

“Cultural History and Psychoanalysis”

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The future is an apathetic void of no interest to anyone. The past is full of life, eager to irritate us, provoke and insult us, tempt us to destroy or repaint it.

– Milan Kundera

Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Culture

Psychoanalysis is now inseparable from Western culture. Today a psychoanalytic sensibility has a central place in the humanities, theater, film, literature, art, the media. A typical nineteenth century two volume “Life and Times...” biography, as John Morley wrote of William E. Gladstone (1903), from which you would never know that he was a flagellant; or Money Penny and Buckle wrote of Benjamin Disraeli (2 vols., 1929); or even Dumas Malone’s Thomas Jefferson (6 vols., 1948-1981), with no reference to the body, sexuality, dreams, or expressed private fantasies, is unacceptable and virtually unthinkable today -- the reading public and the reviewers justifiably expect what the twenty-first century has to offer in grappling with the conflicts and multi-determination of motivation, and this is in response to the richness and complexity opened up by psychoanalysis. The existence of unconscious thought and fantasies, the “Freudian” slip, the unrecognized, conflicted, ambivalent, and unacknowledged motive, the psycho-sexual phases of development, are a part of the everyday

discourse of the media and of ordinary people -- this is the triumph and generalization of psychoanalysis in our culture. Freud is indeed, as W.H. Auden said, "a whole climate of opinion." In our twenty-first century psychoanalysis has become a hermeneutic science of interpretation, a quest for meanings in the thoughts, fantasies, and aspirations of individuals and cultures. After a brief general survey of the terrain I wish to focus on a celebrated case of an historian's counter-transference self-reflections and a case study of psychoanalytic perceptions applied to a creative institution.

Psychoanalysis is a discipline of a new kind, a Twenty-First Century discipline, combining both self-reflection and science, but basing itself on a unique and different process of inquiry than either the natural or the cultural sciences. "The psycho-analytic mode of thought," said Freud, "acts like a new instrument of research." Psychoanalysis is a humanistic science, a hermeneutic science of meanings, in which two people together create a secure field for the exploration of the latent and least-understood meanings of fantasies, dreams, interactions (including their dialogic encounter), behaviors, and life itself. Freud was a hermeneutician of dreams, patterning the interpretation of dreams after the hermeneutic model: "'Interpreting' a dream implies assigning a 'meaning' to it."

Freud was much more than a natural scientist--he always wished to be, and was, also a humanist. He pioneered modes of comprehending life and texts on several levels at once. Freud created a general psychology which is based on the humanistic method -- the study of a single case in all its richness, complexity, and ambiguity. What we know of Freud's view of the interpretation of texts is

from the foundational document of psychoanalysis, the *Traumdeutung*, and his six case histories. Freud believed in the heuristic power of the single case history, arguing: "It might teach us everything, if we were only in a position to make everything out, and if we were not compelled by the inexperience of our own perception to content ourselves with a little." Psychoanalysis both limits, or decodes the power of the irrational meaning of dreams, fantasies and symptoms, and at the same time expands and develops their meanings by relating them to the themes and conflicts of a life in an open-ended hermeneutic, much as a humanist does with a text.

The psychoanalyst makes himself the instrument of knowledge, not by suppressing his subjectivity, but by utilizing it in self-reflection. Freud made the point explicitly in contrast to the medical model: "A doctor suffering from disease of the lung or heart is not handicapped either in diagnosing or treating internal complaints; whereas the special conditions of analytic work do actually cause the analyst's own defects to interfere with his making a correct assessment of the state of things in his patient and reacting to them in a useful way." The clinical art of interpreting the preconscious and unconscious levels of the analysand's messages and productions is analogous to the literary critic's reading of the multiple levels of a text or the historian's interpretation of new meanings and new conjunctures of theory and evidence in previously familiar facts and data. The psychoanalyst's perception of these stimuli must employ his/her self-reflective function. Just as an historical event or movement, a poem or a fictional text, may be understood from many different points of view, a symptom, a dream, a

behavior, or a fantasy may have more than one meaning. The psychoanalyst, as does the historian and humanist, seeks meanings at multiple levels of consciousness and in cultural, intellectual, political, gender, ethnic, and familial contexts.

