

Since its earliest beginnings, the relationship of psychoanalysis to the world at large has been a fraught one. It is well known how Freud was at first shunned and ostracised by his psychiatric colleagues, and how he persevered with his work for many years in almost total isolation. Then, after the First World War, there was a sudden explosion of popular interest, in psychoanalysis. In those few years Freud was established as one of the major influences on twentieth century thought. One might think that Freud, and the small group of analysts who had gathered around him in his years of isolation, would have welcomed this recognition and attention. In fact it brought with it problems hardly less difficult, which continue to plague analysis to this day.

The major problem has been how to preserve and foster the development of genuine psychoanalytic theory and practice, in contradistinction to the myriad ways in which Freud's ideas have been borrowed, adapted and transformed by this new-found army of followers.

Freud's response, with some regrets perhaps, was to try to close off psychoanalysis from the outside world. 'You can believe me when I tell you that we do not enjoy giving an impression of being members of a secret society and of practicing a mystical science,' he wrote in 1935, 'yet we have been obliged to recognize and express as our conviction that no one has the right to join in a discussion of psychoanalysis who has not had particular experiences which can only be obtained by being analysed oneself.' (New Introductory Lectures, quoted by Malcolm, p.20.)

Of course Freud could be no more successful than Canute in trying to hold back the tide of discussion and argument his ideas had aroused among the wider public. Yet he did have the power to try to insulate the professional organisations of psychoanalysis and barricade them to the curiosity of outsiders.

None is more heavily defended than the Freud Archive, a vast collection of unpublished letters and documents by and about Freud, gathered since the end of the Second World War. These have been locked away in the Library of Congress in Washington under conditions that make the government's '30 year rule' for Cabinet Papers look like reckless radicalism. Some of these papers are not to be released until the year 2102! The Archive is presided over by one of the elders of the psychoanalytic establishment: the larger than life figure of K.R. Eissler. Malcolm explains, its 'head, originator and only active member' (p.6). It contains material of the greatest interest about Freud and the history of analysis; but attempts by historians and students of psychoanalysis to gain access to this material have been of no avail. Scholars have been advised, as Malcolm puts it, 'to cash in their chips' and work on some less jealously guarded figure. Until, that is, the advent of Masson.

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson first appeared upon the psychoanalytic scene in the mid-seventies. He created an immediate impression, as Malcolm describes:

He was analyst-in-training at the Toronto Institute of Psychoanalysis, but he wasn't like the other analytical candidates one sees at congresses - quiet and serious and somewhat cowled-looking young psychiatrists who stand about together like shy, plain girls at dances, talking to one another with exaggerated animation. Masson (to continue the metaphor) not only has a rudiously steered clear of the wallflowers but was among some of the most attractive and desirable partners at the ball. (p.5)

It was as if Indiana Jones had foresaken anthropology for psychoanalysis.

At an International psychoanalytic conference in 1974, Masson and too good to be true. He embodied all that Eissler was cherished in wildness - qualities that the early analysts evidently had in abundance but however, were not so taken with Masson. Though they acknowledged him to be indiscreet. But despite the warnings, Eissler was soon planning to make the Freud Museum which was to be set up in Freud's house in Hampstead when Anna Freud (who was then living there) died.

In the meantime, however, and on the basis of some of the material to which he had gained access, Masson began to develop and express views development. In 1981, reports of these ideas began to appear in the New York Times, and matters were brought to a head. Eissler, in a glare of establishment, was forced to recant. Masson's position at the Archive was...
antagonising his only friend and confidant, Fleiss, and to make peace with the psychiatric profession.

Masson's own estimation of the significance of his work is of megalomaniac proportions: His discoveries are destined to destroy the foundations of psychoanalysis: 'they would have to recall every patient since 1901. It would be like the Pinto.' (reported by Malcolm, p.19)

Masson's book has now appeared, and it is quite clear that it is not going to have any such effect. The book is bad. Not that it is deficient in the narrow sense. On the contrary, the evidence with extraordinary zeal and diligence. He is quite clearly obsessed with Freud's early history in general and with the seduction theory in particular. But this very obsessiveness prevents him from being able to assess and interpret the evidence in an objective and entirely unconvincing way.

