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## A SEA CHANGE IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

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FOR MANY YEARS, I HAVE SUGGESTED Greenberg and Mitchell's 1983 book, *Object Relations and Psychoanalytic Theory*, to supervisees who want or need an overview of some or all of the many theorists covered in the book. In 2009, while recommending the book once again, it became apparent to me that the 25th anniversary of the publication of this landmark volume had passed without a mention—that I was aware of—in Interpersonal and Relational circles. I decided to see if we could commemorate the book's longevity and continuing relevance by organizing a Tuesday morning Clinical Education Meeting at the William Alanson White Institute around this topic. Jay Greenberg was gracious and humbled by the invitation to speak at such a meeting. Jay and I discussed the idea of having Margaret Black stand in for the deceased Stephen Mitchell, to which Jay was enthusiastic. Margaret Black, a respected analyst in her own right, was also gracious and helpful throughout the process. Ruth Imber was invited to be the discussant. After the panel was created with Greenberg, Black, Imber, and Zaphiropoulos as the key members, a date was set for September 21, 2010. The panel was titled "The 25th Anniversary (+2) of the Publication of Jay Greenberg's and Stephen Mitchell's Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory."

The presentations and the ensuing discussion with Imber and the audience were exciting and moving. Imber disclosed that the book had not been reviewed in *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* upon its publication—perhaps an indication of the ambivalence with which some Interpersonalists received one of the premises of the book, i.e., the "relational" commonalities among many theories of psychoanalysis. Mark Blechner, the editor of *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* at that time, was in the audience.

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He announced then and there that the book's anniversary would be honored in a subsequent issue. This, the 30th anniversary of the book's publication, is that proposed issue.

*Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* became immensely popular in psychoanalytic circles following its 1983 publication. For many years, this historic volume was widely reported to be the best-selling psychoanalytic book. In it, the reader could find a spectrum of diverse psychoanalytic viewpoints. By dividing the psychoanalytic theories covered in their book into a "drive/structural model," composed chiefly of Freudians, and a "relational/structural model," which included the Object Relations and Interpersonal schools, Greenberg and Mitchell (1983, p. 382) sought to demonstrate conceptual differences between the models. The book also highlighted the red threads of consensus amongst the different formulations—the inclusion of some form of Object Relations concepts in many psychoanalytic theories, for example, and the impact of transference on psychoanalytic technique.

As noted, although some Freudians felt that the authors had isolated them and set them apart from other theorists (Interpersonal and Self psychologists) (Levenson, 2009), Greenberg and Mitchell in fact showed that the work of many of the theories they discussed actually overlapped. For some, the division they addressed between the drive/structural and the relational/structural models underscored how slow the Freudians were in catching onto the evolving importance that the psychoanalytic community at large was placing on dyadic object relations and interpersonal processes, as well as the gradual move away from an Oedipal configuration as the bedrock of inner life.

I was in supervision with Stephen Mitchell in the 1980s after the publication of the book. Discussions with him about psychoanalytic theory were thoroughly enjoyable: he was knowledgeable and excited about what he saw as the principles of Interpersonal psychoanalysis being recognized by analysts of other orientations. He cited in particular the compatibility of Object Relations theory with Interpersonal concepts. This made intuitive sense to many Interpersonalists, but it challenged the strong boundaries that psychoanalysis had set among differing psychoanalytic orientations since the "Controversial Discussions" in London nearly 40 years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Greenberg and Mitchell were confronted not

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<sup>1</sup> The "Controversial Discussions" (1942–1944) were a series of scientific meetings of the British Psychoanalytic Society in which competing ideas between supporters of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein were discussed. Often oppositional, these discussions resulted in a train-

only by classical analysts who felt their theory was being marginalized, but also by some Interpersonalists who saw the combining of various theoretical concepts from across the psychoanalytic spectrum as diluting, rather than enriching, and conflictual, rather than consensus building.

Although Greenberg and Mitchell's *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (1983) stands alone as a seminal contribution to psychoanalytic thinking, its publication also served as one of a number of major events that were taking place in the changing landscape of psychoanalytic theory and technique in the early 1980s.

