

TWO BRITISH PSYCHOANALYSTS: A REVIEW

Richard Klein

Two psychoanalysts who are contributing to current trends in British psychoanalysis happen to be both Americans - British psychoanalysis being an orientation in a practice and not a nationality. Christopher Bollas is a psychoanalyst who practices in London and Thomas H. Ogden in San Francisco. Reviewing them together supports the impression that this is a school of psychoanalysis, especially with respect to the object each donates.

Given their orientation, both are led to focus on ever earlier moments in the pre-Oedipal relation and, inevitably, to the claim that they can be established in the treatment of the adult in whom traces can be discovered. To this trend which is, in effect, quite traditional, can be added another tendency which is new: the attempt to filter British psychoanalysis through notions borrowed from Lacan which are in the use made of them, on the one hand, delacanianised, and, on the other, putting their British tradition at risk.

Bollas adds to current trends what he calls the transformational object, and Ogden donates the autistic object. My comments on the former are taken from 'The Transformational Object' found in 'The British School of Psychoanalysis. The Independent Tradition', ed. G. Kohon, F.A. 1986, and in the latter from 'Subjects of Analysis', Karnac Books, 1994.

The tradition of developmental psychology is upheld by Bollas, and the transformational object appears in a first moment preceding the phase in which the transitional object emerges.

There seem to be nine principles on which the transformational object is founded:

- 1) It is not an object at all but a process the armature of which is called enviro-somatic care, operated by the mother who modifies the infant's environment in order to satisfy its needs.
- 2) The process occurs outside representation.
- 3) The mother is the child's other self who transforms the environment which the infant experiences as transformations of the self. Despite the use of the term, it is a non-represented self, but it exists.
- 4) The process is an identification not based on desire.
- 5) Transformation of the self is repeated in the adult in aesthetic experiences, in something like buying a new car and in gambling.
- 6) The above experiences are signifiers of transformations of the self.
- 7) The acquisition of language is the most obvious of transformations.
- 8) The transformational object appears in the transference when the analyst becomes the object.

9) The transformational relation is established by an acting out on the part of the analyst which fills in the hole that exists in Freud's self-analysis: the relation to mother.

From these nine principles I extract the following eight points on which to comment:

- 1) The existence of a possible contradiction in the notion of language that emerges in the text.
- 2) The subject of the transformational phase.
- 3) Transformation is an identification with representation.
- 4) Enviro-somatic care: a dialectic between need and sensation.
- 5) No libido please, we are British.
- 6) Transformation: symptoms and ideals.
- 7) Transformation of the ego in the treatment.
- 8) Acting out: where is the unconscious since there is no desire.

1) Nothing in the transformational moment itself undergone by the infant is represented, but the trace is discovered in the adult because something is represented by the signifier. "Buying a new car" is a signifier of a transformation of the self. The signifier is assigned the function of representation. However, language is a transformational object. The signifier, being an element of language, is, therefore, a transformational object, but a transformational object does not have the function of representation. Hence the signifier as such does not have the function of representation. That's a contradiction in his theory unless, of course, the signifier has other functions which it, no doubt, has. As it is functioning here, it is doing so as representation and as non-representation. Thus, a contradiction!

2) In 2) and 3) above, referring to Bollas' principles, a non-represented self is postulated. It is assigned a pure existence over and against representation, that is, it has no attributes. The transformational self is a lack in representation, but it is representable by the signifier. It is a lack which can in language acquire attributes. Therefore the infant in this first moment is a subject of the signifier. The idea of a subject is buried in a dialectic between need and sensation in which it is intersubjectivised.

3) Trading in one's old car for a new one is a transformation in the environment. The environment, now, is the environment of the signifier. As the environment is represented by the signifier in the field of the Other. In the transformational moment itself the environment is not represented. The new car is the environment represented by the signifier. The problem is where the self that has just been transformed along with the environment is to be situated if it is a non-represented self. The only solution is that transformation is another word for identification with the effect of representation.

