AT THE CROSSROADS: FEMINISM, PSYCHOANALYSIS, POLITICS*

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ABSTRACT *Feminism, psychoanalysis, and politics have evolved together. This paper situates their interimplicated evolution in the intellectual shift from dualism to multiplicity, from binary toward pluralism. The method used is to replace dualities with triads, to move from 'either/or' to 'both/and', to bring The Third into play. Accordingly, the tale is told at the conjunction of personal, political, and theoretical discourses. Three concepts – paradox, contingency, and dialectics – limn this triple crossroads: feminism as cultural, personal, and intellectual; psychoanalysis as a clinical, theoretical, and social practice; politics as subjective, historical, and contextual.*

Key words: sexuality, intimacy, power, theory

This paper limns a conjuncture of thought and activism, the 1960s' utopian vision: strangers, like feminism, psychoanalysis, and politics, can love each other – or at least produce some sparks that illuminate new ways of seeing ourselves and the world. Feminist, psychoanalytic, and political ideas and practices co-evolve at the join of culture and mind, public and private, politics and psychology. This synergy necessarily begins in dualism and ends in multiplicity. So here, via a reckoning of the state of the psychoanalytic art, I shall propose, first, to replace 'either/or' with 'both/and', that is, with a Third. Next, through a personal account of New Left/academic politics, feminism, and psychoanalytic training, I indicate the shift from 'either/or' to 'both/and' in Marxism. I conclude with a view of psychoanalysis, social theory, and feminism as a set of *décalages.*

PSYCHOANALYSIS CONFRONTS DUALISM

Psychoanalysts are no strangers to dualism. How could they be? Many polar pairs line the landscape of psychoanalytic theory – sexuality and aggression, consciousness and unconsciousness, transference and countertransference, analyst and patient, abstinence and gratification, neutrality and participation, intrapsychic and interpersonal, fantasy and reality. Dualism is a

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problem that therapists know in their bones, that academics have explicitly or implicitly theorized since Descartes, that politicians locked into adversarialism embody, and that analysts are now beginning to work through.

In daily clinical life, dualism often shows up as deadlock. How often, for example, analyst and patient butt heads over an interpretation of the patient's past or a criticism of the analyst or, as is common now, a point of difference or conflict that has arisen in an enactment (Leary, 1994; Renik, 1996). Believing only one can be right, analyst and patient struggle – a political struggle? – alone and together, to create a place where their contradictions can live together. How hit or miss, how contingent, how you-had-to-be-there are such extrications.

Dualism deceives. It looks like two, but behind the two is really only one; dualism dissolves into monism. A patient, for example, feels ready to end the analysis. The analyst believes the work is not yet done. Who is right? Some analysts find this deadlock no problem. Stay or leave, they might say. If, in contrast, the analyst holds that analysis entails a meeting of minds, not a dualism of minds, what is to be done?

That a power struggle pops up as dualism is no accident. Dualism's separate-but-equal masks a hierarchy: the one behind the two is always on top. In the 'tables of opposites' deriving from the pre-Socratics (Scheman, personal communication, 25 November 2001) – for example, male/female, light/dark, reason/emotion, mind/body, nature/culture – one term is always implicitly better or higher than the other. Hence the usual deconstructive reading: binaries conceal hierarchies. Feminist philosophers make this point with regard to sex and gender. Irigaray (1985) argues 'that the purportedly two are really one, as in "husband and wife are one and that one is the husband"' (Scheman, personal communication, 25 November 2001). This construction renders the male the generic human being and the female void of meaning.

Dualism, in this view, is always a set-up. Complementarity is avowed, while the fight to the death is denied. The idea of a singular truth is magnetic. Which underlies human happiness and misery, sex or aggression? Does it all start in the oedipal phase or the preoedipal? Inside or outside the mind? Is the origin of character intrapsychic or interpersonal, psychological or social, social or biological? In the end, dualism's implicit debate presumes only one correct solution to any problem; determinism inhabits dualism. Either/or.

