
Culture in Psychoanalysis

It is now rarely disputed that the broader intellectual currents of a time, its *Zeitgeist*, have a profound influence on the way problems in the human sciences are formulated and systems of knowledge elaborated. The impact of nineteenth-century European intellectual, scientific and moral concerns on Freud's thought, for instance, are sufficiently well-documented without in any way undermining his claim to genius. I believe it would be a *fascinating exercise to link the various changes in psychoanalysis over the last one hundred years with the vicissitudes of Western intellectual and social history in the twentieth century*. The developments in classical theory, such as ego psychology in the United States, the birth of other models which underplay if not explicitly deny the classical drive theory and Freud's structural model in favour of an emphasis on 'object relations', Lacan's gloss on Freud and Kohut's 'self-psychology'—all would feature in the study. That such an effort must be confined to what is generally called the 'West', is due to the nature of the psychoanalytic enterprise which continues to derive its intellectual sustenance and creative impulse from European, North American (and increasingly Latin American) centres without, as yet, any significant contributions from the non-Western civilizations.

From our vantage point at the end of twentieth century, we have little difficulty in discerning the impact of one of the more influential intellectual currents of our time—post-modernism—on contemporary psychoanalytic theories and practice. Although post-modernism consists of many strands, it has some common postulates which demand a response and serious engagement from all human sciences, including psychoanalysis. The core of post-modernism, as I understand it, would consist of the following statements: All social knowledge is relative in the sense that it is inextricable from its cultural and historical contexts and, especially, from its embeddedness in the power relations of a society;

knowledge is not 'out there' to be discovered but is created or (to use a fashionable post-modernist term) 'socially constructed'; knowledge-systems are not in the possession of some 'truth' but can only be evaluated on the basis of their aesthetic criteria such as plausibility, coherence—'attractiveness' in general—or the pragmatic criterion of their 'usefulness' for the needs of a particular culture at a particular time (Leary, 1994).

Besides encouraging a subjectivist, social-constructionist view of psychoanalysis (Atwood and Stolrow, 1984; Hofman, 1992) and emphasizing its nature as a 'narrative' enterprise (Spence, 1982), the irreverent streak in post-modernism has also had a salutary effect on psychoanalytic writing which in its rightful pursuit of seriousness sometimes tends to get ponderously exegetical and given to making solemn ex-cathedra pronouncements. The post-modern intellectual surround, in which contemporary analysts operate, has encouraged them to discuss observations and experiences from analytic practice—to 'tell it the way it is'—even when these undermine some of the cherished constructs of older theories and classical analytical technique. In fact, the creativity of contemporary psychoanalysis, even when its demise as a clinical discipline is repeatedly proclaimed, is in many ways reminiscent of its founding years when a spate of original and innovative papers were being published by Freud and his brilliant, sometimes quirky, disciples.

Whereas psychoanalytic creativity in the early years of the discipline was more centripetal, contributing to the construction of a single, grand enterprise, the contemporary creativity is more centrifugal. Today, with a profusion of suggested models and theories 'no one can claim to occupy an Archimedian point from which all theories can be objectively studied and a judgment rendered as to which is the correct theory' (Phillips, 1991, p. 408). What is important in contemporary psychoanalysis, however, is that it has recaptured the essentially iconoclastic spirit of the discipline's fledgling years, even though its iconoclasm is now more often directed at its own gods rather than the cultural gods of an earlier era. To give only one example: some contemporary analysts are redefining the nature of analytic interaction, stressing the inescapable subjectivity of the analyst in the analytical situation and suggesting that he or she can never know the 'truth' about the internal state of a patient but only about his own. In France, the birthplace of some of the major constituents of post-modern thought, many analysts believe that interpretations should be considered more as stimuli to the patient's self-investigation than as

'truths' about his or her mental life. In a recent paper, Owen Renik (Renik, 1993) not only questions the very notion of the traditional ideal of the dispassionate, objective analyst, but even contests the desirability of such a figure. He believes it pointless to ask an analyst to set aside his personal values and views of reality, his assumptions and psychological idiosyncrasies while he engages in the analytical activity of listening to the patient and interpreting the communications from the couch. All the analyst can do is become aware of the way his or her subjectivity influences analytic work and that, too, not in any prophylactic manner but only *after* the fact. To believe that the analyst can minimize his personal involvement in clinical work is to be falsely complacent and hold on to a dangerous illusion. There is no ideal analyst—neither Freud's 'reflecting mirror' listening to his patients with 'free floating attention', nor Bion's listener 'without memory, feelings or desire'. Irrevocably entangled in his subjectivity, no analyst has total 'empathy' or is an ideal 'container'.

