

Introduction: Integrative Plurality in Psychoanalysis
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Arnold Richards's psychoanalytic contributions, are presented in Vol. I of his selected papers entitled *Psychoanalysis: Critical Conversations*. This volume follows the thesis of "integrative pluralism": how to continue the conversation between the contributors of uneven or disparate psychoanalytic schools of thought. In the *Sociology of Scientific Knowledge* these schools would be thought of as "thought collectives" and together they make up the larger psychoanalytic knowledge base, which grows and changes with each new contribution. In the Chinese translation of the book's title it reads *Psychoanalysis: Open Conversations*. This seems in retrospect a more apt title because it identifies the goals of psychoanalysis "Open Conversations," and implies to the difficult process of getting there and even where "there" is. Richards asks how does one get to an open conversation. Also, is our own belief system about the open conversation the same as others who identify with psychoanalysis? Throughout the volume, Richards attempts to engage in dialogue with: those who claim a new orthodoxy and would minimize the overall efforts of psychoanalysis; those who claim new theories,

usually untested and unproven, that would replace the old; and those immovably complacent in the deep malaise of the status quo.

The book is dedicated to having these critical/open conversations. For thematic purposes it was divided into 5 sections.

The first section shows us the evolution of this design – psychoanalytic integrative pluralism – that has taken more than half a century to develop.

Richards begins the “critical conversations” with a reflection on his personal journey. He locates himself in a variety of dialectics and explores psychoanalysis as a historical discipline that needs to come to terms with its history on “personal, intellectual and institutional levels” (1999, p. 9). He deepens our understanding of how “institutional dynamics” can, without malice intent, create segregation; which he calls the “**politics of exclusion**” (p. 12).

Tracing this complex legacy of exclusionary policies he has outlined three main themes, all contributing to the present state of fragmentation in our field. Richards feels theoretical restoration is a limited solution and seeks a new **politics of inclusion**, which is at the heart of his **plea for a measure of humility**. After providing a broad history since Freud, he concludes that psychoanalytic theory has

evolved into an **irreversible pluralism**; differentiated by major perspectives. He argues for a course of action - to reach out in an open-minded and scientific spirit and learn from one another. If we fail to achieve this outcome, he notes, we will be left clinging to the remnants of old attachments to our professional ancestors. This solution has not worked well in the past and most likely will not work now. **To make his point, Richards uses the relational perspective and concludes that it was a lost opportunity for integration.**

Richards fills in the details of these conversations in the next three sections (chapters IV – XIII) as he explores and challenges theories from self psychology, hermeneutics and social constructivism, and the relational perspective. These papers were all written in the heat of debate, and together they offer a broad perspective on the profession's attempts to grow in an era of grand contributions and tumultuous change.

In Section V, (chapters 14–17), Richards explores the theoretical core of contemporary conflict theory. This is his theory of choice. He carefully outlines the theoretical contributions of Brenner, Arlow, and Rangell, which provide a historical overview; and with Arlene Kramer Richards he contrasts how psychoanalytic theory and

its consequences on technique differs with representatives from the other major perspectives.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Richards's curiosity has made him a natural pantologist reflecting a new version of the old value of Bildung (or psychoanalytic formation). He has taken Freud's discoveries of the organizing and disorganizing forces in the mind and applied them to the growth and development of psychoanalytic theory. His theory of psychoanalysis is broad and congruent in its models of mind, development, pathology, and technique.

This theory emerges from Freud's work, continues with the contributions from ego psychology and structural theory; eventually settling down in a core modern conflict theory. It is not as traditional as it might sound, as Richards requires explanations from bio/psycho/socio-cultural contributions that are determined epigenetically. Having arrived at a theory with suitable explanations inspired Richards into a challenging dialogue with other thought collectives.

Although not often recognized, these debates follow the spirit of Bergmann as they 'embrace rather than bemoan the multiplicity of models.' (Munter, C.H. & Pekowsky, J.C., 1995, p. xvi). So in the subtext of these

selected papers, Richards recognizes that within each psychoanalytic thought collective the members separately and together delete, alter and enhance the theoretical concepts provided by prior members. These alterations and enhancements are multiply determined from sources of internal creativity to sources of conflict with external thought collectives. The overall contributions keep psychoanalytic theory vital and relevant to the times. They continue to offer the best explanations possible for the clinical problems we face everyday (Brenner, 2006). As each thought collective alters and enhances their theories, they offer further opportunities for the modification of a total composite psychoanalytic theory from an individual micro level through an international macro level (Rangell, 2004, 2007).

While musing over where he fits in the analytic world, Richards notes that he is his own person.” Like his teachers before him, Richards has influenced several generations of psychoanalysts from many quarters, including most recently China. He has also not sought a following or thought collective, opting instead for the works of originality and integration.

We now live in a state of quiet co-existence. Maybe it's a new beginning where we can build bridges and begin a new period of broader integration. This is beyond common ground and total composite

psychoanalytic theory. It is a place of science where information from many fields can stimulate our curiosity to seek out and discover/create something greater, something more useful. This is where Richards work not only clinical but political, has been heading. We hope you'll enjoy Volume II, as well; which addresses, as openly, the political dimensions of the field .