

Chessick, R.D. (1998). Creativity in the Psychoanalytic Process. *J. Amer. Acad. Psychoanal.*, 26:209-222.



(1998). *Journal of American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, 26:209-222

## Creativity in the Psychoanalytic Process

Richard D. Chessick, M.D., Ph.D. \* 

Nietzsche's (1882/1974; 1887/1974b) *The Gay Science* comprises a series of aphorisms, poems, riddles, jokes, and songs in an attempt to overcome the dreary and systematic nature of traditional German philosophy. His central doctrine is usually labeled perspectivism, sometimes called perspectivalism. It holds that all our concepts, language, and culture represent perspectives that we impose on our experience to create a "world." This world picture currently takes the form of the materialism or scientific realism that dominates our age; Nietzsche claims this to be a "prejudice," just as a prejudice, he says, also underlies our internal conviction of having a real essential self.

Nietzsche's title, *The Gay Science*, derives from the Provençal *gai saber*, referring to the poetic art of the medieval troubadours that was so admired by Ezra Pound and was characterized by exuberance, lightness, and spirit. Cooper (1983) explained Nietzsche's point:

The pursuit of truth should, in various regards, emulate this *gaya scienza*, whether at the global level of systematic philosophizing, or at the level of particular detailed enquiries. The spinning of new metaphors, the refusal to be opposed by the weight of tradition and orthodoxy: these are some of the ways truth should be pursued and educators should encourage. (p. 88)

Nietzsche introduced his epistemological orientation of perspectivism in *The Gay Science*. Here he already described science as a "prejudice" (section 373). By reducing everything to what can be measured, the natural scientist, wrote Nietzsche, divests existence of its "rich ambiguity" (p. 335). This permits "counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more" (p. 335). According to Nietzsche, this "scientific" interpretation of the world might be one of the most stupid

---

\* Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Northwestern University; Senior Attending Psychiatrist, Evanston Hospital; Fellow, American Academy of Psychoanalysis, Training and Supervising Analyst, Chicago Center for Psychoanalytic Study.

In response to the call for work in progress at the May 1998 meeting, I am currently working on a book entitled *Mental Illness and Creativity* and based this article on excerpts from two of the chapters in the proposed book. It was presented at the American Academy of Psychoanalysis meeting in Toronto, Canada, May 31, 1998.

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 209 -

of all possible interpretations, "meaning that it would be one of the poorest in meaning" (p. 335). In section 374 Nietzsche maintained that existence without interpretation is essentially nonsense because "the human intellect can not avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these" (p. 336).

In Nietzsche's view there are no self-evident first principles and no logically perfect rigor is possible. The decision among various philosophical systems, just as the decision among various psychoanalytic systems [as I (Chessick, 1992a) have pointed out], must be reached without the benefit of incorrigible facts or a priori and self-evident premises. Such questions can never be definitively settled, and psychoanalytic theories, like philosophical systems, must be regarded as important perspectives. Above all, Nietzsche stressed that one can not abstract any theory from its human settings, and that all mentalistic notions are artificial abstractions that "adversely affect the attempt to comprehend ourselves" (Schacht, 1983, p. 268).

For Nietzsche, not only is God dead, but there is no human essence or soul; deep down we are all hollow and cover it with masks. As far as Nietzsche is concerned, the ego does not exist at all; it is a fable, a fiction, a play on words, a conceptual synthesis. The same is true for the notion of "I," a synthesis that is created by thinking, a word that we set up and that, according to Nietzsche, is the point where our ignorance begins.\*

From Nietzsche one learns that looking at phenomena again and again in different ways is necessary for increasing comprehension, if one agrees with Nietzsche that these phenomena are too complex and multiply conditioned to be adequately grasped by any single way of looking at them. This goal can be achieved only by taking collective interpretive account of what comes to light when phenomena are approached in many different ways, with eyes differently focused. (Schacht, 1996, p. 162)

The starting point of my (Chessick, 1992a) "five-channel" approach to psychoanalytic listening also begins with this basic epistemological premise.