Although the social-constructionist view of analytic interaction, and the role of the analyst as a participant observer with irreducible subjectivity have been subjects of recent discussion in psychoanalysis, another important item on the post-modern agenda, the cultural and historical relativity of all (including psychoanalytic) knowledge, continues to be neglected. There is still insufficient appreciation of the fact that in the intellectual climate of our times, the cultural and historical transcendence of psychoanalytic theories can no longer be taken for granted but has to be rigorously demonstrated. This is not due to any obdurate refusal by contemporary analysts to question the essentialist 'psychic unity of mankind' view underlying Freud's grand metapsychological constructions; it has more to do with the fact that with rare exceptions (Doi, 1973), non-Western contributions which could help in revising any European ethno-centrism in psychoanalysis have been virtually non-existent in the evolution of psychoanalytic discourse. In the various phases of its encounter with anthropology, which could conceivably have tempered its Western-cultural orientation, psychoanalysis has usually been in the privileged position in the sense that its relationship with anthropology has been asymmetrical; there has been a psychoanalytical anthropology but not an anthropological psychoanalysis. Analysts have continued to regard ethnographic facts and the methods used to uncover them as belonging to the 'surface' of human behaviour and hence superficial; they are not considered 'deep' enough to merit the respectful

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attention given to the reports of practising analysts. The few anthropologists among analysts—especially the pioneers of psychoanalytic anthropology such as Geza Roheim and George Devereux—have reinforced the privileged position of psychoanalysis by applying psychoanalytic concepts to cultures, almost as if the former were a fixed set of tools, rather than a means of making analysts more culturally sensitive and reflective. According to Devereux (1978), for instance, any doubts about a universal, acultural conception of psychoanalysis were to be rigorously combated. For him, analysis was a science independent of all cultural thought models and any efforts to ‘reculturalize’ it were to be strongly resisted; a psychoanalysis with cultural connotations would no longer be a science but merely one of the myths of the occidental world. All that Devereux was willing to grant was the presence of an ethnic unconscious built from a specific constellation of defence mechanisms that a given culture brings to bear on human experience, and through which the necessary renunciation of universal wishes and fantasies can be achieved. Yet the cultural relativistic position of post-modern thought, coupled with social changes such as the sharp increase in multi-culturalism in many Western societies, have been resulting in more and more calls from analysts of varying persuasion in many different countries (Davidson, 1988; Yampey, 1989; Bergeret, 1993; Rendon, 1993) to re-examine the issue of culture in psychoanalysis and not shy away from any ‘reculturalization’ if found necessary.

Analysts have not always been fully aware of the extent to which modern Western cultural assumptions with regard to the fulfilled human life and human relationships continue to influence many normative psychoanalytic assertions and diagnostic considerations. For instance, let us take the marriage relationship, always a vital component in the analysis of most adults. Although from today’s vantage point (and thus from a different cultural viewpoint), most analysts would decry the phallogocentrism evident in Freud’s discussion of marital conditions in his lecture on femininity (Freud, 1930), they would still be inclined to accept as ‘natural’ what are in fact Western cultural assumptions about marriage, namely marriage as an institution based on choice, self-selection, monogamy and an intense, affective bond between the partners. Locked into a Western model which regards the husband–wife bond as the fulcrum of family organization, psychoanalysts have considered the capacity to establish a long-term intimacy with a partner of the opposite sex as a mark of emotional maturity, a sign of the ‘genital character’. In societies with

different principles of social and family organization—for example, the extended family where the primary bond is that of parent and son and, deriving from it, very high significance is accorded to the fraternal tie—one can conceive of case histories reporting progress in quite different terms such as, ‘The patient’s relationship with his brothers improved markedly and his sexual relationship with his mistress regained some of its earlier vitality. Increasingly, he began to think of taking a third wife to beget the son he did not have from his other wives so that the family line could be continued, to the great happiness of his elderly parents.’