For psychoanalysis the concept of “overdetermination” suggests multiple causes.

Für den Psychoanalytiker weist der Begriff „Überdeterminierung“ auf mehrere Ursachen hin, aber impliziert natürlich, dass diese nicht mehr als nötig sind. Im Gegensatz zur Mathematik oder Physik die einzigartige Erklärungen suchen, ist in der Geschichtswissenschaft und in der Psychoanalyse, mehr nicht Überflüssig. Freud sagt in diesem Zusammenhang: „Einer weiteren Überdeterminierung sind -- ähnlich wie beim Traum -- keine Schranken gesetzt.“

Psychoanalysis and History: Dilthey, Collingwood, and Bloch

Psychoanalysis *is* history, and the professional and cultural goals of the historian and the psychoanalyst are the same: to liberate us from the burden of the conscious and unconscious past by helping us to understand that past. The historian’s personality and preconceptions affect the way in which he/she searches for and assembles evidence – thus any history is a product of compromise of the historian’s inner life and the socio-political outer world. Cultural historians, as do psychoanalysts, unfold *Gestalten* of the art, literature, theater, films, architecture, and other artifacts with which they reconstitute a past. They are particularly interested in temporal transformations, or what

analysts call adaptations and adjustments to the *traumata* of war, defeat, revolution, famine, disease, exile, and death, as well as long term political, social, and cultural patterns of development (*la longue durée*). Whether they acknowledge it or not, historians use their subjective empathic functions to understand the past. Our way of reading documents necessarily derives primarily from who we are, our psychodynamic past, our present counter-transferences to the material, and our current emotional and theoretical surround. As in so much else, including our clinical work, we exist in a space of tension and ambiguity between the our subjectivity and what we choose to define as outside “reality.”

There is a striking congruence between Freud and the methods of the cultural historian. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) espoused the idea that the historian is himself the primary instrument of research, that he uses himself as the perceptor and interpreter of data. Dilthey understood that the historian relives the past in his own mind. What makes Dilthey so strikingly modern to us is the stress he laid on historical knowledge as an inner experience of the historian. Dilthey argued that the historian's understanding [*Verständnis*] is based on his inner relationship [*innere Verhältnis*] to his subject of research, and this relationship is possible through recreation [*Nacherzeugen*] and identification [*Nacherleben*]. Historians face the practical task “of the inner reliving of the development of individuation” [*innerlich . . . diesen Aufgang zur Individuation zu durchleben*]. He called on historians to place themselves mentally in the historical situation [*Sichhineinversetzen*]. “On the basis of this placing of oneself

in the situation, this transposition, the highest form in which the totality of mental life can be effective in understanding, arises—imitation or identification.” Dilthey was the earliest conceptualizer of the use of sympathy [*Mitfühlers*] and empathy [*Einführung*] as tools of cognition in historical research.

R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) was Dilthey’s prophet in the Anglo-Saxon world. His work and method is particularly congenial to the psychoanalytic mode of experience because it highlights the tools of emotional empathy and mental identification which lead to intellectual insight as to “how it really was.” He wrote:

All history is the re-enactment of past thought in the historian’s own mind....It is not a passive surrender...it is a labour of active and therefore critical thinking. The historian not only re-enacts past thought, he re-enacts it in the context of his own knowledge and therefore, in re-enacting it criticizes it, forms his own judgement of its value, corrects whatever errors he can discern in it.

Collingwood saluted Freud as “the greatest psychologist of our age.” He was aware of, and illustrated, the psychodynamics of projection: “We learn to bolster . . . self-deceit by attributing the disowned experience to other people. Coming down to breakfast out of temper, but refusing to allow that ill humour so evident in the atmosphere is our own, we are distressed to find the whole family suffering agonies of crossness.”