## Constructivism

Introducing constructivism, Hoffman (1991) called attention to what he considered a new paradigm in the psychoanalytic field: "The general

---

\* The references for these phrases by Nietzsche are given by Schacht (1983, p. 131), and are based on the debatable assumption that Nietzsche's (1883-1888) unpublished *The Will to Power is legitimate as a representation of Nietzsche's thought*.

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 210 -

assumption in this model is that the analyst's understanding is always a function of his or her perspective at the moment" (p. 77). The emphasis in constructivism is on mutual influence and constructed meaning. Hoffman (1992) insisted that analysts must now admit subjectivity can never be fully transcended; the analyst can never stand utterly outside of the interaction with the patient in order to generate hypotheses and judgments about the patient. He (Hoffman, 1992a) even tried to take constructivism a step past perspectivism:

Whereas perspectivism merely promotes the idea that the patient's experience can be viewed in various plausible and compelling ways, none of which is comprehensive, constructivism also confronts the analyst and the patient with their responsibility for shaping the quality of their interaction through what they say and do, even through what interpretations they decide to pursue. (pp. 569-570)

Hoffman (1996) placed constructivism against self psychology, pointing out that in his paradigm "there is no objective interpretation and there is no affective attunement that is merely responsive to and reflective of what the patient brings to the situation" (p. 110).

Constructivism in psychoanalytic theory and practice, like Nietzsche's perspectivism, can be viewed either as a radical and nihilistic solipsistic relativism or a "critical constructivism." The latter simply recognizes the contribution of both a partially independent reality and the creative activity of the human subjects (patient and analyst). The constructivist Stern (1991) called attention to what he labeled the unformulated experience, a kind of confusion that arises in the patient who is finally able to think about a previously unaccepted part of his or her life. The construction of experience proceeds in levels of progressive articulation. The choice of words in which the experience is finally articulated is a function of the theory of the analyst, the personalities of the participants, and the current state of the interpersonal field.

Stern's (1992) perspective is that truth is a matter of creation or construction, not a slow accretion of "objective data." From his perspective "the distribution of power in the analytic couple shifts to something closer to equality and balance; patient and analyst share in the creation of what they agree is true" (p. 322). Stern insisted that constructivism "does not require us to say that reality is an arbitrary or frivolous construction" (p. 333). This, he said, is because, as in certain interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism, we are still able to choose a perspective that "works the best" and is "most complete and satisfying in its account of the phenomena in question" (p. 333). Here is a vital philosophical and psychoanalytic issue, because neither the interpreters of

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 211 -

Nietzsche who insist that his perspectivism is not a radical nihilism nor the constructivists offer a clear view of exactly how one decides which particular construction may be labeled closer to the truth than another. And indeed, Nietzsche rhetorically questions the value of truth altogether!

Stern (1996) said, "Constructivism, or perspectivism, is rooted in the premise that all experience is interpretation" (p. 260). He found it ridiculous to insist that all phenomena are constructions as some are so clearly and easily interpreted in the same way by everyone, but this is not true regarding the meaning of events in a person's past. The same remembered events can come to have different meanings in different interpersonal contexts, as is well known to any historian. Stern concluded, "every perception and observation is simply one perspective on reality" (1996, p. 264), a view that seems to come directly from Nietzsche.