A contemporary exit is to replace the 'either/or' with the 'both/and': 'both' in the sense of both terms; 'and' in the sense of the two together, and also in the sense of neither. Andrew Samuels' version of this solution has opposites creating anxious contradictions within each of us (Samuels, 1993, 144–6). To continue the clinical illustration: patient wants to terminate, analyst thinks not. But instead of a struggle to the death, you, the analyst, accept the possibility that both are right, decide nothing about termination, and then explore the meanings, to your patient, you, your relationship, and the treatment, of the deadlock. Indeed, you may suggest that each has both options in mind. Maybe the patient terminates, maybe not. But hay is being made while the sun still shines, meaning is mined and created, and the analysis does its work.

Solutions like this do not keep kosher; purity is not their concern. Nor do they position the truth somewhere between the extremes. Rather they insist on many truths; as Jacques Derrida has it, there is

too much truth (cited in Flax, 1990, 200). Both/and insists on having it all. Both parts of the dualism hold, but neither is the final answer, there will always be other poles, there's always room for more. Which pole is right? It all depends on context.

FROM DUALISM TO MULTIPLICITY

Psychoanalysis has begun to embrace what Scheman (personal communication, 25 November 2001) calls this 'complexity, ambiguity, ambivalence, impurity'. For some time now, psychoanalysis has been at the crossroads where two conceptual roads meet: a one-person psychology and a two-person psychology (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983; Ghent, 1989). Schematically, a one-person psychology belongs to the classical psychoanalytic tradition as articulated, codified, and promulgated by Freud. The psyche consists of structures within the individual mind that develop according to inherent processes and stages. The two-person psychology stems from two postclassical critiques. In the 1950s, Harry Stack Sullivan, on the American side, and Ronald Fairbairn, on Scottish shores, separately created bodies of thought and practice – interpersonal psychoanalysis and object relations theory, respectively – with a similar premise: since the relationship between people is key to personality development, individual minds are structured by and made of representations of the earliest known relationships (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983; Ghent, 1989).

Figuratively, a crossroads is a turning point. When you reach it, you make a decision: you go left, right, or straight ahead (or, I suppose, back). Often enough, however, a crossroads proves just the right place to set up shop. Many a rural market has grown into many a big city at such a spot. Settlers are joined by newcomers, new ideas variegate the old, inventions follow by accident or design. Psychoanalysis, at the either-or crossroads of a one-person and a two-person psychology, has decided to stop where it is, at the site of intersubjectivity. Interesting questions now populate the growing community. Emmanuel Ghent (1989) in fact insists that it is in the tension of this meeting point – this 'both/and' – that analysts now need to work and, if their writings are any evidence, others seem to agree. Such heteroglossia is strange to Western political discourse. Yet, as Samuels (personal communication, 2003) suggests, surely many citizens must feel, when faced with competing views, that there's right on both sides. Surely that familiar experience, of agreeing with the last thing you heard, derives from the inherent multiplicity of political life. However, dualism annihilates the anxiety-producing possibilities of democracy contained in both/and.

The idea of intersubjectivity functions as a third, registering the veridicality of the two psychologies. Intersubjective processes – those at once within the individual mind and between different minds – inform psychic structure, character, health, illness, and, by the same token, the analytic process (Ogden, 1994, 62–4 and *passim*). The contemporary clinical quandary is how to work at once with the intrapsychic and the interpersonal. The current theoretical controversy is how to conceptualize and actualize this paradigm shift. The solutions to both will be plural, to work and theorize contingently, depending on the context in which that work takes place.

Psychoanalysts now approach these questions variously, building on Winnicott's use of paradox to hold the tension of opposites. Mitchell (1993, 57), for example, reconfigures paradox as ambiguity. Ghent (1992) proposes that the only clinical solution to paradox is another paradox. For Benjamin (1998a, 34), the capacity to recognize, entertain, and live with paradox is central to postoedipal development. Bromberg (1998) imagines 'standing in the spaces' within and between minds. Pizer (1998) views paradox as negotiated by building intrapsychic, intersubjective, and interpersonal bridges.

A busy crossroads indeed. Call it, with Aron (1996, 10), a 'transitional theoretical space'. What a contrast to the 'clash of civilizations' mentality that, re-awakened by September 11, reiterates the dualism core to racism and its political structures.