To theorize elegantly about history is one thing. To apply a theory intelligently so that it yields solid results is quite another. With Collingwood we may see, not only a philosopher of history conceptualize what happens when an

historian works, but we may also observe a first-rate historian doing his research and making his discoveries. It is instructive to see how Collingwood operationalized his empathic theory of historical research. He tried to reason as the Roman strategists did, then reconstruct the past in his own mind and test his fantasy by empirical research. His research was concerned with the purpose and function of Hadrian's Wall, a 73-mile-long structure built across the narrowest part of England on a line from the River Tyne on the North Sea to the Solway Firth on the Irish Sea and maintained by the Romans between 122 and 383 a.d. Collingwood reversed the previous scholarship by first creating a problem where there was previously only accepted dictum—that this wall, as other *Limes* at the extremities of the Roman Empire, was a military fortification designed to keep out barbarian invaders. Collingwood asserted that he could not imagine this. His subjective fantasies and feelings led him to his problem:

When disturbance ripened into war, when large forces from the north advanced upon the Wall and attempted (as no doubt they did, not always unsuccessfully) to penetrate it, *we cannot imagine* that the Roman cohorts actually lined up on the rampart-walk to repel them, still less that Hadrian's engineers *ever contemplated* such a proceeding [italics mine]

Collingwood tells us that he is employing his empathy in making a reconstruction. He explicitly says that his tool of cognition is his power of imagination, his ability to get into the mind of Hadrian's engineers and, if a given pattern of thought is 'unthinkable' for them in his mind, this fantasied implausibility is for him an important historical datum. Collingwood is using his

educated and disciplined fantasy as a primary dimension of historical research. He placed himself in the mental and intellectual position of the Roman generals and engineers who designed and built the wall. He immersed himself in their situation, seeking the 'inward experience' of making the past object alive in him. He maintained that the historian makes discoveries by rethinking the thoughts of his subjects in his own mind:

The historian of politics or warfare, presented with an account of certain actions done by Julius Caesar, tries to understand these actions, that is, to discover what thoughts in Caesar's mind determined him to do them. This implies envisaging for himself the situation in which Caesar stood, and thinking for himself what Caesar thought about the situation and the possible ways of dealing with it. The history of thought, and therefore all history, is the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's own mind.

Collingwood pointed out that those persons who had appropriate business in the Roman province would cross the wall at one of the forts. In addition to its function as a boundary, the wall was intended as:

an obstacle to smugglers, or robbers, or other undesirables. A man from beyond the frontier, found on the Roman side of the line, could not plead ignorance or innocent intentions if the line was clearly marked; and if, in addition, it was a slight obstacle, crossing it otherwise than at the authorized and controlled gateways was proof of a sinister purpose.

Now we see Collingwood, the empathic historian, at work, using his powers of identification based on an immersion in the life problems and problem-solving thought of Roman strategists in the time of Hadrian:

[The Wall] lacks the essential characteristic of a fortification. It cannot be defended. In order to defend a wall you must be able to bring reinforcements to a threatened point; but the top of the Wall was reached only by stairways at forts and mile-castles, and by ladders (it would appear) at the turrets; and ladders 500 yards apart are a very poor means of bringing reinforcements to the top of a narrow wall. Nor was the Wall broad enough to march reinforcements along it, behind the “firing line,” even if (as was not the case) the Roman soldier had been provided with *armes de jet* adequate for dealing with an attack on such a work. The walls of a fort of this period are rendered defensible by the earth bank behind them, giving access to every point, and by the frequent gates, which enable the garrison to sally out and take assailants in the rear; both these features are absent from the Wall.

What then was the purpose of this large Roman work in the north of England?

Making his brilliant original formulation, Collingwood tells us:

The Wall, in spite of appearances, was not strictly a fortification. It was an elevated sentry-walk, where men patrolling the frontier were secure against sudden attack and could command a good view of the country which it was their business to watch. It was also a very effective obstacle against raiding, not because raiding parties could not get across it—for a

few men with a ladder could easily overpower a sentry or two and get across before help could arrive—but because, once they were across and the alarm given, it would be almost impossible for them to get back, especially if they were laden with plunder.