The William Alanson White Institute in the early 1980s was an exciting place and I was fortunate to be a candidate there at that time. I felt we were given a front row seat to the major debate in the current psychoanalytic world—the increasing prioritization of the analysis of the transference. Merton Gill, a classically trained psychoanalyst, published *Analysis of Transference*, Volume I, in 1982. It seemed that the entire psychoanalytic community, regardless of theoretical allegiance, was discussing Gill's ideas about the centrality of transference. To some psychoanalysts, Gill's position that transference was ubiquitous seemed extreme, but it led to a reexamination of a number of seemingly "radical" orientations, such as the interpersonalist stance. Since one of the hallmarks of Interpersonal theory was a focus on the interaction of the psychoanalytic dyad, this positioned the White Institute as an important player in the debates about the uses of transference.

On April 2, 1982, Merton Gill came to the White Institute. The atmospheric electricity generated in the room that night was palpable. Dr. Gill presented his paper, "The Interpersonal Paradigm and the Degree of the Therapist's Involvement" (1983, pp. 200–237). In his presentation, Gill cited his extensive exploration into the Interpersonal literature of the day and compared it to his own work. Gill's extensive "homework" with regard to interpersonal concepts was impressive and duly appreciated by all in attendance. Gill, often harshly criticized by some of his classical colleagues, was pleased to find strong areas of agreement between himself and various Interpersonalists. New bridges were built between the classically trained Gill and a number of the theorists at White.<sup>2</sup>

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ing program that included three groups: The Kleinians, the Freudians, and the Middle, or Independent, group that included Winnicott and Balint, among others (Grosskurth, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> For an example of the camaraderie between Gill and members of the White Institute, see Philip Bromberg's correspondence with Merton Gill during those years (1979–1984), recently published in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (2011, pp. 243–252).

Edgar Levenson was one of my psychoanalytic supervisors in those years and at one point we discussed the invitations he was receiving to speak at events sponsored by affiliates of the American Psychoanalytic Association. It was astonishing to learn from him that, previously, theoreticians from White were rarely invited to speak at such events. Levenson's book, *The Ambiguity of Change*, was published in 1983. It added a fresh, impressively written text and a strong Interpersonal voice to the debates in the literature and at conferences. Levenson (1985) had also contributed a chapter on the "The Interpersonal (Sullivanian) Model" to the classical psychoanalyst Arnold Rothstein's book *Models of the Mind*, thus giving him greater exposure to more classical analysts. Levenson's writings were such a clear articulation of the therapeutic action of the interpersonal position that it was hard to imagine how those from other psychoanalytic traditions were not compelled to see the validity of the active interpersonal work in the transference immediately upon reading it. It did not happen that easily, however. The sides seemed even more polarized at times than they were before any inclusion of the interpersonal concepts became a new sort of standard in the debates. The criticisms lodged were that those who worked in the transference did so at the expense of the "intrapsychic" material. Gill's argument that the here-and-now transference contained credible connections to intrapsychic material and Levenson's (1983) position that the therapeutic interactions contained "a microcosm of life" (1983, p. 59) were not sufficiently convincing to some at the time that deep psychoanalytic work was occurring.

One additional historical marker of this time period was the publication of Daniel Stern's *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (1985). Although a classically trained analyst, Stern provided empirical evidence of a psychoanalytic, developmental theory that was based on the internalization of dyadic interpersonal relationships in infancy and early childhood. Thus, the focus on interpersonal relationships in psychoanalytic technique, as bedrock in an applied sense in the transference, now had developmental research to corroborate its theories of personality formation. And Interpersonal technique now had interpersonal research to support its applicability and validity.

It was all a part of a sea change in the 1980s for the entire field of psychoanalysis, of which the Greenberg and Mitchell volume played a major role. Today, active work in the here-and-now transference is common to nearly all psychoanalytic techniques, and Relational theories of develop-

ment continue to be validated by research from the subsequent generations of psychoanalytic scholars. It is for these reasons that the 25th Anniversary (+2) of *Object Relations and Psychoanalytic Theory* is noteworthy and important for its longevity in and continuing relevance to the current landscape of psychoanalysis.

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