Another example of cultural bias in psychoanalysis is the high place it accords to artistic creativity. To paint, sculpt, engage in literary and musical pursuits have not always and everywhere enjoyed the high prestige they do in modern Western societies. In other historical periods, for instance, many civilizations placed religious creativity at the top of their scale of desirable human endeavour. In such a cultural setting, the following conclusion to a psychoanalytic case report would be an example of a successful therapeutic outcome: ‘The patient’s visions increased markedly in quantity and quality and the devotional mood took hold of her for longer and longer periods of time’. Similarly, in terms of analytic practice, I do not believe that a European analyst can remain unaware of at least a kinesthetic tension, which in a particular session will influence his interaction with the Chinese patient who is speaking of the delights of eating a dog curried Tibetan-style or that a vegetarian Hindu analyst will not emotionally flinch when his European patient begins her session with an account of last night’s consumption of a rare and bloody beef steak.

If cultural values and beliefs are a part of the irreducible subjectivity of the analyst, his or her individual psychology, it is logical to expect that given the Western dominance of psychoanalysis since its inception, it would be essentially modern Western cultural values and beliefs which permeate psychoanalytic theory and practice. Psychoanalysis itself can legitimately be regarded as a sub-culture of broader Western civilization, with a body of shared beliefs about the world and a number of social institutions, especially the family, and shared norms such as every child’s right to parental love, empathy and respect, the desirability of reflective awareness of one’s inner states, and so on (Fancher, 1993). In other words, analysts too are locked into a specific cultural unconscious which consists of a more or less closed system of cultural representations that are not easily accessible to conscious awareness. Psychoanalysis, then, like any other

therapy, is also—and cannot be anything else but—an enculturation. As Fancher (1993) remarks: 'By the questions we ask, the things we empathize with, the themes we pick out for comment, the ways we conduct ourselves toward the patient, the language we use—by all these and a host of other ways, we communicate to the patient our notions of what is 'normal' and normative. Our interpretations of the origins of a patient's issues reveal in pure form our assumptions of what causes what, what is problematic about life, where the patient did not get what s/he needed, what should have been otherwise' (pp. 89–90). Moreover, I would suggest that within a broader psychoanalytic enculturation, we make our patients Freudian, Kleinian, Lacanian, etc. and then report on our constructions as if they already existed in these forms before our interventions and interpretations. For a discipline devoted to the pursuit of disillusionment in the best sense of the term, a discipline which believes that illusions should have no future, it is ironical that psychoanalysis has devoted so little effort to root out its own cultural illusions which continue to masquerade as 'natural' social and psychological facts.

Culture in Psychoanalytic Theory

Even though the space between 'creativity' and 'curiosity' in the indexes to most psychoanalytic journals and monographs is depressingly empty, there are some analysts who have paid attention to the issue of culture in psychoanalytic theory—Freud being, of course, the most notable.

Freud's concept of man was not as determinedly biologicistic—as opposed to the social and cultural—as is commonly believed. In his introductory remarks to the psychology of groups (Freud, 1921), Freud had no hesitation in saying that in the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved as a model, as an object, as helper, as an opponent—what we would today simply call the 'Other'—so that from the very beginning, individual psychology is at the same time social psychology as well. The relations of an individual to his parents, to his brothers and sisters, to the object of his love, to his physician—relationships which have been the chief subject of psychoanalytic research—are all social phenomena. Freud even warns against the very sin he is accused of committing, underestimating the influence of social customs that force women into passive situations (Freud, 1933) as compared to the role of any 'innate' factors in the psychology of women.

Freud was well aware of the influence exercised on the individual's

personality by his membership of a stable cultural group which, following McDougall, he characterized as having a continuity of existence, self-consciousness, traditions and customs, interaction with other groups (perhaps in the form of rivalry) and a structure expressed in specialization and differentiation of the functions of its constituents. To the regret of many, Freud did not go on to discuss the role of the stable cultural group in individual mental life, choosing instead to elaborate on the emotional dynamics within temporary groups such as a crowd and artificial groups such as the church and the army.