The wall was a frontier work, not a military work. It was not a fortification, a work designed to resist attack by armed forces. It was a police work, designed to keep out Caledonian raiders who would be seriously impeded by such a wall. In Collingwood's research and interpretation on the problem of the Wall, extending over two decades, we see the historian's procedure of reconstruction of the past by inferring the thoughts and feelings of particular men in the past from the historical evidence of the present. It is a process of immersion in their problems and identification with their solutions, a practice analogous to puzzle solving. Collingwood sought confirmatory evidence from residues in the present, much as an analyst would. His archeological research he established that there was no trench in front of the Wall. Indeed, the Wall top was only 15 feet from the ground. And how do we know that Collingwood is right? Of course, we do not know for a certainty. Indeed we may be certain that in due course his view will be revised. But our conviction is based on the fact that for now the pieces fit. Puzzle solving, incidentally, is a methodological simile used by Freud:

If one succeeds in arranging the confused heap of fragments, each of which bears upon it an unintelligible piece of drawing, so that the picture acquires a meaning, so that there is no gap anywhere in the design and so that the whole fits into the frame—if all these conditions are fulfilled,

then one knows that one has solved the puzzle and that there is no alternative solution.

Historians use the present as an entry to the past, as do psychoanalysts who begin with the presenting complaint. The historical method of the great medievalist Marc Bloch was to pursue a “prudently retrogressive method of research,” to move backward retrospectively from the consummation to origins. He taught: “The knowledge of the present bears...immediately upon the understanding of the past....For the natural progression of all research is from the best (or least badly) understood to the most obscure.” Bloch critiqued the medievalist Fustel de Coulanges, who said the open field system of England did not exist in France, for not looking at the present fields of France and noting “the characteristic pattern of the plowlands visible all over northern and eastern France which so irresistibly call to mind the open fields of England,” and for ignoring “the debates on grazing on the arable which were engaging both Chambers at the very moment” he expressed his judgement. Bloch was a methodological innovator who in 1930 introduced aerial photography as historical evidence of field arrangements. Bloch’s injunction to historians is that the key to the past is “to understand the living,” engage with the here and now, and “keep in constant touch with the present day.” For Bloch “historical facts are, in essence, psychological facts....they find their antecedents in other psychological facts.”

Historians work with multiple interpretations. It is axiomatic that each age and social turn calls for a reinterpretation of the past. In psychoanalysis free association makes explicit a multiplicity of meanings. In both disciplines any

interpretation can be reversed and certainly improved upon. There is no exegesis without contesting. Both history and psychoanalysis presume a series of mutual interpretations, each of which is both completed and corrected by the following ones. There is a progressive creation of meaning through successive encounters and interpretations where the meaning of each interpretation is dependent on the working through of the previous ones. The initial meaning must be seen as provisional, and is not suppressed or abandoned: it is retained, supplemented, finally surpassed in the on-going work of analysis.

Cultural Pessimism: Burckhardt and Freud

Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897) and his Basel colleague Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) were, with Freud, isolated dissenters from the nineteenth century ideology of progress -- the idea implicit in linear time as progression, that the human condition and our civilization is getting ever better. Peter Burke has observed that while Burckhardt's Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (1860) has serious flaws, including a weakness in exploring the material and social setting of cultural life, it remains "the best introduction to Renaissance Italy," an extraordinary accolade considering the depth of intensive research on the subject in the past century and a half.

Rather than engage with Burckhardt's work on the Renaissance, I wish to focus on the cultural pessimism expressed in his letters, lectures, and essays, and the resonance Sigmund Freud found in him. A patrician citizen of Basel, a small Swiss republican cantonal democracy at the juncture of France and

Germany, Burckhardt was a skeptic regarding the "progressive" virtues of nationalism, the state, and modern industrialism. Burckhardt expressed his pessimism about the Enlightenment fantasy of a perfectible human nature: "The great harm was begun in the last century, mainly through Rousseau, with his doctrine of the goodness of human nature."