From this Stern (1988) launched an attack on the self psychologists, who place empathy at the center of psychoanalytic healing. He argued,

The empathizing analyst does more than simply resonate and record impressions. He actively constructs resonances and impressions. What is more, these constructions are not even articulations of the patient's unformulated experience—they are products of the *analyst's* unformulated material. Hypotheses based on empathic knowing, then, as crucial as they can be, are a less direct result of the patient's experience than the empathizing analyst may believe... interpretations based on empathic immersion do not only require the analyst to make sense of the patient's experience; they require the analyst to make experience for the patient." (p. 605)

He concluded,

We must cultivate a tolerance for the possibility of continuous unknown participation.... This perspective is incompatible with the view of most self psychologists, because they hold that, apart from the occasional and unavoidable failure, the analyst always assumes an empathic stance. (pp. 608-609)

Stern (1994) insisted that empathy is not a privileged means of observation but rather a perspective, and observations made with empathic intent are interpretations like any other observations. What the analyst considers to be empathically derived knowledge, according to Stern, is partly a created product of personal processes. Those relying on empathy as a privileged mode of perception assume that the experiences to be perceived are already there in the other person awaiting the analyst's empathic attunement or identification. This ignores what Stern considered

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 212 -

to be “how fully the analyst and patient participate moment-to-moment in the construction of one another's experience, how they co-create everything that takes place in the analysis” (Stern, 1994, p. 443).

## Psychoanalyst as Creator

Although psychoanalysis clearly requires ongoing creative activity from the psychoanalyst, Gedo (1991) lamented that the psychoanalytic community no longer consists of scholars, scientists, humanists, or even the educated. There are no readers of serious literature, he complained, and only the earning of money becomes paramount: “The psychoanalytic world I aspired to join over forty years ago is entirely dead” (p. 168). Gedo was in his seventh decade of life when he wrote this.

Franz Brentano, whose courses in philosophical psychology Freud attended for about a year, believed that the mental differed from the physical by “intentional existence” or direction on an object; mental phenomena as experienced always imply a stance toward the object and are not isolated “raw” or empirical data. The most extreme example of this comes from the work of Groddeck (1923/1961). This unusually intuitive internist, who labeled himself a wild analyst, engaged in a fantastic reverie process. When I assigned his book to residents in psychiatry, they reacted with anxiety and revulsion at the extremity of his views, so I had to stop including this fascinating provocative text in my courses. Groddeck attributed overwhelming power to the “It,” claiming that humans are lived by the It, which shapes our mental phenomena and our very lives. His crucial premise was that humans seek pleasure first and foremost, and like Nietzsche who influenced him, he wrote, “‘I am I’ is wrong... I am a continually changing form in which It displays itself. This is a deception” (p. 233).

A great deal of work has been done in attempting to get at deep structures creatively at work underneath the phenomenology of human experience. Cultural phenomena are intrinsic to the creation of language and behind these, argued Lévi-Straus (Kurzweil, 1980), are archetypal human structures. Lévi-Straus analyzed myths in order to find these structures in a way similar to psychoanalytic studies of the unconscious through the use of free association. Carrying this further, for Foucault (see Chessick, 1992b) history is not the continuity of the subject, but consists of structural discontinuity in epistemological breaks. Each epoch corresponds to the dominant structure. All structuralists extrapolate from rules/relations of grammar/speech to explore social phenomena in terms of linguistic oppositions and transformations. This assumes the centrality

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 213 -

of language to culture and culture to language. Structuralism is a systematic attempt to uncover deep universal mental structures as they manifest themselves in kinship and larger social structures, in philosophy, literature, mathematics, and in unconscious psychological patterns that motivate human behavior. Piaget's structuralism even maintained that structure and genesis are interdependent, so there is no structure apart from creative construction and underlying structure changes as the child's development proceeds.

Stein (1995) stressed the metaphor Lévi-Straus used of the craftsman as appropriate for our modern way of arranging knowledge. Every psychoanalyst carries a tool kit whether he or she displays it or not, and Lévi-Straus pointed out that the tool kit is for the use of a *bricoleur*, a potter. The more tools in the analyst's kit, the more sense the patient will make to him or her, a good argument for my (Chessick, 1992a) five channel approach to psychoanalytic listening.

