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Disappearance and Return: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Past

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Disappearance and Return:
Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Past

by

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**DISAPPEARANCE AND RETURN:
PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE PAST**

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Abstract

This is a theoretical dissertation about the psychology of returning to the past. The purpose of this work is to examine the growth potential of psychological returns and to clarify and contribute to psychoanalytic theory. Special attention is given to involuntary memories, or integrative returns, which are illustrated by four vignettes taken from a mixture of sources. These experiences provide a contrast to familiar pathological returns, such as the return of the repressed and the repetition compulsion. Accordingly, generative returns are differentiated from non-generative returns. With this distinction in mind, psychoanalytic theories are reappraised. A variety of psychoanalytic concepts and practices are reinterpreted as instances of generative returns, including (but not limited to) Freud's early cathartic method, transference repetition, regression in the service of the ego, and regression to dependence. Other psychoanalytic concepts, particularly those stemming from the theories of Klein and Bion, are applied to the psychology of returning in general. The literature converges on some basic themes that cohere in each of the two classifications of returns, generative and non-generative. The following themes are prevalent in generative returns: expanded range of experience; rediscovery and resumed development; open interaction between different levels of organization; disorganization and reorganization; recognition; continuity; sense of individual truth; and reflective distance. By contrast, non-generative returns tend to eclipse meaning and have a non-elaborative character; these are experiences of discontinuity and fragmentation; they have a quality of "itness," and occur outside the borders of self-feeling, or the "I." Based on the complementary study of both experience and theory, it is possible to identify a typical sequence in generative returns. This sequence or progression constitutes a basic model of generative returns. Throughout this study, many generative returns follow a general progression from an initial phase of receptivity, to one

of reimmersion and reexperiencing, to a concluding phase of self-reflection and reconfiguration. This mode of returning in the psychological sphere is representative of a basic principle of psychological growth. The electronic version of this dissertation is freely accessible through the OhioLINK ETD center (<http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd/>).

Keywords: psychoanalysis; repetition; regression; involuntary memories; transitional phenomena; generative returns.

Preface

“The psyche is that which comes back, returns and reproduces itself” (Green, 2002, p. 160).

This dissertation is about the psychology of returning, which naturally features the past in one form or another. One can only return to or repeat something that has been. The central thesis of this work is that returning is a basic principle of psychological growth and well being; however, this is far from being always the case. As Green’s (2002) aphorism suggests, returning is ubiquitous in the psychological realm and encompasses a vast area of experience. It is an activity that may be volitional or involuntary, conscious or unconscious. This work explores these important distinctions as well as others to examine the growth potential of psychological returns.

In the sphere of the mind, returning primarily has to do with the retrieval, reproduction, and preservation of the past. In memory, for example, we may revisit the past through mental imagery and emotional reexperiencing. Returning is also a core ingredient of regression, which typically implies a return to earlier stages of development. In these forms, returning is a backward movement. The opposite is true in cases of repetition, however, as the past is repeated or enacted in a forward direction.

It is common for groups and societies to facilitate psychological returns, such as by creating memorials (Young, 1993). Many traditions and rituals bring a shared past to life in the context of an ever changing and sometimes unpredictable present. When successful, these practices hold groups together, generate meaning, and provide a basis for collective identity (Volkan, 2004). In our private lives, the past is often a silent presence that saturates daily

experience, according to our individual histories. We feel its effect, perhaps in a sensation of familiarity or in moments of recognition, but remain focused on the demands of the present.

The psychological importance of keeping our history alive is perhaps more evident when we are separated from our origins. Consider that thoughts of return are common to many Diasporas (Safran, 2005). The Jewish Diaspora has the return to the homeland as well as the continuation of a cultural and religious heritage that derives from the ancestral home; the continuation of that heritage depends on many returns. More recently, the African Diaspora is adopting the concept of Sankofa, which derives from the Akan people of West Africa. Literally translated, according to the Dubois Learning Center (n.d.), Sankofa reads, “It is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot.” The symbol for Sankofa is a mythological bird that paradoxically, “flies forward while looking backward with an egg (symbolizing the future) in its mouth” (Dubois Learning Center, n.d.). This idea speaks to the virtues of returning to our origins to revive and preserve the past in the interest of learning and growth.

Returning to origins is a central idea within psychoanalytic theories, particularly in the context of psychological pain. Historically, psychoanalytic theories seem to emphasize the pathological nature of returns to the relative neglect of their generative potential, though there are noteworthy exceptions. Despite this outward appearance, a close reading of the literature shows that these theories also provide a careful study of generative returns. In generative returns, the psychic past reoccurs in a manner that facilitates psychological growth, such as by expanding creativity and insight. In contrast to historical attention to pathological returns, this dissertation examines and builds on psychoanalytic theories to develop the thesis that psychological development and health often involves returning to our origins. Psychoanalytic literature, beginning with Freud, seems to support this thesis. Hence, in addition to examining

the role of returns in psychological growth and well being, this dissertation clarifies and contributes to psychoanalytic theories. Finally, this contribution on the generative potential of returns reveals similarities across psychoanalytic theories.

Section I

Generative Returns

Section I includes two chapters that ultimately serve to distinguish generative from non-generative returns. The first chapter surveys psychoanalytic concepts about returning and repetition; these are contrasted with Proust's (1982a, 1982b) descriptions of involuntary memories. The second chapter consists of several vignettes that exemplify integrative returns, a special category of generative returns. The vignettes provide the experiential groundwork for later theoretical chapters.

Chapter 1: Origins

We exist only by virtue of what we possess, we possess only what is really present to us, and many of our memories, our moods, our ideas sail away on a voyage of their own until they are lost to sight. Then we can no longer take them into account in the total which is our personality. But they know of secret paths by which to return to us. (Proust, 1982b, p. 497)

In his novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*,¹ Proust (1982a, 1982b) gives countless, eloquent renderings of involuntary memories. Strikingly clear images and sensations are evoked and return in full through secret paths. Proust's narrator, Marcel, for example, finds that many of his childhood memories are restored by the particular taste of a madeleine cookie soaked in tea. Such memories are distinct in their vibrant presence; we reexperience a living past with emotional vividness. In this way, we may recapture forgotten memories and moods. Proust emphasized that this form of remembering and reexperiencing is not the product of will or desire. It is precisely because chance encounters revive these memories (rather than personal volition) that he considered them authentic, or true memories. One could describe Proust as nostalgic. He emphasized the fruits of rediscovering lost time (i.e., of being freed from the order of time), proclaiming that, "true paradises are the paradises we have lost" (Proust, 1982b, p. 903). From this perspective, we experience paradise by recapturing the living presence of the past. Proust prized more than rapture, however; he was convinced that involuntary memories captured something of his essence and brought greater unity to his being (Bell, 2003). From this perspective, psychological returns have a generative quality.

¹ An alternative, more suitable translation of the title is *In search of lost time*.

Psychoanalytic Views on the Psychic Past

The persistence of the past in the sphere of the mind is also a central theme in psychoanalytic thought. Generations of psychoanalysts, beginning with Freud, have been concerned with how the past pervades and influences our present lives, especially in hidden ways. Freud (1930/1961) maintained that nothing in mental life truly expires; we preserve the past in the mind and “in suitable circumstances (when, for instance, regression goes back far enough) it can be once more brought to light” (p. 69). Much earlier, Freud (1900/1953) remarked on the indestructibility of the contents of mental life, “they are only capable of annihilation in the same sense as the ghosts in the underworld of the *Odyssey*—ghosts which awoke to new life as soon as they tasted blood” (p. 553n.). Freud’s (1937/1964) thoughts on reconstruction are also relevant. In comparison to the archaeologist, Freud writes, “the analyst works under better conditions and has more material at his command to assist him, since what he is dealing with is not something destroyed but something that is still alive” (p. 259). Psychoanalysis as a whole, it seems, is predicated on the idea that we are destined to reproduce past experiences throughout our lives, particularly those long lost to sight.

There is general agreement that the past endures in both conscious and unconscious mental life. The continuity of the past is most evident in conscious remembering, or declarative memory, whereby we reproduce the past in the mind (Loewald, 1971/1980). In this ordinary, representational memory, the past remains distinguished from the present. But beyond this, we recreate the past in less recognizable forms, such as in habitual, repetitive actions, characterological moods, dreams, and by returning to earlier modes of thought and perception. Here, there may be a sensation of familiarity born of repetition and revival, but without

knowledge of the origins of this feeling (as in procedural knowledge or memory). Still, the psychic past infuses the present, potentially expanding meaning and emotional depth.

A brief survey of some of Freud's central formulations reveals a dynamic psychic past that continually returns; rather than decay, the psychic past affects and pervades the present. For example, conceptions of psychopathology and symptom formation (e.g., the return of the repressed, deferred action, and regression) all portray the continued, though hidden, presence of the psychic past. Recall, for example, Breuer and Freud's (1893/1959) early formulation, "*hysterical patients suffer principally from reminiscences*" (p. 29, italics in original), that is, from the return of repressed, noxious memories and ideas. And on the role of regression in symptom formation, Freud (1917/1963), comments,

If reality remains relentless ... then [the libido] will finally be compelled to take the path of regression and strive to find satisfaction either in one of the organizations which it has already outgrown or from one of the objects which it has earlier abandoned. (p. 359)

Later, following World War I, Freud (1920/1955) would link regression to his speculative death instinct in an effort to explain the repetition of painful experiences. In Schafer's (1976) words, this neurotic repetition expresses conflict "blindly and in infinite variety . . . [giving] emotional life a static quality" (p. 44). The result is that nothing changes, Schafer continues, "the analysand lives essentially out of time" (p. 45). Here, returns signal a loss of life and growth. In the return of the repressed, libidinal regression, and neurotic repetition, returns tend to be involuntary and unconscious. The individual experiences symptoms rather than conscious memories, reexperiences without remembering, and repeats without recognizing that it is repetition.

Contemporary psychoanalytic theories, while a heterogeneous collection of distinct and sometimes conflicting theoretical outlooks, perpetuate Freud's emphasis on the preservation of the past in the mind. In general, contemporary analytic theories (e.g., object relations theories, relational theory, or control-mastery theory) have displaced Freud's emphasis on drive discharge, or stimulus reduction, with the establishment and maintenance of relationships, specifically, object relationships (Eagle, 2011). In Mitchell's (1988) language, "relationships with others, not drives [are] the basic stuff of mental life" (p. 2).

Contemporary models tend to ascribe the etiological core of psychopathology to the *persistence* of early modes of relating, an important aspect of which is attachment to old object ties. These early modes of relating might have been adaptive at one point, in that they enabled the individual to live through difficult circumstances, but they are maladaptive in later life insofar as they interfere with enriching and gratifying relationships (i.e., new object ties). In psychopathology, people largely experience later relationships in terms of early relationships, primarily to caregivers, which were in some respects harmful and traumatic. That is, psychopathology stems from excessive reliance on archaic modes of relating. The repetition of outdated, stereotyped modes of relating is often (though far from always) unconscious, or unformulated, despite being familiar.

In Eagle's (2011) review of contemporary analytic theory, the persistence of earlier modes of relating is a function of both learning (including procedural learning) and clinging to early object ties. In learning, we form general representations of self and other through repeated, prototypical interactions with primary objects; in turn, these representations inform our experience of and expectations for subsequent relationships. This relational learning, or implicit relational knowledge (Stern et al., 1998), has the added weight of emotional attachment. The

persistent clinging to early object ties, according to Mitchell (1988), provides a sense of needed “familiarity, safety, and connectedness” (p. 172). This general formulation of psychopathology (i.e., learning and clinging) is evident in Fairbairn’s (1952) internalized objects and object relations, Bowlby’s (1973) internal working models, Weiss’s (1993) unconscious pathogenic beliefs, and Mitchell’s relational configurations, for example. To be clear, these concepts are not identical, but do share the basic assumption that a significant aspect of psychopathology is due to continued and inflexible reliance on earlier modes of relating, or ways of being.

Comparing Proustian and Psychoanalytic Views

Proust and psychoanalysis both display a retrospective impulse, specifically with respect to the persistence of the past. At first glance, however, Proustian and psychoanalytic perspectives on the return of the past appear to be at odds. For Proust, the secret paths that enable isolated fragments of experience to return to life provide a happy reunion. In psychoanalysis, such secret paths form the basis of psychopathology. The return of the repressed, libidinal regression, and attachment to archaic object relations are the products of a fragmented mind, not an integrated personality. Rieff (1979), for example, argues that “the past, for [Freud], is condemned as permanency, burden, neurosis” (p. 187). This discrepancy between Proust and psychoanalysis reflects their different vantage points. Unlike Proust, psychoanalytic attention has tended to concentrate on the pathological nature of returns. Because psychoanalysis inevitably deals with disturbing experiences (i.e., with clinical material) the continuity of the past will acquire meaning and significance that is often unlike that of Proust’s. Psychoanalytic emphasis on neurotic forms of regression and repetition is reasonable given that analysts mainly developed their theories through treating patients.

Still, conceptualizations of treatment reveal commonalities between Proust and psychoanalysis. Consider that psychoanalytic treatment tends to rely on notions that depict various returns (e.g., abreaction, transference, and reconstruction). These returns lead to greater freedom and integration in the personality. To begin with, the fundamental rule or method of free association is a practice that enables unwanted or hidden thoughts and memories to re-enter conscious awareness, often with the aid of interpretation. The past also returns in the transference, where the analysand's hidden and forgotten impulses come to life and are reexperienced in relation to the analyst. Optimally, the analyst helps the analysand recognize her familiar experience as a reflection of the forgotten past, effectively transforming unconscious repetition into conscious recollection and so, bringing greater unity to the analysand's personality. Freud's (1912/1953) memorable remark on the transference conveys its significance to analytic treatment, "it is impossible to destroy anyone in absentia or in effigie" (p. 108). The reference to destruction symbolizes freedom from a past that haunts and constricts the present. Reconstructing or redescribing the analysand's experience ultimately allows her to reexperience and remember *differently*, that is, as informed by psychoanalytic understandings (Schafer, 1983, p. 194). In psychoanalytic treatment, what was hidden finds the light of recognition. In time, involuntary and unconscious returns are transformed into volitional and conscious actions, including acts of *re-collection*.

In the end, we may be surprised to find a fair degree of commonality between Proust and psychoanalysis. Both hope to reclaim the past, the former in search of paradise and unity, and the latter in search of freedom and integration. Both seek to cure the malady of lost time, the former through reexperiencing a living past in the present, and the latter through discovering the unacknowledged past in the present. In either case, a felt link between present and past is

restored, and a fragmented self is restored to a unitary being, more capable of true self experiencing (Winnicott, 1965).

Discovering and describing the ways in which the past is kept alive and how it continues to influence our present lives, particularly in terms of disrupting or interfering with our ability to live well, has been a central theme in psychoanalysis from the beginning and continues to this day. In many ways, to think psychologically is to think historically, to see the ways in which “what was, is, and what is, was” (Schafer, 1983, p. 196); and even when we are (trying) not to think psychologically, we seem unable to escape living historically. On the whole, it seems that if one could garner a psychoanalytic perspective on psychological returns, namely repetition, it would likely convey the following: involuntary (or disowned) and often unconscious repetition of difficult aspects of the past plays a central role in the formation and continuation of psychopathology; however, that very repetition may be put to use in a psychoanalytic treatment that transforms blind repetition into meaningful communication and change. In a printed version of a talk, “Waiting for Returns: Freud’s New Love,” Phillips (2006) writes, “the medium of the so-called cure of psychoanalysis is the patient’s capacity for repetition” (p. 209). In this way, repetition yields psychological growth.

The Search for Clarity and Common Ground

Multiple voices within psychoanalysis have described beneficial aspects of returns. In addition to considering regression as a pathogenic agent, Freud thought regression was an aspect of ordinary life, including dreaming and daydreaming, jokes, and creativity. Other examples include the notion of regression in the service of the ego (Kris, 1952), repetition as re-creation (Loewald, 1971/1980), benign regression (Balint, 1968), and regression to dependence (Bollas, 1987; Winnicott, 1955/1975). Although these formulations represent a range of theoretical

perspectives, there is a common thread: All suggest that under the right conditions returns may signal a (normal) process of mental growth and creativity.

Despite these important contributions, psychoanalysis has yet to adequately articulate an explicit theory or model of generative returns, which would counterbalance historical emphasis on those that are destructive. As it happens, we sometimes overlook similarities in novel theoretical developments, particularly when they arise in isolation from one another and from competing perspectives. This seems to be the case with respect to various contributions on the generative potential of returns. It is possible that the continued dispersal of these contributions has delayed full appreciation and systematic study of generative returns with respect to psychoanalytic theories (Inderbitzin & Levy, 2000; Knafo, 2002). Furthermore, continuing to subsume various returns under familiar terminology that have historically signified or emphasized psychopathology (e.g., regression and repetition) seems to muddle rather than clarify psychoanalytic theories; these concepts have perhaps been overloaded in this respect. A preference for conceptual consistency (that is, constancy) can sometimes obscure subject matter over time. One can imagine that well established connotations or definitions, like fixation points, might exert a retrograde pull on these concepts. Hence, we may benefit by coining a few new terms.

While there are reviews and studies on specific varieties of returns (e.g., Blum, 1994; Loewald, 1971/1980, 1981), there have been no previous attempts to take stock of what psychoanalytic theories have contributed to our understanding of returns in general, particularly with respect to their generative potential. It seems valuable to gain further clarity on a topic that cuts across so many typical distinctions (e.g., between psychopathology and health, old and new, replication and creativity, et cetera). A thorough study on this complex area should yield

important theoretical clarification, particularly on the place of returns in psychological growth and well being. Moreover, common ground in an otherwise diverse theoretical milieu will become more evident.

Two courses of action are useful at this point: first, to explore detailed experiences of returns, and second, to examine psychological theories that are particularly relevant to returns. With respect to the field of experience, a special category of returns (henceforth *integrative returns*) will help illuminate their generative potential. Proust's (1982a) involuntary memories, described at the start of this introduction, exemplify these integrative returns; this type of experience is particularly intriguing precisely because it provides a contrast to historical emphasis on pathological returns. In the next chapter, several vignettes portray examples of integrative returns, bringing greater clarity and life to our topic, without oversimplifying it.

After detailing the essential features of integrative returns, there follows a study and interpretation of pertinent literature, including Freudian theories, British Object Relations theories, as well as some contemporary American perspectives. This reappraisal involves two basic undertakings: the interpretation and application of theory. Several familiar psychoanalytic concepts and practices are reinterpreted as examples of generative returns. The application of psychoanalytic theories, such as those of Klein and Bion, to the psychology of returning will help to clarify and differentiate these phenomena. The complementary actions of exploring experience, on the one hand, and literature on the other, supports a general classification of generative and non-generative returns.

There is general uniformity in the progression of generative returns that various psychoanalytic theories describe. That is, regardless of theoretical perspective, generative returns follow a basic progression from an open, receptive frame of mind, to a period of

involuntary retrieval and reimmersion in the original frame of mind and sensibility, to a third reflective state, conducive to mental growth, creativity, and integration. Several psychoanalytic ideas convey this progression in generative returns, including (but not limited to) early formulations of catharsis, the transference, generative moods (Bollas, 1987), and historical sets (Bollas, 1989). In the end, we have a more balanced articulation of returning in the psychological sphere, one that can account for both generative and non-generative returns.

Chapter 2: Integrative Returns

In this chapter, several vignettes illustrate a special category or type of returning, that is, integrative returns. This category falls within the larger classification of generative returns. Defining this subclass (i.e., integrative returns) will help elucidate the nature of generative returns. The examples will both evoke some well-known psychoanalytic concepts and hint at some contemporary ones. However, with very few exceptions, theoretical terms are absent here as that will be the focus of later chapters. The term integrative highlights the meaning and understanding that these returns convey; through them, we relive essential moments in time, feel again the impact of emotions, desires, and ideas, but *with the necessary reflective distance for learning*. They are integrative, unifying experiences. Thus, integrative returns are distinct from those that are nonreflective, defensive, and degenerative. The latter are disintegrative.

After the vignettes, there follows an analysis and outline of the essential features of integrative returns. To my knowledge, integrative returns have yet to be identified or differentiated from others, such as regression or the repetition compulsion, in the psychoanalytic literature; however, Bollas's (1987, 1989, 1992) thinking on conservative objects, mnemonic objects, and historical sets comes very close. I apply Bollas's (1992) categories of simple and complex selves to the defining features of integrative returns to add further clarification.

To be clear, the examples are well defined and distinct, perhaps even dramatic, but this does not mean that integrative returns must meet such criteria. Rather, intense experiences merely seem to present the clearest picture of our subject. Thus, it is certainly likely that more common, ordinary experiences will also be relevant. These vignettes will serve as a reference point throughout this paper, and will help to clarify distinctions and similarities across theoretical perspectives.

Wild Strawberries

Ingmar Bergman's classic film, *Wild Strawberries* (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957), is replete with a variety of returns, too many in fact to review here, which are well suited for our purposes. Importantly, the film and hopefully this vignette will provide opportunities to identify with the kinds of experiences that fall under the category of integrative returns. This familiarity of experience should provide a useful reference point during later theoretical chapters. To be sure, the vignette is not intended to demonstrate the actuality of these experiences; if that were the case, then a fictional character would be wholly misguided. Cognitive research on involuntary memories suggests that they are common enough (Berntsen, 1996, 1998).

This vignette shows a general progression in integrative returns, from a state of receptivity to vivid reexperiencing and then, to a reflective state that seems to facilitate integration. Some plot summary is necessary before portraying the integrative return in order to appreciate the progression of these experiences and how they may affect the person. On occasion, I reference Erik Erikson's (Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986) analysis of the film to support and develop my representation. Erikson used the film to teach the human life cycle in a college course, "because of the totally convincing way in which it presents an old man's survey—in memories, fantasies, and dreams—of the stages and the places of his development" (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 239). Overall, Erikson considers Bergman's film as the story of an old man in search of the transcendental meaning of his life. More specifically, it is about his struggles to recognize and change his lack of vital involvement. One integrative return in particular (to a wild strawberry patch) seems instrumental to his transformation, as Erikson's subtitle suggests, *Revisitation and Reinvolvement*.

Background. *Wild Strawberries* (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957) is the story of an aging man, Professor Isak Borg, who is deeply immersed in recollecting his past while en route to receive an honorary degree from his alma mater. The award is a tribute to his 50-year career as a physician. One might expect him to reminisce about his professional life on such an occasion, but he is compelled to revisit past experiences of a more personal nature.

We are introduced to Dr. Isak Borg in the opening scene. He sits alone in his home study, reflecting on his life and the preceding days. Writing at his desk, he explains that he has withdrawn from his social life, which has left him rather lonely in his old age. Still, he has worked hard, and has had a fulfilling professional career. He has one child, his son Evald, also a doctor, who happens to live in Lund where he is to receive his honorary degree. His son has been married for several years, but has no children. His mother, 96-years-old, is still alive and vibrant. Dr. Borg's wife has been dead for many years, but he is "lucky" to have a good housekeeper, Agda. Finally, he introduces himself, a 78-year-old professor, Isak Borg, the only surviving child of 10 brothers and sisters. One gets the impression of a solitary, proud man², who is unusually reflective about his feelings and relationships. Erikson et al. (1986) detect self-isolation and a lack of involvement; yet, "something seems to have made him acutely curious" (p. 241). Soon, he is narrating the events of the preceding day, beginning with the uncanny dream that preceded his return to years past, with "a special sense of self-awareness" (p. 242).

A strange dream. In the dream, Isak is taking his regular morning walk, and is troubled by a series of unusual happenings. The streets and buildings are empty. Isak appears befuddled and disoriented. There is a large clock on the street, but as he gets closer, he finds that it has no

² See Robert May's (1981) book *Sex and Fantasy* for an enlightening and comprehensive study of pride in male development as well as alternative patterns in female development.

hands. He reaches for his pocket watch, but it too has no hands. The hot sun beats down on him, and he places his hand on his forehead. Isak turns; he notices a man down the street and approaches him. He places his hand on the man's shoulder to get his attention, but is alarmed to see that the man has no face; it is distorted, caved in. The man collapses on the street and disappears in his clothes as dark fluid flows out. Next, with the clock bells ringing, a horse and carriage come down the street in the direction of Isak. It is a hearse with no driver. The carriage catches a wheel on a lamppost and repeatedly bangs into it, eventually losing the wheel. The free wheel moves menacingly towards Isak, forcing him to move out of its path. The coffin slides out onto the street, and the horses run off dragging the disabled carriage behind. Seeing an arm exposed Isak approaches and peers into the coffin. He finds a corpse that appears to be his double, which startles him. The corpse reaches out, grabs a hold of Isak's arm, and he awakens.

The dream's manifest content and, in particular, the overall mood portray Isak's deep distress over his isolation, loss, and mortality. Isak is portrayed as feeling lost, directionless, and confused. His attempts to orient himself are frustrated: he locates a clock with no hands and a man with no face. The carriage has no driver. Isak's confusion and helplessness turns to fear and terror as he comes face-to-face with death: A man with no face (no identity) collapses on the street and vanishes in his clothes; a corpse resembling Isak eerily comes to life and reaches to pull him into the coffin. The dream depicts a confused and strange arena. There seems to be no order or direction. Even categories of life and death are variable.

A change in plans. The following morning, Isak decides that rather than flying to Lund to receive his award as planned, he will drive. This deeply irritates Agda, his housekeeper, and they argue like an old married couple, prompting Isak to say, "We are not married." For this, Agda thanks her god. Soon, however, she submits and offers to help him pack. Isak warms, and

resolves to make it up to her with a present. At breakfast, a beautiful woman enters, Marianne, the wife of Isak's son Evald. She has been staying with Isak due to some marital discord, of which we have learned nothing. Marianne asks if she may accompany Isak to Lund to return home to Evald, and he agrees.

In the following scene, Isak and Marianne are in the car. Here, we learn something of his character. Marianne goes to light a cigarette, but Isak asks her not to smoke, saying there should be a law against women smoking. He speaks highly of cigars, a vice suitable for men only. Marianne recounts, "and what vice may women have?" "Weeping, giving birth, and speaking ill of her neighbors," Isak replies. One begins to get a sense of his insensitivity and rigidity. Soon they are discussing Evald's financial debt to his father. Isak feels it is a matter of principle that Evald pay him back in full, and is sure that Evald respects their agreement. Marianne rejoins that Isak is "filthy rich" and does not need the money. Her resentment breaks free as she informs Isak that while his son shares his principles, "he also hates [him]." Once more, Isak is startled.

Soon after, Isak wants to know what Marianne has against him. She does not hold back, coolly stating that he is "selfish, utterly ruthless, and [that he] never listens to anyone," all the while hiding it beneath his "old world manners and charm." She reminds him that when she approached him a month ago for help regarding her marriage, he said, "don't draw me into your marital squabbles, I don't give a damn; I have no respect for mental suffering, so don't come lamenting to me." In addition to being withdrawn and isolated, Isak can be harsh and scornful, particularly of others' feelings, for which he seems to have no patience. Yet, one also has the sense that Isak is newly receptive and accessible. He tells Marianne that he liked having her at the house and says she is a "fine woman." Isak seems to make a reparative gesture, perhaps indicating that he is approaching a more reflective state. He gingerly informs Marianne that he

had a dream last night. But, she treats him with the same indifference that he had afforded her, saying she has no interest in dreams.

A daydream. Isak veers off the main route; he wants to show Marianne something. They park the car and wander down an overgrown pathway. It is the summerhouse of Isak's childhood. Marianne leaves him to take a swim at the lake. Nostalgic, Isak settles at a familiar wild strawberry patch. He sits down to eat the berries, "as if they contained some consciousness-expanding essence" (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 247). "Perhaps I got a little sentimental . . . a little tired . . . a bit sad," says Isak, as he begins to let his mind wander. He does not know how it happened, "*the day's clear reality dissolved into the even clearer images of memory . . . with the strength of a true stream of events*" (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957). Erikson et al. describe it thus, "the real scene and dreamlike images now begin to fuse" (p. 247).

In his reverie, Isak sees Sara, the lighthearted, blond sweetheart of his youth, picking wild strawberries for her Uncle Aron's birthday present. He tries speaking to her, admitting that he is now quite old, but then, to Isak's disappointment, his brother Sigfrid appears, wooing his Sara. She tries to resist him, saying that she and Isak, the nicest of the brothers, are secretly engaged; Sigfrid is not deterred. They kiss, and her basket of strawberries falls to the ground. Sara regains her composure and collapses to the ground, leaving her apron stained red with strawberries. She asks fearfully, what will Isak, the one who "really loves [her]" say?

A gong rings signaling brunch. But little Isak and his father are out fishing, and will not be present. The Isak of today enters the house, witnessing the brunch, deeply entranced. The aunt scolds each of the children in turn, for having dirty hands, neglecting chores, and so on. Then, the twins deviously ask, "What were Sara and Sigfrid doing in the wild strawberry patch?"

They shout, “We saw you! We saw you!” Brought to tears, Sara leaves at once, exclaiming they are “liars.”

