The Moral Journey Implicit in doing Psychotherapy

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THE MORAL JOURNEY IMPLICIT IN DOING PSYCHOTHERAPY

The reflections I offer here are thoughts arising out of a long practice of psychotherapy and some teaching of psychoanalytic theory. As a therapist I am constantly attentive to how people imagine themselves and their lives. What follows therefore is a double recommendation to renew both our imagination of the moral life and of psychotherapy from the viewpoint of the client. There is nothing decisively new in what I will recommend, but it could help towards a fruitful open integration of an older moral tradition (St. Thomas and Aristotle) with the new psychological literacy since Freud.

In his justly admired work *Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and the Self (*1992), Harry Guntrip argues that Freud's psychology is based squarely on agreement with a classic Western view (Greek and Christian) that the human being is always and inevitably in moral conflict, always divided, always failing, always guilty. Guntrip proposes what he considers a deeper view of human life as able to unfold harmoniously if the child is met with loving relationships and a safe world. He thinks children are forced to divide themselves (schizoid withdrawal) out of self- protective fear that arises from insult or deprivation. What others think of as the essential human condition, he considers a picture of the mess we have generally made of bringing up children. (1)

My point here is that Guntrip does not use the category 'moral' for what he considers his deeper view of human possibility: he allows 'moral' to be restricted to the realm of human

guilt and inner conflict. Guntrip describes psychotherapy this way: "he [the therapist] must be the kind of person with whom this particular undermined and hurt individual can win his way back out of the fear, hate, guilt and despair, to a capacity to trust and relate to people" (2).   For schizoid individuals "the great problem is that the foundations of an adequate 'self' were prevented from growing in infancy" (3). However much they are moral at the ordinary conscious level of personality, they are "unable to maintain themselves on that level because the underlying, unconscious strata of their personalities are on the *pre-moral* level [italics mine] of infantile fear, ego weakness, and flight from life" (4.).

It is tempting to follow this path, seeing that psychoanalytic work crucially engages areas of a person's life that are pre-moral, not within that person's freedom. However as the deeper reaches of the client's personality are opened up, they are being contained in the conversation of two adults and integrated by the client into "their experience of themselves as that significant and meaningful 'whole' which we call a 'person'" (5) The therapist may look at the client as radically split, quite unfree in some part of their life and personality. At the same time the client, as free, is trying to hold himself or herself as sometimes free and sometimes unfree.

It is easy for therapist and client to collude in restricting the culturally older moral discourse to those areas of the personality or personal life that were familiar, already 'conscious', before the searching discoveries they come upon in the therapy.

A better option, I think, is to extend the range of "moral" beyond some more or less clear set of rules for life to include a general modal sense of our deepest, integrative effort at self possession and self orientation through our whole life with others. We would be retrieving for our more fragmented culture the moral visions of Aristotle and St. Thomas.

Aristotle writes, in the *Nichomachean Ethics,* of the complete life of activity directed to what we consider our very best possibilities: ". . . human good turns out to be activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete. But we must add 'in a complete life'. For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed or happy". (6)

St. Thomas, in a more explicitly theistic form, takes the same large view. In his prologue to his questions about God, he writes: "Because the principal intention of this theology (*sacrae doctrinae*) is to hand on knowledge of God, not only of God as God is in God's self, but also of God as God is the beginning of things and their end, especially for the rational creature (as is clear from what was said before); pursuing the exposition of this theology, first we will treat of God; secondly of the journey (*motu*) of the rational creature to God (*in Deum)". (7)

Our goal in therapy may be, as Guntrip says, "to win our way back out of the fear, hate, guilt and despair, to a capacity to trust and relate to people" (8), but this is a crucial moment or part of a whole life, and we do it for the sake of the whole life to come. The one who sees her therapy this way is seeing it as a part of her moral journey.

