

Review : Encounters with the Irrational: My Story. By Andre E. Haynal, MD

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Like an ellipse, André Haynal's memoir revolves around two foci: his childhood under fascism; his psychoanalytic contributions. And like an ellipse, he binds these together both in the axis that spears the two foci of an ellipse — traumas and reconstruction — and in the ellipse itself that circumscribes this extraordinary life of the mind.

Like a good psychoanalytic text, we can almost read it backwards, from the adult's thinking to the childhood experiences that informed and formed such thinking. The core of Haynal's intellectual contributions begin on page 69 with a chapter, Depression and Creativity. We can follow its circumscription forward to his work on psychoanalytic history, "method" contra "technique," Ferenczi through Fanaticism (and indictment of both the Right and the Left). We can also follow the ellipse backwards to the childhood and adolescence of privation (the incursion of Nazism among the Hungarians and of the Nazis themselves; the incursion of the fascistic Communists subsequently) through his hair-raising escape at night, by foot with two buddies via Vienna to Switzerland. Mastering this youth overshadowed (and almost murdered — only ten of his twenty-four classmates survived) by the fanatics of the Hungarian fascists, then of the Nazis, followed by the Soviet/Hungarian communists, Haynal offers us the gifts of what he discovered in his three analyses: what it took for him to reconstruct a life.

Haynal is painfully candid with us. His despair moved him to psychoanalysis (once his physical life was safe) to work-through the depression precipitated by life under fascists and the preceding vacuum experienced with his loving, but removed parents and their de facto separation/divorce when he was in late latency. Haynal connects the working through of depression and mourning — the reparation afterwards — with the possibility of creativity. His book *Le sens du désespoir, Depression and Creativity* (1985) was contemporaneous with the writing of Pollock in Chicago (1977), albeit the “source” material was more personal, we might say, for Haynal.

Clinical gems come through this book. “...any developmental process is...accompanied by external change and the loss of successive inner states... despair (is) a necessary concomitant of human development.” (p. 71) Schlesinger develops this in his *Endings and Beginnings* (2014), attributing this realization to his work with Ekstein, another refugee from fascism (Schlesinger, Personal Communication). Fear of change is a form of separation anxiety, as it represents the “loss” of early internal objects.” (p. 71).

Trauma he defines as a gap between an external event and the capacity for working through (p. 71). And, psychoanalysis consists of 1. a quest for tension tolerance; 2. integration despite dissociative tendencies; 3. a sense of confidence despite “the inevitable insecurity that is life.” (p. 73).

From his Cistercian Catholic high school Greek and Latin, we learn how he prefers to teach psychoanalytic “method” to “technique.” “Method” comes from the Greek, *hodos* (a path) and *meta* (through something). That is, method is a path through. We can link

this with metaphor, which also has Greek origins (*metapherein*) and is the Greek translation for the Latin “transference,” or Freud’s more plainly-spoken German, *übertragung* (Szajnberg, 1986).

We can only touch on other gems in this book. He learned from studying Ferenczi (and editing the correspondence between Freud and Ferenczi), that the relational *also conceals the past and the instinctual (particularly adolescence (Anna Freud, 1958) (p. 129).*

For those of us in the Bay Area, Haynal expresses gratitude for his two years at Stanford, his analysis with Weinschel (a fellow Hungarian-speaker, with whom he spoke only English), the protection he felt with Bob Wallerstein, friendship with Paul Ekman, and the birth of his two children.

The last section on Fanaticism returns us to the roots of his adolescence and young adulthood, to life under both the right-wing fascists and the left-wing fascists. The latter may prove controversial for some: when he lived in Paris before his transition to Switzerland, his left-wing psychoanalytic colleagues could not accept or absorb the fascist acts of Communist Russia or Hungary. History proved him too right: more were slaughtered by Stalin and Mao than by Hitler (but a pox on all three of their houses).

Does Haynal ring a cautionary bell about the tinge of fascist thinking among American or European left who now police speech, what can or cannot be said? What he does say explicitly is that we should follow Freud’s dictum of the Delphic oracle, “*Gnothi Heauton*,” “Know thyself.” We analysts should have radar to know when our discipline is succumbing to charismatic characters and the circles that form around them that are the seeds of fanatical thinking. And purge ourselves of such tendencies for the sake of

being honest seekers of scientific truths about that morass within ourselves, our unconscious and our still, small voice of reason that may help us master our inner lives.

From Haynal's book, from his lived life and reflected life, we can learn how to overcome vicissitudes, to build better lives and world around us.

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