In the stairwell, (with our present-day Isak observing) Sara confides in her female cousin, close in age. “Isak is so fine and good, so moral and sensitive,” she explains, “he wants to read poetry, talk of the next life, play four-handed piano, and only kisses in the dark.” Yet, “He’s on such a terribly high level,” and this leaves Sara feeling beneath him. Our Isak looks on, admiring Sara with affection. As he relives his love for her, he also touches upon his loss. Soon he is overwhelmed with feelings of emptiness and sadness. He is awakened from his reverie only to meet a present-day Sara, much like the one of old, who along with her two suitors, will accompany Isak and Marianne to Lund.

Discussion. Isak’s reverie evokes vivid memories, images, fantasies, and feelings from years long past. Erikson et al. (1986) write, “Isak obviously made himself relive events typical for his crisis of intimacy (versus isolation)” (p. 247). We later learn that his brother Sigfrid will marry Sara; they have six children. Isak loses his first love and it seems more, likely contributing to his lack of vital involvement. As Isak peers into his past, he reexperiences the full emotional impact of formative events. It is not a replication of the past, but a “new old world” (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 248). Isak is able to expand on his prior experience, which assumes greater meaning in the context of his extended life. Hence, his psychic past evolves and changes as it marinates in his psychic present. As he feels the reverberations of his psychic past, he is reunited with aspects of himself long since departed. Isak was sensitive, romantic, sentimental, and even read poetry and spoke of the next life. This is not at all like our present Isak, who we have learned is uncompromising, cold, and determined.

Following the dream, Isak appears to be in a more receptive frame of mind. In the car, Marianne presented Isak with a bold, pointed account of his character, one that appeared to startle him. Yet he did not deny it, but instead seemed to want to change her opinion, offering her compliments, such as that he liked having her at his home. In his daydream, he is able to hear the testimony of Sara, who portrays him in a more positive light, though he is “too high.” It seems that when he lost Sara to his brother, he disowned or alienated rather large categories of his subjective life or self experience—those more sentimental, intimate, affectionate, and forgiving.

To review, just prior to his award ceremony, Dr. Borg has a frightening dream that reveals his deep distress over his isolation and mortality. The dream seems to instill some doubt and confusion in Isak, altering his usual frame of mind. He is unusually receptive to being guided by his feelings rather than his intellect, as for example, when he decides on a whim to drive to Lund rather than fly as planned and to pull off the main route to visit his former summerhouse. By returning to a place of origin and being open to receive years long past through remembering, feeling, and imagining, he makes renewed contact with parts of himself that were lost. Here and later in the film, we observe Isak “mourning for an abandoned part of his identity” (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 252). This integrative return is set in motion by the sight, touch, and taste of wild strawberries. As Isak and his company continue on to Lund, he expands on these experiences and allows them to evolve in ways that bring greater unity to his personality. For example, he has several dreams that help him better recognize “the distant rigidity of which Marianne accused him” (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 256). Isak admits that through the dreams, he seems to be saying something to himself that he does not want to hear; but Isak is able to hear these things. Through revisiting the self in past relationships, Isak gains insight

about himself and his current relationships, allowing him to get involved in his life in new ways; he is more tender and affectionate. In essence, we observe in Isak “a tempering of Pride with Caring” (May, 1981, p. 147). This development in men represents a resolution to challenges usually associated with mid-life, such as confrontation with one’s mortality and other personal limitations (May, 1981). Of course, Isak is dealing with just this, despite being well into the second half of life.

The next vignette will help to clarify the nature of integrative returns by further differentiating them from typical autobiographical memories. In particular, it is not so much the memories per se, but the accompanying recovered emotional states that typify integrative returns.

Proustian Memory

Proust’s (1982a, 1982b) *Remembrance of Things Past* (alternatively translated, *In Search of Lost Time*) is a seven volume novel that is at once autobiographical, philosophical, and psychological. I will not, by any means, be offering an analysis of Proust’s work, which is obviously beyond the scope of this paper and likely, my capability. Instead, Proust’s lucid and imaginative descriptions of involuntary memories serve to further illustrate integrative returns.

Background. The overture of the first volume, *Swann’s Way* (Proust, 1982a), culminates with the madeleine episode: the narrator Marcel’s childhood memories of Combray³—impervious to conscious and willful efforts of retrieval—are dramatically revived by the taste of a madeleine cake soaked in tea. The overture begins with Marcel’s account of his difficulties falling asleep, and soon he is discussing dreams, memory, and time. He recalls his strong desire for a goodnight kiss from his mother, for her to stay in his room throughout the night, and his great difficulty settling down for rest without the comfort of her kiss.

³ Combray is the fictitious name given to the village of Marcel’s youth.

Later, Marcel reveals his inability to recall much of Combray despite his great efforts. His attempts at voluntary memory, “an exercise of the will” (Proust, 1982a, p. 53), bring little satisfaction. “The pictures which that kind of memory shows us of the past preserve nothing of the past itself,” Proust (1982a) explains, “to me it was in reality all dead” (p. 53). This is an important observation for Proust, that is, the static, dead quality of voluntary memory.

The madeleine episode is preceded by Proust’s (1982a) appreciation of a Celtic belief: “the souls of whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal ... plant ... [or] some inanimate object” (p. 54). These souls are imprisoned until by chance, “we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object ... they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognized their voice the spell is broken” (Proust, 1982a, p. 54). Recognition frees them from the prison of neglect and invisibility, and allows them to return to life. Marcel suggests that this is also the case with respect to our past experiences. Our active, conscious attempts to recapture the past prove futile:

The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect ... it depends on chance whether we come upon it. (Proust, 1982a, p. 54)

In some sense, Dr. Isak Borg’s past was hidden (and preserved) in the wild strawberry patch, in the sight and taste of the berries (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957).

Madeleine episode. Many years pass during which Marcel recalls nothing about Combray apart from the drama of going to bed, mentioned above. While visiting his mother one cold winter day, she offers tea to warm him. He declines at first, as he does not ordinarily drink tea. Then, for no clear reason, he changes his mind. Marcel takes a spoonful of tea soaked with the cake:

No sooner had the warm liquid and the crumbs with it, touched my palate than a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a special essence; or rather this essence was not in me, *it was myself* . . . I was conscious that it was connected with the taste of tea and cake . . . Whence did it come? What did it signify? How could I seize upon and define it? (Proust, 1982a, pp. 54-55, italics in original)

Intent to recapture this experience, Marcel drinks a second and third mouthful, but to no avail. He resolves to search his mind for what the tea has invoked in him, “this unremembered state” (Proust, 1982a, p. 55). This “unremembered state” refers to the memories that Marcel presumes are connected to the “special essence” that the madeleine cake has evoked. He works to make it reappear, clearing his mind of all distractions, but the source of this sensation, this special essence, eludes him. Unsuccessful, he grows fatigued and allows his mind to wander and “think of other things” (Proust, 1982a, p. 56). Once more, he meditates on the taste of that first mouthful, “I feel something starting within me, something that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise” (Proust, 1982a, p. 56). Again, his conscious efforts are fruitless. Marcel tires,

My natural laziness . . . has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of today and of hopes for tomorrow, which let themselves be pondered over without effort or distress of mind. (Proust, 1982a, p. 57)

And from this relaxed and receptive state, the memory suddenly returns.

The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Leonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea. (Proust, 1982a, p. 57)

Marcel is astonished as images of Combray blossom into vivid recollection: “the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea” (Proust, 1982a, p. 58). All that his conscious efforts could not recapture was revived by that distinct and familiar taste. Like the Celtic souls held captive in objects awaiting recognition for their release, involuntary memories lie hidden, resistant to voluntary attempts at recollection; they come to life by secret paths, the familiar sensations afforded by chance encounters. These familiar sensations evoke memories that are vibrant, fresh, and emotionally vivid, as though no time had passed; such qualities distinguish them from memories we consciously, or intentionally, choose. Involuntary memories allow for a recognition that goes beyond the familiar sensation, to that of a “special essence.”

Inspiration. Proust (1982b) elaborates numerous examples of involuntary memories throughout the novel, and it is through recording these particular memories that lost time is recaptured. Yet, it is not until the final volume, *Time Regained*, that Marcel shares the inspiration for his life’s work. Following a long absence from Paris, Marcel is absorbed in contemplating his “lack of talent for literature” (Proust, 1982b, p. 886), all despite his best efforts. Upon his return, he finds an invitation to an afternoon party with music at the house of Prince de Guermantes. Marcel decides to attend. The name Guermantes (Marcel’s longtime friends) reminds him of his childhood at Combray and arouses, “a longing to go to the Guermantes party as if in going there I must have been brought nearer to my childhood and to

the depths of my memory” (Proust, 1982b, p. 888). Still, Marcel was convinced of his lack of skill for description and was utterly without enthusiasm, his first criteria of literary talent.

Disheartened, he resigns himself to the “frivolous pleasure” (Proust, 1982b, p. 897) of attending an afternoon party with old friends.

By chance, Marcel finds that not all is lost. As he approaches the Guermantes mansion, he fails to see a car coming towards him. The driver shouts, and as Marcel retreats, he stumbles on the uneven paving stones. Marcel recovers his balance, stepping on a slightly lower neighboring stone:

Just as, at the moment when I tasted the madeleine, all anxiety about the future, all intellectual doubts had disappeared ... the difficulties which had seemed insoluble a moment ago had lost all importance. The happiness which I had just felt was unquestionably the same as that which I had felt when I tasted the madeleine soaked in tea. (Proust, 1982b, p. 899)

The sensation of moving about uneven paving stones brings forth memories of Venice accompanied by joy. He recalls standing on uneven stones at St Mark’s and these impressions are suddenly linked to countless others experienced at that time. Marcel is determined to understand this experience, which like the madeleine episode both evokes vibrant memories and a distinct happiness that seems to make even death a matter of indifference.

Soon after, Marcel enters the Guermantes mansion. He hears a spoon rattle against a plate, and a second involuntary memory is brought to life, “again that same species of happiness which had come to me from the uneven paving-stones poured into me” (Proust, 1982b, p. 900). Marcel describes the sensations as “heat combined with a whiff of smoke and relieved by the cool smell of a forest background” (p. 900). The sound of clanging dishes remind him of the

reverberations coming from a railway worker's hammer, clanging against the wheel of a train that he had traveled in. The sensations evoke images of the forest he observed as the train was repaired, but which had failed to move him. Moments later, a server brings Marcel some refreshments. He wipes his face with a napkin, "a new vision of azure passed before my eyes ... so strong was this impression that the moment to which I was transported seemed to me to be the present moment" (p. 901). Vivid, sensory memories of Balbec come to mind, causing him to swell with happiness.

Discussion. Like Isak, Proust (1982a, 1982b) had to be in a receptive state of mind before he could experience the integrative returns that were so meaningful to him. Involuntary memories are somehow incompatible with conscious intent or acts of will. They arrive unbidden, without choice or effort.

The sensation of uneven paving stones, a metallic sound, the stiffness of the napkin, the taste of a madeleine cake soaked in tea, bring forth special memories, real impressions that were not at all like Marcel's conscious, or intentional, memories. His involuntary memories could induce a feeling of renewal and joy, whereas their voluntary counterparts seemed to preserve nothing of life or feeling. Real impressions, as Proust (1982b) called them, are experienced both in the present moment and in the context of a distant moment; "they had in them something that was common to a day long past and to the present, because in some way they were extra-temporal" (p. 904). With the psychic past somehow inhabiting the present moment, culminating in an experience outside time, Proust experienced himself an "extra-temporal being ... unalarmed by the vicissitudes of the future" (p. 904). For Proust, these resurrections revealed the essence of things through vivid recollection. The involuntary nature of these vibrant impressions, led Proust to consider them as authentic imprints or isolated fragments of reality

that were freed from the order of time. To transform these sense impressions into thought, their psychic equivalent, he would have to create a work of art. Proust concludes that an artwork is the only way to recapture lost time, and his experiences of time regained would become the material for his work of literature.

Presently, it should be evident that both involuntary memories and recovered emotional states are defining features of integrative returns. In fact, it seems that an emotional state cannot be remembered without also being reexperienced qua emotional state. It is a reimmersion in the original frame of mind and sensibility, with all the senses of vulnerability, desire, and feeling that accompanied them the first time. Hence, any effective or adequate representation of deeply felt emotion must evoke said emotion. Of course, reimmersion comes in degrees. At the deepest level one momentarily forgets that one is not actually in the original experience; this is more of a visceral reliving, or return. At the surface, there is little to no detectable reimmersion in the original frame of mind and sensibility. Instead, one has a cognitive representation and account of a past event, with little to no accompanying affect.

The Artist

A freshman college student, Miss A, is an art major at a competitive school in the Northeast. She is suffering greatly from social anxiety and depression, and is just coming to grips with a recent separation from her boyfriend of about 4 years. In addition, Miss A misses her parents greatly, and is beginning to acknowledge their marital problems. To say the least, it has been a challenging transition to college. In her studio art class, she is working on a painting with autobiographical themes. Miss A first sketches out the basic shapes and figures, including scenery from her birthplace (e.g., several tall buildings), an image of her having sex during her adolescence, and finally, an image of her being embraced by a larger, motherly figure, perhaps

an archetype of sorts. There are no family members in this painting. Ready for the next phase of this work, Miss A begins mixing paints. She has acquired a strong affinity for deep reds, such as alizarin crimson and cadmium red. The shade of red is not yet right, and so, Miss A adds a blot of white paint. The texture of the paints and the arrangement of red and white pigments mesmerize Miss A, and she has a transformative recollection: *Miss A is at her parents' home, 16-years-old, and sitting alone in the bathroom. She is suffering greatly with stomach cramps, and has been bleeding from her vagina for about 30 minutes. There are small clumps of blood in her fingers; she inspects what looks like a white bean amidst the red fluid and substance. She is frightened and in a state of disbelief. She tells no one of what she has found, or of her experience.*

When Miss A finds herself, once more, in art class, she fears others have noticed her lack of presence. There is no evidence of this, however. The disbelief and shock from her past transfers to her present experience. She is stunned that she has lived without her memory for several years; however, Miss A does not doubt the veracity of her memory. She believes that she had a miscarriage (although, we cannot be sure of this). Miss A has no conscious feeling of loss or sadness connected to her presumed miscarriage—it was what she had anxiously wished for. She feels ashamed and frightened, and chooses not to inform her family or anyone else of her experience, at least not in words.

Miss A's finished painting clearly represents her pain in layers of deep reds and browns, and with little mental effort, an observer cannot help but be struck by Miss A's portrayal of her frightening experience. Miss A depicts herself as passive (underneath) during sexual intercourse. In the following sequence (to the right), Miss A represents herself as actively inducing a miscarriage by clawing at her abdomen, blood flowing down her body and legs, while being

embraced by a larger, warm, female figure. The move from passivity to activity perhaps is representative of Miss A's efforts to master what had been an overwhelming experience. When asked, Miss A replies that she had not thought of her artwork in these terms, but she believes it is true. The motherly figure embraces Miss A as she desperately claws at her abdomen. To Miss A, the mother's presence is oppressive. Still, the motherly figure may also represent a disavowed wish for a good-enough mother; we might consider that the mother's embrace helps to contain Miss A's experience, allowing for better integration. The image of Miss A clawing at her abdomen portrays the wish to miscarry as well as intense self-loathing and regret. Miss A's action is both a rejection of motherhood and a display of her refusal to sacrifice her budding autonomy. Although Miss A is averse to discussing her miscarriage, she makes little effort to disguise her artistic representation of the event.

In this example, Miss A's present activity (the production of an artwork) enabled her to regain a meaningful piece of her history in the form of a transformative, involuntary memory (i.e., an integrative return). It is transformative in the sense that she relives the original frame of mind and sensibility that she experienced the first time. In the present context, it becomes more than pure repetition. The artwork itself is representative of her making use of her experience, both as a form of communication and to further integrate her experience. This seems to allow her to achieve some degree of mastery over her experience, allowing for a more expansive future and less dependence on repression.

Miss A did not consciously go searching for this memory when she began her painting. Rather, she followed her intuition when selecting the subject matter and paints. While the particular circumstances that brought about Miss A's integrative return are not evident, it seems that her choice of subject matter, life events, and pigments were integral to this revival. When

she saw the small white blot of paint mixed in with the red, all of the corresponding elements coalesced to incite a transformative memory.

To summarize, Miss A had an involuntary memory of what she believes was a miscarriage, which she had repressed for several years. She regained more than mental images; she also experienced a return of feeling and sensation. Her experience was one of returning to, or reexperiencing an earlier, original frame of mind and sensibility that she had put at a distance. This prior self state reemerged, replete with feelings, sensations, thoughts, wishes and fears, and images. The movement was back to something true⁴ and personally meaningful. One final note seems worthwhile. As a college freshman, Miss A is in a transitional phase of her life. She is unsettled, and in the midst of moving from late adolescence to emerging adulthood. Moreover, she is an isolated young adult, who just lost a highly important and stabilizing romantic relationship. It is possible that being in a state of transition or separation will make one more susceptible to returns. Recall that Isak had an unsettling dream about mortality and isolation, and that Marcel was deeply troubled by his inability to recall Combray.

Choosing an Object

In *Being a Character*, Bollas (1992) narrates a personal story that has parallels with the previous vignettes. In particular, he discusses his choice to study *Moby Dick* for his Ph.D. thesis; “by choosing Melville’s book I selected an object that allowed me to be dreamed by it, to elaborate myself through the many experiences of reading it” (Bollas, 1992, p. 57). Bollas writes that the selection was an intuitive choice based on unconscious knowledge that it would “bring something of [him] into expression” (p. 57). The book was associated with two upsetting experiences that Bollas had as a boy, both of which were lost to him. At the age of 11, while

⁴ It was true in the subjective sense, not necessarily in any historical, objective sense.

swimming far off shore at his favorite cove, he saw “what initially looked like a large reef . . . it was a whale and it passed by me so closely that although it did not touch me I could still feel it” (Bollas, 1992, p. 57). And before that, when just 9-years-old, he rides “over a wave to collide with the bloated body of a woman who must have been dead at sea for some time” (Bollas, 1992, p. 57). These memories, linked in his unconscious, resurfaced after writing his dissertation. Bollas concludes, “I selected an object that I could use to engage in deep unconscious work, an effort that enabled me to experience and articulate something of my self” (p. 58).

Bollas’s experience has several features in common with the experiences of Isak, Marcel, and Miss A. Each had involuntary memories and moved back to self experiencing that was true and personally meaningful. Furthermore, none of them went consciously searching for such experiences or memories, but instead seemed to follow their intuition. The specific objects they encountered and selected seemed to enable them to regain meaningful pieces of their respective histories, which they could then make psychological use of.

Essential Characteristics of Integrative Returns

The above vignettes provide a starting point for identifying the essential features of integrative returns. These include: *relaxed frame of mind; autobiographical memories with reimmersion in the original mood or feeling states; features common to present and past; a sensation of familiarity or recognition; the feeling that the experience arrived spontaneously or without choice, that is, involuntarily; self observation and reflection; and learning or making use of such experience.* These features represent interacting phases of receptivity, reimmersion, and reflection.

Relaxed frame of mind. The presence of a relaxed frame of mind is most evident in the integrative returns of Isak and Marcel. Recall that as Isak sat down at the wild strawberry patch

he began to let his mind wander, perhaps owing to a feeling of drowsiness. Marcel (Proust, 1982a) eventually lets his mind drift aimlessly without effort or distress. One can imagine that Miss A too had entered a free-floating meditative state, as she prepared and mixed her paints. Finally, Bollas's (1992) description of being dreamed by Melville's *Moby Dick* through many readings intimates a relaxed, receptive frame of mind as well.

Memory with reimmersion in mood and feeling. A particular form of memory is noticeable in integrative returns. These memories are vivid, unusually clear, and convey a sensory quality. For example, Erikson et al. (1986) describe Isak's half-waking fantasies as "exceptionally vivid in every sensory detail" (p. 268). Freud (1937/1964) described some of his patient's memories in a similar fashion as "ultra-clear" (p. 266). Miss A's memories have a transformative quality, in the sense that the accompanying feelings and sensations (i.e., self state) generate a change in her time sense; specifically, she is reimmersed in a prior state of being, feeling, and thinking. What seems essential here is the revival of an earlier form of self experiencing, a reimmersion in the original frame of mind and sensibility. Repression seems to be a major factor; however, it is not a necessary feature of integrative returns. These returns may include revived feelings and vivid memories that have not been repressed, per se, even if it has been a long time since they have been recalled. Dr. Isak Borg's reverie seems to be a case in point (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957). Still, the arrival of familiar moods and feelings are likely associated with involuntary memories that have yet to be fully represented or formulated. Memory, mood, and feeling are essential, seemingly interdependent features of integrative returns.

Features common to present and past. Integrative returns include specific features that are common to both present and past situations. Isak, for example, settles at a familiar

strawberry patch and eats berries containing “some consciousness-expanding essence” (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 247). Marcel tastes the Madeleine cake soaked in tea; Miss A observes a blot of white paint in a mass of red pigment and feels the fluid consistency. The common features provide a felt link between present and past that evokes a spontaneous revival.

Sensation of familiarity. A sensation of familiarity accompanies the revived memories, moods, and feelings. The sense that “I have been in this position before” persists throughout integrative returns. The sensation of familiarity is also evident in the experience of déjà vu. However, in the vignettes, returns are unlike déjà vu experiences in that each person is able to recollect the source of the familiarity (i.e., the original experience). They experience a revival along with knowledge about the source of the return and opportunity for further learning.⁵

Spontaneous feeling. It seems that returns arise in a spontaneous or unexpected fashion. To be sure, this is a phenomenological description, and thus does not speak to the absence of possible unconscious determinants. In retrospect, one may connect the return to present circumstances or perhaps see evidence of intuition, but this occurs after the fact. For example, recall that Bollas (1992) considered his choice of *Moby Dick* to be largely intuitive in retrospect. The subjective experience is one of passive, or choiceless, reception.

Self-observation. There is certainly a strong experiential component to integrative returns, including, for example, heightened imagination and self experiencing. Yet, there is also a degree of self-observation and reflection. It is not that one simply delves into experiencing. There is also space for reflection, elaboration, and curiosity. Hence, it is receptivity and

⁵ Freud (1919/1955) provides an interesting account of how the return of something that was to remain secret and hidden—though in some sense still familiar and recognizable—creates an uncanny feeling.

reexperiencing along with enough psychological distance for higher levels of organization to remain intact.

Learning or making use of returns. As stated, integrative returns appear to arrive spontaneously or by chance. In a sense, the experiencer may feel herself to be in a passive, receptive position. This is temporary, however, as the experiencer is also intent on making some sense out of the return. Perhaps owing to the sensation of familiarity and the capacity for self observation and reflection, integrative returns invite further learning and processing; they allow the individual a rich self experience that she may then make use of. For example, Miss A's return allowed her to communicate her frightening experience and generate meaning through an artwork; Bollas's (1992) intuitive choice of *Moby Dick* brought something of himself into expression and allowed him to "engage in deep unconscious work" (p. 58). Proust (1982a, 1982b) memorialized his involuntary memories in his literary works.

Simple and Complex Selves

The essential features of integrative returns may be clarified further by Bollas's (1992) concepts of the simple self and the complex self as well as his stages in the "dialectics of self experiencing" (p. 31). Bollas's simple self refers to that part of us that is immersed in experience. As examples, Bollas points to the experiences of falling in love and getting lost in conversation; one could add many sorts of play to the list. The simple self is linked to Bollas's notion of the true self⁶ in that this deep experiencing is informed by one's personal idiom. Bollas considers this area of experiencing in terms of Winnicott's third area, or the intermediate area, located between inner reality and external, actual reality. This is the space where one's subjective reality and the object world meet, or come together, in play, imagination, and

⁶ Bollas (1987, 1989) has expanded on Winnicott's True Self concept.

creativity. In contrast to the simple experiencing self, the complex self is reflective; its aim is to “objectify as best as possible where one has been or what is meant by one’s actions” (Bollas, 1992, p. 15). The simple and complex selves oscillate and, “enable the person to process life according to different yet interdependent modes of engagement: one immersive, the other reflective” (Bollas, 1992, p. 15).

The essential features of integrative returns may be organized according to the simple self and complex self. The simple self is more prominent for the following: the relaxed frame of mind; memories with reimmersion in the original mood or feeling states; features common to present and past; the sensation of familiarity and recognition; and the feeling that the experience arrived spontaneously or without warning. The complex self occupies the area of self observation, learning from experience, and / or making use of such experience.

Bollas (1992) identifies four stages in what he calls, “the dialectics of self experiencing” (p. 31): (a) The use of an object, (b) being played by the object, (c) being lost in self experiencing, and (d) observing self as object. As an example, consider Miss A’s experience: she selects a medium, paints, subject matter (object choice); she is affected by such object choices (is played on); subsequently she is lost in a transformative memory or return (lost in self experiencing); and finally, she emerges from such experience and reflects on where she has been (observes self as an object). According to Bollas, the simple self occupies the third stage, that of being lost in self experiencing, and the complex self the final stage, observing the self as an object.

At this point, the following formula appears to capture integrative returns: *Through encounters with various objects in the objective present, we involuntarily retrieve related, meaningful experiences from the psychic past, thereby allowing us to reconnect with or return to*

*a prior form of self experience, which is available for further elaboration, learning and reflection.*⁷

⁷ This formula is similar to Freud's (1908/2003) formulations on creativity, which I discuss below.

Section II

Reappraisal of Returns in Psychoanalytic Thought

In the preceding chapter, we identified a special type of returning, integrative returns, which falls within a broader classification of generative returns. Thus, all integrative returns are generative, by definition, but the same cannot be said for the reverse. For example, we will see that there are generative returns that do not include the essential features of integrative returns. In this section, we will explore a diverse range of psychoanalytic perspectives that are relevant to psychological returns. These include, for example, Freudian theories, British object relations theories, and some American perspectives as well. Some of these theories may strike the reader as outdated. While true, it does not follow that the ideas are thus without value to us now. For example, Ogden (1986) argues that returning to earlier, pivotal moments of the psychoanalytic dialogue, not to replicate the thinking of past analysts but to generate new understandings, is integral to the growth of psychoanalytic thought. Ogden notes that, “each act of interpretation preserves the original (experience and idea) while simultaneously generating new meanings” (p. 3). Creative dialogue with our ancestors can safeguard us from the superficiality and repetition that results from intellectual and cultural isolation as well as enliven contemporary conversations.

Psychoanalytic theories have attended to the various ways in which the enduring psychic past returns and informs the present. A reappraisal of these theories will enable us to view returns from multiple perspectives and different angles. We will see that some familiar psychoanalytic concepts and practices are interpretable as instances of generative returns. Moreover, the application of these theories to returns will help to clarify and differentiate generative and non-generative returns.

Chapter 3: A Return To Origins

Freud's Early Trauma Theory

This section traces some early developments in Freud's thinking on the etiology and treatment of psychopathology to clarify important returns that Freud conceptualized in his theorizing, such as the return of the repressed. In more general terms, we will consider the interaction of past and present, primarily within the bounds of psychological time. In this realm, we are less constricted by the arrow of time, that is, by the order of events as they unfold in real time or objective reality. Thus, the 'psychic past' may be active in present experience, and the 'psychic present' may influence or activate the psychic past.⁸

In collaboration with Breuer, Freud (1893/1959) put forth the notion that "*hysterical patients suffer principally from reminiscences*" (p. 29, italics in original). In other words, they traced the cause of hysterical symptoms to the return of the repressed, namely, to disavowed memories of early psychological trauma. To be sure, these returns are not conscious memories of traumatic experiences, but rather, unconscious memory traces that have been reactivated by some recent event.⁹ While under the influence of hypnosis, patients recount these otherwise hidden memories with "wonderful freshness ... full affective tone ... [and] hallucinatory vividness" (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959, pp. 30-31).

From the beginning Breuer and Freud (1893/1959) define trauma as "psychic" rather than external. They propose that the determining quality in a psychic trauma is the affect of fright: "Any experience which rouses the distressing affects of fright, apprehension, shame, or psychological pain can have this effect" (p. 27). These early "exciting experiences" (or traumas) continue to be

⁸ Loewald (1962/1980) used these terms (psychic past and psychic present) in his paper, *Superego and time*.

⁹ This is explored further below under the heading, Deferred Action.

active years later: “The psychological trauma, or the memory of it, acts as a kind of foreign body constituting an effective agent in the present even long after it first penetrated” (p. 28).

One question that arises from this formulation is how these distressing, traumatic experiences persist and remain active with such intensity. According to Breuer and Freud (1893/1959), a psychic trauma interrupts the normal reactions that allow memory and affect to fade. This normal reaction includes two processes: first, a direct discharge of feeling equal to the intensity of the event, and second, associative absorption into “the great complex of associations” (p. 31). The associative absorption allows for greater perspective and appraisal as the memory “undergoes correction by means of other ideas” (p. 31). If these normal reactions are inhibited or suppressed, the quota of affect retains its intensity and the memory is cut off from the rest of the personality, where it remains unintegrated.

Breuer and Freud (1893/1959) describe the interruption of the normal processes of abreaction and associative absorption as follows. First, there is the wish to forget the experience, or deliberate repression. Here, the individual voluntarily excludes the psychic trauma from conscious thought (often automatically or unconsciously). The other cause, which Freud would later reject, has to do with the mental state of the individual during the traumatic event. If the person were in a hypnoid state, as in dissociation or the “half-hypnotic twilight state of day-dreaming” (p. 33), for example, the memory would remain cut off from associative connection with the rest of the personality. These two processes result in a “splitting of the personality.”