It was a happy accident of the dialectic of history that psychotherapy in its modern form begins not from religious life or moral philosophy but from the side of medical people who were used to a non-moralizing scientific detachment about human physical ailments. Freud is moved by scientific curiosity not by reformist zeal. The school for learning about the psyche was the problem of hysteria, brought to the medical man as a physical problem and forcing him to move to psychical explanations and treatments. Freud's interest in morality was in its function in the psyche. He saw early how damaging to people were the archaically oversimplified and neurotically exaggerated moral systems they received in infancy and through education (9). Hence he saw early the therapeutic value of a therapy set-up where the therapists brought no moral judgment to the client and the client was encouraged to allow expression to all their feelings, even if they considered them immoral. He said, famously, he found people much more moral and much more immoral that they thought: more moral because of the extraordinary degree of guilt he found, and more immoral because of the boundary-less range of desires they showed in their dreams. (10) (Freud, of course, had read his Nietzsche with its passionate critique of an imposed conventional morality).

This non-judgmental, non-educational space of therapy has become a precious conscious heritage of psychoanalytic therapy. It has enabled countless people to free themselves from morality imposed by fear and allowed them to grow from within to meet and appropriate what they find true in their culture or religion. The therapist of course will not be free of all unconscious assumptions, but tolerance is an active virtue that keeps her ever searching out remnants of judgmentation.

The value of all this is well known to therapists and clients alike. What I am suggesting is an enrichment of our language about the therapeutic journey. Because of our historical critique of the damaging effect of moral education and because we detach ourselves from moral judgment, we can easily miss something very important about the therapeutic journey. A client may come to therapy to get help with something quite particular: panic attacks, depression, a broken relationship, insomnia and so on, but if they go to a therapist rather than a psychiatrist, they usually already know that these things are not precisely isolable in a person's life, and that to deal with them they will need to look at their whole life.

Now, historically, our discourse about our whole life has been our moral discourse in the most general sense of "moral". For many, it remains within a religious or spiritual tradition; for others, it is a cultural distillate inherited from earlier religious generations. I am arguing for retaining this most general sense of "moral", and for allowing it to expand to include those insights into human life and action that come from a hundred years of psychodynamic therapy.

You could argue that typical modern discourse about morality is even more restricted than Guntrip's realm of human guilt and inner conflict. Sometimes it refers almost exclusively to sexual morality. Sometimes it is a wider discourse about ethical rules, but only about rules.

With respect to the reduction of morality to sexual morality, the history of Catholic theology is instructive. After the glorious syntheses of the 13th century where the whole meaning of

the moral life was imbedded in a larger theological vision of God creating us and bringing us to eternal union with God, there arose a specialized moral theology designed to prepare confessors for the quasi-judicial work of hearing confessions, by furnishing them with a comprehensive manual of the kinds and gravity of sins. Sexual sins were judged the most common serious sins of ordinary people.

Can we say something useful about the sociology and psychology of this theological wave? Whose voice do we hear in the legalistic manuals? It is the voice of the priestly expert lent to the anxious authorities in the Church. It is a voice directed at the ordinary faithful who need clear and detailed instruction because they are not to be trusted to find their own way. We have learned meanwhile from bitter history to mistrust the authoritarian parent who bears down in elaborate detail on their child, betraying in this a lack of confidence in the ability and good will of the child to embrace from within the project of becoming a good person. We have come to understand this as also a projection of the authoritarian's mistrust of their own wild (or dead) inner self.

In the late 19th and into the20[th] century there was a reversal of this fragmenting and casuistic trend. There was a revival of Thomistic theology with its broad moral vision; a large systematic teaching on issues of social justice was gradually developed; the biblical revival gave theologians courage to mount a head-on critique of 'legalism' in moral theology and popular pastoral practice. These came together in the renewed larger vision of the Second Vatican Council. (11)

The Western turn against the "ages of faith" bred its own reduction of morality to a legalistic set of rules, but it was driven by a different set of forces. The loss of religious faith removed the divine guarantee of the meaning of the whole human life project (the free, grace-given return to eternal union with God). The loss of confidence in a metaphysics which had provided the ontological ground for a discernment of human nature and therefore for a broadly consensual view of our "ultimate end (goal)" and the moral journey towards it, sent philosophers reeling.