In general, however, Freud's concern was not the impact of cultural differences on the evolution of mental life. His interest in culture (with a capital 'C' and used interchangeably with civilization) was in its mighty conflict with the primitive, the raw and the instinctual—Culture's struggle against Nature—with the individual psyche as the battleground. Culture, in Freud's view, was an edifice built upon a foundation of coercion and renunciation of instincts and the question which engaged his attention in many of his writings was 'whether and to what extent it is possible to lessen the burden of instinctual sacrifices imposed on man, to reconcile men to those which must necessarily remain and to provide a compensation for them' (Freud, 1927, p. 7).

In its global, undifferentiated aspect, culture certainly played an influential role in the development and functioning of the psyche, namely in the formation of the superego. In an oft-quoted passage Freud (1933) writes: 'The child's superego is in fact constructed on the model not of its parents but of its parents' superego; the contents which fill it are the same and it becomes the vehicle of tradition and of all the time-resisting judgements of value which have propagated themselves in this manner from generation to generation . . .'; he envisions the importance of cultural differences when he goes on to say, 'Mankind never lives entirely in the present. The past, the tradition of the race and of the people, lives on in the ideologies of the superego, and yields only slowly to the influences of the present and to new changes; and so long as it operates through the superego it plays a powerful part in human life, independently of economic conditions' (ibid., p. 66).

With the social upheavals in Europe during the late 1920s and 30s in the aftermath of the First World War and the spread and influence of Marxist thought, 'society' began to play an important role in the writings of analysts such as Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Otto Fenichel and later, Franz Alexander. Freud's conceptions of the social

environment was more in terms of cultural traditions, what he called the 'group minds' of race, class, creed, nation which an individual shared in (Freud, 1921, p. 129); the 'leftist' analysts (Reich, Fromm) on the other hand, emphasized the social class aspect of the environment, especially the production relations of a society—Freud's 'economic' factor—in the development of personality, a society's mode of production bringing about a specific social character. In Fromm's posthumous writings, the individual's experience of the self is completely determined by social factors and he advances the concept of a 'social filter', consisting of the group's language, logic and moral code which determines social consciousness; an individual's perceptions are only available to him if they have passed this filter (Fromm, 1990).

Perhaps one of the first analysts to elaborate upon the cultural relativity of mental life was Karen Horney, later branded a deviant, a 'neo-' rather than a 'post-' Freudian. In her original and stimulating paper 'Cultural and Psychological Implications of Neuroses' (Horney, 1937), she suggested that there are not only cultural variations in customs—and thus in the realm of individual superego—but also at the basic level of drives and feelings. In a radical critique of Freud, Horney said that he was mistaken in regarding instinctual drives or object relationships commonly seen in Western culture as biologically determined 'human nature'. The 'pregenital' stages or the Oedipus complex were not biologically given and thus unalterable, but were culturally variable. Horney, however, did not go so far as to embrace the extreme culturalist position where individual psychology is inseparable from its cultural base. In defining what is neurotic, Horney believed that a satisfactory answer needed both psychological and cultural tools. The first characteristic of a neurosis, its dynamic centre, was fear and defence; the fears and defences of the individual would, however, become neurotic only when they deviated in quantity or quality from the fears and defences patterned in his or her culture. Similarly, with regard to the second characteristic of a neurosis, the presence of inner conflict, the conflicts became neurotic only if they were sharper and more accentuated than the common conflicts existing in the culture.

Within the Freudian mainstream, Otto Fenichel, the author of the standard and magisterial textbook on the theory of neuroses, was one of the first post-Freudians who was a committed culturalist. Starting from Freud's notion of the cultural part of personality, the superego, which mirrors not only the demands of the individual's parents but also of his

society, Fenichel (1945; 1954) proceeded to give a cultural inflection to both the remaining constituents of the tripartite model; the ego and the id. Since the ego also mediates between the organism and the environment, it was logical to presume that the ego must have a different cast in different cultural environments. Moreover, since the ego is to a large extent a composite of the individual's early identifications with the parents, teachers and so on, its nature would vary with the qualities—to some extent cultural—of these models of identification.

As far as the id was concerned, Fenichel suggested that social institutions influenced the instinctual structure of people living under them through temptations and frustrations, through shaping desires and antipathies. He believed it was a misunderstanding of Freud's concept of instinct, which in its original German, *Trieb*, did not have the connotations of unchangeability or rigidity, that has led people to regard Freud as a biological determinist. The essence of the psychoanalytic method and of Freud's writings is to demonstrate how instinctual attitudes, objects, and aims are changed under the influence of experience.