Bollas has constructed a subject not identical to itself in the transformational moment. At every transformation of the environment the subject passes from zero attributes to zero attributes. This is the logic hidden by Bollas' dialectic of need and sensation. It is the logic of identification. Identification with representation supposes a dimension with lack of representation. It is the point from which the subject makes rigorous efforts to acquire attributes. The subject is transformed in the acquisition of attribution through the signifier. From a lack in representation it passes to representation which is what is usually called identification.

Bollas is going against the tradition of infant observation. A lack in representation in the infant is not observable. It is a notion the observer constructs. It is no more observable in the purchase of a new car. It seems to me Bollas has to listen to something at 6) in his principles and extract 2) and 3) in his principles from 6). He can then dress it up according to his tradition.

However, Bollas' infant is not making rigorous effort to acquire attributes. It does not seem to be in a passage from zero attributes to at least one attribute. The infant is bringing the operator of enviro-somatic care, namely the mother, much pleasure which is fundamental whilst it itself remains its sensations and needs. Passing from zero representation to zero representation cannot have a transforming effect. For that, difference must be introduced.

4) The notion of enviro-somatic care can be found in The Project (1895) where an external helper supports the infant in the satisfaction of need exactly as in 1) of the author's principles. From this biological structure Freud begins the passage to psychoanalysis in the simple remark that an infant whose need has been satisfied at the breast falls asleep and dreams, that is, wishes. It is no more possible to observe a sleeping infant wishing than it is to observe a lack in representation. It is also a construction, one that indicates the direction of psychoanalysis itself which is based on a break from need. That this need is being satisfied by the mother indicates in the welcome case he is bringing her pleasure which allows him to divorce himself for enough moments from need as to pass to desire.

Freudian enviro-somatic care includes an identification with component B of the *Nebenmensch*, with component B of the Other, a symbolic function supporting an imaginary identification. That this identification falls within the field of representation is clear in The Project: it gives the subject a body by providing him with a relation to an image. If the sensations the environment procures for the infant do not reach the level of representation, the infant will not acquire a body.

5) The transformational phase returns us to the notion of the pure infant which is not the Freudian infant. These sensations are not stated to be libidinal in any way. Nothing is libido, and the new car is not a signifier enciphering jouissance.

6) The examples of transformations he provides the reader with could be considered symptoms or effects of the classical field of ideals. No argument is provided that would distinguish between the purchase of a car with transforming effects and with ideal effects.

7) The analyst becomes the transformational object in the transference. In the logic unfolding here the analyst is not represented. He or she has no attributes. That harmonises with the Freudian position. However, the analyst is also the operator of

enviro-somatic care since that is the armature of the transformational phase. It is ambiguous how one can operate enviro-somatic care without attributes. If the analyst operates it by an acting out as in 9) of the author's principles, that will almost certainly bring the analyst's attributes into play. The analyst becomes a transformational object with attributes. The analysand's ego is then transformed in an identification with the analyst's attributes. The analyst fills in the lack of representation.

8) The transformational relation is established by the analyst's acting out. Acting out has an unconscious determinant, but Bollas does not say in what way the transformational relation is unconscious. Acting out cannot be based on the desire of the analyst since desire is excluded from the transformational relation. Acting out begins at a point in the unconscious and ends in a show. If he is asserting the side of acting out that shows, then the analyst has attributes and cannot be a transformational object, according to the author's definition.

It seems to me that Freud provided his reader with more arguments when introducing a new concept. The author of the transformational object may wish to do that in the future. Perhaps, he already has.

Ogden postulates the existence of a pre-paranoid-schizoid position that he calls the autistic-contiguous position. It is dominated by sensory experiences which produce effects of sensory contiguity, of surfaces, of hardness, of softness. The environmental mother, he says, supports this experience, and continues that the infant is its sensations. The term 'autistic' does not imply psycho-pathology but is used to describe a phase without objects. The autistic object which is not an object bears some comparison with the transformational object. The final common pathway of both objects is an infant totally desubjectivised.