The rise of confidence in natural science and technology, still in the ascendant, leads to a view of morality as a contractually agreed, minimum set of rules for social order. Just as well we suspicious, competitive animals learned some social rules, or we would never have been able to save civilization with atomic weapons!

Descartes tried to save the tradition with a restructuring defense, but led us towards the pitfalls of solipsism and disembodied subjectivity. His heirs are many, including all the forms of thought that have privileged subjectivity. To the general truths which had previously been foreground, he brought into equal foreground the individual thinker thinking about the general truths.

We detect his influence in Nietzsche and the atheist existentialists, who see the self-creative possibility of human freedom as transcending any tradition of morality. They see a culture's consensual morality as the covert oppression and humiliation of the many by the

powerful—which it can be at its worst. From above it, or freed from it, they see morality as a set of rules created to control ordinary people.

Out of the same turn to subjectivity and adding a heightened sense of historicity, there is a quite similar view proposed by consistently postmodern thinkers, though they affect to wonder what all the passion is about. Individuals and groups can choose their words, their games and their rules. (12) The subject may become multiple, if they can bear it.

By scientific reduction and philosophical transcending we see how an earlier moral vision of the human journey contracts to a set of ethical rules which the knowing ones are really outside of in a serious sense.

It could seem that in my appeal to the holistic moral vision of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas I am merely representing a conservative reaction against modern and postmodern thought about morality. I hope what I say is clearly not a version of ideology protecting itself. I hold the view that a group of contemporary thinkers can reflect on and use the history of their cultures (and other cultures) as a philosophical source. We can see the vicissitudes of thought, the consequences of extreme or one-sided judgments, and are able to retrieve valuable riches from seemingly irreconcilable views. It seems to be the human condition that, when we achieve clarity about something, we oppress the next generation with our clarity. That reflection itself comes about historically, courtesy of the oppressed.

We can consider the broad sweep of these dialectical movements in our history, but it is perhaps useful to remind ourselves that the potentiality for this oppression is built into the transmission of language to the human child. For in our names for things and in our grammar of existence, we enshrine a way of seeing the world, a system of classification, a conviction about the stability of things and the processes of becoming. And that sentence, which might seem innocuous enough to gain broad consensus, can just as easily inflame a philosophical dispute, because it brings extra precision to something that, of its nature, is originally implicit. The cognitive scientist may point out how fuzzy our basic categories are, but that we have categories at all comes from our drive for clarity and precision, not merely from our desire to know which things to run from and which things to eat. (Though the former desire may have lain curled asleep in the latter, waiting for the leisure of thinking).

So our Hebrew tradition gives us a personal God who enters into covenant (a contract between equals!) with Abraham, and calls him to a journey. Later it is clear that the covenant is with the people of Israel, who are liberated and called to a journey to the promised land. This becomes the living symbol of the people's journey through time to the messianic age. At the cost of a persistent anthropomorphism (still with us today in received versions of providence), the tradition keeps before us a God who is personal and loves his people. Gradually there is movement towards universalism, one God as Creator of all things and persons. Time has a beginning and all are called to a linear journey whose goal is union with God. Mirrored in this personal God, humans find themselves both a people with a destiny and individuals with a destiny. These themes of universalism, a personal God,

corporate destiny and the dignity of the individual person are all expressly developed in Christianity.

And there is no going back.   Once we have clearly perceived some possibility intrinsic to being human, even if we lose faith in the origin of the formulation of the insight, we cannot deny the possibility we have perceived. This is the whole ground of Heidegger's project of a philosophy of the human spirit in secular form. It is also present, without abandoning faith, in St. Thomas's appropriation of Aristotle's confident articulation of the question the "good person" asks herself about the goal of human life. We can find in ourselves the imagination to transcend our immersion in temporal particulars, to find that transcendence in and through the particulars, to grasp our life as a whole, to be able to find meaning for the individual self and in solidarity with the living and the dead, no matter when we might individually be cut off.