Soon after, Freud (1894/1962) developed further the role of defensive processes, namely repression, in neurosis. He again emphasized that repression is instituted by an “effort of will” (p. 46) as protection against extremely painful experience. The individual determines to forget the distressing idea because, “he had no confidence in his power to resolve the contradiction

between that incompatible idea and his ego by means of thought-activity” (p. 47). Of course, repression does not succeed in eradicating the experience. The memory trace and the corresponding quota of affect persist, albeit in isolation. The repression, Freud continues, “amounts to an approximate fulfillment of the task if the ego succeeds in turning this powerful idea into a weak one, in robbing it of the affect—the sum of excitation—with which it is loaded” (p. 48). The isolation of affect weakens the noxious idea, effectively keeping it out of consciousness.

In hysteria, the unbound or free roaming affect is transmuted into bodily form. The symptom represents a compromise between the need to release the quota of affect, or excitation, and the wish to remain unaware of the repressed idea. Spared from the pain of conscious recollection, the ego is now burdened with a symptom, or “mnemic symbol” (Freud, 1894/1962, p. 49). In cases where there is little capacity for conversion, the detached affect becomes associated or connected to other ideas, thereby causing obsessions or phobias. Each of these symptoms represents the return of the repressed, as unwanted thoughts and memories return in disguised form. Essentially, the action of deliberately turning away from painful experiences has the effect of keeping them alive or active.

In Freud’s early trauma theory, he expressed the view that symptoms stem from the return of the repressed, namely, the indirect emergence of an unwanted idea or traumatic memory. It is not a conscious return, but rather a return that the ego resists or fails to recognize. When we have been unable to react normally¹⁰ to a distressing experience through feeling (or abreaction) and talking (or associative absorption), the psychic past persists, is kept alive, in disguised form. Thus, a psychic past that has not been sufficiently recognized and represented

¹⁰ I am referring here to Freud’s description of the normal process of reaction.

persists in disguised form in the psychic present, as though untouched by time. Repression, or more generally defense, keeps the psychic past alive in disguised form by inhibiting the normal process of reaction, or by forestalling full recognition or knowledge of that experience.

Deferred Action

In *Further remarks on the defense neuro-psychoses* Freud (1896/1959a) adds the notion of deferred action¹¹ to his theory of the neuroses. In addition, he has since narrowed his conception of the traumatic origins of hysteria to infantile seduction. Freud (1896/1959b) refined his theory in response to the disappointing finding that some patients did not fully recover after the supposed traumatic memory was uncovered. Moreover, these seeming traumas failed to meet Freud's pathogenic criteria: first, that the traumatic event possessed a "determining quality" in relation to the symptoms, and second that it had sufficient "traumatic power." According to Freud, the inquiries that yielded the requisite determining quality and traumatic power infallibly led to infantile sexual experiences (Freud, 1896/1959b, p. 186).

With respect to deferred action, Freud (1896/1959a) remarks, "it is not the experience itself which acts traumatically, but the memory of it when this is re-animated after the subject has entered upon sexual maturity" (p. 157). These memory traces are not conscious memories, but rather are registered in the symptoms; "this memory-trace does not become conscious but leads to a liberation of the affect and to repression" (Freud, 1896/1959a, p. 159). And elsewhere, "every case of hysteria displays symptoms which are determined not by infantile, but by later, often by recent experiences" (Freud, 1896/1959b, p. 211).

¹¹ Freud used this concept earlier, as well, in his *Project for a scientific psychology* (1895/1966) and in *Studies on hysteria* (1893-1895/1955).

How is it that the re-animated memory is traumatic and not the original experience itself? Freud (1896/1959a) describes this as an inverted relation between the real experience and the memory. In a footnote, he explains it thus,

If the sexual experience occurs at a time of sexual immaturity and the memory of it is aroused during or after maturity, then the exciting effect of the recollection will be very much stronger than that of the experience itself ... *The traumas of childhood act subsequently as fresh experiences—then, however, unconsciously.* (pp. 160-161, italics in original)

Thus, we have the psychic past becoming active or re-animated in the present as a fresh experience. It seems that the present, however, adds significantly to this psychic past and contributes to its force; specifically, the second scene adds meaning and thus, emotional impact to the first. The heightened effect or power of the memory traces is due to the maturity of the sexual system. Thus, psychic past and psychic present are mutually influencing.

This raises another question. When does the actual repression occur? The memory traces of the infantile seduction presumably persist out of awareness owing to the sexual and cognitive immaturity of the infant, which seems to prevent associative absorption or psychic elaboration. Loewald (1955/1980) argues that this bears resemblance to the idea that hypnoid states may lead to the “splitting of consciousness.”¹² He continues,

Repression ... occurs on the basis of the reactivation of unconscious memory traces. The original unconscious nature of the memory trace, however, is not in itself already due to “repression” but to the infantile condition of the psychic functions and of the sexual system. (p. 36)

¹² The appeal to sexual immaturity to account for repression holds in Freud’s later theory of infantile sexuality as well, since it is this immaturity that contributes to the original infantile neurosis.

Thus, traumatic experiences are laid down as unconscious memory traces, not because of repression, but because the “immature ego is yet unable to cope by abreaction or associative absorption” (Loewald, 1955/1980, p. 37). This formulation leads Loewald to regard repression as an instance of the repetition compulsion—that is, as a regressive repetition of an earlier inability to cope with, or reconcile with, distressing experiences and ideas. The ego repeats this earlier process by way of actual repression.

The concept of deferred action has some implications for our understanding of psychological time. It is not simply that the past shapes our present and future experience. Our present experience can activate the psychic past and shape how it is remembered and experienced, “the modification of the past by the present does not change ‘what objectively happened in the past’, but it changes that past which the patient carries within him as his living history” (Loewald, 1972/1980, p. 144).

Thinking of deferred action apart from symptom formation will allow us to apply it to our integrative returns. Recall Isak’s reverie, for example (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957). He did not merely reexperience an old love relationship as it originally transpired. That is, it was not an actual repetition. His greater life experience, maturity, and openness helped establish the necessary reflective distance that would enable him to revisit his past with a greater range and depth of feeling and understanding. Thus, it was a new experience. In this way, deferred action may be a mechanism that provides new opportunities for growth.

The Return to Origins

Returns would also prove to be pivotal in the psychoanalytic treatment of neurosis. Early descriptions of the cathartic method demonstrated the curative results of returning to the original trauma (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959). More specifically, symptoms disappeared after the patient

clearly recollected the exciting event with the accompanying affect. In addition, the patient had to relate the occurrence in great detail and with full expression and identification of feelings. Thus, the cathartic method comprises the arousal of affect, the expression of feeling in words, and the clear recollection of the exciting event. Memory of the event alone, without feeling, is insufficient: “the original psychical process must be repeated as vividly as possible, brought into *statum nascendi* [born again] and then ‘talked out’” (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959, p. 28). We may notice here a resemblance to integrative returns.

Is this curative repetition simply a reproduction or duplication of the exciting event?

Eagle (2011) writes,

Simply making the unconscious conscious is not sufficient ... if the material that has been made conscious continues to be fraught with intense anxiety ... pathogenic defenses will remain in place ... symptomatic compromise formation will continue or recur. (p. 95)

Thus, making the unconscious conscious is only curative to the extent that it is integrated into the ego and contributes to greater unity in the personality. Similarly, and long before, Loewald (1955/1980) argued that Freud’s description of the cathartic method goes beyond undoing repression. It involves a transformation of primary into secondary process, thus achieving a higher level of integration. Both Loewald and Eagle compare the process of associative absorption to Freud’s (1914/1958) later concept of working through. These concepts speak to the gradual assimilation of previously disavowed experience into the great complex of associations. Loewald (1955/1980) concludes that the recovery of such memories and ideas never yields a copy or recording, “but a new version of something old ... a creative event in which something for the first time can be put into words” (p. 41).

In some sense, the notion of deferred action also applies to the return to origins, as this second scene (the therapeutic recollection) also adds something new to, or enhances, the psychic past, primarily in terms of meaning and perspective. In the usual sense, deferred action refers to the increased force or intensity that the first scene (i.e., the “exciting event”) acquires during the second scene (when re-animation of the memory trace occurs). Likewise, therapeutic recollection is a deferred *re*-action to the original scene (a return to the normal processes of *reaction*, i.e., abreaction and associative absorption, as described by Breuer and Freud [1893/1959]).¹³ In deferred reaction, the normal reaction that was defensively sidestepped is recommenced, allowing higher levels of organization and representation. Hence, we may consider deferred action in terms of symptoms and deferred reaction in terms of therapeutic recollection or catharsis.

From this early formulation, the task of analysis was to return the “pent-up affect” (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959, p. 40) to its source, or origins, by uncovering the original psychic trauma. This reconnection recommences abreaction and enables the anxiety provoking idea, or memory, to be integrated through “associative readjustment” (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959, p. 28). For Freud, cure was predicated upon the return to the original psychic trauma, that is, conscious recollection or repetition of the exciting event involving both full expression of affect and narration of the details. Both the exciting event and the normal process of reaction operate in a deferred manner, the former en route to symptom formation (deferred action) and the latter to cure and integration (deferred reaction). Hence, deferred action is a non-generative return, and what I have referred to as deferred reaction is a generative return.

¹³ For a description of this normal reaction, see above heading, Freud’s Early Trauma Theory.

Chapter 4: Repetition

Remembering and Repeating

In *Remembering, Repeating, and Working–Through*, Freud (1914/1958) briefly reviews the evolution of psychoanalytic technique and concludes that, despite significant changes in method, the aim has always been the same, “descriptively speaking, it is to fill in gaps in memory; dynamically speaking, it is to overcome resistances due to repression” (p. 148). When a patient is unable to remember the past for self protective purposes, he “*acts it out ... repeats it, without of course, knowing that he is repeating it*” (Freud, 1914/1958, p. 150, italics in original). Green (2008) expresses this as “a power of actualization, of making things not remembered by being present” (p. 1037). Thus, we have reproduction not in memory, but rather in behavior and without knowledge that it is a repetition.

An Analysand will typically reproduce the forgotten past in relation to her analyst. Freud (1914/1958) explains that the transference is “only a piece of repetition,” continuing that, “the repetition is a transference of the forgotten past not only on to the doctor but also on to all the other aspects of the current situation” (p. 151). Freud figuratively describes the compulsion to repeat as the patient’s way of remembering, but one that resists conscious recollection. It is worth quoting Freud further, “while the patient experiences it as something real and contemporary, we have to do our therapeutic work on it, which consists in a large measure in tracing it back to the past” (p. 152). This seems to be a move from implicit, or procedural memory to declarative, autobiographical memory. Here repetition is contrasted with conscious recollection.

Loewald (1971/1980) makes several useful distinctions with respect to the psychoanalytic concept of repetition. Following Freud, Loewald proposes that repeating in behavior and feeling,

as in transference repetitions, is an unconscious form of remembering, a reproduction. Recall that Freud (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959) described symptoms in terms of reminiscences, or unconscious memory traces (i.e., the return of the repressed). Insofar as the transference is a new edition of a nuclear neurosis, it too seems to qualify as a manifestation of unconscious memory traces. Loewald argues further that conscious recollection is also a form of repetition; it is a reproduction in the mind. Thus, we may have passive or automatic repetition in action and feeling (i.e., unconscious, enactive memory), or active and re-creative repetition in conscious, representational recollection. Whereas Freud linked repeating and remembering by referring to the former as the patient's way of remembering, albeit unconsciously, Loewald links repeating and remembering by referring to the latter as a form of repetition; hence, repetition now includes remembering. The original distinction between repeating unconsciously in action versus consciously by remembering holds, the latter being the aim of psychoanalytic treatment¹⁴. The implication, however, is that it is not a question of repeating or remembering, but rather of passive, automatic repetition versus active, re-creative repetition. In Loewald's (1971/1980) words:

In analysis the conflict is reactivated, is made to be repeated and, through the work of interpretation, to be repeated in an active way, that is actively taken up by the ego's organizing capacity an important element of which is remembering. (p. 89)

In this way, psychoanalysis does not aim to supplant repetition with remembering, but rather passive, unconscious reproduction with active, re-creative repetition that allows for a higher level of organization. Unconscious reproduction is a non-generative return, and re-creative repetition is a generative return. With respect to the latter, we may consider a compulsion to repeat that

¹⁴ The aims of psychoanalytic treatment have since expanded (see Eagle, 2011; Fonagy, 1999).

includes active, re-creative repetition (Loewald, 1971/1980, p. 92). Thus, repetition would seem to transcend, or go beyond, categories of sickness and health. Remembering does not displace repetition, but rather, allows one to live more comfortably with the living presence of the past:

Those who know ghosts tell us that they long to be released from their ghost life and led to rest as ancestors. As ancestors they live forth in the present generation, while as ghosts they are compelled to haunt the present generation with their shadow life. (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 249)

Proust's (1982b) involuntary memories are unlike neurotic repetitions, which feature the past as a hidden force that haunts the present; rather, involuntary memories are more akin to active, re-creative repetitions (generative returns). In neurotic repetition, there is a failure to distinguish present from past due to insufficient reflective distance and, in Freud's language, repression; hence, the two time periods are fused. In Proust's involuntary memories, present and past are linked by common sensations (e.g., the clang of a spoon hitting a plate or the taste of the madeleine cookie), and these linking sensations resurrect the past. Proust describes the impressions that are common to past and present as in some way "extra-temporal." By experiencing the present moment "in the context of a distant moment, so that the past was made to encroach upon the present," Proust is himself an "extra-temporal being" (p. 904). This is less a fusion of two time periods than an experience outside time. Proust's narrator, Marcel, is aware of his dual experience of two corresponding time epochs, and this awareness allows him to exist in between present and past without questioning which one is real. We may liken this area of experiencing to Winnicott's (2008) notion of transitional phenomena.

Proust's (1982b) "true self," or extra-temporal being, "made its appearance only when, through such identification of the present with the past, it was to find itself in the one and only

medium in which it could exist and enjoy the essence of things, outside time” (p. 904). The past comes to life in the present in an experience of integration and unity, not fragmentation and confusion. If psychoanalysis hopes to reclaim history by remembering, it is through experiencing the living past with greater clarity, mastery, and ownership. In this way, it seems that psychoanalysis is reaching towards Proust—or towards a mode of reliving that integrates disparate self states into a unitary being, one free from terror and thus able to consciously receive the reverberations of the past.

The Compulsion to Repeat

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/1955), Freud gave his fullest attention to the repetition compulsion, or the tendency to repeat painful experiences in life, as this posed a significant theoretical dilemma for psychoanalysis. Namely, the repetition of painful experiences appears to conflict with the pleasure principle, a core tenet of Freudian theory. Yet if we follow the logic of Freud’s essay, the repetition compulsion does not in fact oppose the pleasure principle. It is, as promised, *beyond* it. Freud provides two distinct rationales at differing conceptual levels for this position (Pine, 1985, p. 65). First, he offers the clinical formulation that repetition involves a specific way of mastering trauma. Second, in an admittedly, highly speculative venture, Freud recasts his theory of the instincts: “*It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things*” (p. 36, italics in original). In the end, Freud concludes that the death instinct alone tends towards a return to an earlier state, while Eros preserves life and holds all things together. To be clear about the implications of Freud’s thought on returns, it is useful to treat these two lines of thought separately.

Repetition in dreams, play, and transference. Freud (1920/1955) begins with a discussion of the pleasure principle, that is, the notion that the mental apparatus is regulated by the avoidance of unpleasure or the production of pleasure. As a regulatory principle, pleasure and unpleasure are not meant to denote conscious affective or feeling states. In Freud's words, "We have decided to relate pleasure and unpleasure to the quantity of excitation that is present in the mind ... unpleasure corresponds to an *increase* in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a *diminution*" (pp. 7-8, italics in original). Soon after, Freud equates the pleasure principle to the principle of constancy, "the mental apparatus endeavors to keep the quantity of excitation in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant" (p. 9). Thus, the pleasure and constancy principles are merely different expressions of the same basic concept. At the outset, Freud acknowledges that there are exceptions to the pleasure principle, or rather, circumstances that inhibit it. For example, the ego's instincts for self-preservation may postpone gratification or pleasure in the interest of safety, that is, according to the reality principle. Moreover, in the course of development certain instinctual desires are repressed and held back at lower levels of development, where they remain ungratified. If these repressed wishes are satisfied through circuitous paths, the ego will experience unpleasure (e.g., anxiety or symptoms). Still, Freud concludes that these exceptions do not contradict the pleasure principle, as pleasure is merely postponed or reached in a roundabout manner. In the latter case, what is unpleasure for one system, the ego, will be felt as satisfaction for the other.

Freud (1920/1955) observed the compulsion to repeat unpleasant experiences in widely divergent events, including traumatic dreams, children's play, and the transference. His initial treatment of traumatic dreams is brief and incomplete. He observes that in such dreams the individual is brought back to the traumatic situation (i.e., to a state of fright). This is not what

we would expect according to the theory that dreams are wish fulfillments, which would predict dreams of cure or better times. Following Freud, we return to this quandary at a later point.

Next, Freud (1920/1955) considers the repetitive play of a young child he observed for several weeks. He termed the boy's game, "fort" (gone) "da" (there), or "disappearance and return" (p. 15). Freud was initially puzzled by the game. The boy repetitively tossed small objects and toys into the corner of the room or under his bed, in effect playing "gone," and followed this by recapturing them. The meaning of the game became clearer as Freud observed the boy playing with a wooden reel with a string attached to it. While keeping hold of the string, the boy threw the reel over the edge of his curtained cot, thereby making it disappear. Subsequently he pulled on the string and so caused the reel to reappear. Now, the boy was rather remarkable in that he would allow his mother to leave (i.e., disappear) for hours without protest. The game seemed to represent the boy's compensation to himself, Freud reasoned, for his instinctual renunciation (i.e., the lack of protest at his mother's absence). Freud asks, "How then does his repetition of this distressing experience as a game fit in with the pleasure principle?" (p. 15). The underlying motive, Freud reasoned, was not in fact pleasure, but mastery.

Being left by his mother for a few hours time was a *passive* experience, as it was not the boy's doing or choice; he was overpowered by it. By repeating his experience, he took an *active* part or role. Thus, the repetitive play allowed the boy to change his experience from passive to active, thereby providing him with sense of control and mastery. Still, the play seems to yield pleasure in the outcome, and so Freud (1920/1955) is not ready to concede that there are tendencies beyond or independent of the pleasure principle.

Freud (1920/1955) next considers the repetition compulsion in psychoanalytic treatment. Even with the help of interpretation, analysands are not able to recall all that they have repressed.

Freud continues, “[the patient] is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of ... *remembering* it as something belonging to the past” (p. 18, italics in original). Here, the patient acts out the nuclear conflict in relation to the analyst, thereby establishing a transference neurosis. Freud distinguishes between the higher strata of the mental apparatus, or ego, and the unconscious repressed. Resistance arises from the ego, whether conscious or unconscious, and operates according to the pleasure principle: “it seeks to avoid the unpleasure that would be produced by the liberation of the repressed” (p. 20). The repetition compulsion, on the other hand, is associated with the unconscious repressed. Now, the ego experiences the repetition as unpleasure. But recall that this does not in itself contradict the pleasure principle, as what is felt by the ego as unpleasure may in fact gratify instinctual impulses long since repressed. However, the repetition compulsion revives essentially painful, ungratifying experiences from the past that never brought satisfaction, such as feelings of rejection, or of being replaced and humiliated. Thus, what is repeated is seemingly unpleasurable in entirety. This observation gives Freud the “courage to assume that there really does exist in the mind a compulsion to repeat which overrides the pleasure principle” (p. 22). This is not without reservation, however, as it is rare to see the repetition compulsion in pure form, that is, without other visible motives. In psychoanalytic treatment, for example, Freud notes that the repetition compulsion may be used in the service of resistance (as when repetition precludes painful remembering).

Mastery: from primary to secondary process. To conclude this line of thought, Freud (1920/1955) examines traumatic excitations, first those arriving from outside and then those from within. External trauma is, by definition, powerful enough to breach the protective shield. In such cases, the pleasure principle is essentially out of order, the primary task being the

mastery or binding of large quantities of excitation that have overwhelmed the mental apparatus (i.e., the protective shield). To counteract the excessive influx of energy, a large scale anticathexis is established around the breach: “a system which is itself highly cathected is capable of taking up an additional stream of fresh inflowing energy and of converting it into quiescent cathexis, that is of binding it psychically” (Freud, 1920/1955, p. 30).

Earlier in the essay, Freud (1920/1955) contrasted states of anxiety, fear, and fright: Anxiety refers to a state of expecting danger, even if it is unknown; fear requires a definite object of worry or trepidation; fright refers to a state of being in danger without the benefit of preparation, and so, has the added element of surprise. The anticipatory state of anxiety protects against fright, specifically surprise, and thus, against “fright-neurosis” (Freud, 1920/1955, p. 12). Freud reasons that a lack of preparation for danger, that is, anxiety, results in greater harm from the breach in the protective shield or trauma. Thus, preparation for danger in terms of anxiety and counter-cathexis bolsters the protective shield and constitutes a defensive effort.

Recall that traumatic dreams repeatedly bring the person back to the state of fright. Freud (1920/1955) infers that these dreams serve to “master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis” (p. 32). Thus, Freud is postulating a function of the mental apparatus that is independent and more primitive than the pleasure principle, which serves to master excessive stimulation retrospectively.

We have yet to consider the excitations that impinge from within, namely, the instincts. According to Freud (1920/1955) instinctual impulses operate according to the primary process mode of thinking and are freely mobile, or unbound. The instincts press towards discharge without consideration of consequences or reality. In contrast to the primary process, the secondary process is bound. Insofar as the instinctual impulses are freely mobile or unbound,

there is the danger of a buildup of excessive excitation from within, which would theoretically reach traumatic levels. Some perception of reality is in fact necessary to effect successful drive gratification, as demonstrated by the fact that a hallucinated breast does not satisfy hunger. In short, drive gratification and the prevention of excessive stimulation (in other words, self regulation) largely depend upon secondary process modes of thought (Eagle, 2011, p. 31).

This leads Freud (1920/1955) to conclude that the higher strata of the mental apparatus, or the ego, have the initial task of binding instinctual excitation. Thus, binding the instinctual excitation is a necessary precursor to the dominance of the pleasure principle (or in modified form, the reality principle). “Till then,” Freud writes, “the other task of the mental apparatus, the task of mastering or binding excitations would have precedence—not, indeed, in *opposition* to the pleasure principle, but independently of it” (p. 35, italics in original). One may observe here that this entire process is consistent with the constancy principle, or the tendency of the mental apparatus to keep the quantity of excitation as low as possible or constant. Here, Freud highlights the importance of replacing the primary process with the secondary process, that is, of binding freely mobile energy. This demonstrates that the repetition compulsion, as a retrospective attempt at mastery, is a further effort at (or repetition of) the primary task of binding. As such, it represents a self regulatory mechanism and a generative return.

In summary of Freud’s (1920/1955) clinical formulation, the repetition compulsion is analogous to a function of the mind that is more primitive than and independent of the pursuit of pleasure—that of mastering or binding instinctual excitations impinging upon the mental apparatus. In some sense, the repetition compulsion is a callback, or return to this initial task. Freud notes, “only after the binding has been accomplished would it be possible for the dominance of the pleasure principle” (p. 35). Again, the absence of binding would result in

excitations reaching traumatic proportions. The repetition compulsion proper begins with a trauma—an experience that is excessive and beyond the ego’s capacity to comprehend or bind. In response to such excessive stimulation, the compulsion to repeat serves to *master the stimulus retrospectively*.

In this formulation, the repetition compulsion is not a constant presence or force, but only a last line of defense set in motion by a trauma. While the task of binding instinctual excitations is a constant precursor to the pleasure principle, this is not an instance of the repetition compulsion per se. Rather, the repetition compulsion is observable only after these initial attempts to bind have failed, or when the ego has been overwhelmed.

A New Theory of the Instincts

Freud’s (1920/1955) consideration of the repetition compulsion also led him to revise his instinct theory significantly. The feeling of urgency (i.e., the instinctual character) of the repetition compulsion impressed Freud, leading him to ask, “How is the predicate of being ‘instinctual’ related to the compulsion to repeat?” (p. 36). This question signifies an interesting shift in Freud’s thinking, as he infers that all instinct involves repetition. As such, “*an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things*” (Freud, 1920/1955, p. 36, italics in original).

Prior to this, Freud (1915/1957) defined instinct as an inner stimulus, a need arising from within, to which the mental apparatus responds according to the constancy principle—or pleasure principle (p. 120). This was the state of things above as well, in Freud’s (1920/1955) clinical formulation of the repetition compulsion as a specific mode of mastering trauma. Loewald (1960/1980) describes this change in Freud’s thought:

He defines instinct in terms equivalent to the terms he used earlier in describing the function of the nervous apparatus itself ... Instinct is no longer an intrapsychic stimulus, but an expression of the function, the “urge” of the nervous apparatus to deal with environment. (p. 234)

In other words, “instinct now means regulatory principle” (Loewald, 1971/1980, p. 62); these two concepts are now coterminous. In contrast to Freud’s clinical formulation of mastery, the repetition compulsion now represents a constant force or presence owing to his new definition of the instincts as an inherent urge to repeat or return to an earlier state. Bibring (1943) describes this in terms of restitution, or the urge to restore an original state. It is worth noting, as Freud (1920/1955) himself did, that this formulation is speculative, “what follows is speculation, often far-fetched speculation ... an attempt to follow out an idea consistently, out of curiosity” (p. 24).

As Freud (1920/1955) considers the implications of his newly defined instinct (i.e., as an urge to restore an earlier state of things) he infers that it ultimately must lead back to an inorganic state, as this precedes life. Freud thus terms this the death instinct, perhaps an unfortunate title, as it seems to be not in fact so much about death, but rather a state of quietude or rest. Following much consideration, Freud admits that he cannot square the sexual instincts with his newly formulated death instinct. While sexual instincts are conservative in that they restore an earlier state of the organism, they ultimately preserve life and press towards higher levels of development. Hence, the life instincts are set in opposition to the death instincts. Freud ultimately includes both the self-preservative and the sexual instincts within the category of the life instincts, or Eros. This is because he now treats the self-preservative instincts as libidinal owing to his notion of primary narcissism (Freud, 1914/1957).

If Eros comprises both the self-preservative and the sexual instincts, then what may we ascribe to the supposed death instincts. Here Freud (1920/1955) revises his views of sadism and masochism. Previously, Freud viewed sadism as an expression of the sexual instincts and masochism as sadism turned against the self. In his revised formulation, masochism and sadism are attributed to the death instincts. As an expression of the death instinct, masochism is primary and subsequently turns to an object in the form of sadism. The move from sadism back to masochism, which is present in super-ego formation, represents a regression to primary masochism (Freud, 1930/1961, pp. 91-92). Essentially, Freud ascribes our destructive and aggressive impulses to the death instincts¹⁵.

Yet Freud (1920/1955) does not consider sadism to be his most compelling evidence of the death instincts. Rather, he is most convinced by his constancy principle, or Nirvana principle, “which finds expression in the pleasure principle” (p. 56); again, these regulatory principles all refer to the dominant function of the mental apparatus, that of eliminating excitations, or internal tension, or reducing them to the lowest possible level. Recall that in Freud’s new theory, instinct means regulatory principle (particularly the death instincts). If in fact these concepts are now coterminous, then appealing to the inertia or constancy or pleasure principle as evidence for the death instincts will not be of any use; it is a tautology. “In this sense,” Loewald (1971/1980) writes, “the death instinct is really nothing new” (p. 62).

It is possible that Freud did not think of the death instincts and the regulatory principles as coterminous—despite their considerable, if not complete, overlap. In this case, the death instincts take the regulatory principles one step beyond rest or quietude, to an inanimate state. Here one can logically appeal to the regulatory principles, as Freud does, in support of the death

¹⁵ Freud elaborated on this formulation in chapter 4 of *The ego & the id* (1923/1961) and in chapter 6 of *Civilization and its discontents* (1930/1961).

instincts. However, this seems inconsistent with the larger part of Freud's (1920/1955) essay. Later in the text, for example, Freud states that the pleasure principle itself is "concerned with the most universal endeavor of all living substance—namely to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world" (p. 62). This reaffirms that the death instincts do not extend or add anything new to the regulatory principles; however, as a definition of instinct, it is a significant change in Freud's thinking. Of course, Freud's speculation that the regulatory principles imply an instinctual urge to return to an inorganic state is new as well. Bibring (1943) has noted that it is problematic to conflate such restitution with repetition, as one cannot continually return to (that is, repeat) death. It is, after all, a dead end.

Freud (1920/1955) comes to the following conclusions on the relationship between the instinctual processes of repetition and the pleasure principle. One of the primary functions of the mental apparatus is to bind impinging instinctual impulses, and thus, to replace the primary process mode of thought with the secondary process in the service of mastery and drive gratification. This binding is a necessary precursor to the dominance of the pleasure principle and occurs on its behalf. The pleasure principle, like the constancy principle, operates to free the mental apparatus from excitations or stimulation, that is, to keep levels of excitation constant or as low as possible. This function implies an innate, universal need "to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world" (Freud, 1920/1955, p. 62). In this sense, the pleasure principle is ultimately in the service of the death instinct.