Heinz Hartmann, the great theoretician of ego psychology which is the pre-eminent post-Freudian school in the United States, also took up the issue of the role of culture in psychoanalysis in his essay 'Psychoanalysis and Sociology' (1944). There were certain instinctual tendencies and psychological developmental facts such as the dependency and helplessness of the child which are common to all human beings regardless of their culture. Cultures differed in the way they dealt with these facts and for Hartmann the question to be asked was, 'In what manner and to what degree does a given social structure bring to the surface, provoke or reinforce certain instinctual tendencies or certain sublimations, for instance?' Culture influences personality in a variety of ways. There are the more superficial influences which do not reach the core mental structure but shape the choice of a person's rationalizations, the conceptual language he uses, as well as certain mental contents. Other cultural influences reach the core structure where they co-determine the degree of severity of the superego, the degree of the mobility of the ego and the person's style of conflict resolution. Cultures also have an effect on the frequency and type of neuroses in a given society as well as on their symptomatology and the meaning a neurosis may have for a certain cultural group. Obsessive-compulsive symptoms of constant washing and cleanliness, for instance, may well be regarded as an expression of piety in a particular religious group. Moreover, since the kind of neuroses in Western civilization have

changed—from the hysterical disorders of Freud's time to the more prevalent narcissistic and character disorders of today, cultural conditions also seem to modify the deep structure of personality though Hartmann did not elaborate on this process.

Perhaps the most radical thinker on the issue of culture in the post-Freudian tradition was Erik Erikson. He not only sought to bring the individual's cultural environment into the centre of theoretical discussion but was also the foremost proponent of cultural relativism among the psychoanalysts. Strongly influenced in his thinking by his field trips to the Yurok and Sioux Indians in the 1940s, in the company of two anthropologists, H. Scudder Mekeel and Alfred Kroeber, Erikson saw the relationship between culture and self in terms of an adaptive fit, the creation of a communal identity being indispensable to individual identity. Every culture, no matter how 'primitive', must strive for a 'strong ego' in a majority of its members in order that the individual emerge from a long and fearful infancy with a sense of identity and an idea of integrity. The individual's ego-identity is adapted to his community's particular habitat, its world view and its design for living which, among others, inculcates efficiency in its ways of technology and protects individual members against anxiety. Cultures do this work of adaptation primarily by giving specific meaning to early bodily and interpersonal experiences—what Erikson (1952) called 'organ modes and social modalities'—a language very different from traditional psychoanalytic descriptions in terms of the structural model. For example, a child who has just found himself able to walk, incorporates his culture's particular version of 'one who can walk' into his ego, be it 'one who will go far', 'one who will be able to stand on his own feet', 'one who will be upright', or 'one who must be watched because he might go too far' (Erikson, 1952, p. 207).

Erikson was psychoanalyst enough not to idealize cultures and their 'designs for living', or to believe that the fit between culture and individual was always perfect. Each culture created character types marked by its own mixture of defect and excess and each culture developed rigidities and illusions thus protecting the individual against the insight that no ideal, safe and permanent state can emerge from the blueprint the culture has evolved. There were also limits to the cultural creation of the individual self. A culture could exploit somatic patterns (such as differences of sex and age) only within limits which assured health and vitality to most of its members; it could make demands on personal adaptation but only within limits which guard a manageable degree of

anxiety and conflict; and it could dictate social roles only up to the point where a sense of community can make up for sacrifices in individual autonomy (Erikson, 1987).

Most contemporary analysts in the classical Freudian tradition, I believe, would subscribe to the modified essentialism of Fenichel and Hartmann's conclusions. They would not agree with the extreme culturally relativist position that cultural conditions can by themselves account for intrapsychic constellations or even the behaviour of individuals in a given culture; nor would they share the post-modernist belief that there is no essential human nature at all. They would resist the notion of the person as a *tabula rasa* without 'innate' desires, wishes and fantasies although they may differ about the basis of this innateness being biology, universal conditions of human infancy or a combination of the two. They would see the individual as greatly modifiable but not infinitely so, with mental life as the end product of a complex interaction between the individual's culture, family milieu and his or her own needs and desire-based fantasies. In another, more dynamic formulation to which I would subscribe, the individual self is a system of reverberating representational worlds—representations of his culture, primary family relationships and bodily life—each enriching, constraining and shaping the others as they jointly evolve through the life cycle (Ross, 1994).