One of Freud's original colleagues had a very bad reputation because he always made up a case that fit whatever was the main presentation topic during the meetings of Freud's Wednesday Evening Society. But Stekel (1950), for all his faults, was one of the first to recognize that the work of a psychoanalyst is the work of an artist. He wrote:

The carrying out of real analysis is a work of art. The attitude which Freud has so stubbornly defended, namely, to analyze the patient without influencing him and to let him find his own way, is not worthy of a science which purports to be a form of psychotherapy. The physician must be his patient's teacher and guide him with gentle force out of the world of his fantasies onto the road of reality and work; again and again he must hold up to him the mirror of his inactivity, revealing to him his will to illness, and stimulating his constructive energies. (p. 206)

For a long time this attitude was ignored, but in recent years the truth of it has become increasingly apparent. The standard theory of psychoanalysis for many years emphasized insight into the developmental origins of psychopathology through analysis of the transference as the central mechanism of therapy. Transference was thought of as a unique opportunity to observe directly the past of the patient and thereby to understand the development of his or her conflicts. But the analyst today would be more likely to view the treatment process itself as central to psychoanalytic therapy, with a traditional Freudian theory of neurosis such as presented in the wonderful classic work by Fenichel (1945) used only as a guide to interpretation. Transference is now seen more as a jointly creative construction of the patient and the analyst, and the central mechanism of therapy is the exploration of the origins of transference as

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 214 -

it appears in the therapeutic relationship. But for Fenichel, psychoanalysis was about the infantile origins and dynamics of neuroses, and the current relationship between the analyst and the patient was ignored as a direct therapeutic factor. Today psychoanalytic treatment is quite concerned about what transpires between the patient and the analyst rather than only about interpreting the infantile origins and adult dynamics of the neuroses, and the focus is on how that interaction can reshape the patient's character and life. It involves what Freud (1940) called “after-education.” As early as 1958, emphasis on after-education began to develop, getting the patient to live his or her life more with the matured ego in charge. Saul (1958) correctly insisted that the emotional attitude of the analyst to the patient was crucial.

But there are certain respected psychoanalysts who still follow Fenichel's classic approach. When I was in training in the 1950s, the "bible" for psychoanalysts and psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapists was Fenichel's textbook. This is ironic because Fenichel, a refugee from the Nazis, was ill treated in the United States. In order to practice psychoanalysis in California he was required to obtain a medical license although he was already a licensed physician in Europe. This entailed serving an internship, and produced the picture of an overweight middle-aged man exhausting himself in a general medical internship that was terminated when he suffered a fatal coronary occlusion.

Recently, on the 50th anniversary of the publication of Fenichel's (1945) classic, the book was reissued with an introduction and epilogue by Leo Rangell (see Fenichel, 1996). Rangell still finds Fenichel's traditional Freudian formulations relevant to his contemporary psychoanalytic practice: "A small and seemingly dwindling minority has stayed with these general formulations throughout the last three decades, during which customs, numbers, trends, and popularity have led in other directions. I count myself among those few" (Fenichel, 1996, p. xii), and Rangell in his "epilogue" hoped that Fenichel's text would produce a return to "basic and enduring theory" (p. E11), or "unified psychoanalytic theory" (p. E12).

The trend has actually been the other way. For example, Spence (1982) emphasized the creative aspect of the psychoanalyst's work. He believed that the reason interpretations work is because of their poetic value, because they help the patient "see" by the right words, they offer a coherent account, they remove a responsibility, and there is no evidence against them. So an undocumented assertion can acquire a life of its own and in that sense all interpretations are "inexact" but, insisted Spence, some are more creative than others. He argued that in all of them we exchange narrative for historical truth. Each analyst "hears" material in

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 215 -

his or her own way, making interpretation an aesthetic experience as well as useful of results.