Transitional space is, as Winnicott (1958) formulated it, a liminal state. He defines it as an 'intermediate area of [infantile] experience' that 'throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work' (Winnicott, 1958, 97). And, we could add, to politics too – consider the creative imaginings and action of, say, nineteenth-century utopian communities, or Greenham Common and WTO demonstrations. Transitional space is simultaneously internal (intrapsychic) and external (interpersonal), although within it these distinctions are senseless. Within it, both/and, not either/or, rules: transitional space is where you both invent and discover your parents, where you love and destroy them and they survive. By extension, transitional theoretical space allows one, two, or many theories to bloom. Excess is not too much.

These psychoanalytic efforts at both/and may be summed up as efforts to create a third. 'The question of how we get out of complementary twoness, which is the formal or structural pattern of all impasses, is where intersubjective theory finds its real challenge' (Benjamin, 2001, 3). The elaborations and extensions of paradox, for example, fall under the rubric 'the third'; paradox stands as the third term to the two terms of dualism. Once there are three, you have a conversation of multiplicity (see also Simmel, 1950, on monads, dyads and triads).

Yet escaping dualism is tricky. Suppose we are persuaded that old-fashioned, either/or thinking ill suits our purposes. What do we do? Dump dualism and plump for the both/and? But this would be the same old, same old: behind the two is the one. You can't have one without the other: there must be, as Jung held (Samuels, 1989), an either/or, two terms, in order that there be a both/and, a third. And what that third will turn out to be is contingent on the interaction within in the either/or.

Pace Hegel and Lacan, the third is no answer. It's but a moment in a process generating new possibilities (Rorty, 1989, 108). Creating new tensions, it calls for new resolution, because it becomes an either/or to yet another term. Dialectics, viewed this way, is in principle an ongoing process (Ogden, 1998), even if, at any given moment, closure seems sure. In actuality, psychoanalyses end: the patient terminates, carrying the analysis away, one hopes, in idiosyncratic fashion. Can one say the same of the dialectics of political life? The results are not in. In the dialectics of psychic life, however, going from the either/or to the both/and is a voyage made repeatedly.

AN EXCURSION INTO MARXISM, THE NEW LEFT, AND PERSONAL HISTORY

In the mid-nineteenth century, Karl Marx (1867) dissolved this impasse between materialism – the forces of History – and idealism – the forces of Mind, with a heterodox insight. Human beings make their own history, he said, but they do not make it under conditions of their own choosing. We author our own destiny, but it never realizes our visions because we are cultural beings nested in forces that, fostering us, exceed us.

The similarity of Marx's paradox to Freud's will not escape the reader. But whereas Freud located those forces in the interior world, Marx situated them in the external world. We are born into a socio-economic formation, in whose eye, as Louis Althusser (1971) was to put it, we are always already a gleam. Given this contingency, Marx held, it is imperative, in order to create a universally just, good life, to know these forces. If you understand them, you can grasp the evolutionary tiller and steer the human ship toward its destination, the classless society. Whether this is the case is a matter for continued debate in the wake of Eastern European communism's demise, as well as of the twentieth-century's social movements around race and sex (Amariglio, Resnick and Wolff, 1988; Laclau, 1988; Mouffe, 1988).

Still, we are not done with the either/or of the mental and the material. Marx's perception of their contingent relation contains a fruitful tension out of which many thirds crystallize. Several positions emerge in the venerable debate between determinism versus free will: (1) material conditions determine mind and culture; (2) reality is a projection of the mental; (3) a mix of (1) and (2); (4) yet another set of relations, not yet named, that we might regard as a provisional nexus of the mental and the material. This nexus would constitute a third position, a dialectical negotiation between the powers of abstract, impersonal history and the powers of the person. C Wright Mills (1959) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1959) recognize this philosophical juggling act when they argue that accounts of human life should sit at the join of biography and history. That the value of Marx's thought depends on determinism yielding to contingency is an irony that has also inspired recent post-Marxist thinking, including Michel Foucault's, to which I return below. It is also a tension embodied and addressable by feminism and, as I have indicated, psychoanalysis.

