

The Ethics of Psychoanalysis

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Introduction

Setting the picture.

I am really not sure at all whether it is possible to speak about the ethics of psychoanalysis. Of course, I am speaking about it, but, like my work as a consultant, in which I cannot claim ever to have got any work on purpose, so too with the question of ethics - I cannot claim ever to have been ethical on purpose, so how can I possibly speak about it?

I fell into consultancy by accident. After a degree in Engineering, IBM and a Masters degree in Business Administration, I took a keen interest in what is called Management Development - and started doing research into the way managers made decisions when there were no rules to go by. I began to pursue a long-standing interest in psychology, basing my approach on George Kelly's Theory of Personal Constructs (1,2).

When the funding ran out, I turned to my clients to continue to support me and became self-employed. That was in 1979, and here I still am doing consultancy and still self-employed. The interest in Management Development soon became an interest in Organisation Development and in what is called "strategy" (3,4).

Strategy has many definitions. The one I use is that "strategy is the management of ignorance" - there is always a strategy inherent in the-way-things-get-done because of the way things get ignored and things get attended to.... I began to work with organisations that wanted to change the ways things got done - and were stuck in some way.

What do I mean by "stuck?" The market had changed, they were being forced to adopt new technologies, their organisation didn't work, there was conflict between different parts of the business, they had overdosed on the use of external consultants. In each case they were stuck because they had run out of answers, and wanted to find some new questions.

A distinction emerged in the nature of strategies between positional and relational strategies - doing as little as possible for the customer without jeopardising the business; and doing as much as possible. The stuckness could be understood in terms of an inability to be relational. The most striking thing about relational strategies were that they called for a different form of leadership, and a different understanding of the place of the consultant (5). I guess I was fortunate to be living in a time when competitive pressures were conspiring to encourage relational forms of strategy because of the rate of change in markets and technologies.

I had got into the research and then into consultancy because of the "by what authority" question... the question of by what authority managers were doing what they were doing in organisations. It was never a question of their not knowing what to do. It was always a question of finding ways of calling what they knew into question.

It is a hard thing to sell - it is a matter of getting referrals by word-of-mouth because of the way I have been working. In my more pretentious moments I call it strategy analysis - a process of analysis in which what is being ignored is called into question.

I came to CFAR via the Grubb Institute and Systemic thinking - my question had become centred around the place of speech and language in organisations. Construct psychology really hadn't got to grips with this (6), and although I came across Lacan in 1978, it wasn't until much later that I was able to find people who spoke English and who were interested in his work, and I could begin to make head or tail of it. Meanwhile, I had started working with the open systems tradition, group dynamics and paradox.

By the time I came to CFAR, the question had become one of what I was doing as a consultant. Thus began a process of re-inventing what I was doing as a consultant 'under the influence' which began to take shape last year in a workshop series I ran with Barry Palmer under the auspices of the IGA called "Meeting the Challenge of the Case - the place of the consultant". The series was about listening to the way we listened as consultants to our clients speaking. Central to this series was the question of ethics. Here is a quote we used to set the theme of the third weekend from Robin Skynner:

"The [consultant] automatically selects the ideal clientele in which to study himself or herself vicariously...., though the knowledge cannot benefit us... until we acknowledge the fact that our work, however useful, has also been an evasion of the truth about ourselves."

Policy, strategy and tactics.

Psychoanalysis is a particular way of working and earning a living which carries with it implications for ways of being...(7,8). What can be said about these implications?

The question can be approached through understanding the effects of the analysis in the being of the analysand. Here we might find ourselves discussing the effects of the transference in the way the analyst is able to work in relation to the analysand.

Since analysts, by definition, themselves go through an analysis, we might also approach this question through understanding the practice of the psychoanalyst in relation to other fields, and the way psychoanalysts work in relation to each other.

This is Bion on the subject of the group as container in relation to psychoanalytic organisations (9):

"In recent years there has grown up the use of the term Establishment; it seems to refer to that body of persons in the State who may be expected usually to exercise power and responsibility by virtue of their social position, wealth, and intellectual and emotional endowment. I propose to borrow this term to denote everything from the penumbra of associations generally evoked, to the predominating and ruling characteristics of an individual, and the characteristics of a ruling caste in a group (such as a psychoanalytical institute or a nation or group of nations). Because of my choice of subject it will usually be used for talking about the ruling 'caste' in psychoanalytical institutes.