Concluding Remarks

I presented Freud's (1920/1955) theory of the repetition compulsion in two sections, which correspond to two distinct formulations in *Beyond the pleasure principle*. In his clinical formulation, Freud's depiction of the repetition compulsion as a specific mode of mastering

trauma represents a growth process. Even if it is unsuccessful, or leads to further pain, it is an attempt at growth and self regulation. A primary function of the mental apparatus is to bind impinging instinctual impulses, and thus, to replace the primary process with the secondary process. This binding process is a necessary precursor to the dominance of the pleasure principle. The repetition compulsion proper begins with a trauma—an experience that is excessive and beyond the ego's capacity to comprehend or bind. In response, the compulsion to repeat is initiated to master the stimulus retrospectively. Here, the repetition compulsion means subsequent attempts to master or bind overwhelming excitations. In this case, the repetition compulsion is not a constant force, but rather, a last line of defense against traumatic experience.

In his second formulation, Freud (1920/1955) treats the repetition compulsion as instinctual, and redefines the instincts in terms equivalent to those that he used to define the regulatory principles. The instincts and regulatory principles are now coterminous. He expands his motivational theory to include the death instinct, which operates along side the life instinct, or Eros (Freud, 1920/1955; Freud, 1923/1961). Both Eros and the death instincts are conservative in nature (Eros conserves life). According to Freud's revised instinct theory, the ego operates according to the life instinct, or Eros, which comprises both the sexual and self-preservative instincts. Eros operates to preserve life and aims to hold all things together; it is a binding or integrating force that establishes greater unities. (As a binding force, Eros and the clinical formulation of the repetition compulsion [as an attempt to master stimuli retrospectively] bear resemblance.) In opposition, the death instinct is responsible for our destructive and aggressive impulses; in other words, both masochism and sadism are expressions of the death instinct. The death instincts aim to undo connections and to return to an earlier state of things, ultimately to an inanimate or quiescent state. Freud reasons that Eros does not *ultimately* aim to

return to an earlier state of things (in contrast to the death instincts), as this would presume that living substance was once an original unity, later separated.¹⁶ Although the life and death instincts are in conflict, Freud (1920/1955, 1930/1961) considered them to be deeply mixed or alloyed. Freud was initially hesitant about this revision, but he proved committed to it (see, for example, Freud, 1930/1961, pp. 78-79).¹⁷

In Freud's (1920/1955) revised instinct theory, returns (such as the repetition compulsion) take on new meaning by their association with the death instincts. In this formulation, returns tend towards an earlier state of things, ultimately reverting to an inanimate state. However, it seems wholly consistent with Freud's regulatory principles to conclude that this restoration ends in a state of calm or rest or quietude, rather than death. While the return to an inanimate state, or death, is in marked contrast to the clinical formulation of mastery—where returns operate in the service of mastering or binding excessive stimuli, seemingly in line with Eros—the return to a state of rest or calm is consistent with the clinical formulation of mastery. In the latter case, one can imagine elements of Eros in the repetition compulsion manifesting as a wish to redo the past, to experience it in a way that leads to growth through binding and mastery. However, Freud's (1920/1955) death instincts offer something crucial to our formulation, namely the wish to undo connections and break things down or apart. As we will see in chapter 6, Bion's thinking suggests that fragmentation can lead to new forms of thought and higher

¹⁶ In the first chapter of *Civilization and its discontents* (1930/1961), Freud does hypothesize an original unity, or undifferentiated state. See also Balint's (1968) formulation that the ultimate aim in life is the restoration of primary love, or an interpenetrating harmonious mix-up. Loewald (1960/1980) argues that in proposing Eros, an essentially integrating force, Freud moves away from the view that the instincts and ego are in opposition (p. 235). Eros manifests on both levels of organization, the drives and ego, as an integrating force.

¹⁷ According to Greenberg and Mitchell (1983), Freud never suggested that the life and death instincts have a phenomenological basis, "life and death instincts were conceived of as properties of biological tissue" (p. 141). Thus, according to their interpretation, psychological experience begins with libido and aggression—not the life and death instincts.

levels of organization. This is not always the case, however, as undoing or blocking connections can surely forestall growth, particularly when trauma is a factor.

In the end, we have a dizzying array of returns. “It may be said,” writes Green (2002), “that the psyche is that which comes back, returns and reproduces itself” (p. 160). We began with the observation that people often repeat unpleasant experiences. In Freud’s (1920/1955) clinical formulation, this represents an attempt at mastery that involves replacing the primary process with the secondary process, or of binding freely mobile energy. As a retrospective attempt at mastery, the repetition compulsion is a further effort at the primary task of binding. As such, it represents a self regulatory mechanism that may serve well being. When Freud altered his instinct theory, he formulated an unbinding, disintegrating force in opposition to an integrating, uniting force. As we move forward, this fundamental opposition will reappear in various forms. We may settle on the following two categories: There are returns that are conservative in nature, which seem to replay the same state of things without the possibility of change or growth (under the dominance of the death instincts), as well as returns that are generative, which repeat in such a manner as to provide new opportunities and reorganization (under the dominance of the life instincts).

Chapter 5: Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive Modes of Experiencing

As in Freud's work, returns play a pivotal role in the theories of Klein. However, Klein's thinking will primarily be used to elucidate psychological returns, not to exemplify them. In particular, her formulations on the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions add clarity to how various returns may hinder or contribute to mental growth. Ogden's (1986) interpretation of Klein's work is particularly relevant to this discussion.

In brief, this chapter highlights the following points. The unity and integration achieved in the depressive position involves the recovery of aspects of the self and objects previously cut off or dissociated. The recovery (i.e., return) of split off aspects of object relations is essential for establishing continuity, historicity, and mental growth. This is perhaps most evident in projective identification, which provides a means of moving from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position (Ogden, 1986). Conversely, movement from the depressive to the paranoid-schizoid position involves a return to an earlier, more primitive organization. From a Kleinian perspective, this constitutes a regressive flight from danger. Later we will see that Bion has a more nuanced view of this movement. Psychological returns will look rather different depending upon whether one is operating from a paranoid-schizoid or depressive position. In the former case, returns are largely unconscious as in the repetition compulsion where people repeat in place of remembering (Freud, 1914/1958). In the latter case, returns have conscious quality, and lead to greater understanding, integration, continuity, and historicity. Thus, generative returns seem to depend on a mode organizing psychological experience that is characteristic of the depression position.

Background and Theoretical Revisions

After discovering Freud's (1900/1953) *Interpretation of Dreams*, Klein sought out a personal analysis with Ferenczi in 1914 (Mitchell & Black, 1995). With his encouragement, Klein began observing and treating young children from a psychoanalytic perspective. Klein believed that she could grasp the hidden, unconscious mental life of children through their play. In this respect, children's play is comparable to the adult's dream world as a disguised expression of unconscious mental life. Klein considered play to be equivalent to free association as a method of gaining access to unconscious life.

After World War I, Klein began presenting her findings and captured the admiration of Karl Abraham (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). Soon after, she relocated to Berlin to work at the Psychoanalytic Institute under the tutelage of Abraham. This ended in 1925 due to his unexpected illness and death. Thereafter, Klein would accept Ernest Jones's invitation to move to London. Klein's method of treating children, that is, through candid psychoanalytic interpretations of their play, was in direct conflict with Anna Freud's techniques. (Anna Freud was also an influential figure in London, and along with her father would relocate there to escape from the Nazi invasion.) As is well known, these and other disagreements would eventually lead to a divide within the British Psychoanalytic Society. The "A Group" was loyal to Klein, the "B Group" to Anna Freud, and the "middle" or independent group did not take sides (Kohon, 1986; Mitchell, 1986; Mitchell & Black, 1995).

Klein's direct work with children and later with very disturbed adults led her to modify and extend much Freud's thinking. For example, she argued that the Oedipus complex and superego were present much earlier than Freud alleged, albeit in a form that is more primitive.

Klein also broadened the meaning of phantasy¹⁸. For Klein, phantasy is the basic substance or primary content of mental life. Phantasy is the unconscious psychological representative of the instincts, which are biological in nature. Recall that for Freud, fantasy is the result of frustration. Here, phantasy is not a substitute for drive gratification, but rather, complements it (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). Phantasy life, as the psychic representative of the instincts, contains unconscious images and knowledge. In particular, Klein held that objects are inherent to instinctual impulses. Accordingly, infants possess a priori categories of thought, or “phylogenetic inheritance” (Klein, 1952a, p. 117 fn.). Unlike Freud, Klein holds that there are internal, rudimentary objects from the beginning that shape our conscious experience. Ogden (1986) suggests that the Kleinian notion of inherited knowledge or ideas is best understood as “a powerful predisposition to organize and make sense of experience along specific lines” (p. 15).¹⁹

Following Freud, Klein was committed to a dualistic conception of the instincts, namely the life and death instincts. These instincts and their psychological manifestations are in direct conflict. The core problem in Klein’s developmental scheme has to do with the containment and management of destructive impulses emanating from the death instincts (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Klein (1946) described how these opposing instincts are managed in terms of two fundamental positions, the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions. The term position refers to a mode of organizing psychological experience—particularly with respect to the position of the ego, or self, in relation to objects. Developmentally, the paranoid-schizoid position precedes the depressive position, elements of which theoretically begin to emerge between the fourth and seventh month of infancy. The former represents a more primitive mode of

¹⁸ The *ph* designates that the phantasy contents are unconscious.

¹⁹ This is similar to the Kantian notion that our experience of the natural world is limited by the mind’s organization, specifically with respect to the a priori forms of sensibility (space and time) and concepts of understanding (the categories of thought).

experience and organization. In Klein's (1957) model, both positions persist throughout life (i.e., co-exist) and are characterized by particular types of anxiety, modes of defense, object relatedness, and forms of symbolization.

The Paranoid-Schizoid Position

The paranoid-schizoid position (Ps) represents a primitive mode of organizing experience in reaction to the anxieties associated with the death instinct²⁰ (i.e., fears of annihilation and persecution). According to Klein (1946, 1948), early infant life is characterized by overwhelming aggressive and destructive phantasies emanating from the death instinct. Klein (1946) describes the resulting anxiety as the fear of annihilation. In defense, the infant projects the destructive impulse outwards where it attaches to an external, part object (i.e., "the bad breast") in an effort to separate from it. For example, when the infant has not had a good feed or has been deprived, he experiences the breast as bad. While projecting aggressive impulses provides a sense of distance from danger as it is now outside, the infant's anxiety remains and takes on a persecutory quality. The Ps position is "paranoid" because the infant's reliance on projection and projective identification keep him on the lookout for danger.

In contrast to this overwhelming anxious state, the life instincts lead to pleasurable feelings of safety and satisfaction. These impulses are associated with good objects, such as "the good breast" after a good feed. Early on, the infant keeps his good and bad experiences separate by actively splitting objects and his self in relation to them (that is, by splitting the self). According to Klein (1946), with cognitive maturation and continued good experiences, the infant soon develops a capacity to integrate both good and bad experiences of self and other.

²⁰ Alternatively, Ogden (1986) suggests that splitting is the psychological form of an otherwise biologically determined mode of managing danger—simply the inborn tendency to flee from (and thus, gain separation or distance from) danger (p. 44).

The “schizoid” of the Ps position refers to the infant’s use of splitting as a defense and way of organizing his experience. According to Klein (1946), splitting the object—both internal and external—coincides with splitting the ego. Thus, the bad object is in relation to a hostile, aggressive self (as object), and the good object is in relation to a loving aspect of the self (as object). Because these objects are not integrated or whole, Klein (1957) refers to them as part objects. Splitting affords some equanimity by keeping the loving and hating aspects of experience (part-object relationships) separate from one another. This allows the infant to experience his desire and love without fearing that his hate will contaminate the experience; it also allows the infant to hate without the fear that it will damage the good object.

In the Ps position, the self is experienced primarily as an object, as opposed to a subject (Ogden, 1986). Symbol and symbolized are treated as identical. Thoughts, feelings, and sensations have a quality of “it-ness” to them, as though they are happening to the individual; reactions are automatic, and occur without reflection. In some sense, the individual is lived by his experience. In line with this, there is little sense of “I-ness” or subjectivity, as there is “no interpreting subject mediating between perception of danger and response” (Ogden, 1986, p. 45).

The Ps position lacks a truly historical perspective, giving the present a sense of immediacy and certainty. Splitting makes the shift between loving and hating aspects of self and object discontinuous; that is, these opposing feelings and relations are cut off, or dissociated, from one another. Otherwise memory of the opposing experience would contaminate the present, causing unbearable anxiety. The individual operating from the Ps position relies on both denial and omnipotent thought to obliterate the opposing object relation (Klein, 1946). Ogden (1986) describes this discontinuity as “the continual rewriting of history” (p. 65). In other words, without the perspective of the past that continuity affords, present experience takes on a quality

of (untested) reality, “the present is projected backward and forward, thus creating a static, eternal, nonreflective present” (Ogden, 1986, p. 62).

One can see that returns from the Ps position will have an unconscious, automatic quality. The conditions of the Ps position (e.g., the absence of self reflection or sense of being an interpreting subject, discontinuity, dissociation, et cetera) prevent awareness that present actions and experience may reflect the distant past. The individual does not reflectively ask, “Why do I continually put or find myself in this predicament?” but feels as though there is no other way to be because experience is happening to him. The prototypical example may be the (passive or automatic) repetition compulsion, as the individual repeats instead of remembering (Freud, 1914/1958). Any sense of familiarity fails to evoke self reflection or related, conscious memories. Here, the past is reproduced in action rather than by representation. Green (2002) explains, “the non-elaborate character of what is repeated is such that, in reproducing itself, it is as if it had never existed and was occurring each time *as if it were the first time*” (p. 41, italics in original). These experiences are marked by the absence of recollection and time perspective. In the Ps position, we seem to have partial returns as whatever is driving the repetition remains split off. The past is reproduced in action and escapes representation.

Projective Identification

In the beginning, Klein asserts, the infant’s experience is wholly a reflection of the instinctually derived phantasy life. All experience is shaped according to the infant’s phylogenetic inheritance, thereby creating a closed system of meaning. Yet, how does the infant escape from this predetermined system of meaning and learn from experience? According to Klein, the infant’s psycho-physiologic maturation and continued experiences of satisfaction and comfort (e.g., through projecting good feelings and parts of the self into the mother, or

introjection of the good breast) lead to a diminution of anxiety stemming from the death instincts. The reduction of persecutory anxiety coincides with the infant's growing belief that love outweighs hate—presuming a predominance of good experience.

As Ogden (1986) rightly points out, this explanation is not completely satisfying as it leaves unanswered how or why the infant stops relying on his inherited system of meanings. In other words, why does the infant stop interpreting his (good) experiences according to his phantasy life (namely the death instincts)? Moreover, it seems that Klein's (1957) notion of envy would undermine this process, as the infant allegedly destroys the good object under the sway of the death instinct. Ogden argues that Klein's notion of projective identification provides a plausible means by which the infant may break out of his closed system of intrapsychically generated meanings. Klein (1946, 1955) conceptualized projective identification as an intrapsychic process. Essentially, the infant projects unwanted aspects of the self (ultimately stemming from the death instinct) into the object, where he can vigilantly watch and unconsciously identify with them. From Klein's (1946) viewpoint, this could intensify inner persecution as the reintrojected object now contains dangerous aspects of the self.

Later theorists (e.g., Bion, 1962a, 1962b; Ogden, 1979) developed projective identification as an interpersonal concept. In addition to being a defense, projective identification is a form of communicating difficult states (feelings, wishes, needs, impulses) in a manner that can transform each participant. The projected elements of unprocessed experience induce a corresponding feeling or state in the recipient. The recipient processes or metabolizes this state (in other words identifies it and gives it meaning) and thus, is able to experience it without recourse to primitive defenses. Optimally, the projector (infant) recovers previously intolerable aspects of the self in a modified, more manageable version that he can experience

(Ogden, 1979). Ogden (1986) argues that this hinges on the creation of a mother-infant entity, which requires the mother to allow herself to be used (p. 34). The point, or distinction, that Ogden makes is that the infant is not passively recovering the processed experience; instead, there is “a change in the infant’s *way of experiencing* his perceptions” (p. 35). Establishing an emotional link with the recipient (mother) in this process presumably changes the infant. This interaction with the mother transforms the infant’s instinctual preconceptions, thus, enabling the shift to the depressive position and mental growth (Bion, 1962).

In projective identification, an unwanted or intolerable aspect of the self is projected into an object and unconsciously identified with. The unconscious identification is an unacknowledged return, as the projector unconsciously recognizes something as belonging to him. “What has been *abolished* in the inside comes back from the outside” (Green, 2008, p. 1035, italics in original). This is more consistent with Klein’s version.

The interpersonal conception of projective identification, however, results in the mental growth of the projector. In this case, the return is more akin to conscious re-collection. Optimally, the recipient (i.e., mother-infant entity) is able to process or metabolize the projection, and thereby make sense of it and generate meaning. The projection, thus transformed, is available for recovery and experiencing in the projector’s conscious mind. Projective identification provides one way of thinking about returns in terms of mental growth and learning. We will expand on this idea in the following chapter on Bion’s thinking.

The Depressive Position

The depressive (D) position is characterized by sadness and remorse following the recognition that one’s aggression and hate has been directed towards the loved object. This

recognition leads to a drive to make reparation. Consider actor Peter Coyote's reflections on the emotional scars from his past (after a 10-year analysis):

There were people I hurt by not being sensitive; by being exploitative; by using my charisma to get what I wanted; by not being as kind as I could have been. Once you wake up and see your own behavior clearly, it is a kind of wound, because it makes it impossible to reflexively think of yourself as a "good person." [It is no longer possible to rewrite history.] It has taught me to be very cautious. It has taught me that we all have within us the potential to do great damage to the world and to other people, and the only thing that saves us from doing it is our self-awareness. (Kupfer, 2011, p. 11)

The recognition that one has harmed (even if only in phantasy) the good object is only possible when one grasps that the bad, depriving object is also the good object. Klein (1946, 1948) held that this capacity (i.e., to introject whole objects) begins during the second quarter of the first year of life.²¹ As the separation of the good and bad aspects of the mother diminishes, the infant's emotional life undergoes marked changes. The fear of annihilation or persecution is replaced with the fear of object loss, as the infant fears he has harmed and driven mother away. Feelings of sadness, guilt, and concern follow the realization that one has attacked the loved object; this is the "depressive" aspect of the D position. The culmination of this realization is the desire to make reparation, that is, in efforts to restore the good object. These experiences further integrate the ego, or self, as the infant's loving and hating experience gains in proximity.

Ogden (1986) refers to the shift from the Ps to the D position as, "a monumental psychological advance ... a new state, built upon, but qualitatively different from that which

²¹ Many authors (Ogden, 1986; Rayner, 1991) have cogently critiqued Klein's timetable. However, we are considering these positions as fundamental background states of being—and are less concerned with the specifics of a developmental timeline.

preceded it” (pp. 68-69). The ego functions at a more advanced, complex level in the D position. Recall that in the nonreflective state of being characteristic of the Ps position, danger is reflexively managed through eradicating or splitting experience (via denial, splitting, projection, introjection, and omnipotent thinking). These severe maneuvers are supplanted in the D position. Enhanced capacities for synthesis, integration, self-object differentiation, symbol formation, delay, reality testing, and memory are under way. It is important to note that the D mode continually develops over one’s lifetime. Moreover, even if the D mode is dominant in conscious experience, the Ps position continues to operate, often unconsciously.

The move from part-object relatedness to whole-object relatedness coincides with the move from split, discontinuous self experience to continuity in self experiencing (Ogden, 1986, p. 71). Ogden (1986) positions the emergent subjectivity (or the experience of “I-ness”) between the now distinguishable symbol and the symbolized. That is, the I, or self, refers to the “interpreter of one’s symbols, the mediator between one’s thoughts and that which one is thinking about, the intermediary between the self and one’s lived sensory experience” (Ogden, 1986, p. 72). Thought becomes less concrete and increasingly open to interpretation. The infant gains the perspective that others too are subjects with their own, often dissimilar, feelings and experiences. As subjects, others are beyond the infant’s omnipotent control. This allows the infant to experience concern and guilt for another, as well as to experience the desire to make reparations.

The new vantage point of the D position, particularly continuity in self experiencing, amounts to the creation of history (Ogden, 1986). The individual no longer magically rewrites the past in accordance with present circumstances nor does he omnipotently revive what has been annihilated. Instead, he works to repair the damage he has done. Ogden (1986) describes

this as the birth of the historical subject, or the “historical self” (p. 79). The historical perspective of self and others requires the capacity for self-reflection, as the ability to think of oneself over time, particularly with respect to changes in oneself and others. Without this capacity, “each new event radically changes all previous ones. The present is immediately projected on all previous experience thus nihilating the past” (Ogden, 1986, p. 80). The historical perspective makes mourning possible, as there is recognition that things are not what they used to be, or that relationships change or come to an end altogether. All of this contributes to the historicity of the individual, who now possesses the ability to symbolize and generate meanings of past and present experience through an historical lens.

Returns

Returns in the Ps position (partial returns) differ considerably from those experienced in the D position, which are more complete or whole. Ogden’s (1986) description of transference analysis is particularly relevant. Recall that Freud held that we sometimes repeat as a way of resisting conscious recollection. In psychoanalysis, repetition takes form or is enacted in the transference. The analysis of transference, whereby the present (repetition) is retold as a reflection of the forgotten past, “is aimed at expanding the historicity of the depressive position” (Ogden, 1986, p. 82). In other words, transference analysis transforms passive repetition (Ps position) into conscious recollection, or history (D position).

The historical position²², while acknowledging the passing of time and loss, makes (conscious) revival or reexperiencing possible. According to Ogden (1986), “the form of transference possible in the depressive position allows one to perpetuate, to have again, important parts of what one has experienced with people whom one has lost” (p. 90). The past is

²² Following Ogden (1986), I use this term interchangeably with the D position.

not magically restored, as though one has actually time traveled; however, “one experiences with the new person feelings like those one felt with the previous person” (Ogden, 1986, p. 90). In this way, the past is preserved—both in memory and feeling—by its emotional proximity to present circumstances. Ogden aptly writes, “*transference in the depressive position is an attempted preservation of a feeling state from a past relationship; transference in the paranoid-schizoid position is an attempted preservation of the lost object itself* (p. 90, italics in original). In the D position, reality perception is intact.

Another way of stating this is that the D position allows for reflective distance, or what Scheff (1979) has termed “optimal aesthetic distance.” Scheff explains,

When we cry over the fate of Romeo and Juliet, we are reliving our own personal experiences of overwhelming loss, but under new and less severe conditions. The experience of vicarious loss, in a properly designed drama, is sufficiently distressful to awaken the old distress. It is also sufficiently vicarious, however, so that the emotion does not feel overwhelming. (p. 13)

Thus, both literature and psychotherapy provide opportunities to reexperience and perpetuate important past experiences. Optimally, this occurs with the requisite, reflective distance for understanding these experiences and emotions from an historical viewpoint. Both Loewald (1955/1980) and later, Eagle (2011) have discussed the similarities between Freud’s early formulation of catharsis and associative absorption and his subsequent notion of working through. That is, working through seems to involve both the reexperiencing of affect (abreaction) as well as understanding in terms of one’s life history (associative absorption). Optimal aesthetic distance appears to be a necessary condition for working through.

Segal's (1952) work on aesthetics is also relevant. She argues that the reparative wishes present in the D position play a central role in the creation of an artwork. Here, the creation symbolizes the restoration (i.e., re-creation) of a complex and organized internal world, after it has been destroyed or damaged in phantasy. Segal pays particular attention to Proust, who is explicit about his wish to recover his lost past through the creation of an artwork, namely, his literary work, *Remembrance of things past* (1982a, 1982b). To recapture his past in vivid, living memory, "to give them permanent life, to integrate them with the rest of his life, he must create a work of art" (Segal, 1952, p. 490). She describes his work as an effort to restore his past object life, "all his lost, destroyed and loved objects are being brought back to life" (pp. 490-491).

This mode of preserving the past seems unique to the D position. Here is Segal (1952) quoting Proust, "it is only by renouncing that one can re-create what one loves" (p. 491). Hence, one must first acknowledge that there has been a loss and to some extent have mourned that loss, to have the reparative wish that leads to the creative impulse. (These processes are central to the D position.) Otherwise, there is no need to return to the psychic past; in the Ps position one can alter reality, deny loss, and rewrite history. The sustained, conscious desire to have again, with its recognition of loss, means that one has renounced (for the time being) the omnipotent thought characteristic of the Ps position. When Proust writes that he re-creates or recaptures his past, he is emphasizing the emotional and vivid nature of his memories and experience—not declaring that he has magically restored, or brought his past back to life. Accordingly, the conscious wish to recreate the past is rooted in the D position. In this way, the creation of an artwork, similar to reading fiction or partaking in an analysis, is a way of preserving past feeling states (the psychic past) and for generating integrative returns.

In agreement with Klein (1940), Segal (1952) contends that when the adult mourns he is simultaneously reliving early depressive anxieties and the loss of early objects. Segal continues that successful mourning results in the formation of symbols. That is, if the lost object can be assimilated by the ego, then it becomes a symbol. Once we create the symbol, we may use it freely. Hence, mourning leads to the creative act of symbol formation, a form of mental growth, and the extension of which is an artwork. To conclude, the creation of an artwork can be thought of as a commemorative gesture in that it preserves the past. It is a reparative act involving the restoration of one's internal object world and the revival of past experiences with significant others. Segal concludes that the creation of a successful artwork restores internal objects, leading to re-integration and enrichment.

Manic Defense

Klein's notion of the manic defense will allow us to see an instance of returning that seems antithetical to mental growth. When the anxieties of the D position (e.g., threat of object loss) overwhelm the ego, one means of regaining psychic equilibrium is through the manic process, or the (defensive) regression to Ps modes of defense. Such regression compromises aspects of the D mode, such as the sense of subjectivity, historicity, and reality perception. For example, the individual confronted with the difficult reality that he has harmed another through his insensitivity or carelessness, may cope with the fear of object loss by relying on self-aggrandizement to deny his dependence on other people (Klein, 1935). Splitting factors in as the other is defensively devalued, perhaps hated and considered worthless. According to Klein (1935), the specific feature for mania is the "*utilization of the sense of omnipotence for the purpose of controlling and mastering objects* (p. 133, italics in original).

The loss of various functions sets this return apart from those experienced from the D position. Rather than learning to live with the difficulties of life, the individual flees for cover in earlier modes of thought and perception. This maneuver provides temporary relief, but at the cost of adaptation and reinforcement of paranoid anxieties.

Both Klein and contemporary Kleinians emphasize that the Ps and D positions co-exist and are ever-present. Ogden (1992) discusses these positions in terms of a dialectical interplay between psychic organizations. Thus, it is important to resist thinking of these positions as linear. Moreover, the idea of regression suggests a linear formulation. That is, regression suggests going back to a previous, earlier point in development. In Kleinian thought, we do not relinquish the Ps position. Again, it is ever-present—though at varying degrees of consciousness. Still, the term regression seems apt (Klein herself used it) as it emphasizes the loss of function that is evident during shifts from the D position to the Ps position. What seems important is to recognize that the Ps position is not actually given up or rendered inactive despite evidence of D modes of organization and functioning. Lastly, Ogden (1992) has pointed to the benefits of de-integration, that is, of Ps modes of functioning, which he contends are necessary for considering new possibilities, remaining open, and non-arrogance (p. 616). This idea leads us to Bion's theorizing.

Chapter 6: The Thinking of Bion

The work of Bion adds perspective to the relationship between returns and psychological growth. Bion's (1962a, 1962b) theory of thinking describes various processes that impede and facilitate mental growth. In Bion's model, the central difficulty that plagues people has to do with tolerating painful truths. Eliminating emotional experience in an effort to escape frustration and pain impedes the development of thought and thinking, as well as the capacity to experience a full range emotions and impulses. Thus, mental growth coincides with developing a capacity to bear emotional truths. Without this, learning from experience is not possible. As we will see, returning to previous experiences or self states provides a (re)exposure to emotional truths that, if converted into meaningful experience, leads to learning and understanding. The artist's vignette provides one example. Additionally, Bion's (1965, 1970) thinking on transformations, especially with respect to evolutions of O, has implications for our special category of integrative returns. In this area, the area of faith, we will gain clarity on receptive states, dream-like memories, and approaching one's essence.

The Growth of Thought

A theory of thinking. Bion (1962a, 1962b) regards thinking as dependent upon two distinct developmental processes. The first is the development of thoughts, and the second, is the development of an apparatus to cope with them, namely, thinking. Thus, the existence of thoughts precedes the thinking apparatus, or the thinker, and so it is possible, inevitable in the beginning, for there to be thoughts without a thinker. For Bion (1962a), "thinking has to be called into existence to cope with thoughts" (p. 110).