Culture in Object-relations Schools

In different object-relations theories, most of which are indebted to the work of Melanie Klein, there is an extraordinary absence of the external world, and thus of culture. The discussions of theory and interpretations in analytical practice are almost always in terms of earliest childhood fantasies expressing instinctual tendencies—in Klein, especially those related to terrifying violence and orgiastic body functioning. Here, there are no real people with their cultural beliefs, values, customs and traditions; interpretations are almost exclusively oriented towards a universal infantile fantasy life revealed in relation to the analyst—in the *transference*, leaving little or no room for the effect of cultural differences on mental life. For instance, the only reference to culture I could find in the writings of Melanie Klein is an account of her meeting with an anthropologist (Klein, 1977, p. 263) who disagrees with her presumption of a universal foundation for mental life. He tells Klein of a tribe where it is considered a weakness to show mercy to an adversary. On being

asked whether there were no exceptions to this rule the anthropologist admits that there are three. First, if the enemy can place himself behind a woman so that up to a point he is covered by her skirt; second, if he can get into a man's tent and; third, if he can reach the safety of a sanctuary. Klein interprets, to the satisfaction of the anthropologist, that the tent, the woman's skirt, and the sanctuary are symbols of the good mother protecting the family where a hated sibling is safe from murderous impulses and can find safety. Whatever distortions of character are accepted or even admired, she concludes, all cultures are linked through the primal good mother (and the frightening, 'bad' one—she might have also added).

When object-relations theorists talk of culture they do so in the sense of 'high culture'—embracing art, literature and religion. Their interest is not in the cultural creation of individual mental life but in the individual's creation of culture. Culture is thus the individual's generation of ever expanding symbols for representing and enriching his or her intrapsychic and interpersonal life (Guntrip, 1971). In the work of Winnicott, for instance, culture fills what he calls the 'potential space' of the individual, the area between the me and the not-me, which is neither in the world of imagination nor outside in the world of shared reality. It is the space of individual creativity, where symbols are used and where the world is continually woven into the texture of imagination. It is the place where art, literature, music and religion are encountered and depends for its existence on the richness of the developing child's experiences. Winnicott's interest in the influence of culture in our sense is therefore limited to the issue of whether cultures facilitate or retard the child's creative experiencing (Winnicott, 1965; 1974).

Culture and Self-psychology

In his earlier writings, Kohut (1971) recognized the effect of the child's cultural milieu on the 'drive-curling and drive-channeling structures' of the basic fabric of his psyche (p. 188); however, he believed an engagement with culture lay outside the task of psychoanalysis proper. Such knowledge may be tactically useful in analysis by constituting an act of intellectual mastery which gives support to the patient's ego but essentially belongs to the non-analytic realm of *etiology* rather than to the *genetic* domain of psychoanalysis. The genetic approach in analysis relates to the investigation of those subjective psychological experiences of the child which usher in a chronic change in the distribution and further

development of 'endo-psychic forces and structures' (p. 258). The etiologic approach, on the other hand, relates to the investigation of those objectively ascertainable factors which, in interaction with the child's psyche as it is constituted at a given moment, may—or may not—elicit the genetically decisive experience. In other words, it is not the objective, perhaps culturally determined or co-determined 'event' but the subjective experiencing of this event by the individual which is decisive for psychoanalytic work.

In Kohut's later writings (1977; 1985), there is a perceptibly greater interest in the influence of cultural differences on the development of the self. Culture enters self-psychology through the questions: How does the social milieu provide stimuli or lack of stimuli? How does it nourish, *undernourish* or *warp* the self? In formulations very similar to Erikson's discussion of identity development in various socio-cultural contexts, Kohut suggests that there are a wide variety of parental responses to the child which are non-pathogenic and do not interfere with psychic development even when they do not actively promote it. Within limits, such as the ones crossed by the parents' grossly sexual or counter-aggressive responses to a growing child's oedipal manifestations, there is a whole spectrum of parental responses which can be said to lie within the realm of normalcy. In patriarchal societies, for example, the parental attitudes towards the oedipal boy foster, as a result of his experiences at this stage of his life, the development of a psyche characterized by a firm superego and a set of strong masculine ideals. This is a personality type which may be specifically adapted to the tasks of a frontier society or at least to a society in which the values of a frontier society still hold sway. In societies where gender differentiation has lessened, different parental attitudes may produce girls whose ideals and firmness of superego correspond more to those normally found in boys growing up in patriarchal societies—girls who may be specifically adapted to the tasks of a non-expansive society (Kohut, 1977, pp. 231–2).