The Establishment has to find and provide a substitute for genius. One of its more controversial activities is to promulgate rules for the benefit of those who are not by

nature fitted to have direct experience of being psychoanalytic so that they may, as it were by proxy, have and impart knowledge of psychoanalysis. Group members will not through incapacity be denied a sense of participation in an experience from which they would otherwise feel forever excluded. At the same time these rules (or dogmas) must be such that they attract rather than repel, help rather than hinder, the membership of genius, which is essential to the group's continued existence and vitality." (p.73-74)

There are a lot of questions raised here about what Bion meant by "genius" in terms of the strategy of the "Establishment", and in particular about the nature of the difficulty in sustaining a relational strategy. The 'group' and the 'Establishment' are two contexts the psychoanalyst is in relation to. Bion's formulation that "the function of the group is to produce a genius; the function of the Establishment is to take up and absorb the consequences so that the group is not destroyed" (p.82) points towards the problematic nature of this relation.

Is the Ethics of psychoanalysis therefore something which can only be formulated in relation to the couch? If it is a question which attaches somehow to the psychoanalyst rather than to the practice, how can this be formulated in some way which is not predicated on the presence of an analysand? And if it is to be formulated in terms of a practice of 'being' how is this possible in relation to other fields than that of the couch? How are we to approach this question of the ethics generated by the practice of psychoanalysis? Let me take my cue from Lacan.

Lacan points out in the Écrits (10) that it is not only the patient who must pay in the process of analysis. The analyst must pay too:

"- pay with words no doubt, if the transmutation that they undergo from the analytic operation raises them to the level of interpretation;
- but also pay with his person, in that, whatever happens, he lends it as a support for the singular phenomena that analysis has discovered in the transference; and
- can anyone forget that, in order to intervene in an action that goes to the heart of being, he must pay with that being which is essential in his most intimate judgement: could he remain alone outside the field of play?" (Écrits p.227)

Lacan refers to the former two as the tactics and strategy of the analyst, and the last as his policy, in which he is least free, and where "he would be better advised to take his bearings from his want-to-be (*manque-à-être*) rather than from his being.... his action on the patient escapes him through the idea that he forms of it - as long as he does not grasp its starting point in that by which it is possible, as long as he does not retain the paradox of its four-sidedness, in order to revise in principle the structure by which any action intervenes in reality." (Écrits p.230)

What then does he mean by 'pay' with being, and 'the paradox of four-sidedness'? These are not easy questions, but I hope to cast some light on them in the course of this paper, as a way of approaching the question of the ethics of psychoanalysis.

The paradox of four-sidedness

Organisation as practice.

I find it difficult not to read the concept of primary task - established by Miller and Rice (11) - as a metaphor for the relationship to the primary object - the mother (12).

Thus the whole emergence of an organisation of object relations capable of regulating the exchange processes with the environment can be understood in terms of introjection and projection of structures. These structures form the backcloth on which sentient groups form on the basis of identification.

Isabel Menzies Lyth (13), in her study of the nursing service of a general hospital inverted this, considering the form taken by the task organisation as supporting a sentient structure born out of the nurses' need to contain the anxiety generated for them by the nature of their work.

Elliot Jacques developed this notion of the organisation as a structure of object relations with different nested levels of context capable of 'holding' the anxiety of individuals at different levels of timeframe. Here is Jacques in 1982 (14) on goal-directed activity:

"A goal-directed episode begins with a sense of something particular which must be done. It may be stimulated from outside by some thing or occurrence which attracts our attention and which we then choose to pay attention to - by a chance encounter which must be followed through or by an invitation to take part in some event, or by an instruction to carry out an assigned task. Or it may be self-initiated, beginning with a lack, a felt need, a gap, a sense of something missing, an absence, and a wish that this gap or lack or absence did not exist.....This sense of lack next begins to take shape as a desire - the Desire emphasised and written with a capital D by Hegel (The Phenomenology of Mind 1807). Desire takes the form of wishing or willing the existence or the completion of something which can replace the lack or somehow complete or close the episode." (p.112)

Jacques was developing a distinction between succession and intention - chronos and kairos - which was rooted directly in the Pleasure Principle vs Reality Principle dialectic:

"It may seem that my analysis suggests that as far as doing things is concerned, the protomental unconscious processes are the really substantial processes and the conscious processes are ancillary in the sense of being context-setting. That impression would be correct." (p.68)

He was equating chronos time with succession and the Reality Principle, and kairos time with intention and the Pleasure Principle. Jacques developed his work specifically in relation to church, army and bureaucracies, so that it was as if there was no beyond of the Pleasure Principle in the way he formulated levels of organisation. This beyond was concealed in the problematic of the leader.