The autistic-contiguous position is also associated with an identification. It seems, but one cannot be quite certain from the text that the associated identification is meant to reach the level of representation.

For instance, the autistic-contiguous position appears later as a capacity to procure sensations such as pushing oneself to one's own physical and intellectual limits. It arrives at a sensory limit that bounds the self. Bounding the self seems to be a concept in the domain of identification. It procures or affirms an identification. It comes to the support of the ego. It is also a defence mechanism since, according to Ogden, everyone has need of autistic objects in order to protect oneself from the tensions of life. By that, one supposes it is a defence oriented towards the exterior and has nothing to do with the subject of the unconscious. He gives us a way of dealing with life.

However, I am reviewing Ogden because he has another agenda in his book Subjects of Analysis.

I will isolate three items on the agenda and review them:

- 1) The term 'self' is over-burdened with too many concepts. Ogden wants to replace it with the term 'subject'.
- 2) He wants to demonstrate the function of an analytic, third subject.
- 3) He wants to refute the idea that systematic interpretations of transference -

counter-transference establish a dual, imaginary relation, or, according to Ogden, a narcissistic relation.

The notion of subject, he says, at the beginning of the book, is implicit in the works of Freud, Klein and Winnicott, and gives the reader a list of contemporary analysts who have contributed to it. Lacan does not appear on the list, but in a Postscript on pp. 28-29 the author explains that if he has not included Lacan, the reason is that Lacan's conception of the subject includes lack and that Ogden does not intend to grasp the subject in this way. Ogden refers to the two dimensions of the subject, firstly as a signifying determination and secondly as a rupture in the symbolic chain. Lacan, he says, bases meaning on *malentendu*, misunderstanding, on Freudian error. For Ogden it seems that meaning must have more guarantees than that. He is going to postulate a subject of guarantee.

The subject, says Ogden on p. 19, is neither the unconscious, the conscious nor the ego. He repeats the famous Lacanian proposition: the unconscious is the Other. It is not quite certain whether he means the Other to be unconscious or the discourse of the Other. It seems that in deploying these notions, he does not want the subject to be confused with the Other. He will, nevertheless, in the end confuse them in postulating an intersubjective Other.

As for the subject in Freud's doctrine, it is, he says, already constituted in the *Verneinung* which is illustrated in the following phrase : this is what I am not. He does not explain how there is a subjective position in this phrase. It's very simple. In the Freudian view a non-recognition is indexed on the phrase. It concerns a subject not identical to itself, therefore, a divided subject: on this is what I am is indexed the subject's identification, and on this is what I am not a non-recognition. That is a divided subject. The Freudian subject is the subject of the repressed and therefore, the subject of the unconscious. Ogden's subject is not the subject of the unconscious.

Having postulated a Kleinian subject, there is on p. 40 a subject associated with the paranoid-schizoid position but dispersed due to splitting of ego and objects. Then, on p. 35, there is no subject connected to this position. No 'I am' is linked to the position and, therefore, no subject. One has to wait for the depressive position when the subject as a unity exists. This will become the principle definition of Ogden's subject: it is a unity, not divided. His subject is indexed on this is what I am, that is on an identification. It must not reveal its division. 'I-ness' is not strictly a linguistic concept but also indexed on an identification.

However, this 'I-ness' depends on the notion of an analytic, third subject. Psychoanalysis begins with two subjects, the analysand and the analyst who, on p. 5, together create, in a relation of reciprocal recognition-negation, a third subject called an analytic third. The third subject permits 'I-ness' which the concept of self does not. Then, he foments confusion. In a few scattered remarks it is no longer the third subject but just the subject which provides 'I-ness'. For example, on p. 26, the term subject translates the psychoanalytic concept of the 'I' of the experience, and on p. 27 it refers to the 'I' which is speaking. His nascent theory becomes totally obscure when on p. 17 one reads that the subject is not, in fact, an 'I' which speaks nor an ego.