The critical questions raised about the historical nature of thought, feminist questions about the voice of power, and postmodern questions about all proud generalizations waken us to the dangers of hubris and a temporal oversimplification, to delusions of clarity and thought closure. However, we all share the same language and project of human communication: each one and each group can, in principle, inherit the whole culture.

So a hermeneutically generous thinking (13) can read Aristotle's and St. Thomas's views of the moral journey and expand it with the critical reminders of more modern thought, itself purified of a spirit of contradiction.

Nietzsche's attack on traditional Christian morality, like Freud's attack on theism and moral education look very different from a contemporary vantage point. They can both be seen, or retrieved, as prophetic critiques of the way the Christian Church handed down its message of faith to succeeding generations.

Nietzsche, for example, points to the unruffled certitude and the affectation of questionless completeness of the teachings about morality. He is the voice of those who open all questions anew, because God being dead and humans in confusion, he has no authority but himself

Freud's critique of theism calls for a revitalization of the already articulated negative theology in the Christian tradition, and his dissection of the malignant effects of contemporary moral education about sexuality points the way to a needed revolution in the Christian understanding of human sexuality in all its scarcely imagined complexity and variability. This latter revolution has not yet found a public consensual voice.
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It has been an habitual failure of the Christian Church that it has used its message of salvation to foreclose complex human explorations as incompatible with faith, only to admit later that the faith itself did not decide these matters one way or the other.

In similar fashion, the bracketing of moral issues in the psychic exploration that happens in therapy opens up vast areas of the human psyche for exploration. In theology and most

philosophy, the psyche, its powers and development were largely studied with respect to human freedom to do good or evil, and with respect to the human ability to reach truth about God. When psychology explores everything to understand pathology and paths of healing, those other discourses, which now seem too general, are opened up to new dimensions and enriched beyond measure. Now the dialectic moves the other way and psychology can be enriched by the perspective of the moral journey.

I want to highlight this ecumenically useful imagination of the moral journey with reference to two very different thinkers.

The first is Kierkegaard, who might seem an unlikely ally for my theme of equating the human with the moral journey. For he asserts ultimately the incompleteness of the ethical in the face of the call to Christian faith. This typically Protestant contrast captures a certain theological reality, but I prefer the Catholic notion that faith becomes incarnate in the moral life where moral means what is highest in us. At all events, it was to the other famous pole of Kierkegaard's thought that I wanted to refer, namely his clear insistence that the individual is the living subject, agent and patient of her spiritual life. Was not that clear in Plato, Aristotle and St. Thomas? Of course. But with Kierkegaard, for the first time, we have, as it were, the autobiography of the individual's journey that includes the huge struggle with social belonging and acceptance of tradition.

Kierkegaard's individual shows himself to us in a lifetime of writing. But each new client that comes to meet the psychotherapist is entering a space where he can be that individual,

for the therapist is there to serve the other's authentic coming to himself. The client's

agreement to endure, not act out, and be as honest as possible seems to me a moral

expression of the wish to be that authentic individual. This possibility is lost, of course, if the

client or especially the therapist sees therapy as the mere riddance of symptoms.

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My other guide here is the contemporary Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, whose

Sources of the Self (1989) seems to me a splendid, hopeful essay for our generation. "We are

not selves in the way that we are organisms, . . . But we are only selves insofar as we move in

a certain space of questions, as we seek and find an orientation to the good". (14)

Taylor's whole project seems to be to argue that as selves we are all, always already, as

Heidegger might say, moving in our time to make sense of our whole life by orientation to

what we think is good. Orientation in a space of questions about the good is clearly

identified as the moral life. Agreement on rules essential for social survival is only a part of

the matter.