Thoughts undergo three developmental stages: pre-conceptions, conceptions *or* thoughts, and concepts. Pre-conceptions refer to inborn expectations, or a priori knowledge. This is

similar to Klein's notion of phylogenetic inheritance. The prototypical example is the inborn expectation of the breast. Prior to actual experience of the breast, the pre-conception is an "empty thought" (Bion, 1962a, p. 110). Conception refers to the mating of a pre-conception with a realization; hence, we would have the expectation of a breast mating with the realization of the breast in experience. It is also an emotional experience of satisfaction. Conceptions may be refined or purified further to form concepts, which eventually may be used in a scientific theory, for example (Bion, 1963).

For Bion (1962a), the term thought means something rather specific. In contrast to a conception, thought represents the mating of a pre-conception with a frustration, or negative realization. Continuing with our example, the expectation of breast is frustrated, or met with an absence, a "no-breast." According to Bion the infant's capacity to tolerate frustration is of great importance. Supposing that the infant has an adequate tolerance level, then the negative realization, or no-breast, becomes a thought and the thinking apparatus begins to develop. The thought and the developing thinking apparatus lead to further frustration tolerance. In this case, the frustration is modified by the appearance of thought and thinking. If on the other hand frustration tolerance is inadequate, then the infant experiences the no-breast as a bad object, which must be evacuated to avoid frustration. The related sense impressions and primitive emotional experiences lack meaning and are felt as forces or objects, which Bion termed, "things-in-themselves" (p. 112). Instead of having a thought or representation (modification of frustration), the thing-in-itself is projected or expelled (evasion of frustration). In severe cases, Bion writes, "there takes place a hypertrophic development of the apparatus of projective identification" (p. 112). Ultimately, excessive projective identification interferes with or impedes the development of thinking and thus, learning from experience.

Alpha function. Bion (1962b) introduced the abstract notion of alpha function to name an unknowable (or unobservable) function of the personality that converts raw sense impressions and emotions into alpha-elements, which are suitable for memory, dream thoughts, images, dreams, and unconscious waking thinking. Thus, when a pre-conception mates with a negative realization and a thought forms, the alpha function has converted the raw experience into alpha-elements, or mental objects. In this case the infant has adequate frustration tolerance leading to the development of thought and a thinking apparatus. When our frustration is intolerable and we experience the no-thing as a bad object, or a thing-in-itself, the original sense impressions and emotions remain unchanged. Bion (1963) terms these unchanged, raw impressions beta-elements; they are experienced not as phenomena, but as “objects compounded of thing-in-themselves, feelings of depression-persecution and guilt and therefore aspects of personality linked by a sense of catastrophe” (p. 40). The infant typically relies on projective identification to cope with beta-elements.

The distinction between alpha-elements and beta-elements is significant. Alpha-elements can manifest as dream thoughts, images, and memories, and they can be refined into higher levels thought. Hence, the alpha function makes sense impressions and emotional experiences into subjective experience, available for further processing and learning from experience. When the alpha function is impaired or disrupted, sensory impressions and emotional experience cannot be represented in a meaningful way; instead, they are evacuated via projective identification. Beta-elements are not stored in the mind as memories, but rather, as “undigested facts” (Bion, 1962b, p. 7).

According to N. Symington (personal communication, June 27th, 2011), beta-elements, alpha function, and alpha-elements are theoretical conjecture, and thus are not sensually

available.²³ Thus, a person does not subjectively experience beta-elements. For Bion (1962b), the beginning of awareness is an act of dreaming. But in order for such dreaming to occur, beta-elements must be converted by the alpha function into alpha-elements. As alpha-elements, they may be represented through dreaming. In Bion's thinking, dreaming does not preclude waking life or consciousness. Rather, the dream allows a person to remain "asleep" to unconscious contents. Bion (1962b) writes:

He is able to remain "asleep" or unconscious of certain elements that cannot penetrate the barrier presented by his "dream." Thanks to the "dream" he can continue uninterruptedly to be awake, that is, awake to the fact that he is talking to his friend, but asleep to elements which, if they could penetrate the barrier of his "dreams," would lead to domination of his mind by what are ordinarily unconscious ideas and emotions. (p. 15)

Formation of the Thinking Apparatus

When considering the origins of thinking, specifically of alpha function, Bion (1962b) begins with the catastrophic moment: The nascent psyche is flooded with beta-elements, raw materials that require digestion or processing before they can be apprehended. In Bion's account, the capacity for digestion (i.e., alpha function) is an outgrowth of normal experiences of projective identification, whereby undesired parts of the personality are split off and put into an object.

Based on clinical experience, Bion (1962b) recasts Klein's notion of projective identification as an interpersonal process. In essence, a patient relying on projective identification is able to behave in such a way as to induce feelings in another, which she herself does not want to experience; hence, the omnipotent phantasy has a counterpart in reality. Bion

²³ Symington (Symington & Symington, 1996) is a current authority on Bion.

writes, “the patient is sufficiently adjusted to reality to be able to manipulate his environment so that the phantasy of projective identification appears to have substance in reality” (p. 32). Bion proposes a similar process in infancy. That is, the infant is able to provoke the mother in such a way that she will experience those feelings that the infant wishes to abolish.

“When the mother loves the infant what does she do with it? ... my impression is that her love is expressed by reverie” (Bion, 1962b, pp. 35-36). Bion (1962b) defines reverie as follows:

That state of mind which is open to the reception of any “objects” from the loved object and is therefore capable of reception of the infant's projective identifications whether they are felt by the infant to be good or bad. In short, reverie is a factor of the mother's alpha-function. (p. 36)

A mother that is well-balanced and capable of reverie is able to receive her infant’s projections and respond in a beneficial manner. She does so through her alpha function, which enables her to process her infant’s primitive experiences and thereby respond with understanding and care. In this way, the infant’s frightening experience is returned in a modified form that she can tolerate. This gives her the experience that something can be done with the raw data. This use of normal projective identification is not the excessive form that interferes with thinking, but rather, represents an early form of thinking that requires the mother’s participation.

Container ♀ contained ♂. From the above discussion of normal or realistic projective identification, Bion (1962b) abstracted the dynamic relationship of container–contained. The mother capable of reverie is the container of the infant’s expelled, primitive experience, the contained. Bion uses the sign ♀ for the container and ♂ for the contained. To continue with this example, the infant’s experience ♂ is projected into ♀. The emotion that permeates ♀ (and so

♂) is reverie. Both mother and infant benefit and achieve growth from this process. The infant introjects the ♂♀ apparatus, which becomes part of her alpha function. Consequently, the infant is increasingly able to do for herself what she had relied on mother to do.

The dynamic relationship between ♀ and ♂ may be commensal, symbiotic, or parasitic, depending on the quality of the emotion that permeates it (Bion, 1962b, 1970). Bion (1970) expresses these relationships as follows:

By 'commensal' I mean a relationship in which two objects share a third to the advantage of all three. By 'symbiotic' I understand a relationship in which one depends on another to mutual advantage. By 'parasitic' I mean to represent a relationship in which one depends on another to produce a third, which is destructive of all three. (p. 95)

Normal or realistic projective identification, as described above, is a commensal ♂♀ relationship. The third is represented by the understanding and care that contributes to growth. A commensal relationship is also apparent in the development of conceptions: A pre-conception, ♀, mates with a realization, ♂, and produces a conception (the third) to the benefit of all. A symbiotic relationship, while in itself beneficial, does not produce a third that contributes to mutual growth. For example, in a symbiotic psychotherapy relationship, each participant depends on the other for well being, but without insight and mental growth (the third). Projective identification may also represent a parasitic relationship. For example, if the mother rejects the infant's projection or attacks it with envy or hate, then the infant's projection is returned in the form of nameless dread (the third).

Bion (1962b, 1963) describes the emotional link between two objects in terms of love (L link), hate (H link), and knowledge (K link), as well as the negative of these, -L, -H, and -K. All emotions are cataloged according to these six links. The mother's reverie, or loving

relationship to her infant, which makes her containing productive is likely an L link. This relationship could also be a K link, however, as she is trying to get to know both her emotions and her infant's experience. Hence, projective identification in L or K is a commensal relationship between ♀ ♂ (Bion, 1962b).

The K link implies bearing the frustration, or discomfort, inherent in learning. This is apparent in the formation of a thought, which originates in the frustration of being confronted with a no-thing or absence rather than a realization. If frustration is avoided and the beta-elements are expelled, then this is -K. All of the minus links represent attempts to destroy meaning and understanding. They operate to negate emotion and understanding. Thus, if the mother is under great pressure and is severely distressed, she may wish to ignore or not understand her infant's experience, which represents -K. The mother's envy may also contribute to -K. Bion (1962b) explains,

In — K the breast is felt enviously to remove the good or valuable element in the fear of dying and force the worthless residue back into the infant. The infant who started with a fear he was dying ends up by containing a nameless dread. (p. 96)

The concept of ♀ ♂ is central to mental development in Bion's (1963) thinking. Thought emerges from the depths of raw, undigested sense data and emotional experience to form increasingly abstract, purified, categories of thought.²⁴ Each step in this process may be represented in the following manner: a pre-conception searching for a realization, or ♀ (state of expectation) searching for ♂; the mating of ♀ ♂ forms a conception; the conception, in turn, becomes a new pre-conception ♀ in search of a new realization ♂, and thus continues to greater levels of complexity and abstraction. The repetition of this process represents movement to

²⁴ In Bion's (1963) grid, this progressive movement is represented on the vertical axis from top to bottom.

higher levels of thought and thinking. The evolution of thought depends on a commensal ♀♂ relationship, that is, an emotional environment conducive to growth. In a negative environment, the formation of thought either does not start or moves in the reverse direction, to loss and destruction of meaning.

The growth of thought as represented by the ♀♂ model, or pre-conception seeking out and mating with a realization, is about the development of meaning. Bion (1962b) described this in terms of saturation and naming. When the pre-conception and realization come together, the pre-conception is saturated, or accrues meaning, through experience. Naming also occurs when a pre-conception is realized. The naming holds or binds the experience together. The name accumulates meaning, or saturation, through the continued operation of ♀♂. Still, this process of binding elements together through naming has a provisional, tentative quality. Further learning requires that the ♀ remain integrated without rigidity. Bion describes this state of mind in terms of the individual who can “retain his knowledge and experience and yet be prepared to reconstrue past experiences in a manner that enables him to be receptive of a new idea” (p. 92).

Ps ↔ D. In addition to the ♀♂ process, the thinking apparatus relies on the co-existing dynamic relationship between the paranoid-schizoid position (Ps) and the depressive position (D). Bion uses the symbol $Ps \leftrightarrow D$ to designate this movement. In particular, Bion is referring to the shift from fragmentation and dispersal (Ps) to integration and coherence (D), the back and forth movement between disintegration and reintegration. The move from dispersal to integration is precipitated by the discovery of the selected fact. Bion (1963) explains, “by selected fact I mean that by which coherence and meaning is given to facts already known but whose relatedness has not hitherto been seen” (p. 19). The selected fact is an experience that links together elements that had been dispersed, or that were not seen as connected; a selected

fact could be an idea or an emotion. As the double arrow indicates (Ps ↔ D) it is not just integration that leads to the formation of knowledge. Integration must be tentative, not rigidly adhered to. Thus, the move from coherence to dispersal is also integral to mental growth. Breaking apart allows for new syntheses to form and thus, new ways of thinking. Thus Ps has creative value.

Bion (1963) is hesitant to give priority to ♀ ♂ or Ps ↔ D, instead suggesting that they both operate together in a mixed state. The ♀ ♂ process represents expulsion and ingestion, while Ps ↔ D represents a back and forth between fragmentation and integration. Bion (1963) would settle on a distinction, however; the recognition of the whole object depends on the Ps ↔ D mechanism, and the accumulation of meaning depends on the operation of ♀ ♂. Ps is a state of disorder. The individual tolerates incoherence and doubt, waiting for the selected fact to surface. The selected fact brings coherence, signaling a move to D. At this point, ♀ ♂ processes contribute to the development of meaning. The return to Ps allows for new possibilities and selected facts to emerge.

Learning From Returns

We may consider Miss A's integrative return in terms of Bion's theory of thinking. Recall that Miss A's production of an autobiographical artwork enabled her to regain a terrifying aspect of her history, perhaps a miscarriage. The vivid memory scenes evoked strong feelings and sensations that give Miss A the sense that she is there again, reliving this event. The revival itself may be thought of as a selected fact. The beginning elements of Miss A's artwork (an image of intercourse juxtaposed with a mother embracing a daughter who looks down, the sea of red pigments, and the overall despondent mood) all come together, are bound, in the moment of recollection. The return brings unity to elements that were rather vague to Miss A, thereby

providing an overall coherence (D). Although the moment of revival from Miss A's perspective is initially disorienting and inchoate (Ps), this initial disarray, gives way to an experience of coherence and overall order (D), as represented by her artwork.

Miss A's involuntary memory of what she believes was a miscarriage represents a return to or revival of a powerful emotional experience that had yet to be digested; the undigested experience was a ♂ in search of a ♀, a thought awaiting a thinker. The raw sense impressions and emotional experience were banished from her mind rather than converted into meaningful experience that she could understand. In this case, fear seemed to impair her alpha function and so, forestall the formation of dreams, thoughts, and images (i.e., mental objects). Yet, these undigested facts were revived and converted into vivid images and emotions. The return allowed Miss A to reexperience this catastrophic moment, to hold it in her mind long enough for conscious reflection, that is, for her alpha function to render it thought and real. As a real event, Miss A could think further about her experience, could reflect on it, and incorporate it into her artwork, thereby generating further meaning. Miss A's conscious reflection, the thinking process itself, and later the artwork, provided a containing function, that is, operated as the ♀ for the ♂.

What made Miss A open to receiving ♂? While mixing her paints and constructing her composition, Miss A achieves a meditative state of relaxed attention, approximating reverie or dream-like thinking. In this state, Miss A is open to receive various images and memories from her past. Her relationship to these objects is a K link. The ♀♂ relationship is commensal. The ♂ mating with the ♀ produces a beneficial third, the artwork.

In summary, we assume that the mechanism of Ps ↔ D and the operation of ♀♂ are active in returns that lead to mental growth. Through the mechanism of Ps ↔ D, an individual may grasp a selected fact; various elements of experience, past and present, cohere through vivid

recollections and are represented by higher levels of thinking. The psychic present and psychic past co-exist in self states and experiences common to both. When we enter receptive states of relaxed attention and reverie, we become more open to receiving undigested facts, and they are converted into dream-like memories suitable for learning and meaning-making. In this way, returns provide an avenue for learning from heretofore unprocessed impressions and experience. For Miss A, the time elapsed likely provided enough experience for the continued development of her alpha function, specifically, of her capacity to dream her experience (Ogden, 2004). In this way she is in a better position to process the undigested facts, or beta-elements, that had escaped conscious reflection.

Transformations

Transformations from O. Bion (1965) introduced a theory to describe the change in form, or transformation, of an original state or reality during processes of representation. The concept of transformation applies to many situations. For example, Bion describes a painting of a landscape as a transformation of the artist's visual experience of the landscape. A poet's process of transformation through language would result in a different transformation of the same landscape. Despite these differences, however, something of the original is preserved in the new form. These unaltered features of the original landscape, or invariants, are recognizable in the end product (whether a painting or poem) despite the change in form. In this way, the new form provides a reference point for the original fact, which Bion symbolizes as O. Recognition of O requires that the recipient have sufficient understanding and experience, as well as motivation. For example, someone who has never seen or been to Venice would not recognize O in Proust's descriptions.

Transformation (T) implies three stages. These are, in order, the initial or original fact (symbolized by “O”), the process of transformation (symbolized by $T \alpha$), and the product of transformation (symbolized by $T \beta$). Invariants are those aspects of O that are left unchanged by $T \alpha$; they create the possibility for recognizing O in $T \beta$. Bion (1965) distinguishes between the analyst’s $T \alpha$ and $T \beta$, (which he symbolizes $Ta \alpha$ and $Ta \beta$, respectively), and the patient’s $T \alpha$ and $T \beta$, (which he symbolizes $Tp \alpha$ and $Tp \beta$, respectively). For example, $Ta \beta$ might refer to an interpretation, and $Tp \beta$ to free association and various gestures. In analysis, O refers to the emotionally meaningful events of the session or the emotional truth of a session.

Bion (1965) lists three types or groups of transformations. These are rigid motion transformations, projective transformations, and transformations in hallucinosis. Rigid motion transformations display the least amount of deformation. As an example, Bion refers to the transference (neurosis), whereby feelings and thoughts appropriate to the Oedipus complex are transferred “with a wholeness and coherence” (p. 19) to the analytic relationship. The transfer of feelings from one situation (and time) to another involves little deformation, making it recognizable as transference. By contrast, projective transformations bear significant deformation, making recognition of O rather difficult. Here, the $Tp \alpha$ involves mechanisms associated with the Ps position, such as splitting and projective identification. Hence, the $Tp \beta$ may lack self-object differentiation and be altogether confused as normal boundaries in time and space are disregarded.

Finally, transformations in hallucinosis are characteristic of the psychotic part of the personality—which is theoretically present in all persons, regardless of their level of functioning. The $Tp \beta$ may be a hallucination, but need not be. These transformations are related to a primitive catastrophe, specifically, an original emotional experience that was never contained or

transformed. The beta-elements were unable to find a container (such as mother in a state of reverie) and so, were returned and experienced as a nameless dread, or psychotic panic. The psychotic part of the personality attempts to avoid the beta-elements, or the emotional catastrophe, by using “his senses as organs of evacuation which are able to surround him with a universe that has been generated by himself” (Bion, 1965, p. 137). In this way, the patient feels she is independent from everything but her own creations.

Rigid motion transformations, as in transference neurosis, seem to best describe returns that are conducive to learning. Recall Ogden’s (1986) description of transference in the depressive position, “*an attempted preservation of a feeling state from a past relationship*” (p. 90, italics in original). This preservation facilitates the creation of meaningful personal history. Miss A’s integrative return seems to fit in this category. That is, the original fact (O) is revived with wholeness and coherence in the psychic present, culminating in a unitary experience of two distinct moments in time. The $T \beta$ is not an exact replica of O, but the invariants make O recognizable in the end product. Miss A’s painting also represents a transformation. The O (integrative return) is transformed in her painting $T \alpha$, which culminates in an artwork $T \beta$ with little deformation. The same is true for Proust. His creation of an artwork is a transformation of his involuntary memories.

Each transformation (rigid motion T, projective T, and T in hallucinosis) is a transformation *from* O. As such, they are about *knowing* O and so signify K or –K links (–K when obscuring O rather than communicating O is the intention). The analyst’s interpretations are K links; they are about getting to know the phenomena of O, or the true emotions of the patient in a session. Bion (1965) wondered whether these interpretations could effect a transition from knowing to being, from K to O.

Transformations in O. In Bion's (1965) thinking, there is a gap, a curtain of illusion, between phenomena and reality, the thing-in-itself, or noumena (to borrow Kant's terminology). Hence, reality is ultimately unknowable. Reality is not something that lends itself to being known, "It is impossible to know reality for the same reason that makes it impossible to sing potatoes" (Bion, 1965, p. 148). Potatoes, Bion continues, can be eaten or grown, and reality it seems "has to be 'been'" (p. 148). And later, "the point at issue is how to pass from 'knowing' 'phenomena' to 'being' that which is 'real'" (Bion, 1965, p. 148). The former has to do with transformations *from* O, the latter with transformation *in* O, which Bion also describes as *becoming* O.

To simply know something, to have understood in an intellectual sense, somehow misses the point. Bion (1965) likens the difference between transformations in K (or from O) and transformations in O to knowing about psychoanalysis versus being psychoanalyzed. The difference is also comparable to accepting an interpretation intellectually versus receiving it in a manner that resonates emotionally and historically, so that change and growth occur. Resistance to K, or to transformations from O, arises when becoming O is on the horizon. Overcoming or mastering the fear of becoming O allows the analysand to experience her emotional reality.

In his next book, Bion (1970) shifts his attention from how to affect the move from K → O to how O enters the domain of K, or evolves to the point of being known. The critical issue has to do with being receptive to evolutions of O, to becoming at-one-with O. The experience of becoming O allows for some acquaintance with O, a knowing of sorts, "[O] can be 'become', but it cannot be 'known'" (Bion, 1970, p. 26). Bion (1970) explains,

It is O when it has evolved sufficiently to be met by K capacities in the psycho-analyst. He does not know the 'ultimate reality' of a chair or anxiety or time or space, but he

knows a chair, anxiety, time, and space. In so far as the analyst becomes O he is able to know the events that are evolutions of O. (p. 27)

By being O, the analyst may intuit the patient's evolutions of O. In this way, evolutions of O enter the domain of K, but O in itself, the ultimate reality, absolute truth, or the thing-in-itself cannot be known. "[O] stands for the absolute truth in and of any object; it is assumed that this cannot be known by any human being," Bion continues, "it can be known about, its presence can be recognized and felt, but it cannot be known. It is possible to be at one with it" (p. 30).

Thus, the progression for the analyst is optimally from evolutions of O → K. That is, she must first be O in order to communicate or formulate the O of a session through K activity. To do so, the analyst must rid her mind of desire and memory.

Faith and reception. The analyst, according to Bion (1970), must wait for evolutions of O to become apparent, or coherent, to her intuition before interpreting. Evolutions of O are united or bound by the analyst's intuition, just as the selected fact coheres and unites disparate parts. In order to intuit evolutions of O, the analyst, according to Bion, must have a particular frame of mind. Specifically, the analyst systematically avoids memory and desire. What Bion has in mind is the cultivation of a receptive state of mind, a mind that is unsaturated with presumptions. Bion illustrates, "I avoid any exercise of memory; I make no notes ... I avoid entertaining desires and attempt to dismiss them ... I think it a serious defect to desire the end of a session, or week, or term" (p. 56). Bion's avoidance of memory does not extend to remembering appointments, or a patient's family members, her age, or medical history, all of which may be recorded; nor is he advocating simple forgetfulness.

The disciplined denial of memory and desire is an "act of faith" (F) (Bion, 1970, p. 41). Both memory and desire are based on sense impressions, and as such, their presence prevents the

appearance of unsaturated preconceptions. Desire and memory “occupy the space that should remain unsaturated” (Bion, 1970, p. 41). Bion (1970) also suggests eschewing sense perceptions and understanding (by which I take him to mean dwelling on these activities). In all, this “artificial blinding” (Bion, 1970, p. 43) is for the purpose of making contact, or intuiting, psychic reality or evolutions of O. Memory and desire block this contact by saturating preconceptions with presumptions.

In psychoanalysis, O represents the unknown. Bion (1970) writes, “if it is true that the proportion of the known to the unknown is so small at the *end* of analysis, it must be even smaller *during* analysis” (p. 69, italics in original). What matters or deserves attention is not what is known, but what is unknown. F in O represents the belief that there is an ultimate reality and truth that is recognizable. The intrusion of the analyst’s memory and desire blocks and obscures her capacity to intuit evolutions of O.

Dream-like memory. Bion (1970) contrasts the experience of *remembering* a dream with dream-like memory, which “float into the mind unbidden and unsought and float way again as mysteriously ... thoughts also come unbidden, sharply, distinctly, with what appears to be unforgettable clarity, and then disappear” (p. 70). He reserves the term “memory” for conscious attempts at recall—which Proust (1982a) refers to as “voluntary memory.” Similarly, Bion’s “dream-like memory” (p. 70) bears a strong resemblance to Proust’s “involuntary memory.” Bion writes that this is “the memory of psychic reality and is the stuff of analysis” (p. 70). Thus, the practice of avoiding memory and desire, (F), is meant to facilitate the growth of dream-like memory.

Bion (1970) remarks further on dream-like memories:

The experience of the dream seems to cohere as if it were a whole, at one moment absent, at the next present. This experience, which I consider to be essential to evolution of the emotional reality of the session, is often called a memory, but it is to be distinguished from the experience of remembering. (p. 107)

We may liken Bion's dream-like memories to Proust's involuntary memories or to Miss A's sudden recollection. Such memories seem to facilitate the evolution of emotional reality.

F in O: return to origins. Bion's (1970) notion of F in O, like reverie, describes an optimal state of receptivity. These notions depict an openness to experience that is conducive to the evolution of emotional reality, or O. Recall Dr. Isak Borg's special sense of self-awareness (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957). While driving to Lund with Marianne, where he will receive an honorary degree, he is drawn to visit the summerhouse of his childhood. With Marianne off exploring, he approaches a familiar wild strawberry patch. He sits down without pursuing memories or desire; he is in a state of free receptivity. Patiently eating the berries, he lets his mind wander, "the day's clear reality dissolved into the even clearer images of memory ... with the strength of a true stream of events" (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957). Isak's state of reverie and calm invites dream-like memories, images and feelings from long ago. He is once more living the emotions of an early, bittersweet romance with a faith that approaches O, allowing him "to experience the impact of emotional reality in a way which allows the latter genuinely to evolve" (Eigen, 1985, p. 326). Within this dream-like reverie, Isak re-connects with aspects of himself long since discarded, his love of poetry and his emotional sensitivity. Isak revisits his past in a manner that allows him to become O, to experience the evolution of emotional reality. In this way, Isak is able to expand on his prior experience, to feel again his loss but with enough reflective distance for him to tolerate his experience and allow it to evolve.

Turning now to Proust (1982a), it seems that his difficulties with recall during the madeleine episode are significant. The madeleine cake soaked in tea evoked an exquisite surge of pleasure that invaded his senses and filled him with a special essence. Thereafter, Proust tried repeatedly to revive this experience. But his conscious efforts were to no avail. Proust, like Bion, makes a point of differentiating voluntary memory from dream-like, involuntary memories. The former represents an act of will and preserves nothing of the past. The images rendered have no life to them. Involuntary memories, by contrast, are unbidden. They are evoked by chance happenings, such as the sight and taste of wild strawberries or of a spoonful of madeleine cake soaked in tea. Proust eventually grows tired of his attempts to restore his pleasurable experience. He lets his mind wander without the distress of desire. Then, unbidden and unsought, a fleet of dream-like memories suddenly returns with remarkable clarity and distinction. He had to achieve F in O, the absence of memory and desire, to be receptive to evolutions of O.

Through recognition, we may recapture the psychic past, bringing it to life in dream-like memory. A veritable moment of the past is linked to the present and thereby preserved. Proust (1982b) writes that that which is “common both to the past and to the present, is much more essential than either of them” (p. 905). And with respect to the madeleine episode, “this essence was not in me, *it was myself*” (Proust, 1982a, p. 55, italics in original). Somehow, the vivid images and feeling states contained within involuntary memories bear the essence of a person, or in Bion’s language, evolutions of O. Essence, here, means becoming at one with an emotional truth that has historical depth, that is, a truth common to psychic past and present that both preserves what was and expands on it.

Chapter 7: Regression

This chapter examines different notions of regression to further solidify the distinction between generative and non-generative returns. I begin with some tentative, exploratory ideas and propositions. It seems clear that psychoanalysts have long used the notion of regression to describe a wide range of phenomena in a variety of settings. While this practice may be common in the early stages of theory building, such as in the stage of description, continuing in this manner indefinitely will not lead to clearer, more consistent use of the term.²⁵ Rather, it is something like seeing nails everywhere while learning to use a hammer: Though useful with learning and mastery in the beginning, it should give way to a more selective and judicious approach. Likewise, retaining the meaning and value of regression concepts requires further restriction and precision in usage. To this end, we would gain much clarity if we gave more weight to contextual factors when applying concepts of regression. For example, whether shifts in dominance between secondary and primary process thinking are regressive should depend upon the circumstances. In a creative context, whether in play, music, or art making, this typically indicates flexibility in the personality rather than a loss or restriction in functioning, as the term regression implies (Arlow & Brenner, 1964).

Rather than furthering attempts to depathologize the concept of regression (Knafo, 2002), and in this way extending its application, we may reserve regression concepts for instances that are truly steps backward in development and functioning; this is consistent with the conclusions of Arlow and Brenner (1964). Of course, many regression concepts would not qualify as such. Yet, cataloguing experiences that are not truly steps backward under the wide penumbra of regression has at least two unfortunate consequences: first, they acquire a pejorative connotation;

²⁵ Freud's (1915/1957) comments on developing scientific concepts seem to be consistent with this position.

second, the meaning of regression becomes obscured and muddled (Inderbitzin & Levy, 2000; Loewald, 1981; Weissman, 1971). I propose using *return*, a synonym for regression that has the benefit of being more ambiguous (i.e., less value laden), as a general category to refer to the variety of ways in which we revisit, revive, and repeat significant aspects of the past, such as in regression. Hence, returns may be regressive or progressive; but regression in itself cannot at the same time be considered progressive.

There are at least two benefits to using the general category of returns: first, regression concepts will gain in precision, which will increase their communicative value; second, we will be better able to identify commonalities across theoretical perspectives that have been obscured by inconsistent use of regression concepts. As it is, similar returns may be described in terms of regression from one theoretical perspective but not so from another, and this gives the false impression that such viewpoints are further apart than they actually are.

Concepts of Regression

The notion of regression is ubiquitous in psychoanalytic literature. Freud relied on regression to describe both normal and pathological processes. With respect to normal activities, Freud used the concept of regression to explain dreams and daydreams, memory, creativity, and wit. Later formulations, such as those of Kris (1952) and Anna Freud (1965), further developed the role of regression in creativity and normal growth processes. Beginning in 1905, Freud (1905/1953b, 1917/1963) argued that libidinal regression was a central component of symptom formation in his theory of neuroses. While the concept of regression has been applied to a range of phenomena and contexts, it is probably as a pathogenic agent in Freud's theory of symptom formation that regression was most prominent and clearly defined.