In modern Western societies, Kohut believes, the child's participation in his parents' play and leisure activities can never provide his nuclear self with the same nutrients as his emotional participation in their work life—something which was more common in traditional societies. In work, the parents' competence and their pride in the work situation ensure that their selves are profoundly engaged and the core of their psyches most accessible to the empathic observer. Further, whereas children were earlier over stimulated by the emotional (including erotic) life

of their parents, they are now often under stimulated. Formerly (in Freud's time?), the child's eroticism aimed at gaining pleasure led to inner conflict because of parental prohibitions and oedipal rivalries. Today, many children seek erotic stimulation to relieve loneliness and fill an emotional void (Kohut, 1977, pp. 269-71).

Culture in Psychoanalytic Practice

As far as clinical work is concerned, most analysts will agree with Hartmann's statement that the analytic situation minimizes cultural differences; at least within the confines of a broader Western culture, the difference in cultural background between analyst and patient is of comparatively minor relevance as compared to the analyst's personal qualities (Hartmann et al., 1951). There are certainly difficulties such as the ones enumerated by Ticho (1971) in treating patients of a different culture: a temporary impairment of the analyst's technical skills, his empathy for the patient, diagnostic acumen, the stability of his self and object representations and a stirring up of counter-transference manifestations which may not be easily distinguishable from stereotypical reactions to the foreign culture. Generally, though, given a consistency in the analyst's empathic stance, these difficulties are temporary and require no changes in analytic technique.

I believe these conclusions on the role of culture in psychoanalytic practice are based on a less than full appreciation of the significance of the patient's intense need in analysis to be 'understood' by the analyst. From my own experience with European and American patients in India, there often appears to be an unconscious force at work which makes patients underplay the cultural part of the self they believe will be too foreign to the analyst's experience. In the transference-love, what they would rather stress in their closeness to the analyst, including the sharing of (not agreement with) what they believe are his scientific and artistic interests and religious beliefs. This intense need to be understood, paradoxically by removing parts of the self from the analytic arena of understanding, was brought home to me by the fact that during my own training analysis I started dreaming in the language of my analyst, German, something I have not done before or after that period.

Psychoanalytic Understanding of Cultures

Most psychoanalytic observations on the role of culture in the development of the self have the character of principles derived from the

author's particular theoretical orientation; they are, in Kohut's terminology, experience-distant rather than experience-near formulations. In contrast to the psychological anthropologists (whose work is not a subject of this essay), analysts have rarely had the opportunity to elaborate upon and show the effectiveness of these principles in concrete cultural contexts that vary sharply from those of Western societies. When they have done so they have usually worn the anthropologist's hat instead of sitting behind the clinician's couch. There are indeed a number of reports in psychoanalytic literature on the analysis of individuals from different cultures or from different sub-cultures within a particular Western society (e.g. Sachs, 1937; Muensterberger, 1951; Babcock and Caudill, 1958; Schachter and Butts, 1968; Ticho, 1971). Direct analytic observations of a non-Western culture through the analysis of a number of persons belonging to that culture have been rare (Parin, Morgenthaler and Parin-Matthey, 1963; Roland, 1988). The relatively small number of cases, short duration of the therapies, their conduct in a language which is not the patient's mother tongue and, sometimes, the lack of the analytic setting, raises as many questions as these accounts seek to answer. For instance, in the work of Parin et al. on the Dogon in West Africa, regarded as a classic in the genre, psychoanalytic interviews in French, in a face-to-face setting, were conducted for a few months with thirteen persons who had no wish to be treated or healed and a good part of whose motivation to collaborate with the European analysts' enterprise was to talk (or be seen talking) with high status Whites and to receive money for each session. These accounts, whatever their value for psychological anthropology, lack the elaboration of imagination and subjectivity of people living within the particular culture. What is missing are the narratives of conflict, passion and despair which give psychoanalysis its distinctive cast—and perhaps its very life. They raise doubts whether the writers have a sufficient intimacy with the particular non-Western culture to make *psychoanalytic* contributions to its understanding. Lacking the intimate cultural knowledge that makes a preconscious sense of many unspoken 'texts' of a communication contained in inflections, intonations, gestures and in the ways in which something is *not* said, these accounts, say, of the Dogon in Africa and of Indians in New York and Bombay, are flat and one-dimensional. They resemble portraits of Third-World natives drawn by Western travel-writers, journalists and novelists, images of people who talk the European language with a quaint engagingness but whose inner life is bland and certainly far less complex than that of the writers' middle-class English, French or American friends.