He describes what I have called a m<u>odal</u> view of morality about which we could agree

without complete agreement about what we consider the ultimate good. With this

ecumenical possibility, the psychotherapist need no longer be shy about seeing the client's

therapeutic journey as a part or manifestation of that client's moral journey. When my

parents' morality, my Church's moral teaching, my particular moral quandaries come up in

the therapeutic conversation, they can be seen as specifications and determinations of a

modal morality we can easily share and fruitfully notice: they are all, and we are all, trying to live our lives in the space of questions about the good for us.

PSYCHOTHERAPY AS THE SEEKER'S JOURNEY

It may not be a huge shift to move from particularized, contracted views of morality to an imagination of the moral journey as the whole human journey to the good. But we meet specific difficulties when we try to map this onto the journey that is psychotherapy. For while our language about psychotherapy (etymologically, "soul healing") is full of agent words for the therapist, it is remarkably lacking in agent words for the other party in the enterprise. We speak of the "patient, the "client", the "analysand", who is "treated, "healed" or "cured". "Client" came into use in a conscious attempt to de-medicalize that other. A paying customer has a certain contractual equality, though he may still be seen as passive to the service he is buying. The word has older meanings as the correlative of the Roman patron, as a disciple, as a dependent, but in modern usage it usually means the one who employs a professional or a businessman to perform a service (15). As we shall see, however, there is, within the history of psychodynamic therapy, a movement towards enhancing this sense of the agency of the client.

The recommendation to re-imagine the psychology of the therapeutic journey from the point of view of the client does meet a specific modern resistance from the ascendancy of

pharmacological psychiatry, neuropsychiatry and evolutionary psychology. The huge advances in human neurology, human genetics and human chemistry easily lead to an assumption of identity of the brain with the psyche, of sensation, thought and feeling with neural processes: ultimately of all human process with complex chemical processes. The more we know, it seems to the scientist to be mere superstition to resist this assumption of identity. What they forget is that the whole discourse about human thought and feeling relies on self-ascription of experiences by living subjects. And the knowledge path that leads to such self-ascription of human experiences is utterly different from the observation of neural or chemical events. Freud the neurologist originally had the hope of a unified psychology-biology, but quickly came to see the irreducible two paths to the knowledge of the human. The fact that we all are given our psychological language, as it were from the 'outside', by our begetting culture, allows us to be tempted to think that seeing someone is envious, let us say, is quite like seeing the neural events that are activated when someone has a strong emotion. We hold both languages as ways of describing others. But the 'internal grammar' of "seeing someone is envious" requires us to speak of a realm of discourse that is both a language of self-ascription and a confidently consensual language about shared and reported experiences. The language about the genes, chemicals and neural events is, on the other hand, a consensual, third person observational language.

A person is given from the culture what we mean by "envious", but a linguistically competent person who is feeling envy, knows it without observation. In her classic essay "Intention", Elizabeth Anscombe makes the distinction between knowledge by observation

and knowledge without observation. Human intentions are known by having them, not by observation. This is true of all psychological experiences.

What I am defending here is the autonomy of psychological discourse. Even if increasingly accurate correlations are made between neural events and psychological experiences, observers must, in principle, await the self-ascription of psychological experiences to have anything to correlate neural events with. They get away with "the brain thinks" because they are relying on a language constructed from countless correlations between events observed and measured and psychological experiences known without observation and self-ascribed by those having the experiences.

Allowing the autonomy of psychological discourse does not guarantee that we see therapy as the journey of the agent client, but it at least opens the possibility. We see contrary directions in early psychoanalysis: the desire for unified science (or, more humbly, a general psychology) and the desire to attend to the particular psychological story of each.