For a time, the "present" was literally synonymous with progress, and the result was the most ridiculous vanity, as if the world were marching toward a perfection of mind or even morality....as to "moral progress"... there is none to be found,... it is relevant to the life of the individual and not to whole epochs. If, even in bygone times, men gave their lives for each other, we have not progressed since.

In his correspondence with his Prussian friend von Preen, Burckhardt displayed an uncanny foresight into the drab totalitarian police states of twentieth century Europe. He envisioned:

high purposefulness of the military machine worked out to the last details....The latter is bound to become the model of existence. It will be most interesting for you, my dear Sir, to observe how the machinery of State and administration is transformed and militarized; for me -- how schools and education are put through the cure....I have a suspicion that, for the time being, sounds completely mad, and yet I cannot rid myself of it: that the military state will have to turn 'industrialist'. The accumulations of beings, the mounds of men in the yards and factories, cannot be left for all eternity in their need and thirst for riches; a planned and controlled degree of poverty, with promotion and uniforms, starting and ending daily to the roll of drums.... The picture I have formed of the *terribles*

simplificateurs who are going to descend upon poor old Europe is not an agreeable one; and here and there in imagination I can already see the fellows visibly before me.

Burckhardt. was one of Freud's favorite authors -- he had six of Burckhardt.'s books in his personal library, and he often refers to the pleasure they give him. Freud's view of time was that the prehistoric is alive and instrumentally effective in both individuals and civilizations. Significantly, during the most lonely and depressed period of his self-analysis, when his sole transference object and mirroring comfort was the Berlin ear, nose, and throat specialist Wilhelm Fliess, Freud was reading Burckhardt: "For relaxation I am reading Burckhardt's History of Greek Civilization which is providing me with unexpected parallels. My predilection for the prehistoric in all its human forms has remained the same." A week later he writes Fliess, "I am deep in Burckhardt's History of Greek Civilization." Freud cited Burckhardt on da Vinci's universal genius "whose outlines can only be surmised,-- never defined." Freud did not subscribe to ideas of human moral progress or development, neither in individuals nor in epochs. He always admired antiquity, indeed he considered the ancient Greeks as our cultural betters. Freud made an explicit comparison of our society to ancient Hellas with reference to the toleration and educational function of homosexuality: "We surely ought not to forget that the perversion which is most repellent to us, the sensual love of a man for a man, was not only tolerated by a people so far our superiors in civilization as were the Greeks [*einem uns so sehr kulturüberlegenen Volke wie den Griechen*], but was actually

entrusted by them with important social functions." For Freud we are enveloped in time – the past is always an integral to the present. Time at this moment is the sum total of all time past. Moral time, psychological time, is not linear. Can any of us who have witnessed the carnage and atrocities, Holocausts and genocides of the twentieth century doubt that Burckhardt and Freud were right about the lack of moral progress in our selves and our civilization?

The assimilation of psychoanalytic culture into the humanities and social sciences.

In 1957 William Langer (1896-1977) in his Presidential Address to the American Historical Association issued a call for historians to train in psychoanalysis and to use psychoanalysis in their research. He argued that

Psychoanalysis would seem to have much to contribute to the solution of historical problems....viewed in the light of modern depth psychology, the homespun, commonsense psychological interpretations of past historians, even some of the greatest, seem woefully inadequate, not to say naive.

Clearly the time has come for us to reckon with a doctrine that strikes so close to the heart of our own discipline.