Defining regression with precision is rather difficult owing to its widespread application: It may be beneficial or harmful, adaptive or maladaptive, normal or pathological, malignant or benign, et cetera. The meaning and connotation appears to change according to the circumstances. Generally speaking, however, regression means to return or revert to an earlier form, or to retrace one's steps. Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) define regression as follows: "As applied to a process having a determinate course or evolution, 'regression' means a return from a point already reached to an earlier one" (p. 386). This definition shows that regression is closely related to notions of evolution and development.

Regression in Freudian Theories

Several authors (Arlow & Brenner, 1964; Blum, 1994; Inderbitzin & Levy, 2000; Loewald, 1981) trace Freud's use of regression to the influence of English neurologist, J. Hughlings Jackson. Jackson applied Herbert Spencer's notion of evolution to the development and functioning of the nervous system. According to this view, there is a progressive movement from simple, undifferentiated structures to more complex, differentiated, and increasingly integrated organizations. In the biological realm, regression refers to a backward movement in development, that is, a reversion to a simpler, archaic stage, which entails a loss of higher levels of functioning and coordination (Blum, 1994). Hence, with respect to psychological development Loewald (1981) writes, "regression implies a standard or norm from which one deviates ... in a backward direction ... going below a norm that had been reached" (p. 24). As we will see, however, applying the idea of regression to psychological phenomena is not so clear-cut in practice.²⁶

²⁶ Loewald of course understood this and often made a point of it.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud (1900/1953) argues that the vivid mental imagery of dreaming as well as hallucinatory wish fulfillment are the products of a topographical regression, that is, a reversal of the usual progression of excitation. Thus rather than moving from the sensory to the motor end of the mental apparatus, as in a typical reflex arc, excitation moves in the opposite direction, from the motor end towards the sensory end of the mental apparatus until it reaches beyond the mnemonic systems to the perceptual system, resulting in the mental imagery of dreams or hallucinations. This retrogressive movement is not just a product of our dream life, but is also an aspect of normal waking life. For example, Freud (1900/1953) reasons that normal regression is involved in intentional recollection and other forms of complex thought that return to the “raw material of the memory traces” (p. 543). However, in normal waking states the backward movement does not go beyond mnemonic images to the perceptual system, which would produce a “hallucinatory revival of the perceptual images” (Freud, 1900/1953, p. 543). In a later paper, Freud (1917/1957) clarifies this distinction: “we are quite familiar with situations in which a process of regressive reflection brings to consciousness very clear visual mnemonic images [memory-pictures], though we do not on that account for a single moment take them for actual perceptions” (p. 231). That is, there is a distinction between vividly recalling memories versus hallucinating perceptions, namely, the testing of reality. Thus, in the absence of sufficient loss of function, namely, reality testing, topographical regression remains a normal activity during waking life.

What, if anything, does this topographical account of regression teach us about generative returns? In *Constructions in analysis*, Freud (1937/2002) likens his patients’ vivid memories and heightened imagination to hallucinations, but without the loss of reality testing. The unusual clarity of the mental imagery is thought to stem from closely linked repressed memories that

have retained and exert great sensory force. Thus, these returns involve regression to the Mnem. systems, or the raw data of memory traces. One may entertain this principle in Miss A's return, for example. The deep red pigments, the texture of the paints, and the image of a small blot of white paint within the red, were closely linked with unconscious memories. Thus, the unconscious memories were able to attract, or draw, her conscious thoughts to the raw data of the Mnem. system. We may fairly assume that there were also close associations between the imagery of *Moby Dick* and Bollas's (1992) unconscious memories of having met a whale and a dead woman at sea.

Thus, it seems we are able to gain some clarity on the role of topographical regression in returns, particularly concerning vivid memories. We can further assume that such returns could possibly lead to a more integrated personality, given adequate ego support and strength, as previously isolated islands of experience are integrated.

In a 1914 addition to *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/1953), Freud further clarified regression, adding temporal and formal regression to his earlier depiction of topographical regression. Freud described temporal regression as a harking back to older psychic structures and formal regression as the return to primitive modes of expression and representation. Freud synthesized these forms as follows: "All these three kinds of regression are, however, one at bottom and occur together as a rule; for what is older in time is more primitive in form and in psychical topography nearer to the perceptual end" (p. 548). Despite this overlap, Freud mainly referred temporal regression in his clinical formulations.

When Freud (1917/1963) discusses regression in his explanations of symptom formation and the transference neurosis, he is referring to temporal regression in drive and libidinal development. In the development of neuroses, "the libido is lured into the path of regression by

the fixation which it has left behind” (Freud, 1917/1963, p. 359). Freud (1905/1953a) depicts this in the Dora case as follows, “a stream of water which meets with an obstacle in the river bed is damned up and flows back into old channels which had formerly seemed fated to run dry” (p. 51). Hence, libidinal regression is closely connected to the inhibition or fixation of libido at previous stages of development.

Although the drives pass through stages of development, portions remain fixated at various levels or stages of organization. The proportion of libido fixated has to do with both constitutional forces and environmental factors, such as trauma. Freud (1917/1963) described the action of these two factors as a “complemental series” (p. 347). The regressive pull of the earlier structures is related to the amount of libido left behind. Freud depicts this with an analogy:

If a people which is in movement has left strong detachments behind at the stopping-places on its migration, it is likely that the more advanced parties will be inclined to retreat to these stopping-places if they have been defeated or have come up against a superior enemy. But they will also be in the greater danger of being defeated the more of their number they have left behind on their migration. (p. 341)

Freud described two types of libidinal regression: the return to previous objects and modes of relating to them, such as incestuous objects, and the return to previous stages in sexual organization. The former is prevalent in hysterical neuroses and the latter in obsessional neuroses, where Oedipal anxieties have led to a reversion to the anal stage of sexual development.

The notion of temporal regression in particular is clearly tied to a linear model of development and the notion of progression, and apparently to the evolutionary biological ideas

that J. Hughlings Jackson espoused. It is a regression to simpler, older structures. Here, the notion of regression seems most clear and straightforward, despite being outdated as a model of psychopathology. Yet, see Eagle (2011) for an analysis of the similarities between this older model and contemporary object relations views.

The Usefulness of Regression

Regression as a principle in normal development. Anna Freud (1965) contributed to our understanding of the positive and normal dimensions of regression by demonstrating that regression is a necessary part of the normal psychological development. Anna Freud first reminds us of how we arrived at the expectation of growth as a linear progression. In the body, and other biological structures, we generally observe straightforward, progressive lines of growth, from immaturity to maturity, until adulthood is reached; thereafter, we expect decline to set in. Of course, various illnesses, injuries, or deprivations may interrupt this progressive move toward maturation. Now, psychological development similarly proceeds in a progressive direction, but not in the straightforward manner we tend to assume:

While on the physical side, normally, progressive development is the only innate force in operation, on the mental side we invariably have to count with a second, additional set of influences which work in the opposite direction, namely, with fixations and regressions.

(Freud, 1965, pp. 93-94)

Anna Freud then translates earlier concepts of regression into structural terms: temporal regression involves the drives, related objects, and/or methods of discharge; topographical and formal regressions involve the ego functions and the secondary process. Hence, regression may occur in the id, ego, or superego, and may involve functioning or psychic content.

Unlike libidinal or drive regressions, ego regression is free from the influence of inhibition, that is, “the stubborn adhesion of the drives to all objects and positions which have ever yielded satisfaction” (Freud, 1965, p. 98). Rather, the regression seems to retrace the order of progress, step-by-step, beginning with the most recent advance. In ordinary, normal development, regression in various ego functions is a regular incident. These may include, for example, ego functions of reality testing, language, secondary process thought, integration, frustration tolerance, social adaptation, and impulse control. Thus a child’s ability to function on a mature level will not be without ongoing interruptions. Anna Freud (1965) reassures us, “according to experience, the slow method of trial and error, progression and temporary reversal is more appropriate to healthy psychic growth” (p. 99).

With respect to regression in secondary process functioning, Anna Freud (1965) points to child (and adult) analysis, children’s normal behavior at bedtime, and the culmination of long and arduous school days. In each of these scenarios, we may observe gradual declines in logic, coherence, and rationality, as the secondary process gives way to primary process functioning. Anna Freud continues that the defenses also lead to regression in ego functions. For example, denial, repression and reaction formation all interfere with improvements in memory, and projection interferes with the synthetic function as we expel unwanted parts of the self into the object world. Despite the decline in functioning, these regressions are not pathological, but rather are normal aspects of development and coping. “They are useful answers to the strain of a given moment,” writes Anna Freud, “and make difficult situations bearable” (p. 105). In this way, they both serve adaptation and defense, and are beneficial so long as they are temporary and naturally reversible. If, on the other hand, regression is permanent and truly interferes with progressive development, then it becomes a pathogenic agent. When we recognize regression as

a principle in normal development, then periodic retreats to earlier modes of functioning take their proper place among the unalarming facets of development.

Creativity and daydreaming. As noted, Freud's application of regression was not limited to psychopathology. For example, regression also plays a role in his formulations on daydreaming and art. Freud (1908/2003) traced the origins of daydreaming and artistic endeavors, namely creative writing, to childhood. The child at play is busy creating a world according to his liking, similar to the creative writer. Both take their craft seriously and invest it with much emotion, but all the while retain the capacity to distinguish their creations from reality. Moreover, both attach their creations to objects in the real world, the artist to her artwork and the child to whatever props and people are needed. As the child grows into adolescence, he renounces the pleasures of play for the solitary activity of daydreaming, thereby forfeiting the link to external objects. Daydreaming is merely a substitute or surrogate for play, both of which represent the fulfillment of a wish, either ambitious or erotic. Hence, the motive force of daydreaming is unsatisfied desire, or frustration.

The backward movement (i.e., regression) in daydreaming becomes apparent as Freud (1908/2003) raises the issue of time. "Fantasy," Freud notes, "hovers ... between the three periods involved in our ideation" (p. 28). A current impression or occasion arouses a major desire, which, in turn, evokes a memory of an earlier experience, typically from childhood, in which that very desire was satisfied. From this historical reference point, we dream up a situation in the future that fulfills the desire. Hence, the origins of the daydream are both in the present experience and the analogous recollection of the past. Freud notes, "past, present and future are strung together on the thread of one desire that unites all three" (p. 29). And similarly in artwork, "a potent experience in the present awakens in the writer the memory of an earlier

experience ... from there proceeds the desire that finds its fulfillment in the literary work”
(Freud, 1908/2003, p. 32).

The artist, like the neurotic, returns to earlier forms of gratification; but unlike her counterpart, the artist finds her way back to reality through her creation. By elaborating on her daydreams in the creation of an artwork, she withdraws her personal imprint so that others may share in her satisfaction, thereby earning her praise and recognition. It is worth mentioning that Freud (1920/1955) would later supplement this formulation to include the motive of mastery, which helps to explain the repetition of painful experiences (rather than pleasant) in play, dreams, and artwork.

Regression in the service of the ego. Building on the theoretical contributions of ego psychologists, such as Hartmann, Kris (1952) developed the idea that the ego may enroll the primary process for creative purposes through a self-regulated regression. Kris referred to this process as “regression in the service of the ego.” Kris credits Freud with the idea that the ego may use the primary process without being overwhelmed by it. Specifically, in his explanation of wit, Freud (1905/1960) writes, “*a preconscious thought is given over for a moment to unconscious revision and the outcome of this is at once grasped by conscious perception*” (p. 166, italics in original). Kris reasoned that a similar process happens in various creative and inventive processes, such as in caricature, art, and moments of insight.

The process of creation occurs in two phases, inspiration and elaboration. Kris (1952) explains that these may be “sharply demarcated from each other, may merge into each other, may follow each other in rapid or slow succession, or may be interwoven” (p. 59). The period of inspiration is characterized by reception, passivity, the feeling of being driven by an outside agent, and rapture. Here, the subjective experience may be of receiving a continuous stream of

thoughts or images accompanied by a desire for expression. Kris notes that the experience of inspiration has “many features in common with regressive processes: Impulses and drives, otherwise hidden, emerge” (p. 59). In the phase of elaboration, by contrast, agency and purpose predominate. The individual works to organize her experience with dedication and concentration.

According to Kris (1952), these purposive and controlled regressions involve a “shift of cathexis between the psychic systems and in the function of the ego during these shifts” (p. 62). The inspirational phase seems to involve the partial withdrawal of counter-cathectic energies and a corresponding “relaxation (‘regression’) of ego functions,” which Kris describes as a “functional regression” (p. 253).²⁷ In this way, “the id impulses, or their closer derivatives, are received” (Kris, 1952, p. 313). During the phase of elaboration, the counter-cathectic barrier is restored along with cathexes of ego functions, including reality testing, formulation, and communication. Essentially, the shift between psychic systems and psychic levels allows an interaction between primary and secondary processes.

The complimentary phases of inspiration and elaboration enable communication between differing levels of organization, and thus, contribute to learning and discovery: “We now distinguish two stages: one in which the artist’s id communicates to the ego, and one in which the same intrapsychic processes are submitted to others” (Kris, 1952, p. 61). In addition, Kris (1952) remarks that, “the integrative functions of the ego include self-regulated regression” (p. 318). It is integrative because the partial reception of unconscious contents is followed by a reflective phase of elaboration, which brings coherence to the material. In this way, various memories and associations may reach consciousness and become integrated with, or absorbed

²⁷ Functional regression is equivalent to topographical regression.

into, the ego. These phases seem to bear some resemblance to Bollas's (1992) distinction between the simple self and complex self. The simple self conveys deep immersion in self experiencing, or getting lost in one's experience, similar to the passive receptivity of Kris's inspiration phase. The complex self refers to states of reflection, self-observation, and understanding, similar to Kris's phase of elaboration, whereby the individual works to organize and represent her experience through reflective thinking and evaluation. At the beginning of the chapter, I suggested the possibility of identifying commonalities across theoretical perspectives, heretofore obscured by the use of regression concepts. The similarities between the formulations of Kris and Bollas seem to provide an example.

Regression in Analysis. In his classic paper on therapeutic action, Loewald (1960/1980) presents a far-reaching account of the psychoanalytic process, "the significant interactions between patient and analyst that ultimately lead to structural changes in the patient's personality" (p. 221). In addition to offering a forceful critique of tendencies to equate the psychoanalyst with the objective, detached scientist²⁸, Loewald presents a view of the mental apparatus as an open system and clarifies how interactions with the environment lead to psychological development and structural change. Moreover, he considers the role of both regression and repetition in psychological growth.

The overarching principle of Loewald's (1960/1980) contribution has to do with the role of interaction in healthy functioning. According to Loewald, Freud's (1923/1961) structural model (id, ego, and superego) has led to the erroneous view that psychic structures are isolated from one another and that the id is isolated from the environment. Rather than viewing the mental apparatus as a closed system of isolated parts, Loewald contends that in health there is a

²⁸ Relational analysts (Wachtel, 2008) refer to this perspective as a one-person psychology, since the analyst's psychology is presumably absent from the treatment situation.

free interplay both between the structures and with the environment; in topographical terms, there is a free “interplay between the unconscious and preconscious systems” (p. 240).²⁹ From this perspective, psychopathology stems from the isolation of psychic structures and systems from one another as well as from the environment. The psychoanalytic process restores these interactions, allowing development to recommence.

The core feature of Loewald’s (1960/1980) depiction of the interaction process is *the overcoming of a differential*. The differential refers to the gap, or difference between two levels of psychological organization. The differential between lower and higher levels of organization is overcome through their interaction, bringing about “the creation of an identity of experience in two systems, two psychic apparatuses of different levels of organization” (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 239). Thus, the interaction process is a unifying experience, or in other words, an integrative experience.

The interaction process is evident in the infant-parent relationship that is based on empathy and understanding. Loewald (1960/1980) notes that in the beginning, both recognition and fulfillment of need are beyond the infant’s ability or primitive level of organization (p. 237). Thus, the mother’s more advanced level of psychological organization allows her to provide both recognition and fulfillment of the infant’s needs. Here, the differential is represented by the different levels of psychological organization between infant and mother.

The understanding recognition of the infant’s need on the part of the mother represents a gathering together of as yet undifferentiated urges of the infant, urges that in the acts of recognition and fulfillment by the mother undergo a first organization. (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 237)

²⁹ Note the similarity here with Kris’s (1952) formulation of regression in the service of the ego as an interaction between the primary and secondary processes.

Through empathic understanding, the mother recognizes and fulfills of the infant's need, and this has the effect of organizing the infant's undifferentiated urges. In time, the infant gains increasing ability to perform these functions (i.e., recognition of need and goal-directed action) with less dependence of the mothering one. That is, the infant internalizes the interaction process, through identification with and introjection of the mother.³⁰ In this way, Loewald writes, "the organization of the psychic apparatus ... proceeds by way of mediation of higher organization on the part of the environment to the infantile organism" (p. 238). Thus, a differential between infant and environment is a necessary precursor to psychological development.

Loewald (1960/1980) uses this model of infant development to illuminate the psychoanalytic process. In any growth process, a differential exists between two levels of organization. Like the mother–infant pair, the psychoanalyst represents a higher level of organization as compared to the analysand, at least for the time being and within the boundaries of the analysis. (In some respects, this differential may be a product of the analytic situation.) Loewald notes that normal development includes continual, but temporary, "periods of relative ego disorganization and reorganization, characterized by ego regression" (p. 224). In an analysis, ego disorganization is induced by the promotion of a transference neurosis, which is dependent upon a controlled regression and ultimately allows for reorganization. Note that this controlled regression contributes to the differential between analyst and analysand that is a precondition for growth. Loewald writes,

The patient can dare to take the plunge into the regressive crisis of the transference neurosis which brings him face to face again with his childhood anxieties and conflicts, *if*

³⁰ See Stern et al. (1998) for a contemporary version of 'mutual regulation' in infancy and in the psychotherapy process.

he can hold on to the potentiality of a new object-relationship, represented by the analyst.
(p. 224, italics in original)

The new discovery of an object, or new object-relationships, offers the opportunity to rediscover paths to develop object-relations, “leading to a new way of relating to objects as well as of being and relating to oneself” (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 225). “New spurts of self-development,” Loewald (1960/1980) continues, “may be intimately connected with such ‘regressive’ rediscoveries of oneself” (p. 224).

Loewald describes how this reorganization occurs in the interaction between analyst and analysand. Whether analysts are clarifying conscious material or interpreting unconscious material, Loewald (1960/1980) describes their activity in terms of structuring and articulating the analysand’s productions, verbal or otherwise. If the analyst’s interpretations are on point, they will be, in Loewald’s words, “recognizable to the patient as expressions of what he experiences” (p. 238). (Recall the role of recognition in the parent–infant relationship described above.) Loewald continues, “they organize for him what was previously less organized and thus give him the distance from himself that enables him to understand, to see, to put into words and to ‘handle’ what was previously not visible, understandable, speakable, tangible” (pp. 238-239). In this way, the analyst–analysand dyad reach a higher level of organization. Loewald describes such interaction as an integrative experience, as the creation of an identity of experience in two individuals, and as an experience of mutual recognition. These interaction processes involve regression in the service of the ego, or in the service of higher organization. Further consideration of the interaction reveals the interplay between secondary and primary processes. Interpretations make the analysand’s unconscious material recognizable and understandable,

“lifting it to the level of the preconscious system, of secondary processes, by the operation of certain types of secondary processes on the part of the analyst” (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 240).

Controlled regression is not applicable to just the analysand. To be in tune with the analysand, or to recognize what she herself cannot see, Loewald (1960/1980) writes that the analyst “must be able to regress within himself to the level of organization on which the patient is stuck” (p. 241-242). Schafer’s (1959) concept of generative empathy is relevant here. In this way, the analyst too regresses in the service of the ego and in the process “performs a piece of self-analysis” (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 243). All of this is to allow for,

Freer interplay between the unconscious and preconscious systems, whereby the preconscious regains its originality and intensity, lost to the unconscious in the repression, and the unconscious regains access to and capacity for progression in the direction of higher organization. (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 240)

Thus, the integrative experience involves the mutual influence of two psychic systems or structures as represented by the overcoming of a differential. This mutual influence allows for both higher organization and “replenishing regression” (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 241).

Recognition is central to reestablishing lost connections. In Loewald’s (1960/1980) explication of interaction, health amounts to mutual communication or transformational interplay between unconscious and preconscious systems. These unifying, integrative experiences are based upon mutual recognition. Loewald (1960/1980) suggests that structural change involves the internalization of the interaction process. He continues, “the opening of barriers between unconscious and preconscious, as it occurs in any creative process, is then to be understood as an internalized integrative experience” (p. 251). This presents a view of (partial and controlled)

regression and disorganization as important aspects of psychological growth, health, and creativity.

There are noteworthy parallels between Loewald's formulations of interaction in terms of development and health, on the one hand, and Bion's (1963) formulations of container contained and $Ps \leftrightarrow D$, on the other hand. In Loewald's thinking, the mother's empathic understanding (or in Bion's language, reverie) of the infant's need and her optimal response lead to organization and fulfillment (or in Bion's language, containing). Moreover, Loewald's formulation that development involves periods of disorganization and reorganization bears some resemblance to Bion's account of growth in terms of $Ps \leftrightarrow D$ (i.e., the movement between fragmentation and integration leading to discovery of the selected fact).

Deprivation Theories: Regression as an Opportunity for Correction

Recall that for Freud (1914/1958), temporal regression leads to reexperiencing in the transference. With the help of the analyst, this repetition can be transformed into recollection, and thereby, seen as a reflection of the past. Thus, the reexperiencing is a necessary precursor to insight, or a means to an end. For Winnicott (1955/1975), the idea of regression, which similarly leads to reexperiencing, is not only important in terms of being a forerunner to remembering, but also for the possibility of correcting the original environmental failure and enabling forestalled aspects of emotional development to recommence. Winnicott views the experience of reliving itself as crucial to the healing process, no longer merely to be translated back in terms of the past. To clarify this, we must review some of Winnicott's developmental theory.

In Winnicott's (1949a/1975) developmental model, the provision of a good-enough holding environment allows the infant to experience a continuity of being, which provides the necessary footing for later stages of growth, especially for true self experiencing. During the

stage of absolute dependence, the infant needs an environment, “which *actively adapts* to the needs of the newly formed psyche-soma” (Winnicott, 1949a/1975, p. 245, italics in original). From Winnicott’s perspective, the ordinary good-enough mother is capable of adapting to her infant’s needs due to a temporary state of heightened sensitivity, or primary maternal preoccupation. When occasional lapses in care occur, as they must, the infant’s mental activity turns a “relative failure of adaptation into adaptive success” (Winnicott, 1949a/1975, p. 245). In other words, the infant’s understanding allows the mother to be less than perfect, that is, good-enough. Ideally, the mothering one protects the infant from “complications beyond those which the infant can understand” (Winnicott, 1949a/1975, p. 245). As the infant’s cognitive abilities and understanding grows, the mother typically provides a matching “graduated failure of adaptation” (Winnicott, 1949a/1975, p. 246). “In health,” Winnicott observes, “the mind does not usurp the environment’s function, but makes possible an understanding and eventually a making use of its relative failure” (p. 246).

The infant initially needs an environment that actively adapts to her needs to prevent ongoing disturbances in her continuity of being, or going-on-being. This state of not reacting, of being, is “the only state in which the self can begin to be” (Winnicott, 1949b/1975, p. 183). Winnicott (1949a/1975) describes disruptions in continuity of being as impingements. These are by definition beyond the infant’s comprehension and demand excessive reactions, or over-active mental functioning. These reactions are excessive because the mind “begins to take over and organize the caring for the psyche-soma, whereas in health it is the function of the environment to do this” (Winnicott, 1949a/1975, p. 246). According to Winnicott, the mind can thus become a thing in itself—a mind-psyche as opposed to a psyche-soma. The mind dissociates from the soma, or body, thereby leaving the true self hidden. The mind-psyche learns to look after the self

by reacting to environmental impingements. Winnicott describes such caretaking as the false self, in part, because this pseudo-independence (i.e., precocity) disguises an underlying deprivation and emptiness.

As stated, excessive disturbance of continuity may result in over-active mental functioning. In addition, the infant's experiences of impingement are catalogued, or memorialized; that is, there is a "freezing of the failure situation" (Winnicott, 1955/1975, p. 281). Winnicott (1955/1975) suggests further that there is a corresponding,

unconscious assumption (which can become a conscious hope) that opportunity will occur at a later date for a renewed experience in which the failure situation will be able to be unfrozen and reexperienced, with the individual in a regressed state, in an environment that is making adequate adaptation. The theory is here being put forward of regression as part of a healing process. (p. 281)

Now, Winnicott does not mean that an infant has an unconscious hope for renewed experience, particularly during or slightly after a trauma, but that such hope may develop over time. In this way, catalogued impingements are available for later assimilation or processing, made possible by a regression to dependence. Moreover, Winnicott is not referring to an instinctual regression, that is, to a personal defense organization. Regression to dependence has to do with the environmental situation, specifically adaptation to ego and id needs. Thus, it is not a regression to flee from danger but to repair, or correct, a deprivation. Winnicott points out that the analytic setting, "reproduces the early and earliest mothering techniques" and thus, "invites regression by reason of its reliability" (p. 286). As the patient returns to dependence, the analytic situation adapts to provide the necessary holding environment. From this place, a new sense of self, previously hidden, may emerge, and the original failure can be relived, "from the new position of

ego strength” (Winnicott, 1955/1975, p. 287). Winnicott (1986) expresses this eloquently elsewhere in reference to delinquency, “they cannot get on with their own lives until someone has gone back with them and enabled them to remember by reliving the immediate result of the deprivation” (p. 99). Subsequently, a memory follows of “*the time before the deprivation . . . back to a creative relationship to external reality*” (Winnicott, 1986, p. 98, italics in original).

Again, Winnicott placed reexperiencing, or reliving, at the center of the healing process. The patient must reexperience what had once been too much and has since remained frozen to fill in the gaps—to reestablish continuity with the past. To be sure, in the two papers that I have mostly relied on, *Mind and its relation to the psyche-soma* (1949a/1975) and *Metapsychological and clinical aspects of regression* (1955/1975), Winnicott is primarily discussing his most disturbed patients. Even so, the original freezing of the failure situation (i.e., the cataloguing of unconscious memories) makes possible the hope that an opportunity will arise for a restorative reliving. The reliving is a growth process from this perspective; it is jointly undertaken with the hope of establishing further integration and continuity. Winnicott (1955/1975) goes so far as to say that regression is, “a normal phenomenon that can properly be studied in the healthy person” (p. 281). From this perspective, we are all destined to search (unconsciously) for new situations to relive ourselves.

Benign Regression

With respect to regression in the treatment situation, Balint’s (1968) conclusions are similar to those of Winnicott; both articulated a theory of regression as an important ingredient to healing and development. Balint argued that interventions primarily suitable for the Oedipal period, namely those relying on adult verbal communication, did not reach patients with

pathology originating in earlier periods of development³¹. Hence, when the analytic work goes beyond the Oedipal level, the analyst can no longer rely on words as a reliable form of communication. At these more primitive levels, Balint writes, the patient needs a certain form of object-relationship to find herself and thereby begin anew.

Balint (1968) distinguishes between three areas of the mind: The area of the Oedipus conflict; the area of the basic fault; and the area of creation. The area of the Oedipus conflict is characterized by a three-person psychology. Two parallel objects always accompany the subject, making it a triangular relationship. This is the area of psychological conflict, typically stemming from ambivalence in the subject's relationships with two objects. Balint continues that in the Oedipal period, "adult language is an adequate and reliable means of communication" (p. 16). In the area of the basic fault, where two-person relationships dominate, adult language tends to be unreliable and inadequate. Balint explains, "the analyst's every casual remark, every gesture or movement, may matter enormously and may assume an importance far beyond anything that could be realistically intended" (p. 18). Pathology at the level of the basic fault is not characterized by conflict, but rather, the individual's sense that there is a fault within, that something essential is lacking, due to an early deficiency in care, attention, and affection.

The third, and final, area of the mind is that of creation. In the area of creation, there is no external object present, "the subject is on his own and his main concern is to produce something out of himself" (Balint, 1968, p. 24). Such creations (i.e., objects) may include artwork, literature, gaining insight into oneself or others, as well as philosophical and scientific contributions. Although there are no organized, whole objects in the area of creation, Balint

³¹ Balint (1968) disliked describing pathology as pre-Oedipal, "[it] should not be called pre-something else—certainly not pre-Oedipal, because it may co-exist with the Oedipal level" (p. 16).

(1968) writes, “the subject is not entirely alone there” (p. 25). He suggests that there are “pre-objects” (p. 25) in the area of creation, which he likens to Bion’s (1963) beta and alpha elements. The process of creation involves the transformation of pre-objects into proper objects.