Holding contingency's tension is a struggle – as clinicians know all too well. How lulling the collapse into a one-person model: you diagnose your patient, you think you know what to do. Yet diagnoses are but incomplete descriptions, to be filled out by clinical dialogue. Any given case's idiosyncratic details force you to rethink your categories (Wolstein, 1975), and you tire doing it over and over. Even clinicians who value contingency, ambiguity, and uncertainty may find themselves craving formulas, universally definitive and explanatory truths, a clear this or that, not a fuzzy both/and. Wanting to lay the tension to rest, one tends, as psychoanalysts say, to split. Dialectics collapses into dualism, tension into resolution.

Simplification via splitting snags Marxian thought too. Take another distinction, according to which society's material 'base' is said to determine its 'superstructure' of ideas, beliefs, and mental life. To be sure, this dualism is a caricature. Yet like many a Freudian reduction – sex as the root

of all neurosis – it has served as a shorthand whose grip on thought many have tried to loosen (for example, Gramsci, 1929–37; Althusser, 1971; Foucault, 1976; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Zizek, 1989). According to base/superstructure determinism, for example, your birth class governs your economic future and your psychic state. But how, then, can one explain the many familiar exceptions to this vulgar determinism? If material determinism were the answer to history's conundrum, how could people rise up against immiserating conditions? How could minds change? How could patients ever get better?

How do you answer these questions without losing the breathtaking tension of Marx's insight? This challenge presented itself to me when I was in graduate school (1964–1970, although I suspect it to have been haunting me way before that). I could not see what is now clear: solving the problem of vulgar determinism would entail not only refiguring the relation between the material and the mental, but rethinking the mental itself.

Instead of class reductionism, more recent interpretations of Marxism propose a multiplicity of subject positions (Mouffe, 1988, 90). Race, gender, sexuality, and other categories now join class in overdetermining (Amariglio, Resnick and Wolff, 1988) individual and social life: having multiple determinants, personal fate, for example, can be understood from a variety of perspectives. But subject positions are discursive as well as economic in character, origin, and effect. 'Not a mental act in the usual sense' (Laclau, 1988, 254), 'discourse' designates the unending negotiation of meaning, in which material conditions also play a part. This negotiation can and must happen because meaning itself is multiple: in Lacanian view, 'a certain cleft, a certain fissure, misrecognition characterizes the human condition as such' (Zizek, 1989, 2).

This discontinuity, this reflexive division, which founds human subjectivity, is a window for personal and social change. One's subject positions have their material base as well as their personal, cultural, and historical meanings, so one may, given the right circumstances, rework the subject position bestowed by birth, whether based on class or ethnicity or sexuality or whatever. Out of one's own psychic decentredness and plural subject positions, one can make more than has been dreamt of in many philosophies. Taking advantage of this crack in the wall of class is Western democracy's utopian promise of upward mobility, so often not fulfilled.

But that's now. Way back then, I was a dedicated materialist: there were single causes and single effects, single (class-based) positions, single meanings, and single explanations. Scientific clarity and certainty were all. Happy to find anthropology in (what I did not yet know was) the sunset of positivism, I applauded its claim to scientific standing and believed fiercely that cultural data could be studied objectively and laws of human nature derived therefrom. The late Marvin Harris's (1968) brilliant, brash empiricist theory of cultural materialism ruled the day at Columbia University, where I was studying. The economic, indeed, the ecological basis of any given culture was held to determine its system of kinship, its ladders of power, its colour preferences, its dreams. Like any instance of vulgar Marxism, this base-superstructure theory admitted of few nuances. Its flatfootedness was timely and compelling, given the brute social problems like war, poverty, and starvation that preoccupied us then.

Inspired by the civil rights movement, the university ethos of the 1960s and 1970s held this truth to be self-evident: the theoretical was political. A dualism was collapsing: the 1950s, Cold War shibboleth of science's neutrality was crumbling as the anti-war movement brought its political commitments to light. Graduate students and junior faculty, recognizing that systems of knowledge and structures of power interfaced, were going to put this recognition to good use by making thought relevant to social problems. In anthropology, theory was to focus not on what people say but on what they do, not on their ideas but on their actions, not on pure ideals, but on the vulgar verities, like the physical violence of war and the social violence of injustice, which Americans were prone to deny.

