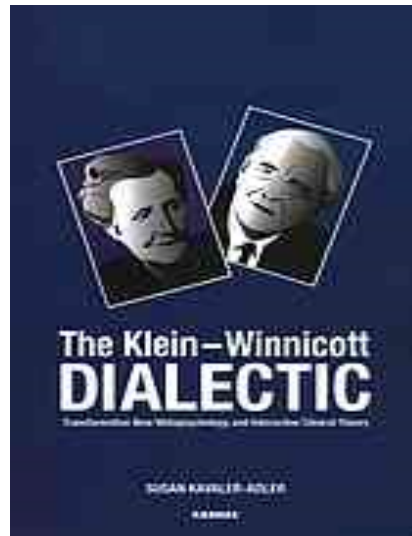


Review:



*The Klein-Winnicott Dialectic: Transformative new metapsychology and interactive clinical theory.*

*By*

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For more than four decades, Dr. Susan Kavalier-Adler's clinical practice and academic writing have focused on faithfully integrating British object relations psychoanalysis into the current mainstream American psychoanalytic tradition. More so, as a clinician, writer, and Founder<sup>1</sup>, Executive Director, Senior Faculty, Training Analyst, and Senior Supervisor of the Object Relations Institute for Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis (ORI), Dr. Kavalier-Adler gives voice to some of the most challenging psychological complexes found in

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<sup>1</sup> With Dr. Robert Weinstein.

contemporary psychoanalytic treatment. Areas that are explored and uncovered in Dr. Kavalier-Adler's clinical practice and academic writing include the fear of success, paralyzing inhibitions of the Real Self, the demon lover complex that affects many women's creative lives, the theme of creative compulsion versus free motivation, the importance of developmental mourning in the opening of erotic desire and spirituality, and much more. Unique to Dr. Kavalier-Adler's clinical approach is her creative reliance on both autobiographical and biographical work as reflected by the psychoanalytic exploration of the lives and work of such literary luminaries as Charlotte Bronte, Emily Dickinson, Anais Nin, Sylvia Plath, and Edith Sitwell (please see bibliography included). As a prolific author, with over seventy articles and six books, Dr. Kavalier-Adler's provides unique psychoanalytic insights into the profound mental anguish and creative achievements of these writers. Dr. Kavalier-Adler's well-known books entitled *The Compulsion to Create: Women Writers and Their Demon Lovers* (Routledge, 1993, 2000), *The Creative Mystique: From Red Shoes Frenzy to Love and Creativity* (Routledge, 1996), *Mourning, Spirituality and Psychic Change* (Routledge, 2003), *The Anatomy of Regret* (2013), and *The Klein-Winnicott Dialectic* (2014) achieved not only a *National Gradiva Award* from the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis but a further 16 awards on psychoanalytic writing. Dr. Kavalier-Adler can indeed be viewed as a pioneer in object relations psychoanalysis, as well as a seasoned clinician and creative voice in the separation-individuation themes explored in contemporary feminine psychology.

In the current work, Dr. Susan Kavalier-Adler, as theorist, clinician, and integrator, sets out to articulate a long-held vision inherent in her many publications of bringing into psychoanalytic dialogue two very creative and seemingly contradictory giants in British object relations theory, i.e., the work of Melanie Klein and that of Donald W. Winnicott. The integration and contextualization of the conflicting 'positions' of both Klein and Winnicott follow different but interweaving contexts, mainly the various institutional schisms within the British Psychoanalytic Society, as well as Ms. Klein's singular commitment to the death drive/instinct psychology. It is well documented that institutionally the polarization of both Ms. Klein's and D.W. Winnicott's views had detrimental effects on not only the reading and articulation of their respective theories by all the schools falling under the umbrella of the

British Psychoanalytic Society, but also foreclosed sincere collegial support within divergent theoretical and clinical domains (workable dialecticism). In the written work of Dr. Kavalier-Adler;

“Both the psychoanalytic society camp and the outside ‘revolutionaries’ of the Middle Group have seen themselves as diametrically opposed to one another, and, therefore, have often politicised their theory of clinical technique into polarised statements that have belied the profound degree to which their separate contributions *could be integrated on a phenomenological basis*. I have attempted to integrate their theoretical contributions to clinical practice through the use of the conceptual term ‘dialectic,’ a term that has been formerly utilized in the American scene theorising of Thomas Ogden (1986, 1994) and Sheldon Bach (1985, 1994, 2005).” (p. xiv)(italics added)

Adding to politicised views, according to Dr. Kavalier-Adler, and as mentioned, a major polarizing factor can also be found in the death instinct theorizing of Klein;

“... I have had to make the case in this volume of thinking that the major polarising factor in the contributions of the two camps has been Melanie Klein's metapsychology of the ‘death instinct,’ rather than Klein's clinical theory with its brilliant phenomenology. Part of making this case has been to preface my clinical illustrations of the integration of Kleinian and Winnicottian theory from their contrasting, but also complementary, dialectical perspectives with some studies of Klein's psychobiography.” (p.xiv)

Central here, and in an essential extension of Dr. Kavalier-Adler's previous work on biography of well-known literary figures (fleshing out the concept of developmental mourning and the demon lover complex), Dr. Kavalier-Adler brings her psychoanalytic biographical method into creative play by thoroughly and sensitively exploring the various developmental challenges both Winnicott and Klein had to endure. In

chapters one to five <sup>2</sup>, Dr. Kavalier-Adler describes the different developmental ways Klein's autochthonous strivings fell victim to a profoundly controlling and narcissistic mother. Dr. Kavalier-Adler also argues that the mother-daughter bond may serve as a reason as to why Ms. Klein so tenaciously clung to her view of the importance of the death drive in psychic development:

“I will try to demonstrate why Klein clung to her ‘death instinct’ metapsychology. I believe that she needed that in order to psychically cling to her mother.... I believe that her resistance to giving it up is, in itself, a diagnostic sign of Klein's poignant and evocative mourning state. Grosskurth (1986) helps her readers imagine the maternal and fraternal relationships that contributed to this state of mind in Klein.” (p. 3)

Given this endopsychic conflict and unresolved process of mourning, Ms. Klein, like that of the biblical figure Moses, remained unable to enter the promised land so evident in her own psychoanalytic vision;

“It is the story and legend of Melanie Klein, who, I believe, similar to Moses, foresaw the vivid outlines of a promised land, a psychic land, which she herself could not enter or could enter only to a partial degree.” (pp.1-2).