Balint (1968) does not assume that what is simpler is necessarily earlier in development. If we were to assume that, then the developmental sequence would presumably move from the area of creation to that of the basic fault, and on to the Oedipal level. Instead, Balint adopts the following hypothesis:

The earliest level might be that of primary love and with it the level of the basic fault, out of which, on the one hand, the level of the Oedipus conflict develops in differentiation, and, on the other hand, the level of creation by simplification. (p. 30)

Balint is here offering an alternative to the theory of primary narcissism, or the notion that the entire quota of libido is initially invested in the ego. His starting place is a theory of primary relationship to the environment, which he terms primary love. Taking the biological situation of fetal life as a model, Balint describes the first relationship as a harmonious interpenetrating mix-up: “Prior to birth, self and environment are harmoniously ‘mixed-up’ ... they interpenetrate each other” (p. 67). The trauma of birth disrupts this initial equilibrium and marks the onset of differentiation between individual and environment.

Balint (1968) describes the individual’s early attitudes towards the newly emerging objects, or primary objects, in terms of ocnophilic and philobatic structures. The ocnophil clings to the emerging objects and is fearful without them, while the philobat prefers objectless expanses, which she experiences as safe and friendly. In these primitive object relationships, the object is taken for granted. The subject is only able to consider her own wishes, interests, and demands, while those of the object are presumed to be wholly compatible. In this way, the

original harmony of the individual and her environment is partially regained. According to Balint's theory, the central aim of human striving is "to establish—or probably re-establish—an all-embracing harmony with one's environment" (p. 65). The preservation or restoration of the original harmony is evident in harmonious partnership, orgasm, religious or spiritual ecstasy (i.e., the oceanic feeling), sublime moments of artistic creation, and finally, during certain regressive periods of analytic treatment.

Balint (1968) observed that many patients were not able to make use of therapeutic approaches suitable for the Oedipal level, which rely heavily on sophisticated language use. These patients seemed to suffer from psychopathology originating in the area of the basic fault; specifically, they experienced ruptures in primary love during early development, leading to a pervasive sense that they were defective or faulty. Hence, interpretations aimed at resolving conflict at the Oedipal level proved ineffective; at the level of the basic fault, there is no real conflict to solve. Instead, these patients seemed to profit by a regression that went beyond the area of the basic fault, allowing them to find a new beginning.

Balint (1968) was primarily concerned with the therapeutic potential of regression to the "special atmosphere of the new beginning period" (p. 135). This regression purportedly goes beyond the emergence of primary objects, to the original phase of the undifferentiated environment, or the harmonious interpenetrating mix-up. Balint describes this atmosphere as simple, trusting, and unsuspecting; it allows patients to shed their defensive armor. Here, they seem to need a simple, yielding relationship to their environment, as in the original harmonious interpenetrating mix-up. This regression restores or re-establishes an object relationship similar to the primary relationship. Balint describes the analyst's role during such times as follows:

He must be there; he must be pliable to a very high degree; he must not offer much resistance; he certainly must be indestructible, and he must allow his patient to live with him in a sort of harmonious interpenetrating mix-up. (p. 136)

Essentially, the analyst is unobtrusive; she responds with quiet acceptance and understanding. As the patient reexperiences the unsuspecting, trusting atmosphere of primary love, she seems to enter (or withdraw) into the area of creation. The return to origins allows the patient to discover and experiment with “new forms of object relationship” (Balint, 1968, p. 166). These new beginning experiences help patients give up old, defensive patterns of object relationships, such as the ocnophilic or philobatic structures. The new beginning requires a return to a point before the faulty development began and the discovery of a new, more adaptive way of being and relating.

Balint (1968) described regression in analytic treatment as a two-person phenomenon, meaning that both the patient and the analyst play determining roles with respect to the form that the regression takes. Regression may be benign, and thus function as a therapeutic ally, or alternatively, it may be malignant and hence disrupt therapeutic progress. In the benign form, regression is aimed at recognition; it is a “regression for the sake of progression” (Balint, 1968, p. 132). In the malignant form, regression is aimed at gratification. Balint argues that the analyst may facilitate a benign regression by offering a particular type of object relationship. In essence, the analyst should remain unobtrusive and avoid becoming omnipotent.

According to Balint (1968), the benign form of regression has the following features:

1. A mutually trusting and unsuspecting relationship is established, reminiscent of the original harmonious mix-up.
2. It leads to a new beginning and a new discovery.

3. It is for the sake of recognition, especially of the patient's internal problems.
4. There is only a moderate level of demand or "need."
5. There are no signs of severe hysteria and of genital orgasmic elements in the regressed transference.

Alternatively, the malignant form of regression is characterized by the following:

1. The mutually trusting relationship is precarious and repeatedly breaks down, with the result that desperate clinging often develops.
2. Attempts at reaching a new beginning are unsuccessful, and there is a constant threat of spiraling demands and of addiction-like craving.
3. The aim is gratification by external action.
4. There is a high intensity of demands.
5. There are signs of severe hysteria and of genital orgasmic elements in the transference.

Khan (1972) describes this malignant regression as a reactive "attempt to avoid and evade something else that a patient dreads and is threatened by from within: namely surrender to resourceless dependence in the analytic situation" (p. 225). Alternatively, Khan seems to consider benign regression as an instance of what Winnicott referred to as regression to dependence. It is worth reviewing the similar findings that Balint and Winnicott came to.

Both Balint and Winnicott describe a form of ego pathology based on pre-verbal or pre-Oedipal trauma, namely, the basic fault and the false self. A pervasive and underlying sense of futility and emptiness characterize both forms of pathology. Balint and Winnicott both maintain that a regression to a pre-ambivalent state in the analytic setting has therapeutic effects for these patients. Both differentiate this regression from those aimed at instinctual gratification. Both observe that the analyst should provide a particular object relationship, that is, a holding

environment that is unobtrusive and accepting. Lastly, both agree that the reestablishment of these primary states provides healing opportunities for the patient to begin anew and create new ways of being and relating (Rayner, 1991).

On several occasions, Balint (1968) asks whether his new beginning experiences are actually regressions or repetitions (see p. 121 or p. 143). Both regression and repetition imply a return to something that had previously existed. New beginnings, however, involve creation and new discovery. For this reason, Balint concludes that the terms regression and repetition are misleading. (Loewald [1955/1980, 1971/1980] comes to similar conclusions with respect to catharsis and the transference. That is, both Balint and Loewald point out that in addition to repetition, something new and creative takes place.) The work of Bollas (1987) adds important elements to this discussion.

Conservation and Resurrection

Bollas (1987, 1989) has extended Winnicott's ideas considerably, often by drawing on Bion's thinking. (Of course, he is an innovative theoretician in his own right.) In particular, several of his contributions build on the psychoanalytic concept of regression.

Bollas (1987) describes "characterological moods" as "repeated forms of being states" (p. 99). "When a person goes into a mood," writes Bollas, "he may be some former self" (p. 100). A mood "may represent some child element in contemporary life" (Bollas, 1987, p. 100). Finally, being in a characterological mood is a means of "establishing and elaborating elements of the infant-child self" (Bollas, 1987, p. 100).

Bollas (1987) differentiates between malignant and generative moods. A malignant mood functions to coerce or manipulate some other, perhaps as in sulking. A generative mood, in contrast, allows one to go within "to contact the mute, unknown child self and thus has a

greater chance of generating some knowing of what has been part of the unthought known” (Bollas, 1987, p. 101). Bollas describes the unthought known as, “a form of knowledge that has not yet been mentally realized . . . yet it may permeate the person’s being, and is articulated through assumptions about the nature of being and relating” (p. 246). These assumptions about the nature of being and relating originate in the interactions between the infant’s idiom, or inherited disposition, and the maternal process. For a mood to be generative, the person must be able to, “reflect upon the mood as an object without feeling the migratory effects” (Bollas, 1987, p. 101). Thus, a mood has potential to be generative if the individual, through her mood, “reexperiences and recreates former infant-child experiences and states of being” (Bollas, 1987, p. 102) and thereafter, is able to reflect on and learn from the experience.

Like Winnicott, Bollas (1987) is interested in those experiences that represent failures in self-development; characterological moods represent a form of cataloguing, that is, of conserving, such breakdowns for future elaboration. Bollas (1987) refers to experience-memory that has been stored in the internal world as a conservative object (p. 110). It is a “being state preserved intact . . . [that] acts as a container of a particular self state” (Bollas, 1987, p. 110). In this way, the preserved child self may continue to be in contact with the early environment.

Psychoanalysis already had a concept for storing experiences of objects, that of internalization; Bollas’s (1987) contribution, the conservative object, offers a concept for stored self states, such as moods, which are repeating forms of being. Being states may be stored instead of object representations if the child’s capacity for thought or representation is overwhelmed. What is conserved then is an aspect of the unthought known—since it has not been symbolized but is felt nonetheless. This is reminiscent of Winnicott’s (1955/1975) notion that excessive environmental failures may be catalogued (particularly, those which are beyond the

infant's comprehension). Bollas holds that characterological moods may be used for further development, and that this depends on "transformation of what has primarily been mood experiencing into sentient knowing" (p. 114). Like Winnicott, Bollas posits a wish to transform the mood into knowledge, as in the form of memory. Characterological moods are a form of reliving, a repeating form of being, which conserves elements of the unthought known to be transformed into knowing.

Receptivity. When Proust (1982b) discussed what he termed, "true memories," he emphasized that they arise involuntarily. Similarly, when Bollas (1987) describes the "capacity to receive news from the self," he declares, "news comes from within the self only on its own terms" (p. 236). Thus, news from the self arrives spontaneously, and belongs to "the arena of experiencing oneself which follows recognition of our being" (Bollas, 1987, p. 237). This "arena" is in contrast to the knowing which may follow such experiencing. (In Bion's [1970] terms, the progression is from O → K.) A condition for receiving news from the self (and the self-analytic function) is receptivity (again, in Bion's terms, F in O). A receptive space is characterized by tranquility, relaxation, and freedom from desire. Bollas writes, "dream recollections, memories and the like will be evoked by this receptivity" (p. 238). One cannot intentionally produce news from the self, just as one cannot intentionally produce an involuntary memory.

In his discussion of "ordinary regression to dependence,"³² Bollas (1987) states that if the analysand hands over aspects of ego functioning to the analyst, the analysand will be more receptive to receive news from the self, such as prior self states or moods. Analysands may have, "an eidetic experience, accompanied by intense feeling and a sense of wonder or

³² Ordinary in the sense that Bollas does not limit his discussion to patients with severe pathology (i.e., borderline-psychotic) as Winnicott did.

discovery” (Bollas, 1987, p. 271). Bollas (1987) continues that the impression in the mind “has the integrity of memory . . . the adult is ‘inside’ his childhood” (p. 271). This receptive state is one of musing and evocation. “Musing is formless, an aimless lingering amidst perceptual capacities, such as imagining, seeing, hearing, touching and remembering” (Bollas, 1987, p. 272). As in Proustian memories and integrative returns, the senses are of paramount importance. Evocation is a passive state, “in which the more active elements from the unthought known arrive” (Bollas, 1987, p. 272). This is similar to Proust’s account of the passive reception of exceptionally vivid memories and Kris’s (1952) phase of inspiration. Hence, Bollas’s (1987) descriptions of receiving news from the self are in some ways similar to Proust’s descriptions of involuntary memories—both of which lead to an “eidetic experience.”

Historical consciousness. Bollas’s (1989) later treatment of the conservative process in terms of historical sets suggests that, in addition to having healing potential, reliving plays an important role in normal development. Historical sets refer to “clusters of memories that will always recur in relation to one another” (Bollas, 1989, p. 196). These memories, or historical sets, conserve the person’s emotional reality, or lived experience, so that she may return to some prior experience. According to Bollas, “we create sets in order to preserve the integrity of self experience, given that we have an acute sense of transformation in our being” (p. 197). Historical sets provide an experience of continuity by leaving multiple reference points—that is, areas of experiencing that are recognizable, that we can re-collect and relive.

The creation of a historical set that is available for reliving is, for Bollas (1989), “a natural act . . . that stores the essence of being” and provides the internal world with “historic depth . . . that bears the trace of the journey taken by the true self” (p. 197). This description is reminiscent of Proust’s high regard for involuntary memories as conveyors of the essence of

things and for their restorative potential. It is particularly noteworthy that Bollas extends his theory of the conservative process beyond the cataloguing of traumatic experience to encompass the “conservation of the epochal experience of the true self” (p. 197). Like Proust’s involuntary memories and our integrative returns, historical sets provide a “link to one’s prior selves through emotional reality,” so that, “the prior self now becomes an important present self experience” (Bollas, 1989, p. 199). Bollas describes this as a “dialectic of eras, a psychic dialectic, in which prior self states encounter present ones” (p. 205). Similar to Proust, Bollas writes that, “the adult lives again as the self remembered” (p. 200). Moreover, we choose to conserve certain memories because they capture some aspect of true self experience. Historical sets preserve the self’s history and true self states, and allow for “contact with our self, connecting our past life and past selves with what we experience currently” (Bollas, 1989, p. 207).

Summary

The notion of regression is widespread in the psychoanalytic literature. Beginning with Freud, psychoanalysts have used regression to describe a range of phenomena, from the everyday stuff of daydreams and memories, to creative processes, to the transference and symptom formation. In cases of psychopathology or dysfunction, regression indicates a real (i.e., problematic) decline in development, that is, from a point that one had reached back to an earlier one, with the implied loss of function and complexity of organization. This application of regression is closely tied to ideas of evolution and development. However, within the psychoanalytic literature, regression often does not imply such declines. In creativity, earlier ways of thinking (e.g., the primary process) and banished mental contents re-enter consciousness in moments of inspiration and reach higher levels of organization through purposeful elaboration. Throughout childhood and in psychoanalytic treatment, temporary and partial ego

regression is a normal and regular part of growth. Alternating periods of disorganization and reorganization seem to be the ebb and flow of psychological development. Loewald (1960/1980) describes this movement in terms of overcoming a differential through an interaction that creates an integrative, unitary experience of mutual recognition. These returns are integrative experiences that contribute to development.

Independents, such as Winnicott, Balint, and Bollas, describe a benign form of regression (to dependence) in the treatment situation that enables patients to resume an otherwise thwarted development. Balint (1968) questioned whether regression was in fact the appropriate term to use, as these episodes also involve “new beginnings.” Similarly, in an interview with *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, Bollas (1993) was asked if his depiction of “ordinary regression to dependence” (p. 417) was in fact regressive. The interviewer even suggests that it bears “strikingly close resemblance to depictions of enlightenment in Eastern Philosophy” (Bollas, 1993, p. 417). The interviewer continues, “The regression seems to entail the shedding of both normal and pathological mental activities that interfere with a fuller, richer surrender to self-experience ... Does your description not suggest more of a developmental achievement (of adult life)?” (Bollas, 1993, p. 417). Bollas affirms that it does, adding that the achievement is “renewed contact with infant, child, and adolescent parts of the personality that have been split off and lost to the total personality” (p. 417). Bollas goes on to compare this frame of mind to what Freud implied by his “complementary concepts of free association and evenly hovering attentiveness, a kind of abandonment of organization that resulted in a more unconsciously informed experience” (p. 417). This bears striking resemblance to Kris’s (1952) formulation of regression in the service of the ego, and Loewald’s (1960/1980) formulation of the interaction process. Bollas elaborates further on this frame of mind,

It marks a truly deep return to states of vulnerability and dependence that all people associate with childlike states ... The analyst does not ask the patient to explain his state of mind: the lack of such accountability further adds to the patient's movement into this frame of mind. It is as if a part of the personality that knows what infancy is returns now to reexperience infantile childlike frames of mind ... The analyst will remain present but does not intrude ... both participants re-create something of the nature of what I term "constitutive object relations:" it is akin to the beginnings of any person's existence." (p. 418)

Here, we have the rediscovery of a valuable mode of being through a return to origins. It is valuable because it allows for a broader range of subjectivity, or self experiencing, for reestablishing lost connections, and for the beneficial interplay between unconscious and preconscious systems.

Section III

Integration and Findings

Section three is comprised of two chapters that review and integrate our findings; however, they do so in rather different ways. In chapter 8, I identify several core themes in generative returns, contrast these with the characteristics of non-generative returns, and conclude by proposing that returning in the psychological sphere is a basic principle of growth. In chapter 9, I identify a typical sequence that is evident in many generative returns. This typical sequence—from receptivity, to reimmersion, to reflection and reconfiguration—constitutes a basic model for generative returns.

Chapter 8: Dominant Themes

This chapter reviews and integrates our findings in accordance with several organizing themes that are applicable to generative returns; these are contrasted with the characteristics of non-generative returns. Before presenting these findings, I provide a concise summary of where we have been throughout this journey. Early on, the experiences of Isak, Marcel, Miss A, and Bollas helped us recognize and identify integrative returns. Here, encounters with evocative objects (Bollas, 1992) revive meaningful, personal experiences from the psychic past, which are thereby available for further elaboration, learning, and integration. The following characteristics appear to be essential to this experience:

- 1) Relaxed and receptive frame of mind.
- 2) Distinct features (e.g., objects, moods, feelings) common to both the remembered experience and the present situation.
- 3) Involuntary memories with reimmersion in the original frame of mind and sensibility.
- 4) Sensation of familiarity or recognition.
- 5) Self observation and reflection.
- 6) Learning from or making use of the experience for purposes of creativity or growth.

These integrative returns provided us with a special category (or example) of generative returns, and served as a point of reference throughout our reappraisal of psychoanalytic theories. This theoretical reappraisal involved two basic undertakings, namely, the interpretation and application of theory. With respect to the interpretation of theory, we saw that several familiar psychoanalytic concepts and practices illustrate generative returns. The application of psychoanalytic theories, including those of Klein and Bion, to the psychology of returning helped to clarify and differentiate these phenomena.

It was reasonable to interpret the following psychoanalytic concepts as instances of generative returns. From Freud's early trauma theory, therapeutic recollection or catharsis, which involves both abreaction and associative absorption, is good example of a generative return. The same can be said for active or re-creative repetition, particularly as it occurs in the transference, which leads to higher levels of psychological organization and representation. Other examples from Freudian theories include his clinical formulation of the repetition compulsion as an attempt to master difficult experiences retrospectively (albeit cases of trauma typically obstruct this process), as well as returns that are under the dominance of the binding, integrating force of Eros. While the work of Klein and Bion provided some examples of generative returns, these theories mainly served to elucidate our subject. I will come back to this momentarily. The chapter on regression provided several examples of generative returns, such as "regression in the service of the ego" (Kris, 1952), "benign regression" (Balint, 1968), and "regression to dependence" (Winnicott, 1955/1975). Bollas's (1987, 1989) work on characterological moods, conservative objects, and historical sets also provided examples of generative returns.

Applying Klein's Ps and D positions (as interpreted by Ogden [1986]) to returns allowed us to better differentiate non-generative returns from generative returns. For example, from the Ps position, returns have an automatic, immediate quality that lacks historical perspective; these returns do not lead to integration, but rather serve to keep disparate experiences apart or split. Generative returns are more apparent from the D position, where the search for integration and continuity is more prevalent. The work of Bion also mainly served to clarify the nature of integrative and generative returns, not to exemplify them. For instance, applying Bion's theory of thinking to generative returns provided a means of conceptualizing how raw emotional

experiences can be further processed through moments of reliving. Bion's conceptualization of dreamlike-memory, faith, transformations, and O contributed to our understanding and description of integrative returns. Overall, this interpretation and application of psychoanalytic theory revealed several main themes that we will now turn to.

Two broad categories of returns are noteworthy according to the experiences illustrated by the vignettes and our reappraisal of particular psychoanalytic theories. There are *generative returns* that lead to psychological growth and creativity, on the one hand, and *non-generative returns* that are associated with psychological declines or stagnation, on the other hand. The literature converges on several basic themes that cohere in each of the two classifications of returns. To be sure, this is not an attempt to integrate theoretical perspectives, but to show general theoretical agreement or consistency on this topic.

Generative Returns

The literature that speaks to generative returns converges on several noteworthy themes.

In no particular order, these themes are:

- 1) Expanded range of experience.
- 2) Rediscovery and resumed development.
- 3) Free or open interaction.
- 4) Disorganization and reorganization.
- 5) Recognition.
- 6) Continuity of experience.
- 7) Sense of individual truth.
- 8) Increased reflective distance or capacity.

These themes overlap considerably, particularly on the notion of growth, and thus, some

repetition is inevitable as we explore each in turn. (This survey of the themes is not exhaustive.) It is worthwhile to begin by noting that generative returns seem to depend on a level of functioning and mode of experiencing that is characteristic of Klein's D position, or as Ogden (1986) prefers, the "historical position."

Expanded range of experience. Several theories indicate that generative returns involve a new experience of something old. For example, in Freud's early trauma theory (Freud, 1894/1962, 1896/1959b) therapeutic recollection expands the range of conscious experience by making the unconscious conscious. This involves a return to origins, "the original psychical process must be repeated as vividly as possible, brought into *statum nascendi* [born again] and then 'talked out'" (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959, p. 28). Here, the notion of origins does not refer to what objectively happened in the past, but to "the past which the patient carries within him as his living history" (Loewald, 1972/1980, p. 144). The very ideas and memories that the patient has resisted knowing are now recognized and made conscious, thus expanding her range of experience. It is not a replication of the past, but a creative moment in which previously disavowed experience can be recognized, felt, and put into words for the first time (Eagle, 2011; Loewald, 1955/1980). Consciously returning to the experience allows it to be gradually integrated into the individual's network of associations, thus freeing her from automatic defensive maneuvers.

Broadening the range of experience is also a feature of Loewald's (1971/1980) description of repetition as an active, re-creation. With respect to the transference, for example, the patient's conflict is repeated in relation to her analyst, "and through the work of interpretation, to be repeated in an active way, that is actively taken up by the ego's organizing capacity" (Loewald, 1971/1980, p. 89), which includes remembering. The transformation from

passive to active repetition creates the conditions for experiencing greater agency and choice. In knowingly repeating, one may begin to experience greater responsibility and self direction, as opposed to feeling instinctually driven. Loewald explains, “It is repetition with its face towards the future while aware of the past” (p. 99). Ogden’s (1986) interpretation of the D position as the birth of the historical self is applicable here as well. From this position, transference allows important parts of past relationships to be perpetuated and relived in the present, without forfeiting continuity in self experiencing; the historicity of the self expands as felt links between present and past accrue in relationship to the analyst. The expansion of the historicity of the self is perhaps the core generative quality of integrative returns.

Lastly, the application of Bion’s (1963) thought to generative returns also highlights an expanded range of experience, but not in the Freudian sense of making fully formed unconscious content conscious. For Bion, expanding consciousness is not a process of uncovering, but of transformation: The raw sensory experience (or beta-elements) must be converted via the alpha function into alpha elements to be registered or represented, as in dream thoughts, memories, or dreams. From this viewpoint, expanding awareness is a developmental process. In generative returns, preserved traces of undigested emotional experience are revived and elaborated; new emotional experiences enter conscious awareness and contribute to learning and mental growth. In Bion’s terms, the undigested experience is expressed as a thought without a thinker, or a ♂ in search of a ♀. If the preserved raw emotional experience is revived in favorable conditions (e.g., a commensal ♀♂ relationship), then it is converted into an experience capable of representation and conscious reflection, or alpha elements.

Rediscovery and resumed development. Several psychoanalytic concepts and practices that qualify as generative returns converge on themes of rediscovery and resumed development.

In the above section, for example, we saw that therapeutic recollection has to do with rediscovering an experience and resuming the normal process of reaction (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959). The Independent group's contributions on the positive uses of regression in the psychoanalytic situation best exemplify rediscovery and resumed development (Kohon, 1986). Winnicott's (1955/1975) notion of "regression to dependence" and Balint's (1968) notion of "benign regression" both describe a corrective or healing, non-libidinal regression. In Winnicott's terms, the patient rediscovers the relaxation of unintegration, of non-purposive being or going-on-being, to find the self in creative moments. Similarly, Balint describes a return to a state reminiscent of the original harmonious interpenetrating mix-up. From this unsuspecting, trusting environment, the patient may experience a new beginning and discover new forms of object relationship. Finally, Bollas's (1993) notion of "ordinary regression to dependence" involves renewed contact with parts of the personality that have been split off, a reexperiencing of childlike frames of mind. Each of these concepts of regression describes a process of rediscovery that recommences psychological development. By rediscovering frames of mind reminiscent of early childhood or infancy, the patient may discover new ways of being and relating, and from this position resume a forestalled developmental process. It is noteworthy that these returns represent greater flexibility and growth in the personality, despite being likened to childlike states (Bollas, 1993).

Free or open interaction. The interaction of different levels of organization is an important theme in literature relevant to generative returns. This theme is most pronounced in the ideas of Kris (1952) and Loewald (1960/1980). In Kris's notion of "regression in the service of the ego," the ego uses the primary process for creative purposes. The two phases of inspiration and elaboration refer to the interaction of primary and secondary processes, or

different levels of organization. According to Kris, the inspirational phase allows the id to communicate to the ego, while the phase of elaboration provides opportunities for integration and organization. Bollas's (1992) formulation of the simple and complex selves refers to a similar interplay. In Bollas's terms, the interaction is between a phase of deep immersion in self-experiencing or subjectivity (i.e., the simple self) and a phase of self reflection, observation, and organization (i.e., the complex self). In these interactions, temporary and partial regression contributes to integrative experiences.

In his paper on therapeutic action, Loewald (1960/1980) places the free interplay between different levels of organization at the center of psychological health and development. Such interaction occurs intrapsychically (between systems or structures) as well as interpersonally (between an individual and the environment). This interplay involves regression in the service of growth, or higher organization. Recall that in Loewald's description, any process of growth implies a differential between two levels of organization. The prototype for this differential is the mother-infant pair. The mother's understanding recognition and response to the infant's needs represents an initial organization of undifferentiated urges (see also, Stern et al., 1998).³³ In the analytic situation, controlled regression allows the patient to establish renewed contact with primitive anxieties and conflicts, thus contributing to the differential between the analyst and analysand. On the analyst's part, controlled regression allows for identification, empathy, and a piece of self-analysis. Therapeutic interactions between the patient and analyst create the conditions for the unconscious to reach a higher level of organization and for the preconscious system to be replenished by unconscious input. One may note that the integrating force of Eros is consistent with this formulation. Loewald's vision of psychic health involves "an optimal,

³³ Bion (1962b) describes a similar process in terms of normal projective identification as a mode of communication and containment, made possible by the mother's reverie.

although by no means necessarily conscious, communication between unconscious and preconscious, between the infantile, archaic stages and structures of the psychic apparatus and its later stages and structures of organization” (p. 252). These interactions contribute to growth and organization, and are central to creativity and meaning making.

Bollas (1993) makes a similar point when he likens the frame of mind captured by “ordinary regression to dependence” to the complementary processes of free association and evenly hovering attention, insofar as they imply an “abandonment of organization that resulted in a more unconsciously informed experience” (p. 417). Perhaps it is better to describe free or open interaction as “unconsciously informed experience” that leads to further integration. Elsewhere, Bollas’s (1989) notion of a “topographical return” expresses a similar process. The subject sends a mental object to the system unconscious “where it gathers further and deeper meaning and returns to the preconscious where it is now available for a new type of consciousness enriched by the topographic journey” (Bollas, 1989, p. 213).³⁴

Disorganization and reorganization. Similar to free or open interaction, the theme of disorganization and reorganization primarily has to do with processes of integration. Kris (1952) and Loewald (1960/1980), for example, are both referring to integrative experiences in their discussions of interaction. Unlike the notion of interaction, however, which describes a relationship between parts or systems, disorganization and reorganization describes a shift, a back and forth or fluctuation in states or positions. It may be that these concepts refer to the same process from different vantage points: Interaction speaks to the observer’s viewpoint, while the notion of organization refers to the subject’s experience.

³⁴ This is similar to Freud’s (1905b) notion of ‘unconscious revision’ (p. 166) and Kris’s (1952) ‘regression in the service of the ego’. I discussed these ideas above under the heading Regression in the Service of the Ego.

It seems reasonable to trace the theme of disorganization and organization to Freud's (1920/1955) revised instinct theory. In this scheme, the death instincts represent a disintegrating force that is set in opposition to the integrating force of the life instincts, which establishes greater unity. Bion's (1963) formulation of $Ps \leftrightarrow D$ describes a similar dynamic relationship. Bion is referring to a shift between states of fragmentation and dispersal (Ps) and states of integration and coherence (D); hence, the $Ps \leftrightarrow D$ formulation represents a back and forth between disorganization and reorganization. The shift from Ps to D follows the discovery of a selected fact, that is, an experience that gives meaning and organization to otherwise dispersed or disorganized elements. The move from D to Ps , on the other hand, signals the breaking apart or disorganization of a unity; while the individual experiences confusion and doubt, this state carries the potential for reorganization and growth. Hence, both Ps and D are necessary for mental growth. In generative returns, the present psychological organization is disorganized to enable reconfiguration at a higher level.

It seems that shifts between disorganization and reorganization are a normal part of development. Loewald (1960/1980), for example, describes normal development as an ongoing process of relative disorganization and reorganization that results in periods of marked consolidation of ego organization. Continuing development requires that periods of integration alternate with temporary ego regression, that is, disorganization, followed by reorganization at higher levels of integration and differentiation. Moreover, Anna Freud's (1965) idea of regression in normal development indicates that temporary periods of ego regression provide adaptive respite from the everyday demands of living. In this sense, short-lived ego regressions may serve adaptation.