Similarly, Schafer (1983) viewed psychoanalytic work as hermeneutic reconstruction, an interpretative discipline rather than a natural science, with various "story lines" (pp. 276-278) chosen by the analyst. So the "truth" of a given analytic fact resides in fitting it into a system. This is a circular process wherein observations are influenced by interpretations and it explains why there are different "schools" in the field. Schafer maintained that the analyst creatively constructs a "second reality" of the unconscious out of the narration, which has nothing to do with empirical "truth."\*

Carrying this to an extreme, Frankl (1962) claimed that the ultimate meaning of a person's life is not found in the intellect but is found in that person's existential commitments. When there is a vacuum of existential commitments, the patient suffers from what Frankl called a noögenic neurosis. Like Nietzsche and Sartre, he believed humans construct themselves and complained that psychoanalysis overlooked this freedom of the will, turning humans into objects. Horney (1937) was one of the first psychoanalysts to recognize the influence of the competitive, materialistic, and unbridled capitalistic nature of the society in which we live on the formation of neuroses. She believed a basic hostility resulted from living in such a society and this hostility formed the main source of neurotic anxiety. In contemporary terms, as the historian Schlesinger (1997) declared, "Globalization is in the saddle and rides mankind, but at the same time drives people to seek refuge from its powerful forces beyond their control and comprehension.... The faster the world integrates, the more people will huddle in their religious or ethnic or tribal enclaves" (p. 10).

Every country creates the psychoanalysis that it needs (Kurzweil, 1989). Each psychoanalysis, or psychoanalytic listening channel as I (Chessick, 1992a) have called it, operates with indigenous philosophical assumptions, intellectual controversies, journals and societies, and fashions of the culture in which it arises. A total muddle of theories results from this in international psychoanalysis, and in the spirit of Nietzsche, I (Chessick, 1997) have called for a genealogical study of the various forms of psychoanalysis that have become established in different countries over the world.

Mathematicians speak of Cantor's law of conservation of ignorance (Klein, 1980). This law states that a false conclusion once arrived at and

---

\* For details of the hermeneutic approach to psychoanalytic data see Chessick (1992b).

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 216 -

widely accepted is not easily dislodged, and the less it is understood the more tenaciously it is held. Max Plank pointed out that new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.

We have come a long distance from the naive subject-object distinction of Descartes and the scientific positivism based on it. We now know that our mind and our sense of self is inextricably mixed into our perceptions of "facts" or "empirical reality." Recently, idealism has been given a rebirth as Rescher's (1973) "conceptual idealism," in which he contended that our ordinary conceptions of things in nature involve concepts whose adequate explication always makes reference to minds and their activities and capacities, mind-involving concepts. The dependence of "reality" on mind is not ontological but is conceptual, with the mind contributing such concepts as "possibility," "law of nature," "space," "time," and "empirical properties," the ordinary concepts that frame our experience of everyday life. Conceptual idealism has important ramifications for the field of psychotherapy and for science in general, as it brings into question the adequacy of answering human-existence issues by using the traditional scientific methodology of establishing empirical verification of hypotheses.

Wittgenstein (1961) in section 5.6 of his *Tractatus* said, “*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world*” (p. 115). In the last work he (1972) offered, *On Certainty*, he explained that for each of us, our world picture is a system of not easily removed or replaced convictions. It is a framework that we use for all discussions and proofs. Our world picture is tied to the practices we are taught as children when our parents say, “This is the way we do it.” Our actions lie at the basis of our language games and we rely on a memory bank of examples taught by our parents. Our world picture therefore rests neither on empirical knowledge nor on the scientific verification of hypotheses, for any sort of testing has to stop at or be based on some underlying points of belief, axioms, or so-called self-evident premises. Where do these come from? What we are taught as children we take on faith and in so doing we form an organized structure, a world picture, a web of belief. The conclusions and premises from this structure give each other mutual support.

Our world picture is not easily shaken by conflicting empirical propositions; it is an important function of art in each culture to shape and communicate this world picture directly and to announce when it is changing or fragmenting! Our world picture is more like a methodology that one decides to adopt while ignoring conflicting evidence. The changeover to another system represents a conversion, and it is a shift

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 217 -

moved more by loss of a war, persuasion, and dramatic unexpected aesthetic or spiritual experiences than by reason. Wittgenstein (1972) wrote, “When two principles really do meet which can not be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and heretic” (p. 81e).