Freud and Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria* shows the beginnings of the new path forward. Charcot and his colleagues had proven that hysterics were not malingerers, but they showed little respect for what the hysterics said about themselves. (16) Freud and Breuer, though still very much doctors to the patients, allowed the subversive process of the "talking cure". Freud referred to one of his hysterical patients as his "instructor". Here we see the beginnings of a view of psychotherapy as the conversation between two agents. (17) It would not be an exaggeration to say that Freud's experience with (Breuer's treatment) of

"Anna O" opened his imagination to the possibility of his own self-exploration by free association. This path gradually sets psychotherapy apart from the medical tradition and pushes it closer to a secular form of the spiritual journey. (Freud complained with irony and pride that his case histories read like novellas. (18)

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Freud is intent on finding the key to the "*neurotica*" so that he can help his patients, but everything changes when he begins to make himself the one he studies, remembering and analyzing his own dreams. More than the century pivots on *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), for what Freud opened up was the possibility of a new 'literacy', so that human beings could read themselves in a new way. The book is a scientific treatise not the 'Story of a Soul', but his own intimate correspondence tells us that his father's death and the intensity of his reaction to it led to this explosive, creative exploration of his own "*terra incognita*". His method of exploration is potentially subversive of the medical model of psychotherapy, because "free association" has to be done or attempted by the 'patient', while the analyst provides an active listening and response to wherever the patient leads. Hence from the beginning, analysts were informally trained by entering analysis with Freud or a colleague. By the time the psychoanalytic institutes were formed, a training analysis was a central part of an analyst's formation. This could be conceived narrowly as ensuring that the prospective analyst was purified of neurotic elements perhaps hidden from his teachers and himself. More broadly, however, it came to be seen as each person's entry into this new way of seeing themselves. How could they expect to be able to lead another into the mysteries of unconscious thought and feeling if they had not entered on the exploration of their own? Imagine if we required of doctors that they experience the effects of medication before they

prescribe it to others. The absurdity of this shows how we intuitively perceive the difference between the process of psychotherapy and a medicinal treatment of symptoms. We know the client is entering on an active process, a personal journey of self-exploration, a cooperative if sometimes asymmetrical relationship.

The Interpretation of Dreams is not an isolated case of partially covert autobiography in psychoanalysis. The most famous example is the recently revealed autobiography behind Heinz Kohut's *The Two Analyses of Mr. Z. (19)* The "first analysis" matches Kohut's analysis with Ruth Eissler, and the second is Kohut's self-analysis in terms of his innovative theories of Self Psychology. Freud, Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, Karen Horney, Marie Bonaparte, and Helene Deutsch are all argued to have written autobiographical cases. These are covert because these analysts considered themselves under a constraint to be scientific in a somewhat narrow sense. By now we are reconsidering what kind of knowledge and theory can come from a single self-analysis.

We should perhaps acknowledge Jung's influence here because he separated himself early from the ideal of natural science that continued to dominate early psychoanalysis. He saw quickly that what he was writing about was the psychic or spiritual journey of each person. His own *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961) is a classic example.

Nor have the clients and patients been silent. There are by now many accounts of the psychotherapeutic journey by the client. Harry Guntrip wrote an account of "My Experience of Analysis with Fairbairn and Winnicott" (1986). Marion Milner wrote

T*he Hands of the Living God* (1964) about her psychotherapy with Winnicott. Marie Cardinal gives us a marvelous writerly account in *The Words to Say It* (1983).

And the psychoanalysts are catching up. From all sides the dialogal, interpersonal, "intersubjective" emphasis in therapy brings the therapist and client into nearly equal foreground. The account of the therapy, still coming from the therapist, is no longer an account of the other's story, but an attempt to describe what happened in the relationship of two subjects.

In psychoanalysis, however, our language of theory lags behind these new modes of practice and description of practice. This is largely because each generation tries to stay coherent with the Freudian beginnings and the rich developments since. Hence we carry the marks of medical and scientistic beginnings and have allowed ourselves to ossify what was often lively metaphor.

Years ago Roy Schafer embarked on a powerful critique of psychoanalytic language as obfuscating and hieratic, with its predilection for reifying parts of the self, emotional states and stages, mental disease entities and so on. (20) He argued for a more austere language that operated with a minimum of reification, and understood that the coin of the realm in psychology is a language centered on action words, self ascribed by the speaker.
There is much to admire in this effort. It has led to a widespread awareness that maps of the psyche and its processes are laden with metaphor and need not be reverenced as definitive ontology. Theories can be seen, then, as assembling reminders:

- "Don't forget children are already sexual!"

