

Psychoanalysis: Perspectives on a Thought Collective More Selected Papers of Arnold D. Richards, Volume 2

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Richards organizes Vol. 2 with selected papers that are infused with the conviction that the impact of social dimensions is ubiquitous throughout the history and development of psychoanalysis. Each of the five sections of this volume bear witness to the manner in which thought collectives have contributed to and shaped the nature of psychoanalytic theory.

To provide a framework, Richards uses the work of Ludwig Fleck, who demonstrated that people with the same scientific beliefs tend to be drawn into “thought collectives,” each with its own “thought style.” The thought collective is a community of persons mutually exchanging ideas for the purpose of maintaining intellectual interaction.¹

This framework is applied to: 1) the creation and social transmission of psychoanalytic knowledge, 2) The creation of an old world Freudian thought collective,² 3) the trials and troubles in the development of an American psychoanalytic thought collective, 4) a perspective on a psychoanalytic professional organization, and 5) a perspective on dynamic pluralism, paradigms and politics.

Volume 2 of the selected papers of Arnold D. Richards closes as it opens. Throughout this work, he applies the broader bio-psycho- socio/cultural approach of psychoanalytic theory. This approach is not an eclectic common ground perspective, or an attempt to structure a total composite psychoanalytic theory. Instead, Richards addresses the social dimensions upon which psychoanalysis was founded, built and grown to its contemporary form. Drawing from the work of Fleck by applying key constructs from the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK), he continuously bears witness to the manner in which “thought collectives” have contributed to and shaped the nature, organization and findings of psychoanalytic theory through history.

¹ To these concepts Richards brings the ideal of Bildung—(Psychoanalytic formation), or the process of inner development. To be well-formed, or “gebildet,” one needs to have a diverse set of interests and a substantial education. There are those thought collectives that demand medical training for analysts, and others that see the criteria of Bildung as paramount (Freud 1926).

² (Bildung or Psychoanalytic Formation was the old world determinant of inclusion or exclusion from practicing psychoanalysis. The new world is less artful and with Brill at the helm one merely requires an MD to practice.)