

## CONSIDERATIONS OF GEORGE MAKARI'S "REVOLUTION IN MIND"

By David James Fisher, Ph.D.

Makari's 2008 volume is an impressive work of scholarship, critical thinking, and historical integration. In accessible prose he has mastered the literature on the history of psychoanalysis from the 1890's to the 1940's. Not only is he conversant with the key primary and secondary sources, but he expertly contextualizes his discussions. He draws on documents in German, French, and English. Within the encyclopedic framework of the book, there is a well articulated argument and a conducting thread, namely that after Freud's grand synthesis, psychoanalysis became professionalized in the 1920's. Despite persistent conflicts in the psychoanalytic field, and a history of splits and acrimonious struggles, psychoanalysis triumphed with the emergence of American ego psychology during and after World War II. Makari's work will continue to be a useful and accurate guide to those concerned with the emergence of psychoanalysis in the first half of the twentieth century. His volume contains fundamental nuggets of knowledge for intellectual historians, historians of science, and mental health practitioners. Methodologically, he is able to draw on the strengths of both history and psychoanalysis in telling his story and constructing his argument, while deciphering the underlying subtexts.

What is the revolution that *Revolution in Mind* addresses? Essentially, it is a psychological revolution, including a major conceptual breakthrough about the structure of the mind, a new form of therapeutic practice in working with emotionally disturbed patients, and a theory of culture that contains an innovative and radical ethics.

According to Makari, Freud synthesized three disparate intellectual disciplines: first the findings of 19<sup>th</sup> century French academic psychology, specifically the works of Theodule Ribot, Pierre Janet, and Jean-Martin Charcot, centered on the study of psychopathology; second, the tradition of German psychophysics, especially the work of Gustav Fechner, with its emphasis on outer and inner experience and the postulation of a threshold between unconscious and conscious phenomena; and third, the perspectives of Viennese and English sexology, particularly the writings of Richard von Kraft-Ebbing on perversions and Havelock Ellis on autoerotism. These discussions are the clearest and best summaries I have read on the subject matter in English.

It should also be noted that Makari either neglects or underplays how the philosophical elements in Freud's formation helped him to construct his synthesis. He neither includes the integration of a phenomenological neo-Kantianism from Freud's studies with Franz Brentano at the University of Vienna, nor his proficiency in dialectical modes of thinking that derive from Hegel and the Hegelians. He misses Freud's deep reading of ancient and contemporary literature, including the Greeks and Romans, Shakespeare, Goethe, Lessing, 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian novelists, and Nietzsche. Freud learned a great deal from psychologically minded authors past and present. These humanistic, cultural influences are deemphasized by Makari in terms of building his argument around professionalization; it represents a bias, perhaps indicating his own debts to a medical psychoanalytic tradition and a legacy of scientific empiricism emerging from his own training and transference affinities.

Freud's synthesis belonged to a larger intellectual inquiry on the place of reason originating in the Enlightenment, an investigation still relevant. Foucault argued that the

Enlightenment's perception of and policies toward the mad were neither enlightened nor reasonable. Freud's synthesis represented both continuity and rupture with the post-Enlightenment history of unreason, a history that privileges the role of critical reason and a fundamental respect for those suffering from serious mental disorders. Carl Schorske once called for a project studying how psychoanalytic theory and practice ought to be situated in the controversies over the nature and significance of reason. That integration remains to be written.

Makari posits that Freud's discovery of intrapsychic conflict and of psychosexuality marked his revolutionary synthesis. Psychosexuality became the link between reason and passion; mind and body; the individual and the species; the human and the animal. Libido was a critical and determining source of unconscious wishing in dream life and fantasies.

Yet, Makari leaves out of Freud's synthesis his early and consistent understanding of the social. From the 1907 article "Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness" to his inspired 1930's essay, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he realized that there were persistent tensions between the individual and society, not just anxiety created by repression. These conflicts between the human subject and society are illustrated by the ways in which restrictions and interdictions are externally imposed on the child; they derive from child rearing, family systems, educational, religious, and ethical imperatives. Freud underscored that the social nature of shame and guilt, as well as intrapsychic sources, could impose limits, laws, and regulations, often resulting in misery for the individual. Civilization, Freud grasped, also contributed to modern nervousness and to mankind's uneasiness. Makari understates the role of social theory in Freud's

paradigm, the ways in which early psychoanalysis was attentive to social and cultural pressures on the individual, influencing his psychic makeup and his choices.

Freud, Makari argues, solved Comte's paradoxical thesis that there could be no objective and scientific exploration of psychology if that investigation included inner experience. This became a cardinal principle of positivist thought. Freud's approach to the science of subjectivity permitted the observer to maintain the boundaries of observer and observed, despite the subjectivity of both members of this dyad. We now know from the contemporary analytic perspectives on intersubjectivity and the relational school just how elusive this boundary is, how shifting and unstable the interaction is between analyst and analysand.

