

Journal Review: *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* V. 14, 3, 1994 "Contemporary Kleinian Psychoanalysis"

Ed. Helen Schoenhals, Dr.Med.; Reviewed by Eileen Keller, Ph.D.

Reading this issue of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, which is devoted to contemporary Kleinian psychoanalysis, gives dramatic emphasis to the different ways Kleinian and American analysts think about and speak to patients. I was particularly struck by three. There is an emphasis on spatial metaphors in the language of interpretation used in these papers that seems to be grounded in the sense of conviction all of the authors represented here seem to share, that psychology is firmly rooted in physical experience. Second, these analysts seem to treat the manifest content of the sessions reported almost as a dream. Their attention goes to attempting to understand and put into words the unconscious and symbolic content of the manifest content with particular attention to tracking the shifting projections of the unconscious experience of the analytic relationship revealed by the manifest content of the session. Third, the minutiae of the analytic relationship is examined carefully for tiny and fluctuating enactments that are read as repetitions, not of actual experiences, but symbolically generated experiences that are treated more as screen memories than actual repetitions. It is striking that all of the contributions (excepting the overview on Kleinian thinking and Schafer's commentary) are predominantly clinical. For the Kleinians, theory rests on clinical work and the case examples are considered to be the necessary basis for any construction about mental functioning. This collection of papers offers the American reader a complex taste of the very different way British Kleinian analysts view patients.

After Schoenhals, the issue editor, gives a brief orientation to the organizing principle of contemporary Kleinian work, which she describes as the tension and alternation between the two basic psychological positions, paranoid-schizoid and depressive, Helen Spillius offers a lengthy, densely packed, historical synthesis of Klein's important innovations and contributions to psychoanalytic theory and technique. Her review puts to rest some of the common fallacies and myths about Klein and her work that interfere, in the United States, with the serious consideration due her. For example, Klein's view of the development of the inner world is often misrepresented as minimizing or denying the role of the actual parents. In fact, Spillius tells us that Klein believed the real parents provided important mitigating influences modifying the anxieties in the child arising from inherently sadistic fantasies. Klein saw both constitutional factors and the child's active psychological life as extremely important in development, but did not herself take this to minimize the actual parent's importance in the child's life. Spillius also gives a succinct view of the elaboration of Klein's work by Bion. She describes his major clinical contribution of the concept of the container/contained, a model of the development of mental understanding and of the modification of thoughts and feelings by thinking. Spillius views Bion's container/contained concept as a demonstration of the importance of the external object. While reviewing the concept of projective identification, Spillius identifies the problems associated with limiting the concept to that involv-

ing actually influencing the other. She believes that the term is most useful as a general term, which includes different motives for use of projective identification; for example, controlling the object, evacuation, acquiring good attributes, and cementing togetherness. She suggests that the specific type of projective identification described as having a component of real influence on the other be named evocatory projective identification as a way of differentiating behavior from ideation.

Britton, Roth and Sodre contributed papers examining different types of defensive constellations that lead to pathological organizations. Pathological organizations are considered to be different ways of freezing alternation between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions which rely on significant distortions of reality and result in disturbances in symbolic thinking. Britton describes his patient as a "refugee from the external and internal world" whose psychic safety is based on simultaneous denial or disavowal of internal and external reality. The dream given in the paper illustrates this dramatically as the patient dreams first that tigers are a danger to others, then, that in the next field over the tigers have become a danger to him, and then that he lies perfectly still under the fence between the two dangers, frozen into Never-Never Land. Sodre describes two obsessive constructions, obsessional certainty and obsessional doubt, that both serve the defensive function of warding off the conflicts of the oedipal position. Roth's patient is frozen in a pathological organization that is based on an early identification

with a false object, resulting in an increase of idealization and identification at the moment of a realistic perception of the object as fraudulent in order to ward off the loss of the ideal object, into which so much of the self has been projected.

The next three papers, by Steiner, Feldman and Cycon, focus on technical issues. Steiner describes the use of analyst centered interpretations with patients who come to analysis for purposes of reenacting rather than understanding. He views a patient centered interpretation as too threatening to the patient's fragile illusions of psychic safety and uses the analyst centered interpretation as a way of containing the psychic truth the patient cannot yet bear to understand in relation to himself. Feldman and Cycon present clinical examples of evocative projective identification. Cycon examines the subtle pressure exerted on the analyst to engage in defensive sadomasochism and the entrenched quality this defensive organization can have when used as a defense against psychic pain. Feldman describes the gradual enveloping of the analyst by the patient's frightened fantasy of a reprehensible seduction in the consulting room, as each effort of his to interpret the material was twisted into a confirmation of the patient's fearful fantasy.

Schoenhals concludes the clinical contributions with a clinical vignette used to illustrate the impact on her work, as a classically trained German analyst, of supervision from a Kleinian analyst. Her description of the impact of the supervision on her work illustrates the third of the points made above about the Kleinian perspective: "The additional perspective that

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helped me most had nothing to do with the content of conflict—for example, whether to interpret her aggressive feelings or her avoidance of the oedipal situation—but rather with a point of view that took into consideration the fact that all of her verbal and nonverbal communications were externalized and split—up bits and pieces of her relationship with me” (p. 460).

The issue concludes with a thoughtful discussion and critique by Roy Schafer of the point of view represented by these papers. While Schafer states that the Kleinian and American lines of development are so divergent as to be “incommensurable” (p. 475) (having no common basis), I think that this collection of works by contemporary Kleinians demonstrates the rich results of continuing in dialogue against the tension of seemingly (and perhaps truly) unresolvable differences. It is clear from these papers that there has been tremendous influence across the at one time huge divide between the Kleinian group in the British Society and the so called B group. Perhaps we, here in the Bay area with many mental health professionals showing a growing interest in international perspectives in psychoanalysis, can benefit from the example set by the British and engage in “controversial discussions” rather than schisms. In that vein, I encourage all of our members to attend the day with John Steiner coming up on April 1. ■

Schoenhals, H. (1994) Kleinian Supervision in Germany: A Clinical Example. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 14, 451–461.

Schafer, R. (1994) Commentary: Traditional Freudian and Kleinian Freudian Analysis. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 14,3, 1994, 462–475.