The main argument of the book concerns Emma Eckstein, one of Freud's early hysterical patients. Freud discussed her case in detail with Fleiss, who had the bizarre theory that the nose is the source of hysterical problems. Freud allowed Fleiss to perform an operation, but it was bungled - Fleiss left a length of gauze in her nose, which caused serious bleeding and pain, before it was eventually discovered and removed by another surgeon. Freud, as his letters show, was keen to absolve Fleiss from blame as far as possible, and he entertains the idea that the bleeding was primarily due to psychological causes.

Masson jumps to the conclusion that Freud developed his psychological account of hysteria in order to preserve his friendship with Fleiss and to remove himself from his responsibilities as a psychiatrist. However, the majority of Freud's letters presented by Masson do not support such a dramatic interpretation. All they show is that Freud's intellectual development in this period was entirely determined by such motives is absurd and incredible.

The same goes for Masson's other major revelation, which concerns the reaction of Freud and other leaders of the psychoanalytic movement to Perenzel's last work and his death in 1930. These events have only a tenuous connection with the theme of the seduction theory. The interest in Freud's judgement does seems to have been influenced by his desire to preserve Fleiss's feelings, and he seems as much concerned about this as with the welfare of his patient. But Masson's contention that Freud's intellectual development in this period was entirely determined by such motives is absurd and incredible.

However, Freud's colleague and friend Breuer had adopted a different approach in his treatment of his patient 'Anna O.' With the help of hypnosis he began to investigate the memories and feelings associated in
her mind with her symptoms and their history. Freud took up this approach and developed it greatly.

His investigations soon began to reveal ideas and 'memories' of traumatic incidents - 'seductions' that the patient had apparently suffered in childhood at the hands of an adult, often a parent. As Masson, the first psychiatrist who believed his patients were telling the truth.' (p.xviii) Thus Freud came to adopt the seduction theory.

However, doubts soon began to grow in Freud's mind; and in 1897, as we have seen, he concluded that these 'memories' were fantasies. Looking back more than a quarter of a century later he wrote:

when ... I was at last obliged to recognise that these scenes of seduction had never taken place, and that they were only fantasies which my patients had made up or which I myself had perhaps forced on them. I was for some time completely at a loss. My confidence alike in my technique and in its results suffered a severe blow. ... When I had pulled myself together, I was able to draw the right conclusions from my discovery: namely, that the neurotic symptoms were not related directly to actual events but to wishful fantasies, and that as far as the neurosis was concerned psychical reality was of more importance than material reality. I do not believe even now that I forced the seduction fantasies on my patients, that I 'suggested' them. I had in fact stumbled for the first time upon the Oedipus Complex, which was later to assume such an overwhelming importance, but which I did not recognise as yet in its disguise of fantasy. (An Autobiographical Study, quoted by Malcolm, p.17)

Thus, according to Freud, the abandonment of the seduction theory was crucial to the subsequent discoveries of psychoanalysis. Masson is of a different view; 'by shifting the emphasis from an actual world of sadness, misery, and cruelty to an internal stage on which actors performed invested dramas for an invisible audience of their own creation, Freud began a trend away from the real world that is at the root of the present-day sterility of psychoanalysis.' (p.144)

Others, too, have been uneasy on this score: Reich, the objects of relations school, and Laing and his associates have all made similar criticisms, as Malcolm points out. And they are not without basis. Too often, it is true, psychoanalysis as actually practiced is unconcerned with the patient's inner and subjective response. 'We're not so concerned with what really happened,' an analyst tells Malcolm, 'we're concerned with how it got worked into the patient's inner life.' (p.57)

Masson and others are right, I think, to criticise of these subjective sort of psychology. There are good reasons, however, to believe that Freud himself was never satisfied with this approach. This becomes clearer when one looks at the way in which he responded to his discovery that the 'seductions' were mere fantasies. He did not rest content with the lives - he went on to ask why this should be so. He searched for the reasons for the was led on to the discovery of infantile sexuality and the Oedipus Complex, of which these fantasies are the expression.