I was at the time a beginning graduate student at Berkeley. Many of us were hopeful that Langer's Address would usher in a new period of integration of psychoanalysis into humanistic and social science training and method. Some of us wished to establish a separate field of psychohistory in university graduate training. However, although much good work was done and journals such as

Clio's Psyche in America and Psychoanalysis and History in Britain developed, the flourishing of an autonomous field of psychohistorical studies was not to happen. In fact, something much better happened -- instead of becoming a distinct field, separate from other allied disciplines, psychoanalysis became seamlessly integrated into historical assumptions, method, and narrative. I wish to demonstrate this with a major exposition and working-through in current American scholarship of what we would call counter-transference issues of the relationship of racism, gender, and sexuality -- issues which American historians and psychoanalysts have not fully nor adequately grappled with at this scholarly level. Joel Williamson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a distinguished scholar of U. S. Reconstruction (1865-1877) and segregation, in 1997 published "Wounds Not Scars: Lynching, the National Conscience, and the American Historian." Here Williamson shares his self-reflections on why he, as a southern white historian, was able to see and research slavery and segregation, but had a blind spot, could not see, the phenomenon of lynching for the central issue that he now recognizes:

"I discovered that a horrendous wave of lynching had occurred in the South beginning in 1889 and running strong for a generation. It was white people lynching black people ritualistically, one after another, sometimes at the rate of one every other day, as reported widely in the newspapers....Nothing in my living experience as a southerner and an American, nothing in my training and practice as a historian and professor, had prepared me for this." (p. 1235)

"I...passed over the ground without seeing it." (p. 1246) "I was the prisoner of my birth and rearing." (p. 1249) This was, says this leading American historian, "as close as America has ever come to experiencing our own holocaust." (p. 1232) Williamson does not hesitate to refer to psychodynamics, gender, and sexuality in striving for explanation: "Lynching was done by all classes of whites; it was done as a public ritual; and it was a tool to control not only blacks but whites as well, and especially white women and, most especially, white women in relation to sexual matters." (p. 1247) He is honest and modest in discussing his blind spots in relating race to rape and sexuality: "This nexus of sex and gender is the thing in southern culture that I feel I understand least....Is it outrageous to say that the real war, the essence of the conflict, concerned gender, not race, and that lynching and even disenfranchisement, segregation, and proscription had more to do with relations between white men and white women than with relations between blacks and whites?" (p. 1253, passim)

In an unprecedented decision the Board of Editors of the JAH requested consent to publish the original and unaltered referee's reports from all six referees of this paper, four white scholars who praised it, and two Afro-American scholars who voted rejection, and a seventh feminist scholar who was brought in later. Notwithstanding the time-honored policy of anonymous and confidential review, this permission was granted by all editorial readers. Williamson also agreed to publication as submitted, without customary revisions. Said JAH Editor David Thelen: "We froze the documents...in the form we received them." In his contextual preferatory essay Thelen wrote:

We live in an age when historians are as interested in the doing of history as in the products of that doing. We want to find out why author's say what they say and why they shun what they shun....In the best autobiographical accounts personal experience becomes a threshold, not a destination, as authors transcend themselves and speak to us....Joel Williamson wrote about how he came to see some things while failing to see others, and his essay invited referees to respond in equally intimate and candid ways, comparing what they see as they go about their work with what Williamson saw and revealing why history matters to them. Williamson challenges us to think about what we see and do not see, to reflect on what in our experience we avoid, erase, or deny, as well as what we focus on....He insists that the subjects of history live inside us and that we as a culture can talk ourselves into not recognizing and confronting dark emotional sides of our past, preferring to leave them silent in the shadows....What looks like specialization may be avoidance and erasure....The challenge for history is to face squarely the things that are so horrible that we try not to see or remember them, not to rest until we have reached the heart of darkness, especially when that heart beats within us....Beside psychological and cultural issues of avoidance and denial lie fragmenting and isolating rhythms in the contemporary craft of historical scholarship that make it hard for us to find and converse with what we each do."