The hypocrisy supporting injustice was one target of not only Marxist anthropologists but the Students for a Democratic Society and its graduate and junior faculty counterpart, the New University Conference. People say one thing – for example, writing constitutions that declare all to be equal – and then do another: they segregate lunch counters and classrooms, disenfranchise blacks, redline neighbourhoods. To reach the truth, then, cultural materialist anthropology would examine only one pole of the mind/matter binary. If you studied people's materiality, not their ideality – the economic, ecological, and political conditions of culture – you'd find the hard data required for not only truth but also justice.

Materialism was, however, about to meet its negation. Positivism was on the way out, uncertainty was on the way in, a subversive subtext in my graduate training. The image of the anthropologist as scientist contained contradictions that not only cultural materialism but anthropological methodology overlooked. In the 1940s, Abram Kardiner had articulated the ethnographer's role as that of a 'participant observer'. (Sullivan borrowed this idea to characterize the therapist's position and activity.)

But, as I practised being the ethnographic observer who also participates, I came to understand that scientific objectivity was impossible. I was a subjective being, and so were my informants. A scientistic posture, moreover, reduced my humanity and aggravated my sense of perpetrating injustice. I felt like a thief. In order to aggrandize my own position in the world's dominant nation state, I was taking data from people in one of its client states. Politics, it began to appear, shared a claim with science as a source of truth. 'That's why the girl can sit on her ass for a year', snapped one woman in the Greek village I studied, 'she has American dollars.'

Surely I wasn't a thief, just as surely as I wasn't a scientist. But what was I? Dialectics soon (though not soon enough for my field research) came to the rescue. Being an anthropologist was a dilemma, not a profession, thought one of my professors, the late Robert Murphy (1971). Ethnography 'is the dialectics of reducing people to objects while trying to achieve understanding of them and of converting ourselves into instruments while struggling to maintain our identities' (Murphy, 1971, 11). A postmodernist *avant la lettre,* Murphy (1971, 4) saw dialectics as a method and 'philosophy for a period of dissolution in which firm verities are replaced by shifting mirages, in which predictability from the perspective of past expectations has been lost, and in which scepticism has become a mode of perception and not just of evaluation.' It therefore suits practices of uncertainty, which include, notably, both

anthropology and psychoanalysis. One must, as a participant observer, engage the objects of study. But if you talk with them, you must listen to them, stand in their shoes. By implication, you need to decipher what happens in between what they say and what they do. Maybe people do not do what they say, but maybe they do and maybe they also know a lot about the ambiguity between saying and doing.

Mind, in other words, matters. Enter psychoanalysis and feminism. Together, strangely enough (at least in my own life). Even as I was struggling with the mind/matter debate, help was on the way in the form of two new interlocutors. It was 1968, that signifier for the many disjunctures in cultural and political life that were to mark the last quarter of the twentieth century. I'd just returned from my doctoral field research, found the campus in dazzling upheaval, joined my first consciousness-raising group and, a couple of months later, went into psychoanalysis. The ironies are delicious. My first bill from my first analyst remains in use as a bookmark for De Beauvoir's (1949) *The Second Sex,* published 19 years earlier. If psychoanalysis punctuated feminism for me, feminism has returned the favour (Buhle, 1998; Dimen, 1997, 2003).

Psychoanalysis, the premier disciplinary encounter with mind, is 'a demand placed on Marxism', said radical psychoanalyst and educator Joel Kovel (1979). He was addressing the Group for a Radical Human Science (GRHS), a short-lived organization of progressive psychoanalysts and psychotherapists. This speech spoke our need for a materialism conversant with inner life. We were caught between a rock and a hard place, having cut our left-wing teeth on a Marxist view of the world, but having embraced psychoanalysis for personal as well as professional reasons. Unwilling to relinquish either of our two precious praxes, we saw no way out of their seeming opposition. We felt open to both ways of viewing the world and tackling its problems but did not know how to make each open to the other. Although both sides of the Marx/Freud dialectic concede connection between internal and external, then and now the exact relation is open to debate and inquiry.