- "Don't forget to see what advantage a person gains from their habitual acts.".

- "Don't forget the self is largely opaque to itself".

- "Don't forget to ask what psychic task the dream might set you".

But there are, I think, two exaggerations that made his "new language" less plausible and attractive. One comes from his (very modern) skepticism of any ontology, so that our natural appetite for words that name the things or persons that act is confused in his writing with metaphysical/metapsychological illusions leading to systems of unobservable entities. Beings are not to be unnecessarily multiplied: but we do need to name the ones that there are.

The other problem with Schafer is that the acceptable range of discourse is too narrowed to action language. Here he is guided by a modern linguistic analytic philosophy of a certain kind that wanted to attack the notion of inner events or states as the main referents for psychological words. This is seen as an attack on Cartesian dualism, with its mind transparent to itself. However this philosophical effort, careful though it is not to violate ordinary language, cannot in the end escape the absurdities that behaviorism landed itself in already a century ago.

The paradox is that though we learn our psychological words socially, when we use them of ourselves or others, we use them to refer to experiences that are known without observing by the one having the experience.

Philosophers have argued that if we have common language, what the language refers to must be events or behaviour observable by all equally, but this is too full of skeptical anxieties. There is no problem learning a language that refers to an experience that is asymmetrically known without observation by a subject, and known only by empathy, faith or observation by one not having the experience. That other, of course, knows how to use the language to refer to his/her own experiences known without observation.

The core of primary level psychological language is about states or experiences that are easily knowable without observation by the one having the experience and easily known by empathy and observation by the other. It is easy for someone in a rage to know they are feeling rage and easy for someone observing to know the other is in a rage.

Allow this as the paradigm of psychological language and you retain the sociality of language and knowledge, yet protect the interiority of human experience. Then in the vastly complex and long discourse that occurs in a conversational psychotherapy, there is room around this core for many variations and layers. There will be examples of psychological speech where the only access of the listener is to believe the report of the one speaking. For example, I may be sitting quietly thinking about something that is not readily discernible by

context or visible emotion: then you await my report before you know what I am thinking

and before you can empathically know what it is like for me to think that thought.

Then there are paradoxical cases where the observer, theoretically the less privileged, knows

better than a certain experiencing person what that person is feeling. In a long therapy,

where how a person deals with their feelings and beliefs becomes increasingly understood, I

may well come to a point where I can be quite confident the other is angry even if they do not

say so or even if they expressly deny it. I will not necessarily say what I think and if I do I

should probably remind myself and the other person by some demurral that this is counter to

the usual paradigm. "I know you are the best one to say what you feel, but in this case I

think you're quite angry even if you don't know it". There is a danger for the therapist who

has years of such discernment of disavowed or unconscious experiences to lose sight of what

is the paradigm in psychological expression and gradually to create a manner of discourse

that "knows better" than the client what the client is feeling, and even adopts a language that

is theory laden and "descriptive from the outside". Many diagnostic categories and

interpretations are of this kind. Much of the literature aims to develop a psychology and a

theory of practice to prepare the therapist to look for patterns of psychic disturbance and

respond in specific ways. With this preoccupation it tends to privilege the therapist as the

one who knows and as the agent of the therapy.

It could be argued with some truth that all the interesting stuff of psychotherapy is precisely

what the client does not know about himself or herself. So the therapist is able to name

defenses, disturbances, patterns of thought and feeling that are unconscious, disavowed,

dissociated from or even not noticed. *"Omnis homo mendax"*—"everyone is a liar" as the Psalmist said. This is indeed why we go to a therapist. We do not trust ourselves to be clear and honest from within our settled system of adaptations. We need to speak with another living person in a setting and in a mode that allows us to break out of our occluded self: hence the commitment to honesty and free association, the readiness to accept challenge and interpretation. In the end, though, it is a process of the client coming to know and express his feelings in a way that moves him forward in his life.