Hirschhorn (15) is known for his whole development of this object-relations-based approach to the organisation. It is interesting to see Hirschhorn introducing the notion of primary risk alongside that of primary task in order to begin to address the particular configuration of anxiety as being as characteristic of the organisation as primary task. Here he is beginning to address the lack of which Jacques was speaking.

But what is the position of the 'analyst' here? Is it adequate to approach the question of strategy for the organisation in terms of a transference/counter-transference generated by the sentient structures of the organisation? Just as the infant-mother relationship is formed in the interactional context of the mother-father relationship, so

too the competitive environment of the organisation places limits on its viability. What is the analyst's relation to this context?

The subject as problematic.

In a sense, the systemic movement dumped the unconscious, and concentrated on this context as a languaging game which was somehow constitutive of the subject (16). Thus by intervening in the languaging games of an organisation paradoxically, a moment of undecideability could be created in which the subject was freed from the (symptomatic) part he or she was playing in the game, and enabled to create new possibilities (17).

Maturana (18) developed the theoretical basis of this second order cybernetics so that reality became something brought forth as an effect of an observer position. "I" become a social singularity insofar as I can maintain an intersection between my body and an ongoing speaking position called "I" in a network of conversations.

Thus the subject became nothing but an invention in relation to languaging. Maturana argued that there was no such thing as power - only obedience to certain languaging games and the subject positions they made available. As someone living under military dictatorship in Chile, it is perhaps an understandable position. In a sense it was the same conclusion that Foucault came to in relation to Power/Knowledge (19). His social apparatus (*dispositif*) was made up of architectures of looking and of enunciation, gradients and contours of power determining the relations between things, and lines of subjectivity - the strategies capable of sustaining an "I" position (20).

Both approaches are important because they provide us with a way of considering the nature of the interactional context and the limitations it places on our ability to invent ourselves. Both of them were pursuing notions of freedom from particular languaging games or formations of Power/Knowledge. But just as the systemic movement had dumped the unconscious, so too was Foucault seeking to remind us that even psychoanalytic discourse is not privileged, and that there is a *dispositif* here too.

Bion would have agreed with him, and referred to this *dispositif* in terms of the Establishment. But just as the developments based on object-relations did not give languaging a place of its own, so too systemic thinking ignored the whole problematic of desire and the unconscious (21,22).

In this context Foulkes' approach is interesting because he is not only using the group like a model of the mental apparatus of ego, id and superego in which its dynamics are personified and dramatised (23):

"In the group-analytic group, the manifest content of communication, broadly speaking, relates to the latent meaning of this communication in a similar way as the manifest dream relates to the latent dream thoughts. This matter is so important and so bound up with our concept of a group matrix that I shall once more take occasion to stress the group matrix as the operational basis of all relationships and communications. Inside this network the individual is conceived as a nodal point. The individual in other words is not conceived as closed but as an open system. An analogy can be made with the neuron in anatomy and physiology, the neuron being the nodal point in the total network of the nervous system which always reacts and

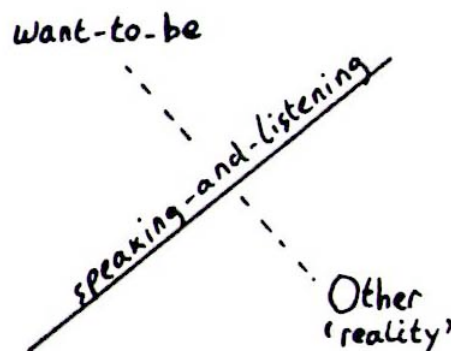
responds as a whole (Goldstein). As in the case of the neuron in the nervous system, so is the individual suspended in the group matrix.”...

In speaking of a social or interpersonal unconscious, Foulkes brings together both perspectives in a psychoanalytic theory. He does it in a way which makes it possible to ask who is a symptom of whom (24)?

Where does this place the analyst in relation to what is going on? In effect, Foulkes takes us from a second order to a third order cybernetics, in which the formation of the subject-as-observer is made problematic in relation to what is lacking in the (second-order) networks of conversations (25,26). Here we have the lack which Jacques speaks of and which Lacan speaks of as the subject's want-to-be, his desire.

Does this bring us to the 4-sidedness which Lacan suggests says what it is possible for the psychoanalyst to 'do' - the structure by which any action intervenes in reality (27)? I think it does.

If we think of a square in which one diagonal represents the relation of speaking-and-listening, with all the richness of Foucault's dispositif in support of it as an axis of subjectification; then the other axis represents the relationship of the subject's want-to-be - what is lacking in the speaking-and-listening axis - to an Other 'reality' which, although always mediated by the speaking-and-listening axis, is always radically Other - an impossible axis.