Recognition. Recognition and the sense of familiarity are regular themes in generative

returns. In therapeutic recollection, for example, recognition of previously disavowed experiences, ideas, and memories allows for normal reactions of abreaction and associative absorption to occur. In therapeutic reexperiencing, Balint (1968) describes a benign regression that aims at recognition, that is, “regression for the sake of recognition”—as opposed to gratification. Here, the analyst’s recognition of the patient’s search for new beginnings facilitates benign regression and growth. Consider also that the analyst’s successful interpretations are “recognizable to the patient as expressions of what he experiences” (Loewald, 1960/1980, p. 238). This *re*-cognition is a return on a higher level of organization, that of symbolic representation. Green’s (2002) reflections on the purpose of producing free associations are apt as well:

The aim is no other than one of recognition. Notice the prefix of return: *re*. ... I would say that “knowing oneself is to recognize oneself.” It can be seen then that the production of associations, which puts one in touch with oneself, that is, which allows one to reflect on oneself in the presence of one’s own emerging speech, supposes that the latter is in fact produced by establishing links within the discourse by means of re-presentation divided up into its conscious and unconscious formations ... In the final analysis, it is a question of recognizing, with the analyst’s help, the latent meaning of one’s discourse ... its representative significance. ... What the analysand needs is nothing other than to reintegrate and re-appropriate meaning ... Re-cognition is symbolizing by coupling two stages of cognition: the stage of breaking apart followed by the stage of coming together. (pp. 57-58)

In this sense, recognition is integral to the process of reorganization that we discussed in the previous category.

Lastly, recognition is central to Bion's (1965) notion of transformations from O, which is applicable to generative returns. The process of representing O (i.e., original states or realities) transforms and distorts that very reality. Despite this general transformation, aspects of O are preserved in the end product, which Bion terms invariants. The invariants provide reference points that make O recognizable. Hence, the analyst's interpretations will only be recognizable to the analysand as expressions (transformations) of her experience to the extent that they communicate invariants. Bion's conceptualization of transformation highlights the place of conscious recognition in returns that lead to integration and knowledge.

Continuity of experience. Generative returns seem both to rely on and to deepen the experience of continuity. Ogden's (1986) depiction of the developmental advance from Klein's Ps position to the D position centers on a momentous shift from discontinuous self experience to continuity in self experiencing. This amounts to the arrival of the "historical self" (Ogden, 1986, p. 79) along with new capacities for self reflection—in terms of recognizing alterations in oneself and others over time. This developmental achievement rests on the gradual integration of split representations of self and of object to form more complete images; that is, the move from part to whole object relations. Conscious reexperiencing, such as occurs in integrative returns, is possible from the D position, because individuals are able to recognize the passing of time and loss. Conscious reliving is only sensible from the historical position, which allows past and present to coexist in a dialectical relationship. These experiences and other conscious memorial activities contribute to the creation of personal history, or the historicity of the D position.

Bollas's (1989) formulation of historical sets is also relevant to the experience of continuity or self-sameness. Historical sets speak to the memorial processes that make integrative returns possible. According to Bollas, our knowledge that the self is changing over

time creates the impetus to engage in a particular form of history taking. Historical sets are clusters of memories that conserve self states. These states contain aspects of an individual's idiom and subjective experience of the world. An historical set provides a "holding space in memory, which stores the child's experience of being himself at that time in his world ... to preserve the integrity of self experience" (Bollas, 1989, p. 197). Conserving past states allows one to experience a felt link between past and present in what Bollas terms, "a dialectic of eras, a psychic dialectic, in which prior self states encounter present ones" (p. 205). Bollas contends that we create historical sets to ensure continuity in self experience over time, not simply to remember past experience but to feel ourselves there again. In this way the history of the self can be rediscovered and to some extent, reexperienced and further elaborated.

Sense of individual truth. A sense of individual, or subjective, truth often accompanies generative returns. Historical sets, for example, provide a particular form of individual truth, or self-knowledge (Beck, 2002); that is, they contain self states with elements of personal idiom, which is Bollas's (1987, 1989) elaboration of Winnicott's true self. Idiom refers to the defining essence or unique nucleus of an individual that seeks expression and elaboration through experience. It is an inherited potential that evolves through spontaneous and creative acts. In these alive moments, the individual expresses and experiences something of his essence or being. Here, truth refers to a particular quality of self experiencing. Perhaps it is because historical sets seem to store something like the essence of one's being, or the journey taken by the true self, that these moments of reexperiencing or reliving convey a sense of individual truth. It may be what inspired Proust (1982a) to write, "this essence was not in me, *it was myself*" (p. 54, italics in original). To be sure, whether or not the individual records the historical events accurately (i.e., truly) is not a point of emphasis here. It is certainly feasible that one may store the essence of

one's experience without having an accurate representation of the actual (i.e., external) events.

Bion's (1970) conception of transformations in O (or becoming O) also conveys a sense of individual truth that is applicable to generative returns. While Bion assumes that ultimate reality, or O, cannot be known, the cultivation of a receptive frame of mind, characterized by an act of faith, allows one to become O, to recognize and feel its presence, "to be at one with it" (Bion, 1970, p. 30). In integrative returns, for example, an emotional truth common to psychic past and present emerges and evolves. Bion's idea of faith signifies a particular sensibility of the mind that is open to receive evolutions of O by way of intuition.³⁵ This experiencing allows O to enter the domain of K. That is, O evolves to the point of being known. Generative returns, such as "dream-like memories" (Bion, 1970), seem to represent a form that evolutions of O may take.

Increased reflective distance or capacity. Several examples of generative returns emphasize reflective capacities. For example, consider Loewald's (1971/1980) conceptualization of repetition in analysis. As the conflict is reactivated and repeated in relationship to the analyst, the interpretive work functions to make the return generative by facilitating the analysand's reflective distance. Loewald (1960/1980) explains that interpretations organize "what was previously less organized and thus give him the distance from himself that enables him to understand, to see, to put into words and to 'handle' what was previously not visible, understandable, speakable, tangible" (pp. 238-239). Reflective distance also features in the elaborative phase of Kris's (1952) "regression in the service of the ego" and in Bollas's (1987) description of generative, characterological moods³⁶. Characterological

³⁵ For the origins of this formulation see chapter 2 of Kant's *Critique of pure reason* (1999, p. 25).

³⁶ See above, pp. 127-130 to refer back to characterological moods.

moods, or repetitive being states, require reflective distance to become generative; that is, to generate some knowing of the unthought known.

Ogden's (1986) interpretation of Klein's D position as the birth of the historical self is once more relevant, as reflective capacities depend upon this mode of experiencing and organization. For example, the sadness and remorse characteristic of the depressive position are the products of self reflection, a process that implies some degree of reflective distance. Because generative returns involve reflective distance, it seems fair to infer that they depend upon a mode of experiencing that is characteristic of the D position.

Non-generative Returns

Naturally, the themes that are pertinent to non-generative or pathological returns are in many respects the opposites of those that apply to generative returns. Consider some familiar non-generative returns. These include, for example, the return of the repressed, the repetition compulsion, and libidinal regression. These non-generative returns are characterized by the following themes: reproduction rather than representation; fragmentation; repression; dissociation and splitting; automatic and passive subjective experiencing; lack of meaning-making; lack of self-reflection; discontinuity and timelessness. There is a static, lifeless quality to this repetition. In Green's (2002) words, "the non-elaborate character of what is repeated is such that, in reproducing itself, it is as if it had never existed and was occurring each time *as if it were the first time*" (p. 41, italics in original). The absence of self reflection and historical perspective is characteristic of Klein's Ps position. One may repeat the past without recognizing it as a repetition, as though it was an original event, because there is no integrity to the experience of time. The origins of such returns remain unconscious and unintegrated despite continual, automatic reproductions. These returns are consistent with Freud's (1920/1955)

formulation of the death instinct as an unbinding force that works to undo connections and break things apart.

A Principle of Psychological Growth

It seems reasonable to propose that returning in the psychological sphere is a basic principle of psychological growth. In cases of psychopathology, however, psychological returns appear to degenerate and are incorporated into pathological processes. Here, returns contribute to meaningless destruction and psychological pain. Of course, we should not thus equate returns with psychopathology. We rely on returns to experience continuity, to experience familiarity and new perspectives, to integrate conflict-prone experiences, for creativity, and to heal from psychological terror. Identifying integrative and generative returns in human experience and in our theories provides a wider perspective on an important area of psychological experience. These concepts allow us to observe parallels across psychoanalytic theories with widely differing assumptions.

Chapter 9: A Model For Generative Returns

At this point, it is possible to take a step forward by extracting from our complementary study of experience and theory a typical sequence that is evident in many generative returns. This sequence moves from a period of receptivity, to reimmersion, to reflection and reconfiguration. In addition to articulating a typical sequence or model of generative returns, I briefly discuss the contribution that such returns make to the ongoing development of self-feeling (Pine, 1982) or the sense of self (Stern, 1985). This will provide us some means for judging their relevance.

Typical Sequence

Receptivity. Our sequence begins with a period of receptivity. This state of mind is open to receiving, akin to Bion's (1962b) "reverie" and Winnicott's (1958/1965) "going on being." There is an absence of goal-directed thinking; it is an aimless, quiet state of attention approaching free receptiveness. This is not to say that there is a loss of consciousness, or even drowsiness. It is an alive state of rest, open to spontaneous happenings or "news from the self" (Bollas, 1987), but without expectation or anticipation. Recall Marcel's yearning to recapture that initial surge from the taste of madeleine (Proust, 1982a). He was unable to intentionally evoke that exquisite pleasure. Yet, after repeated disappointment and failure, he left it alone and let his mind wander without effort or distress. Only then, without in intent or will, was Marcel transported in memory and feeling to his distant past. Hence, receptivity seems to rely on the faith that Bion (1970) described. Eigen (1993) writes, "F in O approaches an attitude of pure receptiveness. It is an alert readiness, an alive waiting" (p. 219). For Bion, faith is defined by an absence of desire and memory (of the sort that clutters the mind with presumptions), and this absence creates an opening for the return of unbidden dream-like memories.

Reimmersion. The second period, that of reimmersion, is a spontaneous or involuntary happening. During the period of reimmersion, the present is experienced in the context of a distant moment (Proust, 1982b). The individual is temporarily reimmersed in the original frame of mind and sensibility; vivid, dream-like memories arise spontaneously as the original sensations and emotional states reoccur. Bollas (1992) describes this as a “dialectic of eras ... in which prior self states encounter present ones” (p. 205). The psychic past and present coexist, creating the experience of a double, as the individual hovers over two corresponding time periods. The individual feels herself to be both present and past.

Winnicott (2008) used the term “potential space” to refer to an intermediate area between fantasy and reality. There are multiple forms of potential space, such as the play space, the area of cultural experience, and the psychoanalytic space. It seems reasonable to consider the period of reimmersion as an additional form of potential space. The dialectical relationship between past and present that emerges during such reimmersion is such that the question of which is real never arises. This space is somehow “outside time” or “extra-temporal” (Proust, 1982b, p. 904). Hence, it is *not* a repetition in which the individual fails to recognize the past or to keep hold of the present. Rather, the simultaneous experience of past and present is tolerated and respected by a mediating subject. The potential space allows preserved feeling states and memories to emerge in living form, and thus, to expand and evolve in relation to present experiences. By allowing past and present to coexist in dialectical relationship, the interpreting self moves toward integration and coordination.

Reflection and Reconfiguration. The period of reflection and reconfiguration represents a shift from passive receptivity and reexperiencing to a more active and purposeful frame of mind. It is a move from experiencing to knowing, or in Bion’s (1970) terms, from O →

K. The vivid memories and emotions that re-emerged in the present context provide new perspectives on longstanding themes or perhaps unresolved conflicts in the person's life. Hence, during periods of reflection, the individual works to make these themes and connections explicit, perhaps by remembering further, which contributes to greater understanding and perspective. There is a desire to put the experience in words, or otherwise represent it, for purposes of communication and meaning making. Ideally, this contributes to the integration of personality structure, such as by facilitating insight and greater continuity and coordination of experience.

Examples

We can observe this typical sequence in the integrative returns that initiated our theoretical reappraisal. The essential features of integrative returns, as discussed in chapters 2 and 8, separate into the periods of the typical sequence (i.e., reception, reimmersion, and reflection and reconfiguration). The beginning, preparatory period of *reception* is characterized by a relaxed state of mind with lowered defenses and free-floating attention. Recall, for example, Isak settling down at the wild strawberry patch and shortly thereafter, allowing his mind to drift (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957). The following period of *reimmersion* includes the unusually vivid, involuntary memories, the accompanying revival of mood and feeling, and the sensation of familiarity. To continue with our example, the familiar, evocative setting of the wild strawberry patch so connected to Isak's childhood inspires unusually vivid memories. He is reimmersed in memories and imaginings of an early romance, during his crisis of intimacy versus isolation; this reimmersion in the original frame of mind and sensibility revives all of the emotions, vulnerability, and desire that were present the first time. In an important sense, however, many of these feelings are experienced for the first time and further elaborated during this period of reimmersion. It is not an exact replica, but a new creation (experience) of an old

world. Finally, the period of *reflection and reconfiguration* includes self observation, deepened self-knowledge and understanding, and the generative use of the experience. Isak senses that through his dreams he is trying to tell himself something that he resists knowing and feeling during his waking life. His returns reunite him with abandoned parts of his identity and lost objects. This reexperiencing yields new perspective, enables him to begin investing more care and affection in his relationships, and to be more open to experiencing a range of emotions, such as loss, sadness, regret, warmth, and desire. In short, he shifts from a position of pride to caring.

We can also observe this typical sequence in Freud's early trauma theory and in the psychoanalytic process. Freud's descriptions of therapeutic recollection, or catharsis (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959), include the three periods of reception, reimmersion, as well as reflection and reconfiguration. An initial period of receptivity is necessary to relax the defenses, such as repression, which have kept the traumatic memories out of consciousness. The significance of an initial period of receptivity is evident by the early use of hypnosis and subsequently, that of free association, both of which rely on relaxed frames of mind and lowered defenses. The following period of reimmersion involves therapeutic recollection, or catharsis. This involves remembering the traumatic event, experiencing the accompanying affect, and expressing these feelings in words; "the original psychical process must be repeated as vividly as possible, brought into *statum nascendi* [born again] and then 'talked out'" (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959, p. 28). The final period of reflection and reconfiguration is apparent during associative absorption, or as the relived experience is absorbed into the great complex of associations, which allows for greater perspective and appraisal. In other words, the experience is gradually integrated. To be sure, it is not an exact reexperiencing, which we would not expect to better the situation but only to exacerbate it; rather, it is a new version of the past, re-created in the present, so that something

different can ensue. Unlike the first time, the re-creation allows normal processes of reaction to occur, namely, the adequate discharge of feeling and associative absorption (Breuer & Freud, 1893/1959).

Schafer's (1983) lucid writing on transference repetition, interpretation, and reconstruction complements some of the major points of emphasis put forth in previous chapters, particularly, with respect to the work of Freud, Kris, and Loewald. Once more, the typical sequence of reception, reimmersion, and reflection and reconfiguration is observable in Schafer's formulations. Schafer's focus is on the relationship between relived experience and new experience within the transference, that is, the middle period of reimmersion in our sequence; however, he also describes a narrative induction³⁷ to the development and elaboration of transference repetitions that is consistent with our preparatory period of receptivity.

Psychoanalytic reconstruction is the central component of this narrative induction (i.e., period of receptivity). In Schafer's (1983) view, all accounts of the past and present are reconstructions, analytic or otherwise, and each reconstruction is guided by a narrative strategy or aim. In the analytic situation, the analyst-analysand pair works to reconstruct a psychoanalytic account of both past and present. That is, events of the past and present are re-described and reinterpreted according to psychoanalytic themes and organizing principles, "and by the analyst's effort to identify sameness or repetition over the course of a life" (Schafer, 1983, p. 196). Schafer describes the analytic work as temporally circular; reconstructions of past and present are interdependent and mutually influencing. The coordination of past and present shows greater continuity of experience over time. The narrative induction alternates attention from present to past and back again, gradually blurring the lines between now and then, and preparing

³⁷ I am referring to the gradual introduction of psychoanalytic narratives, principles, and procedures, primarily by way of interpretation.

the way for a period of reimmersion. There are, of course, other features of the analytic situation that are conducive to reception, including the physical ambience of the setting, the couch and lighting, the analyst's empathic attitude, the regularity of meetings, free association, et cetera; Winnicott (1955/1975) expresses much of this in terms of reliability and holding.

Transference reactions and phenomena are both identified and further developed by interpretations that re-describe them in terms of repetition, that is, transference themes. The various transference repetitions represent the period of reimmersion. In Schafer's (1983) words, "the here and now becomes a condensed, coordinated, and timeless version of past and present" (pp. 196-197). The analysand relives and reexperiences her forgotten past in relation to the analyst, and the analyst's interpretations help to make this repetition a new experience rather than a mere reproduction. "Far from unearthing and resurrecting old and archaic experiences as such, it [interpretation] constitutes and develops new vivid, verbalizable, and verbalized versions of those experiences" (Schafer, 1983, p. 190). A transference repetition unaided by interpretation, and reflective distance, is a wholly contemporary experience; the repetitive qualities go unnoticed. Hence, transference phenomena alone are not representative of reimmersion, as intended in our typical sequence. The interpretive efforts help to bring about *the crucial experience of a double*, that is, an identity of perception (present) with memory (past). This experience of a double, during which one is experiencing both past and present, encapsulates the period of reimmersion. Schafer remarks, "this timeless mode of experiencing and understanding is an achievement ... a new mode of experiencing" (p. 197). It is both relived experience and new experience.

It is worth clarifying further how this timeless mode of experiencing is both old and new. Again, Schafer's (1983) formulation complements Loewald's (1960/1980, 1971/1980)

contributions on the psychoanalytic process and on active, re-creative repetition³⁸. In essence, the transference interpretation creates a new experience by organizing the raw elements of the transference repetition in a novel way. Schafer writes, “*interpretation is a creative redescription*” (p. 130, italics in original). It is not a paraphrase or simple reflection of feeling, but a creative rendering that leads to a new mode of experiencing and a further elaboration of the original. The past is emotionally reexperienced “*as it is now remembered*” (p. 132, italics in original). The optimal interpretation, according to Schafer, allows in particular those aspects of the original that the analysand defensively avoided to be felt for the first time. Describing such periods of reimmersion solely in terms of regression and repetition is clearly not adequate (Balint, 1968; Loewald, 1981; Schafer, 1983). These terms fail to communicate the personal development that is evident during such periods, specifically the new experiences that reimmersion yields in the presence of the analyst.

The final period of reflection and reconfiguration is represented by working through, or the gradual integration of psychoanalytically acquired experience and understanding that results in meaningful change (Freud, 1914/1958; Loewald, 1955/1980). The basic elements of the period of reflection and reconfiguration, such as representation, self observation, deepened self-knowledge and understanding, and productive use of the experience, are implicit in the above discussion on transference interpretation. On the function of language, Loewald (1960/1980) writes,

Language, in its most specific function in analysis, as interpretation, is thus a creative act similar to that in poetry, where language is found for phenomena, contexts, connections, experiences not previously known and speakable. New phenomena and new experiences

³⁸ I discuss these above on pp. 54-55 and on pp. 116-119.

are made available as a result of reorganization of material according to hitherto unknown principles, contexts, and connections. (p. 242)

Hence, the work of putting words to experience is a crucial part of the period of reflection and reconfiguration. The analysand does not simply experience transference phenomena, but reflects on this experience, observes the self as an object (Bollas, 1992), and continues coordinating present and past, through both remembering and the use of language.

Although it is not necessary to go into further detail, it is worthwhile to note that “generative moods” (Bollas, 1987) and “historical sets” (Bollas, 1992) also illustrate our typical sequence. Before proceeding further, I consider an objection.

Objection

The observant reader might have noticed that some generative returns involve reliving and reexperiencing the past (such as those discussed above) while others do not. For example, regression in the service of the ego (Kris, 1952) and Anna Freud’s (1965) regression as a principle in normal development need not involve reexperiencing the past. Hence, these generative returns do not necessarily partake in the period of reimmersion in our typical sequence. We are left asking whether our typical sequence is in fact typical after all.

This objection brings an important distinction to the fore, that is, between regression as a diminution in the level of psychological organization (Arlow & Brenner, 1964) and the subjective experience of reliving distinct, recognizable moments of time in the present. The former may lack the subjective experience of reliving or the sensation of familiarity, while in the latter case, these are paramount. The examples of regression listed in the objection arguably need not include the subjective experience of reliving.

There is significant overlap between this notion of regression and the experience of

reliving, which is partly to blame for a tendency to conflate them. For example, regression seems to necessitate some repetition or reexperiencing, even if the individual does not recognize or feel it as such. Consider Arlow and Brenner's (1964) definition of regression, "the *re-emergence* of modes of mental functioning that were characteristic ... during earlier periods of development" (p. 71, italics in original). This definition leads one to assume that all regression includes repetition. This is not necessarily so, however, as regressive periods of disorganization, such as in psychosis, likely have no counterpart in infancy or childhood (Inderbitzin & Levy, 2000; Stolorow & Lachmann, 1984).

The idea that regression involves a return to earlier periods of development, a repetition of infantile states or primitive levels of organization, is a useful metaphor; however, taking the metaphor literally is erroneous (Inderbitzin & Levy, 2000). Stolorow and Lachmann (1984) note that the archaic modes of psychological organization found in adults are related but not identical to those found in childhood. Likewise, Blum (1994) writes,

Regression will not reinstate the original infantile state, just as pathogenic regression will not represent earlier normal development. It is likely that "one can't go home again" in regression, though transference regression significantly revives the past in a modified and ego-edited form. (pp. 63-64)

This statement from Blum indicates that a distinguishing feature of *transference* regression is the revival of the past. It seems that partial and temporary regression is a necessary feature of reviving the past – but not equivalent to it. Hence, reexperiencing previous mental and bodily states during transference repetition does imply some level of regression in the service of the ego, or relaxation of controls. Yet, the reverse is not necessarily true. Regression can occur without reviving the past in subjective experience. Despite the overlap between regression and

reexperiencing, the distinction between regression as a diminution in psychological organization and reliving the past in the present is an important one. It is the latter that Schafer (1983) argued can lead to a new mode of experiencing given adequate reconstructions.

At this point, we have at least two options. On the one hand, we could limit our discussion points and conclusions to generative returns that involve periods of reimmersion (i.e., reliving and reexperiencing). This would allow us to retain our typical sequence, while restricting its scope. On the other hand, we could modify our typical sequence to allow for a wider range of experiences, namely, all generative returns. In particular, exchanging the period of reimmersion with a broader concept, such as a period of experiencing, would suffice. This sequence would move from reception to experiencing to reflection and reconfiguration. In this respect, Bollas's (1992) simple and complex selves would become more applicable, as would Khan's (1974) discussion of being, experiencing, and knowing in the analytic situation. While I am intrigued by the latter option, my inclination is to retain our original sequence, which emphasizes reliving, or the experience of a double. At the very least, we will avoid criticism of being so broad in our descriptions as to include everything and reveal nothing. Finally, retaining our original sequence and emphasis on reimmersion maintains our distinction of regression and reliving, and ensures that our subject matter involves the subjective experience of reliving.

Expansion of Self-Feeling

In concise terms, I intend to show how the generative returns represented by our typical sequence contribute to the expansion of self-feeling (Pine, 1982). Pine (1982) describes self-feeling in terms of "ownership, responsibility, and / or familiarity – the "I" or the "me" as the source of an urge, an effector of action, or a center of experience" (pp. 142-143). When self-feeling predominates, various desires, impulses, and needs are located internally; the individual

owns the experience, and recognizes it as “mine.” This is in contrast to the “it,” or the experience of various contents as external, or outside the boundaries of the self. The “it” refers to experiences, such as socially unacceptable impulses or wishes, that are disowned or unrecognized. The direction of growth, generally speaking, over the lifespan is towards the expansion of self-feeling (Pine, 1982). Of course, this does not include taking ownership over happenings that are clearly outside the realm of one’s control or creation (as in magical or omnipotent thought).

In discussing how experiences come to be included within the boundaries of self-feeling, it is natural to focus on those experiences that are in some manner, conflict-prone (Pine, 1982). It is conflict-prone experience that we are most likely to resist recognizing or including within the boundaries of the self. Pine (1982) identifies three relevant mechanisms at work during the integration of difficult feelings and thoughts into self-experience: Holding, appeal, and repetition. These mechanisms are applicable to our generative returns.

The first, holding, refers to Winnicott’s (1960a/1965, 1960b/1965) concept of the holding environment. Internalization of the holding environment is likely a precursor to and foundation of our period of receptivity (i.e., being)—which we may also liken to the capacity to be alone (Winnicott, 1958/1965). The security and reliability provided by holding appears to be a necessary condition for the relaxed state of receptivity. It is in this context of ego support or coverage that the infant begins to build up the strength to feel id-demands—originally located in the environment—as part of the self. The period of receptivity, reminiscent of holding, is particularly conducive for experiencing various mental contents and feelings within the boundaries of the self. As the individual relaxes into a state of “going on being” (Winnicott, 1949b/1975), thoughts, feelings, and impulses arrive spontaneously from within, and are

experienced as belonging to the “me.” This state of non-reactivity is the “only state in which the self can begin to be” (Winnicott, 1949b/1975, p. 183).

The mechanism of appeal is also observable in generative returns. The individual finds those objects and activities appealing that allow conflict-prone experiences to be reworked. In chapter 2, we observed each of our protagonists intuitively select (appealing) objects and activities that were crucial to bringing about returns: Isak suddenly decides to drive to Lund rather than fly, and with Marianne accompanying him, he is moved to return to the summer house of his childhood (Ekelund & Bergman, 1957); Marcel is uncharacteristically tempted by a cup of tea and a madeleine cake (Proust, 1982a); Miss A selects subject matter and paints that appeal to her; Bollas (1992) selects a an object for study that allows him “to be dreamed by it, to elaborate [his] self through the many experiences of reading it” (p. 52). In this way, it seems that we are intuitively drawn to objects and experiences that carry unique potential to inspire the experience of a double.

Repetition is primarily analogous to our period of reimmersion. Repetition enables the integration of conflict-prone experience by making experience more familiar or known and by increasing the sense of mastery. In the period of reimmersion, a distant moment is relived in the present. This relived experience—and many others closely linked—might have been lost to the personality, forgotten, or repressed, until the moment of reimmersion. The reliving allows one to see something again by making it present and thus, more familiar. In this way, the past informs the present, and reminds us of ourselves.

The increasing sense of mastery that stems from repetition can result from familiarity as well as from taking a more active role in what is reoccurring. That is, mastery seems to increase as passive experience is transformed into active experience through repetition (Freud,

1920/1955). Similarly, the typical sequence outlined above progresses from passive experience to active experience. The mastery gained from this shift contributes to the inclusion of the return experience within the borders of the self. Miss A's return seems relevant here as her experience progressed from passive to active³⁹. Recall that Miss A portrayed her involuntary memory of (what she interpreted as) a miscarriage in an autobiographical painting. Miss A represents herself as passive in one image (i.e., the conception) and active in the next (i.e., the experience of miscarriage). Moreover, the act of painting, of representing and communicating the experience, is an active one. She assumes responsibility and ownership of this difficult experience (i.e., her living memory) by actively working on it, holding it in her mind, organizing it in her representational memory, and by producing a narrative and artistic representation.

Loewald (1971/1980) contrasts passive, automatic repetition with active, creative repetition within the psychoanalytic situation,

In analysis the conflict is reactivated, is made to be repeated and, through the work of interpretation, to be repeated in an active way, that is actively taken up by the ego's organizing capacity an important element of which is remembering. (p. 89)

Likewise, the generative returns represented by our typical sequence reintroduce a person to lost, sometimes conflict-prone, aspects of history. These experiences are thereby available for further elaboration and inclusion within the boundaries of the self. In this way, more memories, mental contents, feelings and moods enter the realm of self-feeling.

Concluding Remarks

Freud's discovery and formulation of unconscious mental life invites us to think about the inevitable gaps in our knowledge and experience of ourselves. At the same time,

³⁹ See chapter 2, page 32.

psychoanalysis invites us to close the gap, to experience and know more of ourselves, and to bear the difficult truths that are hard for us to admit or acknowledge. And yet, we cannot know or be ourselves fully given the implications of unconscious processes. Perhaps more accurately, psychoanalysis has generated avenues for revisiting or recreating what we failed to see the first time. It seems we are destined to approach being fully ourselves, to narrowing the gaps, only retrospectively. But this is a bit of a paradox, for this retrospection is also a reliving, a distant moment that is simultaneously a present experience.

I began to divine as I compared these diverse happy impressions, diverse yet with this in common, that I experienced them at the present moment and at the same time in the context of a distant moment, so that the past was made to encroach upon the present and I was made to doubt whether I was in the one or the other. The being within me which had enjoyed these impressions had enjoyed them because they had in them something that was common to a day long past and to the present, in some way they were extra-temporal, and this being made its appearance only when, through such identification of the present with the past, it was to find itself in the one and only medium in which it could exist and enjoy the essence of things, outside time. (Proust, 1982b, p. 904)

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