1. **Creative Institutions, Cultural History, and Psychoanalysis**

I wish to engage with the potential contribution of psychoanalysis to the deepening of our understanding of the functioning of creative groups in cultural history, which could include the artists of the *Bateau Lavoir*, or scientists such as the Fermi Group in Roma, or early groups of psychoanalysts in Vienna and Zurich. The *Bauhaus*, in Weimar and Dessau, 1919-1933, was a pre-eminent creative cultural institution of the modern world which decisively shaped much of twentieth century architecture, such as the “international school,” furniture, ceramics, textiles, metalwork, weaving, glass, and interior design, graphics and typography, expressionist painting, and world-wide art education. The *Bauhaus* masters constituted several clusters of creative geniuses in various fields: Walter Gropius, Georg Muche and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in architecture; the artists Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Laszlo MoholyNagy, Lionel Feininger; Johannes Itten and Josef Alpers in art education; Marcel Breuer in design; Oskar Schlemmer in theater; Lucia MoholyNagy in photography; Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilbersheimer in city planning. The student body was also international, drawn from 16 countries. I say, without qualification, that if I were a young person looking for an education in any form of art, architecture, design, or self creative expression in the early twentieth century, the *Bauhaus* is where I would wish to be. A psychodynamic group process achievement worth studying is how these exceptionally talented and strong-willed people successfully

lived and worked together in an institution. The psychodynamic - historical research question is how did these teachers and students manage the feat of productively functioning collaboratively in an institution under the adverse unsettled social-political circumstances of the Weimar Republic?

All was not invariably peaceful within the *Bauhaus*. Transferences were enacted, competitive rivalries and jealousies were accentuated, as in the ideological struggle for dominance and control between Gropius and Itten. There was always vituperative opposition from outside. The Thuringian government expelled the *Bauhaus* from Weimar in 1924, which could have amounted to an annihilation of the institution. The city of Dessau provided a new home, agreeing to finance a new building designed by Gropius for the school. He wished to build a showpiece and working exemplar of his concept that “to build is to shape the patterns of life.” He designed a three winged building: A workshop wing with a stunning curtain wall glass facade held the studios, classrooms, and exhibition space. An arts and crafts wing including an auditorium, theater, foyer, and canteen which could be opened up to create a “festival level.” A six story student wing with 28 double occupancy live-in studios, baths, laundry, gymnasium, and a cafeteria. A three floor bridge over a street with an administrative section, including faculty offices and Gropius’ private atelier, connected the wings. Thus, the various functions were differentiated to parts of the building and then brought back into harmony as an inter-related secure whole, a bounded “container” for work, living,

eating, parties, recreation, sports, and theater functions integrated under one roof in what was one of the most influential buildings of the twentieth century.

The social group process and creative play states, particularly the frequent *Bauhaus* festivals [*Feste*] which were extensions of the curriculum, are especially significant because the psychoanalytic object relational understanding of creativity stresses the playful component of the creative process. Said Gropius: "the spirit was simply excellent, and some of the informal activities, like our celebrations—the *Feste*—when someone would set a theme, like 'black and white,' or 'square,' were splendid occasions." The *Feste* constituted a structured creative transitional space, a play space, which complemented the play of design in the drafting studios and workshops. In the original 1919 Bauhaus Manifesto Gropius wrote: "Theater, lectures, poetry, music, costume balls. Creation of festive ceremonies in these gatherings."

There were four main festivals in the course of the year: the lantern party in which students made original lanterns; summer solstice; a kite festival in the fall in which the students went out to the fields to fly their unique self-constructed kites; and the Christmas party. A White Festival and a Metallic Festival were later added. Some of the postcard invitations to these parties were executed as lithographs in the graphic print workshop with pupils and masters equally involved in their production. Paul Klee did the postcard for the Lantern Festival in 1921; Oskar

Schlemmer created the one for 1922. This regressive group phenomenon was exciting and exhilarating in providing intense emotional closeness coupled with aesthetic and cultural crossfertilization and stimulation. The *Bauhäusler*, both Masters and students, were still attached to their *Bauhaus* experience and mourned it decades after it was over.