Some therapists may think like a textbook, but no good therapist talks like one in conversation with the client. The client will be telling story and memories, directly expressing emotions, putting words to present or habitual emotions and to emotionally laden judgments. The efforts to describe the self and its painful experiences will be full of metaphors and analogies; speech about an inner world, parts of the self—often in battle, reservoirs of emotion, forms of illness, emptiness, deadness, a child within, other people within, and so on. The therapist should enter the language of the client, move freely with it, and work gently against reifications that have debilitating consequences. For example, if the client conceives of his depression as a disease entity he is more likely to feel utterly helpless at altering the depression through his own actions or relaxation.

Part of the attraction of the reification language is that it carries the aura of objectivity. Because our talk about ourselves is always subjective, we easily fear that it will be heard as "merely subjective", and even perhaps wrong. So to express ourselves convincingly and to

ask the other to take it as real, we use the other paradigm of speech wherein the two of us can talk about, say, an observable or measurable tumour.

There is no great problem if the client uses objectifying metaphors, because the client is usually flexible enough to move from these to direct speech about emotions and so on. The danger is much more from the therapist's side, because so much of psychological theory is fashioned according to objectifying metaphors which become enshrined as technical language in complex interconnected theories. Think of the elaborate theories about "internal objects" in Object Relations psychotherapy.

Another motive for favouring objectifying and reifying language is the subtle desire to avoid the issue of responsibility for our human actions. We feel such shame for our actions, even though they may ultimately be coming from some unfree pre-moral place (!) in us. So sometimes defensively, sometimes helpfully, we say our actions come from our addiction or our illness. I remember the joke, "If your inner child makes you rob a bank, you're the one who goes to jail!" Ultimately even those who experience themselves as most disturbed or split grow to acknowledge that they feel and do what the crazy person they sometimes are feels and does. They integrate the whole span of their experience.

I am recommending, then, not some rigid holding of ourselves to one form of psychological speech, but the privileging as the central paradigm for both client and therapist of the direct expression in non-metaphorical terms of human feelings and experiences. When metaphors

and especially reifications are used, there should be a habit of drawing them back as illuminations of direct expression of feelings and actions.

In this way, the agency of the client in therapy will constantly be to the forefront for both client and therapist. As I said, we currently have in English no word that expresses this. Perhaps the word "seeker" would do. I like its lack of specification and its openness to the metaphoric association of one on a journey.

So my two recommendations come together. Let us expand our idea of morality to see our whole life as the moral journey. And let us rethink psychotherapy as the journey of the seeker. Inevitably, I think we will see the larger journey implicit in the therapeutic journey.

NOTES

1. Guntrip (1992) , p.9. It is possible that Guntrip is comfortable with this restricted view of

   morality because of his Protestant theological background. In general, Protestants

   emphasize the discontinuity between nature and grace, the ethical life and the life of faith.

2. Guntrip (1994), p.409

3. Guntrip (1992), p.10

4. *Ibidem*

5. *Ibidem*

6. *N.E.* **I**.7 1098a 15-20. Translated by Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle* (1982), p.162

7. *Summa Theologiae* **I**, Q. 2 Prologue, p.10. Translation mine.

8. See note 2 above.

9. "'Civilized' Sexual Morality" (1908) S.E. **9**

10. "Some Additional Notes on Dream Interpretation as a Whole" (1925), S.E. **19**, p.124.

11. *Documents of Vatican II* (1966), eds., Abbot and Gallagher.

12. See Gergen, *The Saturated Self*

13. See Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy* (1970).

14. *Op.cit.*, p.34.

15. *Oxford English Dictionary (1971)*, under "client".

16. Borossa, *Hysteria* (2001), pp. 28ff.

17. Gay, *Freud* (1988), pp. 63-74.

18. Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), S.E. **2**, p.160.

19. Stosier, *Heinz Kohut* (2001). Pp. 308ff.

20. Schafer, *A New Language* (1976)

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