Here is the sense that the analyst's action on the patient escapes him through the idea that he forms of it. The analyst's action is on this other impossible axis. Thus, for Lacan, the subject's being is on this speaking-and-listening axis, and his want-to-be on the Other impossible axis. No wonder then that, in order to intervene in an action which goes to the heart of being (the want-to-be), he must "pay with that being which is essential in his most intimate judgement."

Paying with being.

Winnicott formulates this paying speaking about the training of psychiatrists (28):

"In respect of each 'case' we meet a challenge. In terms of bringing about practical improvement we may fail, and we often succeed. Real failure can only be stated in terms of a failure to meet the challenge of the case. For this reason the part of our work that is done privately and apart from team-work shows us more than teamwork

does that the need in each 'case' is for the case to be encountered at a deep level. It is generally accepted that the 'case' conference is of no value unless afterwards the new understanding that discussion has brought is carried over into a personal relationship with the case. New understanding does nothing by itself."

Here we have the notion of an ethics which means going beyond the context of assumptions, practices etc. (dispositif) associated with establishing the nature of 'truth'. This something 'more' is beyond the pleasure principle - it is a paying with being - a putting of self on-the-line - an encounter with a limit to being.

The temptation of Pure Reason, Kant argued, can never be overcome. It is part of our nature as rational beings that we should seek to extend our reason indefinitely, so aspiring towards the 'transcendental' perspective. Transformed into practical imperatives, the Ideas of Reason provide the moral law which guides us.

To appreciate Lacan's direction, we have to read Freud as an inheritor of another tradition - one which passes back through Spinoza (29). Spinoza rejected any superiority of the mind over the body, but not in order to establish a superiority of the body over the mind. According to the Ethics, on the contrary, what is an action of the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind. Spinoza's model of the body, in not implying any devaluation of thought in relation to extension, implies a devaluation of consciousness in relation to thought: a discovery of the unconscious, of an unconscious of thought just as profound as the unknown of the body.

The impossible axis reflects this limitation of consciousness and its effects. To pay with being therefore admits of an Other logic - one which is, in its unknowability, a beyond, a law unto itself, a limit.

Between-two-deaths.

Lacan used the position of Antigone between-two-deaths as indicative of this 'ethical' position in relation to an Other law (30). Antigone is the heroine. She is the one who shows the way of the gods. Creon exists to illustrate a function that Lacan showed was inherent in the structure of the ethic of tragedy, which was also that of psychoanalysis; Creon seeks the good. Something that is after all his role. The leader is he who leads the community. He exists to promote the good of all. (p.258) The reaction of Ismene - Antigone's sister - is to argue for a compromise, pointing out that "really, given our situation, we don't have much room to manoeuvre, so let's not make things worse." Antigone is unyielding. "Do you realise what is happening?" she asks. "Here's the situation. This is what Creon has proclaimed for you and me. I speak for me. I am going to bury my brother." Creon punishes her for breaking his law by having her buried alive.

Lacan elaborated two dimensions here: on the one hand the chthonic laws of the earth and, on the other, the commandments of the gods. Creon represents the laws of the city and identifies them with the decrees of the gods. Antigone, in resisting Creon's orders is invoking the most radically chthonian of relations - blood relations - she is in a position to put the word of the gods on her side against the position taken by Creon. She puts her own being on the line for this being of the gods. Her desire becomes the desire of the big Other. But this takes a very particular form assumed by her in a very particular way - she speaks for herself alone in this.

This assumption of what the gods will is not an easy way if the will of the gods cannot be assumed through the good of the Law - it has to be looked for somewhere else.

So, for Lacan, 'between-two-deaths' is a being-in-relation-to this limit/impossibility which, in being true to desire, is also a giving up of the 'good' of the other axis.

The ethics of psychoanalysis

Lacan provides a basis therefore for arriving at some kind of resolution to the difficulties of working with the object-relations based and/or systemic approaches to organisation. In his distinction between Policy, Strategy and Tactics, he calls our attention to the way the tactical effects of intervening with words take place within the context of a transference supported by the presence of the person of the analyst which itself rests on the manner of the person's being.

The problematic nature of this being shows when we come to consider how it can come to be within the context of organisation. Organisation, following Foucault, itself takes the form of a social apparatus - an architecture of looking and of enunciation, gradients and contours of power determining the relations between things, and lines of subjectivity - the strategies capable of sustaining an "I" position. We as subjects can be taken as much as symptoms of this dispositif as vice versa. But only when operating as a subject at the level of the good - subject to its laws. In formulating the subject in relation to his lack - his want-to-be - and making the ethics of being become the foundation of the subject, we come to a problematic particular to the human subject - the four-sided paradox which conveys something of the impossibility at the heart of human being.