We were trapped in the reigning dualism: either mind or matter. Those working in mental-health related fields were the last of the New Left professionals to form intellectual and activist groups, and for good reason. For example, the Union of Radical Political Economists (URPE) had coalesced in the 1960s to formulate and disseminate disciplinary critiques of the ivory tower's relation to power. But, in New York City, radical psychoanalysts and psychotherapists congregated only in 1979 to form GRHS (a contemporaneous and more successful organization is the ongoing Institute for Labor and Mental Health, founded in San Francisco by Michael Lerner). Psychoanalysis, not being taught in the academy, came to most of us relatively late in our careers.

Nor, as I knew to my personal discomfort, was psychoanalysis in left-wing favour, disgraced by its conformism (its 1950s adaptationism lasted into the 1970s) and its sexism (then under feminist critique). At the time it was thought that if you were on the couch you had abandoned the barricades. I confided my guilty psychoanalytic secret to only one member of my consciousness-raising group, believing in my resentful heart that all the hypocritical rest were secretly in therapy. Exploring one's private troubles seemed a shameful, individualist diversion from the urgent, collective project of battling oppression. And

psychoanalysis had not yet been reconfigured in those object-relational or Lacanian terms that now permit its integration with social theory and political concerns.

Left-wing polarization of psychoanalysis contained, of course, another, more common fear. 'We are bringing the plague [to America]', Freud allegedly said to Jung (Fairfield, Layton and Stack, 2002, 1). Psychoanalysis spotlights so much that most of us, including (at least some of the time) psychoanalysts, do not really care to entertain. Any analysand knows this darkness – the anxiety stirred by probing unconscious secrets, therapy's frightening I-thou intimacies, unbearable doubt and uncertainty, re-encounter with trauma, and registration of unrecoverable loss. The willing surrender to a process with – to put it in the extreme – the examined life as its only apparent goal, and no end in sight, is daunting. Who wants to disturb one's life for so speculative an outcome? Only those with no other choice, only those who can afford the expensive last resort of psychoanalysis.

Last resorts would seem to put you in the victim position. But the New Left wanted victims to be victors, identifying with the oppressed Third World and at the same time seeing itself as the liberator. A rationalism ruled (amidst all that LSD). Clear and universal was the meaning of life: organize in your own interests and you win the war at home, where new Third Worlds – people of colour, women, marginal sexualities – were being identified. (That the New Left correctly criticized psychoanalysis for its falsely universalizing narratives – for example, the Oedipal story – did not cause it to reflect on its own tendency to lay its particular meanings on everyone else.) The public world owned by bourgeois white men could, it was thought, be explained and changed by praxis – that is, by theory-in-action. If that project succeeded, then, in a base-superstructure way, the contradictions remaining in the private domain where women reigned would resolve themselves. The personal was political.

Yet home, we were finding out, is precisely where one's own interests are least clear. The political is, in fact, personal. Marxism, to put it evocatively, or social theory, to put it more broadly and precisely, needed psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis takes up where social theory leaves off (Rubin, 1975). It comes bearing gifts: the interpretation of desire and 'personal meaning' (Chodorow, 2000); a theory and course of action in respect to inner life; and a guide to the symbolic systems of psyche and society. Although social theory dissects the conditions of daily working and civic life, it does not unravel the personal and interpersonal tangles of domestic intimacy (and with which, New Left women were realizing, it is women's traditional cultural business to traffic). Social theory leads right up to the bedroom door, to the hearth of family and psyche. Then it stops, defeated by the messy, tangled intangibles of domestic life, the same untidy interiority that constitutes the psychoanalytic meeting of minds (Aron, 1996). Yet late capitalism, one might propose, insists that its central moral crisis – the osteoporosis of meaning – be attended to, and soon (Jameson, 1991).

So, by the time that I enrolled at the Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis at New York University (1979–83), it was clear (at least to those of us in GRHS) that social theory needed psychoanalysis. We also knew what psychoanalysis did not: it needed social theory. Psychoanalysis, for all its unprecedented insight into the psyche, would not and does not admit of the complementary demand.