The essential precondition of creativity is the protection of an intermediate area of experience between the inner life and the external shared reality. The *Bauhaus* provided such a secure place for its masters and students where the realization of their fantasies was nurtured and inspired by interdisciplinary exchanges and taking “inside-me” ideas and making them “not-me” was encouraged. The institution of the *Bauhaus* protected creative fantasy from immediate repression through inner inhibition and suppression by outer criticism. The intense group process of creative interaction in the *Bauhaus* was one of personal and functional interpenetration. Boundaries between individuals, between masters and students, were partially dissolved in significant ways, in an ongoing group process of regressive fusion and creativity. The institutional limits set by the Directors Gropius and Mies, such as insistence on attendance and performance, were an important antidote to institutional dissolution and disintegration. The personal boundary in many important aspects came to be the group boundary of innovators who stood in creative competition to the cultural message, style, methods, and content of the tradition oriented outside world, but was enthusiastically received by *avant garde*

modernists.

The term *Spielraum*, play space, has meanings related to flexible and receptive attitudes toward ideas and concepts, things and people, fantasies and objects. It refers to the idea of “play” in instruments and mechanics, as in “the play of the wheel.” In both literal and figurative terms it represents an ability to come close, handle, touch, feel, “play with” new, different, strange, unusual, unexpected, the unsanctioned and the forbidden, concepts and objects. Our ability to create depends upon our capacity to “play,” which Hutter defined as, “to experiment with and interact with an object outside of the self and to use this interaction to expand the boundaries of the ego and of the cultural space which each of us creates and inhabits.”

In the *Bauhaus* the masters and students could allow the most intimate of their preconscious and unconscious processes to be realized in an intermediate area of experience which D. W. Winnicott defined as the sphere of transitional space: “This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work.” The original space of symbolization, the initial creative space, is the transitional play space between mother and child. This is a space that we carry the rest of our lives and which becomes the model for all later

spontaneous creative activity. Transitional space is the beginning of the capacity for symbol formation and representational thought. It is a me extension, occupying an inbetween space between inner and external reality. This is the place of play and of the first phase of cultural, artistic, architectural and planning creativity.

The *Bauhaus* was a holding environment in Winnicott's sense of being a secure space in which the artists and craftsmen could be playful and safely try out ideas. All works are created with some fantasied recipient in mind. For architects, designers, and artists it is the community of their peers and colleagues and the commercial world of patrons and clients who confer external validation. The point where a new idea is launched, when the manuscript is given over to its first reader, when the artist shows his painting or sculpture for the first time, is absolutely critical because until that moment the creation was still a part of the self. Now, it has become a transitional object in a transitional space. The idea, text, or creation stands between the observer and the creator's self. It is a meextension and is placed from the inner world of nothingbutme into a world of people and objects outside of omnipotent control. The use of this space happens only when there is a feeling of confidence in the relationship that the fragile new parts of the self will be sheltered. As Winnicott put it: "We experience life in the area of transitional phenomena, in the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation, and in an area that is intermediate between the inner reality

of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals.”

The *Bauhaus* was a cultural play space which was safe, a good holding environment for the first finding, leaking, spilling, and reflection of pedagogical methods and radical design ideas which the *Bauhaus* as play space permitted. In the group "play space" of the *Bauhaus* we see the interplay between separateness and union, between regressive fusion among masters and students. This was, to paraphrase Ernst Kris, a regression in the service of creativity. The creativity occurred in the institutional space where the individuals could comfortably allow themselves the freedom to regress to sharing their nascent work, projects, sketches, and their regressive fantasies, play, and behavior in the service of individual growth and group creativity in their mutual enterprise of furthering the *Bauhaus* "idea" of clarity, regularity, and simplicity in design, functionalism in building, and community in creativity.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of psychoanalysis and the study of cultural history is the expansion one's self narrative and that of our analysands, as in the narratives of our collective historical past from Thucydides and Burckhardt to the present. People today benefit from cultural history -- from cogent accounts of humans who lived earlier. By recognizing ourselves in the cultural symbols of struggles, triumphs, and defeats of the past, as well as

the history of admirable creative efforts, we may derive, as did Freud, encouragement and hope for ourselves and our groups in the present and in the future. Cultural history and psychoanalysis are both quests for personal and cultural identifications with the experiences of humans in the past, including the non-rational aspects of human existence, as we pursue personal and group creativity.