Intimacy with one's subject is perhaps the most important vehicle for conveying the authority of a piece of writing. Western writings on Indian inner life, psychoanalytic, literary or anthropological, may be without gross misrepresentations of fact but, with rare exceptions, they are often marked by a wrong nuance here, a false note there, a missing beat here, which slowly mount up in a text to insidiously undermine its rhetorical authority. There is, of course, some arrogance in undertaking a psychoanalytic study of another culture on the basis of very limited analytic work. Such arrogance is perhaps necessary and has on occasion yielded rich dividends. As the psychological anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere (1990) notes in case of anthropology, one cannot study another culture without such arrogance for 'it defies ordinary common sense that a young person with imperfect language skills could go into the field and study another culture to present the native's point of view during the period of a year or, at the most, two' (p. 218).

One must not forget that the roots of this arrogance (self-confidence?) also lie in the historical structure of international power relations in the last two centuries between the Western and non-Western worlds. Although many persons in former Western colonies possess a deep and extensive knowledge imbibed since early childhood, of the language, history, literature and society of at least one Western country—most highly educated men and women in the Third World are natural 'occidentalists'—they have generally lacked the cultural self-confidence to comment on the Western society they know so well.

Psychoanalytic knowledge of a culture does not coincide with its anthropological, historical or philosophical counterparts although there may be some overlap between them. It is primarily the knowledge of the culture's imagination, of its fantasy as encoded in its symbolic products. Much of this knowledge is embedded in the universe of the patient's language, especially the language of childhood. The analyst's awareness of this universe is important even if the analysis is conducted in a language which is not the patient's mother tongue. To give an example, in Punjabi, among boys there are four different words used for the vagina. These words not only refer to the imagined sizes of the female genitalia but are associated with fantasy structures ranging from deflowering a young virgin to the threatening, 'large' vagina of an older woman. Similarly, the images associated with the words for a penis range from the vulnerability of the little boy's organ to the power and majesty of the paternal phallus. The use of the English 'penis' and 'vagina' will lead an analyst without such a psychoanalytic knowledge of the patient's culture to miss out on

the exact imagery and the full range of affect associated with the patient's experience.

To give another example: there is often an impersonal tone when one of my bilingual patients reports significant experiences in English and much greater variations in affect when the same experience is described in Hindi, the patient's mother tongue. When in one of his sessions the patient reported, in English, that the previous night he had said to his wife, 'Let's have sex', his tone was detached, even slightly depressive. When asked what exactly he had said in Hindi, the answer was, '*Teri le loon*' ('I'll take yours'). The Hindi expression is much more concrete, demanding the use of the wife's vagina, objectifying the person, and evoked in him not only a greater feeling of excitement but also the shame he felt in his subsequent reporting.

Perhaps the most common and the best way an analyst gets psychoanalytic knowledge of a culture is the way his patients too get the same knowledge—by being born into it, absorbing the culture pre-consciously through one's very bones. Alternatively, if one belongs to a different culture one obtains it through a very long immersion in the particular culture—its dailiness and its myths, its folklore and literature, its language and music—an absorption not through the bones but through the head—and the heart.

Psychoanalysts can help patients from different cultures because of their focus on the universal aspects of the patients' experiences, and because of their common humanity. They cannot, however, advance psychoanalytic propositions about a culture on the basis of such work. What good clinical work can do is generate hypotheses about the role of culture in intra-psychic life. The further testing of these hypotheses from case histories is best done (i.e. it comes closest to psychoanalytic intention and enterprise) by testing them in the crucible of the culture's imagination—its myths, art, fiction, cinema, and so on—before a psychoanalytic understanding of another culture can be formulated.

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