Try it out: Marxism – social justice – is a demand placed on psychoanalysis. It doesn't quite work, does it? Effecting the policing that Foucault terms regulatory practice, psychoanalysis erects quite solid walls against social theory. In a power-driven, myopic refusal of interdisciplinary challenge, it validates only two kinds of speech, the dualism of the biological and the psychical. It discredits, in other words, the third term, the social (and by extension the political), which nevertheless slips in on the normative or, what is in effect the same thing, the universalizing.

But why shouldn't psychoanalysis answer to social theory? Marxism may have predated Freudianism by half a century. But it animated the cultural and political scene in which Breuer and Freud (1893–5) penned *Studies on Hysteria.* Jacoby (1983) documents its vitality during psychoanalysis' florescence in the 1920s and 1930s and tracks its disappearance during World War II and the Cold War. Every subsequent theory of human beings, Daniel Bell is said to have said, has had to reckon with Marxism (just as, we might agree, every school of psychotherapy must do in regard to psychoanalysis). Even Freud was stimulated sufficiently by it, or at least by its political movements and social criticism, to write several cultural essays, including *Civilization and its Discontents.*

As I trained in psychoanalysis, it was quite evident to me that psychoanalysis and social theory could speak to each other. I just didn't know in what language. Interpersonalism seemed promising, focusing as it did on the analyst-patient connection, on the lived history between child and parent and, later, on counter-transference and the person of the analyst. Yet its muteness on intrapsychic complexity felt like an obstacle. When, in the late 1980s/early 1990s, there bloomed an array of dialects – grouped now under the signifier of relational theory – that might permit this complicated conversation, I was ready for them: object-relations theories of all stripes – classical, postclassical, and in-between; self-psychology; interpersonal theory; intersubjectivity theory.

And so the point is finally sinking in. Otto Kernberg (2000), spokesman for American classical psychoanalysis, now argues that interdisciplinary study can breathe life into psychoanalytic education. He advises dipping into not only neuropsychology but history and sociology. Kirsner (2001), relationist in inclination, similarly warns that thought shuts down when psychoanalytic theoretical and clinical practice shut out interdisciplinary challenges. Perhaps, some might say, Columbus discovered America. But perhaps each discipline must reinvent its own wheel. That neither of these essays refers to any earlier critiques of psychoanalytic myopia (for example, Kovel, 1981) manifests the regulatory problem they bring to our attention. That they do not specifically notice a chief contemporary conduit for social theory's challenge to psychoanalysis issues from their participation in a chief regulatory agency: patriarchy (Aron, 1996; Stern, 1997; Pizer, 1998; Dimen and Harris, 2001; Dimen and Goldner, 2002).

THE CUP THAT RUNNETH OVER

Re-enter feminism, and, with it, the third term to psychoanalysis and social theory, and also the trip from dualism to multiplicity. Feminism has had particular cause to complain both about psychoanalysis's refusal to acknowledge its political context and social theory's refusal to acknowledge inner life. If psychoanalysis is a demand

placed on Marxism, then feminist theory obliges both to stretch for the universal truth to which each lays claim – and, in stretching, to recognize their limits and negation. Neither discipline comprehended the other's subject. The intrapsychic's role in social life, society's place in internal process – this dialectic emerged in both fields as a determinism, whether that of matter over mind or that of mind over matter.

Feminism picked up where social theory and psychoanalysis left off by addressing what they left out – the Woman Question and, with it, myriad others. If your perusal of human life includes the Woman obliterated by Mankind, you encounter the remaining half of the world – what it does, thinks, feels, dreams – and you have to conceptualize it. Reciprocally, Woman leads on and back to vital, nearly untouched issues. Reclaiming the materiality of women's lives puts a new spin on old, often dualistic debates about sexuality, the relation between subjectivity and social life, and human nature. Insofar as this inquiry comes with a social movement – feminism – there arrive with it many social theorists and psychoanalysts who are also women and who are asking questions that might have been asked before but never had to or could be answered until feminism's second wave.

The second wave's prime intervention is the critique of gender. Man is historically the universal human being in both social theory and psychoanalysis. But as long as 'Man' stands for 'men' and 'women', gender remains an invisible category and Woman a special one. Only when the Woman Question is raised does gender, and hence femininity and hence masculinity, become a problematic of general interest to both social and psychoanalytic theory.