Being true to desire.

Lacan's use of Antigone's being between-two-deaths functions as a metaphor for a surrendering of the good of the law for another good which is Antigone's being true to her desire. So it is that the quality of this ethic can be seen in the implications which Lacan draws from the notion that its basis is in being true to desire (31).

He starts by saying that the only thing one can be guilty of is giving up one's desire. The other side of this is that the hero is one who can be betrayed with impunity - the hero is someone who does not give up his desire, even when betrayed. Antigone is a hero, unlike Ismene who betrays her desire for the sake of the good of the law. Thus, for the ordinary man, betrayal sends him back to the service of ordinary goods, losing his sense of direction. In the place of his own sense of direction, he does what is expected of him. In paying with being, there is therefore no other good than that which may serve to pay the price for access to desire. There is something very Zen about this - if you meet the Buddha in the road, kill him. It is only by arriving at a good that something can be left to be desired; and it is only by surrendering that good that an Other good can be come by. This way of desire sets up a metonymy of being in which the human subject is.

But what happens when we try to consider what this might mean in terms of the 'effects' that analysts create around them? Is it possible to approach the ethical question from the point of view of the organisation that forms the context in which they work?

Proceeding by means of a kind of negative way, we can ask what it is in the operation of the dispositif that conceals the metonymy of desire of the human subject, the tracing of a lack.

The dilemmas.

I approach this in terms of three dilemmas that are inherent in the construction of the good, which have their origins in Foucault's analysis of the dispositif (32,33). This analysis is his archaeological method in which, by examining the strategies of power/knowledge he arrives at an understanding of the formations of the subject.

The first of these is the command dilemma [transcendental vs. empirical]: top-down vs. bottom-up. This is the philosophers' dilemma with the sovereignty of mind over matter. The command dilemma here lies in the relation to an Ideal. Top-down processes operate on the basis of what is Ideal for the organisation, whereas bottom-up processes face the organisation with the challenge of making use of what is 'already there'. That is what makes the 'post-modern' Ideal so paradoxical. The nature of this 'already there-ness' is extremely problematic, but the extent to which the top-down management of an organisation is open or closed to bottom-up processes will reflect its relation to this dilemma.

As the command dilemma becomes apparent, so the second dilemma - the communications dilemma [cogito vs. unthought known] begins to emerge: say-how vs. know-how. This is because say-how tends to become identified with top-down, and it is only in bottom-up processes that the say-how of the rationalist obviously comes up against the tacit know-how of the practitioner. It is not that either one or the other is superior. Rather that each acts on and constrains the other. But as organisations seek to put intended strategy into practice, they come up against the tacit knowledge invested in people's experience which remained not just un-said, but un-thought. This is the dilemma facing the systemic view that there is 'nothing but' languaging in the face of the unconscious. Say-how emphasises 'what we know', and know-how emphasises the tacit knowledge invested in accumulated experience. The extent to which communications assume that know-how isn't 'knowledge' until it can be articulated as say-how will reflect the relation to this dilemma.

The third dilemma is the control dilemma [retreat and return of the origin] : affiliation vs. alliance. It is essentially the relation to transference, and is the analyst's dilemma in the place he takes in relation to the transference. It only really becomes apparent when the other two dilemmas raise the question of knowing who is right. We can be affiliated to a particular form of organisation logic which is coherent in itself, but which leaves something out. Alliance raises the possibility of needing to formulate alternative logics.... in effect, with affiliation we know the right ways of doing things because we define them as such; but with alliance, we are allowing what is right to emerge from our working together.

So all dilemmas are always present, and the way in which each of the dilemmas identified above is in play in the organisation will reflect in the good of the organisation.

Finally, whether or not we address ourselves to holding all three dilemmas open together becomes the ethical dilemma. This is the fundamental dilemma which we can express in terms of relational vs. positional. Thus, insofar as any of the three

dilemmas - command, communications or control - are stuck on one or other end, the tendency will be for the organisation's overall good to develop a positional form. If, on the other hand, all three dilemmas are 'held open' by the organisation, then it has the ability to respond to 'opportunities' as they arise, not in a programmatic way, but rather in a way which constitutes a particular response to the challenge - a relational way.

But of course it is not "the organisation" which holds them open, but individuals being true to their desire. This then is a way of understanding an ethics of psychoanalysis as it shows itself in organisation.

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