Wittgenstein explained that at the foundation of every apparently well-founded belief lies a belief that is not founded. Belief systems are acquired by observation and instruction; they are acquired, not learned. We teach a child when we point and say, “This is your hand,” and not by asking the child if this is really a hand or by getting the child to learn to know that he or she has a hand. Certainty, claimed Wittgenstein, becomes a matter of attitude. Along with the learning of language games also comes the learning of what is acceptable to be investigated in a given culture and what is not to be investigated.

## Reason and Truth

There has even been a change in the concept of reason itself in the Western world; it is now recognized that “reason” is culturally mediated and interwoven with social practices. It seems to me best, as Rorty (1991) suggested, to think of Heidegger and Derrida simply as post-Nietzschean philosophers and to assign them into the conventionally described great conversation sequence running from the presocratics to the present time, rather than to view them as initiating or manifesting a radical departure. I believe the originator of the new postmetaphysical mode of Western thinking was actually that archmetaphysician Hegel, who pointed out how a personality and its consciousness develops through action and interaction that alters the self in unforeseen ways. Rather than an essential human core, there is a lifelong dialectic between self-knowledge, self-actualization, and praxis. Striving for a set of goals founded on knowledge of one's self, often enhanced and further expressed by artistic experience, leads to new self-knowledge, new goals, altered strivings, and so forth, in a dialectical upward spiral. Beiser (1993) added that in Hegel's framework the historically prevailing self-conception of the human being indicates where a given culture stands in its level of spiritual expression. Reified values of the West turn out to be products of the human unconscious, and reason alone cannot create a presuppositionless philosophy.

Much debate goes on today among psychoanalysts regarding the role of their creative processes. For example, Fajardo (1993) outlined the varieties of epistemological perspectives employed in contemporary

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 218 -

psychoanalysis. Some analysts think clinical inquiry to be a form of empirical investigation “that positions the neutral analyst-observer on the edge of the psychoanalytic situation, watching the patient's psyche at work” (p. 978). Others, still with an empirical stance, study the patients' intrapsychic structures as they manifest themselves in the patients' behavior and communications, and distinguish this from the interpersonal process between the patient and the therapist. The meaning of “truth” in this context is still that of correspondence to the remembered past.

What Fajardo calls the “hermeneutic constructivist” clinical psychoanalytic position, on the other hand, “positions the analyst as emotionally and subjectively involved, if not embedded, with the patient, immersed in a reciprocal process, and watching and responding to both her own and the patient's experience” (1993, p. 979). Such a dyadic process teaches us about how the patient organizes experience and makes it meaningful, a creative activity. This kind of postmodern explication of the psychoanalytic process can be more or less radical; “truth” here is seen as emerging out of the particular patient—analyst dyad, with mutual agreement and coherence of their webs of belief rather than correspondence to the past as the determinant, that is, “narrative truth” rather than “historical truth” (Spence, 1982). Emphasis may be strictly on the here-and-now or intersubjective aspects of the dyadic situation (Stolorow and Atwood, 1992) or on a combination of the here-and-now and transference aspects of the dyadic situation (Gill, 1982).

The diversity of psychoanalytic approaches leaves the postmodern era in psychoanalysis in a similar situation as that of philosophy and the arts, characterized by positions ranging from the traditional to the radical. Kohut's self psychology is somewhere in between. The Lacanians want to throw out Freud's structural theory altogether. In psychoanalysis as well as in Western philosophy there are conflicting conceptions of “meaning” and “truth,” and disagreement as to how these arise, how they are established, and whether they are specific to each dyad or culture or have some transcendent or repeatable quality. The problem is that “no one can claim to occupy an Archimedean point from which all theories can be objectively studied and a judgement rendered as to which is *the* correct theory” (Phillips, 1991, p.

408).

