: Students will understand the contributions of constructivism and Ferenczi's work on the development of relational thought.

Week 5: Multiplicity and Dissociation: A New Model of Mind

Consistent with the post-modern ethos, relational theory challenged the notion of mind as unitary and advanced a theory of mind as a kaleidoscope of shifting self-states. Dissociation came to be seen as an organizing factor in normal psychic processes and as a defensive reaction to trauma.

Davies, J.M. (1996). Linking the "pre-analytic" with the postclassical: Integration, dissociation and the multiplicity of unconscious process. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 4, 553-576.

Bromberg, P. (1996). Standing in the spaces: The multiplicity of self and the psychoanalytic relationship. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 32, 509-535.

Optional

Ndlovu, S, (2012) "I Am More (Than Just) Black": Contesting Multiplicity Through Conferring and Asserting Singularity in Narratives of Blackness', in Ruthellen Josselson, and Michele Harway (eds), *Navigating Multiple Identities: Race, Gender, Culture, Nationality, and Roles*. online edn, Oxford Academic,

Mitchell, S.A. (1993). One Self or Many? In *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books.

Goals: Students will learn how relational theory posited a new model of mind based on multiplicity and dissociation.

Week 6: Enactment and Emergent Experience: A New Theory of Process

Relational theory reconceptualized the analytic process as a dialogue between two individuals who are never fully aware of their own unconscious conflicts, blind spots, and contributions. As a result, dissociated and unformulated experiences are inevitably brought to life, or enacted, in the relational matrix.

Stern, D. B. (1993). Unformulated experience. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 19, 71-99

Bromberg, P.M. (2000). Potholes on the royal road: Or is it an abyss? *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 36, 5-28.

Optional

Layton, L. (2006). Racial identities, racial enactments, and normative unconscious processes. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 75 (1): 237-69.

Bass, A. (2003). "E: enactments in psychoanalysis: Another medium, another message. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 13, 657-675.

Goals: Students will learn about the role of enactment in relational theory.

Part II: The Early Relational Conversation: Clinical Implications of the Relational Revision

Week 7: Interaction: Mutuality, Asymmetry and the Analyst's Subjectivity

This week's readings explore the early relational view of the analytic project as a meeting of minds in an encounter that is mutual, asymmetric, and defined by the irreducible subjectivity of both partners.

Aron, L. (1991) The patient's experience of the analyst's subjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 1(1), 29-51

Renik, O. (1993). Analytic interaction: Conceptualizing technique in light of the analyst's irreducible subjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 62, 555-571.

Optional

Knight, Z. (2013). Black client, white therapist: working with race in psychoanalytic psychotherapy in South Africa. *Int. J. Psychoanal*, 94 (1) 17-31.

Greenberg, J. (1996). Theoretical models and the analysts' neutrality. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 22, 87-106.

Goals: Students will learn about the relational vision of the analytic dyad as a mutual and asymmetric meeting of minds and will consider the implications of this perspective in the therapeutic matrix.

Week 8: Therapeutic Action, Paradox and Negotiation

Relational theory critiqued the notion of objective truth and analytic authority and reconceptualized therapeutic action as a process of negotiating wishes and needs and holding paradox.

Mitchell, S.A. (1991). Wishes, needs, and interpersonal negotiations, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 11, 147-176.

Pizer, S. (1992). The negotiation of paradox in the analytic process. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 2, 215-240.

Optional:

Slavin, M. and Kreigman, D. (1998): Why the analyst needs to change. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 8, 247-284.

Ghent, E. (1992). Process and paradox. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 2, 135-159.

Goals: Students will learn about the relational view of the analytic encounter as process, paradox, and negotiation.

Week 9 : Intersubjectivity: Developmental, Clinical, and Theoretical Perspectives

Jessica Benjamin theorized that the capacity to recognize self and other as separate and equal subjects, or the capacity for intersubjectivity, is a core developmental and therapeutic achievement. Intersubjective self-psychologists theorized that mind is inextricably embedded in an intersubjective field. From yet another perspective, Ogden focused on the analyst's reverie as she works with intersubjective facts in "the analytic third."

Benjamin, J. (1990) Recognition and destruction: An outline of intersubjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 7, 33-47.

Stolorow, R. (1995). An intersubjective view of self-psychology. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 3, 393-400.

Ogden, T. (1994) The analytic third: Working with intersubjective clinical facts. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 75: 3-19.

Goals: Students will gain an understanding of different perspectives on intersubjectivity.

Week 10: The Analysts' Use of Self

Relational theory posits that it is incumbent on the analyst, as subjective participant, to continually consider her unconscious impact and use of self. We explore a series of seminal papers that explore expressiveness, restraint, holding, and erotic disclosure.

Slochower, J. (1996). Holding and the fate of the analyst's subjectivity. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 6, 323-354.

Mitchell, S.A. (2000). Intersubjectivity: Between expressiveness and restraint in the analytic relationship. In *Relationality: From Attachment to intersubjectivity*. New York: Routledge.