Dr. Kavalier Adler's close reading of especially the work of Grosskurth (1986) supports a sensitive unfolding of Ms. Klein's complicated relationship with not only her narcissistic mother, but also Klein's position in her family of origin, her relationship with her siblings and father (her father-wound), choice of partners in adult life, her approach to being a psychoanalyst, and the development of her unique psychoanalytic vision. During the exploration, the reader is guided to empathically witness and relate to Klein's painful relationship with her mother, children, husband, and colleagues (including Winnicott). For those not familiar with Dr.

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<sup>2</sup> See especially chapter two entitled “Melanie Klein's creative writing revealing themes in her life and theorising” (pp. 27-41).

Kavaler-Adler's previous writing and use of the biographical method psychoanalytically, chapter two entitled "Melanie Klein's creative writing revealing themes in her life and theorizing," will undoubtedly open uncharted vistas in understanding both Ms. Klein's and Dr. Kavaler-Adler's psychoanalytic sensibilities. I leave it to the reader to immerse themselves and come to their own imaginative conclusions as to the immense contribution of an *object-relations informed biographical approach*.

In contrast with the narcissistic mother so evident in Ms. Klein's developmental struggles, Dr. Kavaler-Adler later turns her attention to the work of Winnicott and his unique adaptation to what could be considered a rather schizoid-depressed mother. It is of interest to note that both psychoanalysts suffered from strained if not absent relationships with their fathers (father-wounding). Both fathers were primarily unable to serve as guardians of psychological safety to the pre-Oedipal pressures and conflict narcissistic and schizoid-depressed mothers induce. By treating both Klein and Winnicott as psychoanalytic 'artists,' Dr. Kavaler-Adler allows the reader to intimately engage with the fact that no work of art can exist in isolation from the biographical past of the artist. Valuing the biographical influences of each of the psychoanalytic scholars, the life- experience of both Winnicott and Klein as theorists and practitioners become of immense importance and sheds light on their creativity, their developmental mourning, their unique area of creativity, and singular vision on what makes us truly human.

Given the depth of exploration, as well as the clarity of Dr. Kavaler-Adler's unfolding exposition of both theorists' conflicted childhood development, most would consider this in itself a contribution to our understanding. That is, Dr. Kavaler-Adler's meticulous tracking of both theorists' developmental conflicts and how developmental mourning lined their creative, if not seemingly polarized traditions of autoplasmic (Klein) and alloplasmic (Winnicott) theories, would in itself serve as a valuable contribution. Dr. Kavaler-Adler's conceptualizations continually thicken the reader's understanding of how developmental mourning failure affects the endopsychic processes evident in internal phantasy, paranoid-

schizoid adaptation, the depressive/reparative position, the eternal search for good enough mothering, and the transitional world of intersubjective phenomena, and much more. Furthermore, for Dr. Kavalier- Adler as a clinician, another step is always added, i.e., bridging such an approach to the psychoanalyst's day to day clinical chamber. Through various in-depth psychoanalytic cases, from a decade long once a week therapy, to more classic psychoanalytic cases, that is, three to more sessions per week, Dr. Kavalier-Adler clinically explores and illustrates the Klein-Winnicott dialectic and its clinical use with entrenched developmental mourning processes. Dr. Kavalier-Adler's consulting room serves as a psychoanalytic window, enlivening the concepts evident in the Klein-Winnicott dialectic, supporting the unfolding of conflicted inner and interpersonal worlds characterized by paranoid-schizoid conflicts, the lack of transitional space and as such the emergence of sadomasochistic reactivity in the analyst, the analysts silent reworking of such failed transitional space, the impact of paranoid-schizoid conflicts on the analytic pair, and how the dialectic enables the analyst to remain psychologically available to the analysand by reaching detached and warded off states. Dr. Kavalier Adler's use of the ' Klein- Winnicott dialectic' and case material remains in itself an act of psychoanalytic creation. The psychological and developmental traumas evident in delayed developmental mourning written on by theorists such as James F. Masterson (the abandonment depression), Michael Balint (the 'basic fault'), and Ronald Fairbairn (internal saboteur, moral defense) also all come alive in Dr. Kavalier-Adler's work. For psychoanalysts and therapists wishing to read the application of such a dialectism in the therapeutic echo chamber, chapters six onwards allows a profound appreciation of the psychoanalytic complexities found in working within an object relations paradigm, as well as the hopeful vision that the legacies created by both Klein and Winnicott, brought forward in a non-polarized repaired dialecticism by Dr. Kavalier-Adler, can indeed deepen our psychoanalytic journey with our fellow analysands. The Klein-Winnicott Dialectic thus ultimately succeeds as both a transformative new metapsychology **and** interactive clinical theory. Dr. Kavalier- Adler is to be congratulated on a psychoanalytic work that is both creative and passionately written.

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