I see fantasy in this way is not to see it as a purely subjective and inner phenomenon. On the contrary, fantasy is the reflection and the expression of real and objective aspects of a person's psychology - real wishes and desires which exist whether or not they are consciously willed, or not they are willed. 'Psychical reality', in other words, is not a purely inner realm, beyond the reach of discovery - but not (usually) a literal and direct truth. Certainly, Masson presents no evidence whatever to support his view that the fantasies of seduction revealed in analysis generally signify whether actual episodes of seduction in a person's past and it seems unlikely that such evidence will be forthcoming. But such fantasies should not be dismissed as mere lies and delusions for all that. Rather, Freud's theory suggests that we should regard them as the distorted reflections of objectively real reactions and feelings - distorted reflections of infantile sexual desires.

Moreover, the indications are that Freud was never content to stop there. As Laplanche and Pontalis observe, 'Freud could never resign himself to treating fantasy as the pure and simple outgrowth of the spontaneous sexual life of the child. He is forever searching, behind the fantasy, for whatever has founded it in its reality.' (The Language of Psychoanalysis, p.406) Although the phenomenon of infantile sexuality was one of Freud's most striking discoveries, it is important not to ignore the role that the pre-existing family constellation plays in the development of the child's feelings. These feelings, as well as having an inner source, are also elicited - called forth and developed - by outward conditions.

Moreover, it seems that Oedipal tensions can begin even before the child is born. The child, as it develops in the womb, absorbs more and more of the mother's attention; and the father may begin to feel rivalrous with it. The child's own feelings and actions, when these develop, must certainly make their contribution, but they are not alone responsible for the scene that evolves, nor is there anything inherent in the psychanalytic method that says they must be so.

It is essential to recognise the objective aspect of fantasy in order to grasp the practical side of psychoanalysis its therapeutic role and its critical dimension. Because fantasy reflects realities beyond mere consciousness and subjectivity, grasping and understanding its meaning is a pain in objective knowledge. It makes one aware of the drives and desires shaping one's life, and one's consciousness and thus beyond one's will. And becoming conscious of these hidden forces is the necessary first step towards gaining control over one's life (though it is only a first step).

Moreover, so far as fantasy reflects a reality beyond the 'inner world' - in so far as it reflects the realities of the family and the wider society - it provides insight into the effects of these upon the individual. Indeed, the psychoanalyst is uniquely well placed to observe the effects of institutions - the 'hidden injuries' they inflict - the damage they do which is absorbed inwardly by the individual in self-suppression and self-segmentation. The Freudian unconscious, in other words, both reveals reality and yet at the same time distorts and conceals it.

These are some of the issues raised by the books I have been discussing. Although Malcolm's book is mainly reportage, the sharpness of his intelligence is always apparent, and lifts her book way above the usual
journalistic level. Masson's book, by contrast, is weighed down with all
the baggage of scholarly references and footnotes, but its main interest is
as scandal and gossip. Although Masson's purpose is to raise the issue of
the nature of fantasy and its relation to reality, it is clear that he has
no proper grasp of these concepts as they figure in psychoanalysis. The
irony in this, as Malcola is aware, is that Masson was no 'outsider,' after
all, but a trained analyst who was welcomed at the very heart of
psychoanalysis.

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Notes
1. Hegel's account of the concept of force, and the way it is 'solicited from
without' is illuminating here. See Phenomenology of Spirit, ch. 3.
2. This point is interestingly portrayed in the 'Prologue' to Pasolini's
film Oedipus Rex.

Stephen Grossberg. Studies of Mind and Brain. Boston Studies in the
Philosophy of Science, Vol. 70, Dordrecht Reidel, 1982. $59.50 cloth:
$23.95 paper.

Mark De Mey. The Cognitive Paradigm. Sociology of the Sciences Monograph.
Dordrecht Reidel, 1982. $43.50 cloth.