Maroda, K. (1999). Creating an intersubjective context for self-disclosure. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*. 69, 474-489.

Davies, J.M. (1994). Love in the afternoon: a relational reconsideration of desire and dread in the countertransference. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 4, 153-170.

Goals: Students will understand the relational coconceptualization of the analyst's use of self as it pertains to expressiveness, restraining, holding, and erotic disclosures.

Week 11: Working Through Impasse

From the relational perspective, the analytic process is marked by continual cycles of rupture and repair, stalemates and negotiations in which the "third" or dialogic space is lost and regained. This week's readings explore different conceptualizations of impasse.

Davies, J.M. (2004). Whose Bad Objects Are We Anyway? *Psychoanalytic Dial.*, 14(6):711-732.

Harris, A. (2009). "You Must Remember This". *Psychoanalytic Dial.*, 19(1):2-21.

Optional

Ringstrom, P. (1998), Therapeutic impasses in contemporary psychoanalytic treatment: revisiting the double bind hypothesis. *Psychoanalytic Dial.*, 8: 297-316.

Goals: Students will learn about relational views on impasse.

Part III: The Widening Scope of Relational Inquiry, Intersectionality and the Social Turn

The early relationalists came of age in a time of social and political change. They began to interrogate culture, gender, sexuality, and race as core elements of identity and subjectivity, too often neglected by psychoanalytic inquiry and dissociated within the therapeutic encounter. In recent years there has been a marked turn towards the social and a deepened and urgent reconsideration of race, gender, sexuality, and the intersectionality of identity. In this final section we will read early articles and more contemporary pieces that explore and expand on these critical themes.

Class 12: Intersectionality and Gender

Belkin, M. (2021). Toward an Intersectional Psychoanalysis of Race, Gender, and Sexuality. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*. 57:2, 206-227

Dimen, M. (1991). Deconstructing difference: Gender, splitting, and transitional space. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 1 (3), 335-352

Goldner, V. (2011). Trans: Gender in Free Fall. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 21, 159-171.

Saketopoulou, Avgi. (2015). Mourning the Body as Bedrock: Developmental Considerations in Treating Transsexual Patients Analytically. *J. Am Psychoanal Assoc*, 62(5): 773-806.

Optional readings:

Sam Guzzardi. (2022) Nicki, Nicholas, Nicole: Play as Relational Therapeutic Action on the Transgender Edge. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 32:2, pages 175-190.

Goals: Students will be introduced to intersectionality and gain an understanding of the ways in which gender has been conceptualized by relational psychoanalysts.

Class 13: Sexuality — I have presented a range of readings on Sexuality, from early articles to more current inquiries. The class will review and choose the articles they are most interested in reading in this section.

Stein, R. (1998). The Enigmatic Dimension of Sexual Experience: The “Otherness” of Sexuality and Primal Seduction. *Psychoanalytic. Q.*, 67(4):594-625.

Frommer, M.S. (2006). On the Subjectivity of Lustful States of Mind. *Psychoanalytic. Dial.*, 16(6): 639-664.

Davies, J.M. (2009). Between the disclosure and foreclosure of erotic transference-countertransference: Can psychoanalysis find a place for adult sexuality? *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. 747-766

Additional/Alternative Readings:

Atlas, G. (2018). Has Sexuality Anything to Do with Relationality? *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 18, 330-339.

Saketopoulou, A. (2020). Risking sexuality beyond consent: overwhelm and traumatizations that incite. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 89(4):771-811.

Blechner, M. (1993), Homophobia in psychoanalytic writing and practice. *Psychoanalytic Dial.*, (3), 627-637.

Goals: Students will explore a range of relational views on sexuality, querying the enigmatic, the lustful, the erotic, and the potential role of trauma in sexuality.

Class 14 and 15: Race:

Leary, K. (1995). "Interpreting in the Dark". *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 12(1):127-140.

White, K.P. (2013). Surviving Hating and Being Hated: Some Personal Thoughts about Racism from a Psychoanalytic Perspectives. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 18, 401-42

Suchet, M. (2004). A Relational Encounter with Race. *Psychoanalytic Dial.*, 14(4):423-438.

Altman, N. (2000). Black and White Thinking. *Psychoanalytic Dial.*, 10(4):589-605.

Yi, K. (2023). Asian American Experience: The Illusion of Inclusion and the Model Minority Stereotype. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 43, 45-59.

Levine, L. (2022). Interrogating Race, Shame and Mutual Vulnerability: Overlapping and Interlapping Waves of Relation, 32, 99-113.

Shaw, D. (202). When Racialized Ghosts Refuse to Become Ancestors: Tasting the "Blood of Recognition" in Racial Melancholia and Mixed-Race Identities. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 32, 584-597

Goals: Students will become familiar with early papers interrogating race and its role in the transference countertransference matrix. Additional readings offer important contemporary expansions on race in psychoanalysis.