Today, psychosexuality no longer shocks. Psychoanalysis no longer can claim its revolutionary status by this standard. Or can it? If psychoanalysis has been transformed into a discounted ideology, its very success may have undermined its continuing efficacy. Professionalization, the central subject of Makari's work, may have paradoxically contributed to taming of disturbing truths about our inner world first articulated by Freud and his early analytic cohort. Institutionalization in many ways resulted in the medicalization of psychoanalysis, where lay analysts were marginalized or excluded from training, practice, and positions of prestige. The history of lay analysis, right down to the lawsuit against the American Psychoanalytic Association, seriously weakened the dissemination of psychoanalysis into society, limited its creativity, eliminating the rigorous thinking and innovative approaches to be found in non-medical disciplines. Furthermore, the prejudice against lay analysis delayed the

acceptance of women in the field, curtailed research on children, and the creation of open-ended, brainstorming cross-disciplinary dialogue.

Medicalization also went with bureaucratization, with its inherently conservative turn, blunting the revolutionary edge of analysis's destabilizing truths, often co-opting the subversive methods and findings of psychoanalysis. As psychoanalysis penetrated throughout Central and Western Europe and to America, it became softened, diluted, prettified—making the dark and disturbing truths about our inner world easy to assimilate. Linear thinking replaced the dialectical complexity of Freud's style of discourse. Mechanistic and reductionistic formulations, hardened into dogma, supplanted the early metaphorical, personal, and self-reflexive modes of thinking epitomized by Freud's theorizing.

Standardization of analytic theory and technique became a problem for perpetuating the revolutionary nature of analysis. Gradually, conformism and adherence to dogma replaced the need for freedom, dissent, creativity, and genuine independence, where a clinician was urged to think through a clinical problem for himself. Following received ways of working with primitively disordered and traumatized patients, generations of analysts were not encouraged to be elastic and relaxed in their approach to patients, not to privilege flexibility, imagination, caring, and emotional attunement. Discipleship rose and many of Freud's followers proudly echoed Freud's positions, promoting an uncritical loyalty to the founder, including an internalization of a mythical and heroic history about Freud.

Over time this tendency limited the free flows of ideas and the cross fertilization of analysis with allied fields. This pattern of discipleship was repeated with endless variations as followers gathered around seminal psychoanalytic schools, Kleinian, Anna Freudian, Lacanian, Mahlerian, and in recent years around Kohut, Kernberg, and the various luminaries of the relational and intersubjective schools. These diverse schools have repeated the pattern of bickering, of distinguishing themselves from their fathers by unknowingly returning to their grandfathers and by setting up straw men arguments. These battles generated splits, acrimony, and difficulty in conducting clinical or intellectual exchange .

Makari astutely delineates clinical, theoretical, even ethnic differences in studying different schools in psychoanalysis. He is convincing on the early collaboration and tensions between Vienna and Zurich until 1912; Vienna versus Berlin in the 1920's; Budapest under Ferenczi's influence vs. Vienna; London versus New York City. As psychoanalysis became diffused, distinct theoretical languages emerged in these capitals. These reflected divergent assumptions about the structure of the mind, the developmental sequence and significance of early childhood, disparate emphases on the environment and innate influences, and above all, contrasting transferences to theory and to a theory of technique. Ultimately, these debates reflected differing attitudes of closeness or distance from Freud's authority and paradigm. Not every analyst embraced his methodology, or his key metapsychological, humanist, and modernist principles. It became unclear how to define a psychoanalyst, what constituted an analytic identity. Some defined it as unconditional loyalty to Freud's postulation of psychosexuality, the primacy of the Oedipus complex, and adherence to the structural

model of the mind. Others argued that psychoanalysts adhered to scientific methodology and technique, with its privileging of free association and analysis of the transference.

Resistance to the diffusion of psychoanalysis came from many sources and corners. Makari is quite good about tracking this opposition to core analytic principles. Conservative physicians in Central Europe rejected analytic ideas because of their explicitness about sexuality, their privileging of unconscious dynamics, and their racial bias against the Jewish founders of the discipline. In his discussion of the French scene, he mentions the French resentment of Freud for ripping off many of their significant findings in psychopathology. He neglects the role of French anti-Semitism in obstructing a more dispassionate discussion and receptivity to Freud, especially after the Dreyfus Affair. Likewise, he minimizes the role of French cultural nationalism; many Frenchmen dismissed Freud as a “German” thinker simply because he wrote in German. Makari also misrecognizes what was distinctly Viennese in Freud’s cultural context and development, a point of view beautifully illuminated in the sparkling essays of Carl Schorske and Bruno Bettelheim, and in the scholarship of Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Jacques Le Rider, Peter Loewenberg, and William M. Johnston. He does not appear to be sensitive to the multiple meanings of being a secular Jew in an anti-Semitic city.

