The Identity of Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalysts

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OVERVIEW

- Psychoanalysis has been in a constant uninterrupted debate about its identity as a discipline and as a social institution.

- This paper considers:
  - the place of science in psychoanalysis, and
  - the hermeneutic nature of our discipline.

- The aim is to articulate a typology of psychoanalytic knowledge that characterizes psychoanalysis as
  - a form of therapy,
  - an intellectual movement, and
  - a theoretical system.
This typology considers psychoanalysis as a thought collective that influences its members by exchanging and maintaining ideas.

To a well-rounded psychoanalytic thinker or practitioner one must be able to move easily among three realms of knowledge

- the humanities,
- the social sciences and
- the natural sciences.

Each realm has its own criteria of truth and the challenge is to know when to employ which criteria.
Freud:
“the intellect and the mind are objects for scientific research in exactly the same way as any non-human things” (1933/1964, p. 159).

“Any estimate of psychoanalysis would be incomplete if it failed to make clear that, alone among the medical disciplines, it has the most extensive relations with the mental sciences, and that it is in a position to play a part of the same importance in the studies of religious and cultural history and in the sciences of mythology and literature as it is in psychiatry” (1923/1955, p. 252).
In *The Question of Lay Analysis*, Freud: "matter of indifference whether the analyst is a doctor or not," and "incomparably more important that the analyst should possess personal qualities that make him trustworthy" (1926/1959, p. 244).
Typology of psychoanalytic knowledge:

(1) a form of therapy
(2) an intellectual movement
(3) a theoretical system.
Hermeneutics and Structural Linguistics

Frank Kermode  Ferdinand de Saussure  Wilhelm Dilthey  Paul Ricoeur
Merton Gill: hermeneutics is “an interpretation of human meanings (p. 3), which includes the general psychic reality (distinguished from material reality) and the affective realm of personal meaning.”
psychoanalysis is an interpretive discipline rather than a natural science.

- It deals in language and equivalents of language.
- Interpretations are re-descriptions or retellings of action along the lines particular to psychoanalytic interests.
- The facts are what the analyst makes them out to be; they are a function of the specifically psychoanalytic questions that guide this narrational project, and
- these questions implement the narrative strategies that are favored by the analyst's own presuppositions, however unsystematized these might be" (Schafer, 1983, p. 255-256).
Constructivism helps the analyst to dispel certainty in arriving at facts, while hermeneutics provides enhanced clarity and comprehension.
Goldberg differentiates

- what is presented to the experience (i.e., phenomenology) from
- how it is interpreted (e.g., hermeneutics)
- while stressing the plurality of differing views of the same phenomena (e.g., privileging).

- Since our observations are interpretations the scientific method and hermeneutics disciplines are not opposites.

- The vital distinction is between the interpretation of human experience and the interpretation of experience that falls outside of experiential or conscious experience.
Goldberg: psychoanalysis is
- an ‘understanding psychology’;
- with a special technique that
- works within a circle of understanding.

The technique follows the sequence of
- understanding,
- misunderstanding,
- interpretation, and
- further understanding,
- formed against the background of transference and countertransference, which facilitates our own understanding and in turn leads to patients feeling understood.
An Epistemological Spectrum

(1) Hermeneutic discipline replacing science
Stern, Schafer, Ricoeur

(2) mid range
Holt, Gill, Goldberg

(3) A broad and relativistic definition of science
Brenner, Eagle, Rangell

(4) Empiricism
Fonagy, Solms, Edelson
Sociology of Scientific Knowledge ("SSK")

Steven Shapin: *A Social History of Truth* (1994)

Ludwig Fleck:
A thought collective is "a community of persons mutually exchanging ideas or maintaining intellectual interaction," and it "provides the special 'carrier' for the historical development of any field of thought, as well as for the given stock of knowledge and level of culture"
ALIEN COLLECTIVES:

Alfred Adler
Carl Jung
Sander Rado
Karen Horney
Erich Fromm
Scientific Thought Collectives and the Need for a Professional Identity

Max Graf’s description of the Wednesday Evening Study Group in 1904 depicts an atmosphere more religious in nature, disciples and all, than a place of unfettered inquiry.

The gatherings followed a definite ritual.
First, one of the members would present a paper.

Then, black coffee and cakes were served; cigars and cigarettes were on the table and were consumed in great quantities.

After a social quarter of an hour, the discussion would begin.

The last and the decisive word was always spoken by Freud himself.

There was an atmosphere of the foundation of a religion in that room. Freud himself was its new prophet who made the theretofore prevailing methods of psychological investigation appear superficial. Freud's pupils, all inspired and convinced, were his apostles. Despite the fact that the contrast among the personalities of this circle of pupils was great, at that early period of Freudian investigation all of them were united in their respect for and inspiration with Freud (pgs. 470 - 471).
Is Psychoanalysis a Science?

- Eric Kandel (1999) observes that although psychoanalysts could legitimately claim for many years that "psychotherapeutic encounters between patient and analyst provided the best context for scientific inquiry," and that important contributions to understanding the mind were generated by the methods of free association and interpretation, now, over a century after their introduction, "there is little new in the way of theory that can be learned merely by listening carefully to individual patients" (p. 506).

- Although psychoanalysis "has historically been scientific in its aim," he continues, "it has rarely been scientific in its methods; it has failed over the years to submit its assumptions to testable experimentation."
David Rapaport, Leo Rangell, Charles Brenner, Howard Shevrin, Benjamin Rubinstein,

- “The concept, ‘science,’ is only definable as a way of looking at the world and, more importantly, of trying to understand it” (p. 4).
- Those guided by scientific belief are guided by facts.
- Facts do not represent an “immutable truth” (p. 4) but reflect the best understanding of phenomena of observation available.
- The scientific point of view, then, requires that the theory be the best explanation that one can give to these facts.
Leo Rangell: "total composite psychoanalytic theory" vs Charles Brenner who finds no need for a unitary theory.
Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience:

Mark Solms
Edward Nersessian
IN SEARCH OF A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY:
Arnold Goldberg, Eric Kandel, Arnold Richards, Andre Green, Steve Mitchell, Morris Eagle
Robert Wallerstein vs Howard Shevlin
“Science, since the rise of relativity and quantum theories, has been seen as an interpretive discipline in which there is no escape from the mutual influence of observer and observed.

Metaphor is everywhere in science – in the processes of discovery and of framing models for testing, for example.

Conversely, hermeneutics, or the study of interpretation, functions within dialogical communities devoted, like “scientific” communities, to exploration and understanding.

Each discipline has its own subject matter, of course, but philosophers of science generally – empiricists like Grünbaum are now exceptions – no longer adhere to a strong line drawn between the Naturwissenschaften (natural or hard sciences) and the Geisteswissenschaften (humanities).

Psychoanalysis, therefore, need not decide in which camp it belongs”
Psychoanalysis and the collection of clinical information may fall on a continuum from discovery through a hermeneutic practice to the continuous repetition and validation of these findings to the ultimate creation of testable hypotheses from internal and external sources.
AN INTEGRATED POINT OF VIEW:

- We have proposed a threefold typology that considers psychoanalysis as a collective intellectual and political movement that needs to be studied with the tools of social science.

- The challenge is to develop a sociology of psychoanalytic studies which is part of the broader field of the sociology (and the psychology) of scientific studies.

- To be a well-rounded psychoanalytic thinker or practitioner, therefore, one must be able to move easily among these three realms of knowledge--the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences.

- Each realm has its own criteria of truth, and even the truth of the natural sciences has a social history.