Stephen Grossberg has put together an interesting and useful collection of
thirteen reprints from his 63 articles in mathematical psychology. They
include studies of the neural principles of learning, memory, perception
development, and motor control. The title page includes the sub-topic
'cognition' as a separate item, while the covers refer to an intriguing
hybrid 'cognition and motor control'. The back cover boldly refers to some
rather strange entities - 'neutral substrates' and 'neutral principles';
the well-known ingenuity of cognitivists cannot fail to invent them if they
do not already exist.

The opening article, number 50 in the oeuvres, dates from 1980 and
could hardly be bettered as a curtain-raiser: "How Does a Brain Build a
Cognitive Code?". The next twelve are dated 1968, 1974, 1972, 1972, 1975,
in the oeuvres, the author asserts: 'I needed all the conceptual and
mathematical machinery that I had been accumulating over the past twenty
years. The lesson of the article is that all the pieces fit together'.
In a sense, the reader can begin the collection over again. He will not
fail to note that in the References of this article, the entry under
Grossberg 1978(a) is 'This volume'. Nice one, that! Making all the pieces
fit together.

This deliberate explicitness is a feature of the arguments of the
collection as well as its arrangement. Each article is prefaced by a clear
statement of the issues to be tackled. These prefaces themselves, read
continuously, will put the reader into the picture, about neural networks,
attention, memory and adaptation and much more. Moreover each article
retains its own extensive invaluable references.

As all art has been said to aspire to the condition of music, psychology aspires to the condition of physics. Unless we tolerate an
unbridgeable gulf, between them, how can intelligent (not just clever)
behaviour not be a consequence of physical states? But that is not to say
that the explanation is restricted to physical concepts, narrowly defined.
"Physical" concepts includes theoretical terminology extended from
mathematics, from electronic equipment, from 'information theory' to
explain mind and brain functioning. Grossberg's claim is (p.XIV) that
mathematical laws:

have always possessed a vivid interpretation as neural networks.
The formal mathematical language thereby bridges the gap between
macroscopic psychology and microscopic physiology, such as a
mathematical bridge exists between thermodynamics and statistical
mechanics.

As is to be expected Grossberg's method involved a great deal of
thought-experiment to derive adaptive behavioural principles from
environmental pressures, and the reorganization of data in terms of
principles rather than experimental procedures. He claims that it detects
information that eludes experimental techniques. "How does a brain build a
cognitive code?" deals with the system's adaptive response to a (changing)
environment, bearing in mind that some properties of both response
mechanism and environment must remain the same.

The generation of the answer is in terms of cells, a cell population,
which function in response to input to form patterns which determine
subsequent possible patterns of output etc. (qualitatively reminiscent of
how Descartes thought the pineal gland obtained, retained, and reproduced a
trace/pattern of an external object). Grossberg allows himself to refer to
"behaviourally meaningful inputs", so, obviously, another account of how
attention is aroused is assumed. Grossberg frequently illustrates (rather
than tests) his model by phenomena found in the world. Having explained
the dipole arrangement (cf. p.18) where channels compete before eliciting a
net on-response or off-response, he refers to conclusions from animal
behaviourist research. In particular, reducing J units of shock to J/2
units is less rewarding than reducing J/2 units of shock to 0 units,
despite the equivalence mathematically, an analgesic effect is due to
intracellular adaptation of the chemical transmitters. Where organisms are
regions of chemical activity, the cognitivist provides algorithms of the
information process; the question is in what sense these are actually
functional mechanisms. In another form, the question might be one about
the ontological level of Grossberg's ingenious mechanisms, which
require expressions like error, mismatch, competition, suppression, fear, reward,
to make them work ('motivate'), and give sense to their input/output
conditions. Large general behavioural facts provide enormous plausibility
to such mechanisms. We all press levers when lights go off (car driving?)
and in Grossberg terms - the offset of the light not only turns off the
cells that are turned on by the light, but also selectively turns on cells
that will be transiently active after the light is shut off. These
will activate the motor commands leading to the lever press". Or not, I
suppose. One has the impression that phenomenologically described
behaviour sets the cognitivist his problem, and that description governs