The history of psychoanalysis can be thought of as the study of Freud’s intellectual history, the formation and revision of his ideas. Yet, Freud’s authoritarian style interfered with the transmission of psychoanalytic approaches to the mind. Always the medical professor, the patriarchal founder of the discipline, Freud did not tolerate

challenges to his authority. He legitimized his authority as a master clinician, a trenchant empirical observer, and if not a systematic thinker, a breathtaking theorist—brimming with speculations, insights, and *aperçus*. Many of Freud's early disciples depended on him for referrals and prestige, for approval and the regulation of their self-esteem as analytic practitioners. In return, they provided loyalty. Freud used ad hominem arguments, polemical and rhetorical strategies, to discipline his unruly followers and to create order out of messy and anarchic associations. Analysts in other cities emulated this authoritarian style, including the stance of being omniscient. In practice, this authoritarianism meant that new ideas could not always be debated and critiqued openly; scientific or clinical differences became transformed into personal ones. Intellectual exchange focused on substantial differences on ideas, clinical data, and treatment options collapsed into political, personal, and uncivil exchanges, often designed to discipline or pathologize one's opponents.

Intellectual disagreement, rather than being welcomed and embraced, was seen as a sign of emotional resistance. This injured the analytic community, despite Freud's own somewhat idiosyncratic tolerating of skeptics, dissenters, oddballs, mavericks, and radicals in the movement. Freud, Makari aptly points out, would characteristically rebuff criticism and challenges to his theory, then quietly internalize certain valid ideas which would enlarge his model of the mind. He did not always acknowledge his debt to others, failed to provide documentation of shifts in his point of view. This is particularly evident in Freud's introduction of the death drive in his 1919 essay, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where previous authors, many of whom were followers or former followers, received no attribution in his references. Perhaps all great creative thinkers

have the license to not cite their precursors, as if ideas immediately sprang full blown from their minds. This tone of correctness, arrogance, capriciousness, and omniscience has impeded the dissemination of psychoanalysis, continuing to this day. We are all too familiar with the condescending expressions: “That is not psychoanalysis;” “Colleague X does not understand the unconscious;” and “Colleague Y does supportive psychotherapy.” These expressions do not promote serious and intelligent exchanges.

One antidote to the bureaucratization and medicalization of psychoanalysis was the presence of lay analysts in the movement. This assortment of humanists, scholars, social workers, analytic psychologists, cultural and political radicals, including some sexual revolutionaries, anarchists, socialists, and those inspired by the Russian Revolution often functioned as non-conforming, critical thinking alternatives to the emerging mainstream. These freethinkers demonstrated a willingness to speak truth to power, contesting the hegemony of charismatic leaders locally and nationally. Yet, lay analysts did not always overcome their own tonality of arrogance and authoritarianism, of narcissism and political posturing. Freud was somewhat receptive to these original and imaginative thinkers, willing to contemplate some of their brilliant suggestions and offbeat ideas. Lay analysts opened up the study of cultural formations from the point of view of how dreams, fantasies, and emotions functioned in works or art, literature, anthropology, philosophy, and history. They also provided a bridge between the natural sciences and the cultural sciences, a strong resistance to the conservative, exclusive, and elitist trend of a medicalized psychoanalysis, including an alternative to strictly empirical investigation.

What is revolutionary about psychoanalysis now? Perhaps not much. If psychoanalysis represented a psychological revolution in its earliest history, it was above all a hybrid cultural revolution. In short, it revolutionized our ideas about sexuality, aggression, insatiable desire, and the role of the unconscious in mental life. Makari's Freud is less a revolutionary thinker than one who tweaked and promoted already existing progressive trends in psychopathology, sexology, and psychophysics. Certainly, Freud helped to erase the distinction between the normal and the pathological. He clearly functioned as a social and sexual reformer in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As an initiator of discourse, his language has penetrated into every possible sphere of everyday life, into myriad aspects of high and popular culture. Perhaps the triumph of Freud's synthesis can be seen in the ways our thinking and speaking about the individual is indebted to his writings. For several generations Freud decisively transformed the self-image of the Western mind. What remains of that self-image and legacy is an open question.

George Makari has written an engaging and erudite book on the creation of psychoanalysis. His lucid historical study of this cultural movement provides an understanding after the events. Our own society and psychotherapeutic practices have moved to a stage beyond which early psychoanalysis was concerned. Minerva's owl flies out at dusk. Knowing the history of psychoanalysis in the current context, then, encourages us to reaffirm the practical significance of theory. We need to remember that theoretical elements are productive of insight and deep self-reflection, while being key intellectual tools to calm anxieties about uncertainty, complexity, and not knowing. Revisiting the revolutionary core of psychoanalytic theory and practice can engender a

mood of mourning about the loss of a now dead paradigm for human emancipation. Or, more positively, it can provide hope that psychoanalysis can rediscover its subversive vitality. Such a reinvention might allow psychoanalysis to flourish again in our sick and narcissistic society that desperately needs its healing perspective and liberating methods.

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