Are we in the West to retain some sense of eternal or transcendental truths about “reality” and about “the self” of individuals or are we to accept the notion that everything is radically contingent and historical, and even our method of reason itself, which lies at the basis of all Western thinking, is a product of a learned language game and background cultural practices? In the face of this dilemma it is no surprise that

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 219 -

Nietzsche the artist, coming at the end of traditional metaphysics, perhaps ironically suggested there was nothing left for Western man to do but to laugh and to dance.

## Summary

Beginning with Nietzsche's doctrine of “perspectivism,” there has been an increasing realization in the sciences that the notion of an objective detached observer who reaches truth as he or she studies the subject is incorrect. There is general agreement that the subject—object dichotomy in 19<sup>th</sup>-century science that lies behind traditional sciences and was assumed by Freud is incorrect. As a result we now have in psychoanalysis a movement at the other extreme called “constructivism,” which assumes that on a moment-to-moment basis the analyst and patient together creatively construct the data, interpretations, and “truths” that result. This incidentally casts Kohut's method of empathic understanding as the way to accumulate data in the psychoanalytic process under suspicion, because it is questionable whether the analyst is able to empathize with what is allegedly already there in the patient; it could not be correct if the analyst and patient are constructing what is “already there” together from moment to moment. The same would be problematic about the analyst's allegedly empathic grasp of the patient's “sense of self,” which lies at the center of self psychological investigation.

What we have come to realize is that every psychoanalyst approaches patients with a tool kit whether it is displayed or not. Levi-Straus pointed out that the tool kit is for the use of a *bricoleur*, a potter. The more tools in the analyst's kit, the more sense the patient will make to the analyst, a good argument for the five-channel theory of psychoanalytic listening I (Chessick, 1992a) have previously presented. This is not consistent with the traditional theory, which emphasized insight into the developmental origins of psychopathology through analysis of the transference as the central mechanism of therapy. Now, it is argued by some, the treatment process itself, the sample interpersonal interaction and interpretation of the current relationship between the analyst and the patient as created by both of them is crucial to catalyzing a change in the patient. Is this a form of after-education and a travesty of traditional psychoanalytic thinking, as some authors claim, or is it a more sophisticated stance that deepens our understanding of the psychoanalytic process and especially of the analyst's contribution to it? Extrapolation of this question can also lead us to investigate how each country creates a form or theory of psychoanalysis that it needs, in an effort to understand why there is so little

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 220 -

agreement within the international body of psychoanalysts. Emphasis on the creative input of the psychoanalyst, which tends to be downplayed in the traditional literature, is becoming increasingly realized as important as we go into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## References

- Beiser, F. (Ed.). (1993), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Chessick, R. (1992a), *The Technique and Practice of Listening in Intensive Psychotherapy*, Aronson, Northvale, NJ.
- Chessick, R. (1992b), *What Constitutes the Patient in Psychotherapy*, Jason Aronson, Northvale, NJ.
- Chessick, R. (1997), *Perspectivism, constructivism, and empathy in psychoanalysis: Nietzsche and Kohut*, *J. Am. Acad. Psychoanal. Dyn. Psychiatr.* 25, 219-246. [[↔](#)]
- Cooper, D. (1983), *Authenticity and Learning: Nietzsche's Educational Philosophy*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Fajardo, B. (1993), *Conditions for the relevance of infant research to clinical psychoanalysis*, *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 74, 975-991. [[↔](#)]
- Fenichel, O. (1945), *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*, Norton, New York.
- Fenichel, O. (1996), *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis: 50th Anniversary Edition*, Norton, New York.
- Freud, S. (1940), *An outline of psychoanalysis*, Standard Edition, Vol. 23, pp. 144-173. [[↔](#)]
- Frankl, V. (1962). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Gedo, J. (1991), *The Biology of Clinical Encounters: Psychoanalysis As a Science of Mind*, Analytic Press, Hillsdale, NJ.
- Gill, M. (1982), *Analysis of the Transference Vol. 1: Theory and Technique*, International Universities Press, New York.
- Groddeck, G. (1961), *The Book of the It*, Mentor Books New York. (Original work Published 1923)
- Hoffman, I. (1991), *Discussion: Toward a social-constructivist View of the psychoanalytic situation*, *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 2, 567-570. [[↔](#)]
- Hoffman, I. (1992), *Some practical implications of a social-constructivist view of the psychoanalytic situation*, *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 2, 287-304. [[↔](#)]
- Hoffman, I. (1996), *The intimate and ironic authority of the psychoanalyst's presence*, *Psychoanal. Q.* 65, 102-136. [[↔](#)]
- Horney, K. (1937), *The Neurotic Personality Of Our Time*, Norton, New York.
- Klein, M. (1980), *Mathematics: the Loss of Certainty*, Oxford, New York.
- Kurzweil, E. (1980), *The Age of Structuralism*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Kurzweil, E. (1989), *The Freudians: A Comparative Perspective*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Nietzsche, F. (1974a), *The Gay Science* (Books 1-4; W. Kaufman, Trans.), Vintage Books, New York. (Original work Published 1882)