On p. 20 Ogden takes us back to the idea of the subject as a unity when it becomes the effect of a dialectic between the conscious and the unconscious creating an

illusion of unity. It is a surprising assertion because he seems to forget about it in systematising two subjects in the treatment, that is, forgets he is systematising an illusion.

On p. 27 the term 'subject' refers equally to the object of subjectivity. There is, he says, a reflexive relation between them. The subject will always have some object value. This does not provide the reader with the idea that there is a subjective position that is concealed by an object. The problem is that his definition of the subject does not distinguish it from an object. The subject is defined as a unity which is a definition that can hold for an object. The subject is the object and not just in a reflexive relation with it.

The Winnicottian subject turns out to be the third subject and not just simply the subject. It seems to be an attempt to discover a symbolic position which is a topological register Ogden does not employ by that name, although he does use the term Other and makes the third subject a function of the big Other which is, he says on p.53, a function operated by the mother in her role as mirror. This is Winnicott's mirroring mother. That the mother is led to operate it is, no doubt, something symbolic. She is led to operate an ideal function. Ogden's notion of a third subject is another name for such a function. It allows, he says, the child to see itself outside itself in the big Other, and gives the child the value of an object called an observable 'me-ness' or an 'I as object'. In terms that he does not employ by virtue of a symbolic function, a well-founded imaginary register is constituted.

In effect Ogden is developing the classical dialectic between ego ideal and ideal ego, but there is something strange about it. It is not a dialectic of loss and recovery of narcissism. This observable 'me-ness' can never be afflicted with a loss of narcissism, and that is because this mirror relation is not narcissistic. It stands no chance of losing narcissism nor of recovering it. The explanation is based on Winnicott's notion of the mirroring mother which has an effect of relative similarity and not of absolute similarity. Relative similarity is not, according to Ogden, narcissistic, whereas absolute similarity is. That seems to this reader a thoroughly dubious way of distinguishing the narcissistic from the non-narcissistic. It would provide the ego with the best iron-clad guarantee ever written for it; Made in California out of British parts. It also seems to be a recipe for boredom in that there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose. In any case, it is a fiction. There are no ordinary human mortals with such an ego. The problem seems to be whether it can be constructed in the treatment. In order to do so, one has to begin by refuting the idea that systematic interpretations of transference - counter-transference consolidate a dual, imaginary relation, a narcissistic relation. This is already announced on p.5: although transference and counter-transference reflect each other they are not mirror-images of each other. There is a relative similarity and not an absolute similarity, therefore the identifications in play in this relation are not narcissistic. An ego can be constructed with an ironclad guarantee. However, Ogden has also undermined it with his own assertion that unity is an illusion.

The analytic third subject must not be confused with the third term of the Oedipus proposed by Lacan in 1953, says Ogden in a footnote on p.64, which is, according to him, the Name-of-the-Father. The point is, it seems, that Ogden has need of a third term in the pre-Oedipal relation since the effects of transference - counter-transference are by tradition considered as pre-Oedipal. When he says that the third subject is not to be confused with the Name-of-the-Father, it seems that, in effect, it is not to be confused with a signifier. Some uncertainty is added as to whether he really

means this third subject to have a symbolic function or not.

Nevertheless, on p. 93, the analytic third is presented as an asymmetrical construction. The analysand and the analyst do not have the same relation to it. The analyst draws on it as an instrument of understanding. There are three steps of which constructing the third subject as an asymmetrical instrument of understanding is the first. Here it is functioning like a subject of supposed knowledge as well as an Ideal. In a second step, in so far as the analysand is situated in the field of the Other, he is assigned object value, an observable 'me-ness' or an 'I as object' which is the pre-condition of the third step: the emergence of 'I as subject'. The second step is a symmetrising one since the subject is seeing himself outside himself. The third step from 'I as object' to 'I as subject' is not explained. One can, perhaps, extract further precision from some case histories.