- Nietzsche, F. (1974b), *The Gay Science* (Book 5; W. Kaufman, Trans.), Vintage Books, New York. (Original work Published 1887)
- Phillips, J. (1991), Hermeneutics in psychoanalysis: Review and reconsideration, *Psychoanal. Contemp. Thought*, 14, 371-424. [\[↔\]](#)
- Rescher, N. (1973), *Conceptual Idealism*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Rorty, R. (1991), *Essays on Heidegger and Others*. Vol. 2 of *Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Saul, L. (1958), *Technic and Practice of Psychoanalysis*, Lippincott, Philadelphia.
- Schacht, R. (1983), *Nietzsche*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Schacht, R. (1993), *Nietzsche's Selections*, Macmillan, New York.

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 221 -

- Schacht, R. (1996), Nietzsche's kind of philosophy, in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, B. Magnus and K. Higgins (Eds.), Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Schafer, R. (1983), *The Analytic Attitude*, Basic Books, New York.
- Schlesinger, A. (1997), Has democracy a future? *For. Aff.*, 7, 2-12.
- Spence, D. (1982), *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth*, Norton, New York. [\[↔\]](#)
- Stein, R. (1995), Reply to Chodorow, *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 5, 301-310. [\[↔\]](#)
- Stekel, N. (1950), *Autobiography*, Liveright, New York.
- Stern, D. (1988), Not misusing empathy, *Contemp. Psychoanal.*, 24, 598-611. [\[↔\]](#)
- Stern, D. (1991), A philosophy for the embedded analyst, *Contemp. Psychoanal.*, 27, 51-80. [\[↔\]](#)
- Stern, D. (1992), Commentary on constructivism in clinical psychoanalysis, *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 2, 331-363. [\[↔\]](#)
- Stern, D. (1994), Empathy is interpretation (and who ever said it wasn't?), *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 4, 441-471. [\[↔\]](#)
- Stern, D. (1996), Dissociation and constructivism: Commentary on papers by Davies and Harris, *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 6, 251-266. [\[↔\]](#)
- Stolorow, R., and Atwood, G. (1992), *Contexts of Being*, Analytic Press, Hillsdale, NJ.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1961), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (D. Pears and B. McGuinness, trans.), Humanities Press, New York.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1972), *On Certainty*, (D. Paul and G. Anscombe, trans.), Harper, New York.

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the PEPWeb subscriber and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form.

- 222 -

## Article Citation [\[Who Cited This?\]](#)

**Chessick, R.D.** (1998). Creativity in the Psychoanalytic Process. *J. Am. Acad. Psychoanal. Dyn. Psychiatr.*, 26:209-222

**WARNING!** This text is printed for the personal use of the subscriber to PEP Web and is copyright to the Journal in which it originally appeared. It is illegal to copy, distribute or circulate it in any form whatsoever.