An analysand in a state of anguish complained that he could not remember the last session. The analyst, making himself third subject, presumably, supposed that underlying the situation was his patient's desire to wear clothes to suit his own taste which he couldn't do at school, and, as for his mother, she always bought all her children the same present for Christmas. This opened the way for the following transference interpretation: the patient was worried that the analyst could not remember the last session and couldn't distinguish him from others.

The interpretation begins asymmetrically in that the analyst supposes some knowledge and remembers for the patient. The relation the analyst has to the third subject seems to be omnipotent. There are already well elaborated psychoanalytical concepts to cover this situation. The analyst is placing himself in the position of ego ideal, incarnating the Ideal of the Other : I(A), and from this position of omnipotence supposes some knowledge.

From a point in the Ideal the analyst has the power to distinguish him from others. The aim of the interpretation of transference is to allow the subject to see himself in the Other. The subject being established, namely, this is what I am, comes into opposition with the Freudian subject. The interpretation begins in an asymmetry and has symmetrising effects. It has nothing to do with unconscious knowledge in which the subject does not recognise himself.

The analyst supposes that this is the point the patient's mother let him down. That introduces the effect of loss of narcissism, which is not much to this analyst's taste. The analyst is making up for this maternal fault, as he, evidently, sees it. His aim is to establish an ego not afflicted by this loss. He has to do that by occupying the field of the Other. This is the point the affair becomes quite deceptive. Constructions here that make up for this so-called fault in the relation to the mother consolidate the indexing of the subject's desire on the Other's desire.

There is, probably, a demand in the session, a demand from the side of the analysand. In order to correct the fault in the relation to the mother, to block the notion of loss, the analyst replies to the demand by interpreting transference in the direction that the patient might recognise himself in the Other. An object then appears in the place of loss. In other words, the subject's desire has been directed to the desire of the Other by the analyst. Let's say that the analyst's desire is that his patient wears clothes to suit his own taste. Now, when the patient trades in his old suit for a new suit his desire remains the desire of the Other.

The aim of the treatment is to establish the inter-subjective Other. One would expect it to be in operation in the end-phase of analysis as considered in this orientation. Ogden offers us the opportunity of examining the end of an analysis. On pp. 51-52 at this moment in the treatment a patient dreams of two islands which from one perspective is one island and from another, two. Ogden explains that one island signifies not being apart from mother and analyst in the transference and that two islands signify being distinct from mother and analyst. Not being apart, he says, permits the distinction.

Interpreting dreams is either based on Tarot card reading or the analyst interprets in the name of knowledge. One has to try to extract something from his knowledge and not from the dream. The term 'distinction' seems to be a nodal point in his knowledge since it is also the aim of his interpretation in the first case history cited. It seems that the emergence of two subjects under the category of inter-subjective Other relies on distinction. One could then define his notion of subject as an 'I', as something distinct from another 'I'. The 'I as subject' is an 'I' distinct from a second 'I as subject'. If this holds, it seems that it is not Ogden's aim to end the treatment in an identification with the analyst. But, how can it hold? Let's examine the logic.

Object-relatedness and sexuality, he says on pp. 201-202, are mingled. There is no separation from the mother. Therefore, in an object-relation to the mother the subject remains in her sexual service, with effects of transgression and prohibition.

There is no resolution of the transference-relation. It is difficult to establish a subject distinct from the analyst without resolution of the transference-relation. What is the possibility of affecting an analyst with disbeing who interprets in the name of knowledge?

The two islands of the dream are breasts, according to Ogden's knowledge. Two breasts do not seem to found a distinction between one subject and another subject. The analysis ends, everything points to it, because the final symmetry has been cemented in place. Two islands are an illusion of a unity achieved in one island. That is also part of Ogden's knowledge.