Asking about Woman therefore cuts several ways. For one, it renders gender a critical tool to mediate between psychoanalytic and social theories. For another, it facilitates using those theories to re-examine and change both the psychology of gender and the social institutions of sexual difference. Women, gender theory recognizes, are represented by others, by themselves, and by culture as responsible for interior life in a way that men are not. According to their traditional matrimonial and parental roles, women are meant to mind matters thought too trivial for the big heads of government and business. Femininity is to concern itself with the rearing of children, the running of households, the negotiation of interpersonal complexity.

Posed as gender theory, furthermore, the Woman Question brings up the matter of power. In postmodern perspective, we have seen, the binary always hides a hierarchy. Masculinity and femininity sound like separate but equal parts of a balanced dualism, yet they are not. In public and private life, in job searches and appointments, in representational systems, masculinity still wins hands down. The dualistic 'anatomical distinction between the sexes' has complex cultural correlates and elaborations, many of which are entangled in male domination.

The anatomical distinction, contend many feminist critics of classical psychoanalysis, has as much interpersonal and social as intrapsychic significance (see, for example, Bernheimer and Kahane, 1985, on Dora). Psychically, it emerges in the Oedipal matrix, which is not only a matter of mind. It is equally and always a system of power in which the father dominates by claiming both his wife and his son (his relation to his daughter being not well theo-

rized at all). This early patriarchal crucible of mental development is implicated in other power structures. Not only does patriarchy inflect the development of self, sexuality, and intimate relations – in a culture that uses difference as the nucleus of inequality, it webs class, race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, creating gendered Selves and Others to whom similarities of political interest are strange; the strangeness of inequity, invisible; and inequity, inevitable.

Gender theory, we might put it, became the cup that runneth over. About 10 years into second-wave feminism, it began to be evident that gender, a contested category inscribed simultaneously in mental and cultural registers, demands to be seen from many perspectives. As Samuels (personal communication, 2003) opines, gender seems to lend itself to dualism, but in fact it sits between inner and outer. Gender is *liminal:* when we discourse or reflect on it, are we talking about our souls or our society? Gender is at once personal and social. Patriarchy consists, on one hand, of a system of practices and representations organized through symbols, beliefs, and mores. On the other, it is a place of difficulty as well as bliss (Kristeva, 1983; Dimen, 2002), a structure that empowers and privileges men and women differently by assigning them, respectively, to dichotomized, unequal public and private spheres. Consequently, feminist theory not only insists that social and psychoanalytic theory take Woman and her implications seriously. It requires, perhaps in a way that no other discipline now can, that these disciplines take account of each other, so that the relation between inner life and social process can be understood as the personal, idiosyncratic, and dialectically shaped event that it is.

Feminism is the third to Marxism and psychoanalysis. Arguably the legatee of the 'Marx-Freud synthesis', feminism found itself, unexpectedly, as a forum where Freudianism and Marxism might meet. This crossroads is a transitional space where the political is reintroduced to psychoanalysis, the psychological to social theory. Lest Woman the Peacemaker be invoked, however, recall that transitional space is a site of debate, contest, struggle, even loss. Compatibility, if it is to obtain, must then be dialectically refigured. If once we sought to fuse Freud and Marx, we now see that they need to talk instead. Dissolving their dualistic deadlock requires a third party's claims and challenges, the disturbance of a third place. They need a voice that unsettles their complacency, disputes their politics, dislodges their inclinations toward hierarchy, authoritarianism, hegemony.

Here is where feminism and multiplicity come in. Feminism contains a tension out of which multiplicity naturally grows. One pole of this tension insists on the 'authority of personal experience'. This ethic, forged in consciousness-raising groups holds that, no matter what you are told in speech and print about your place as a woman, your own perceptions of your own subordination and capacities possess as much authority as your parents' views, your clergy's doctrine, your professors' truth, your country's laws, your analyst's interpretations. By the same token, only by recognizing women's subjectivity can inner and outer experience be grasped in their intimate entanglements.

Curiously, feminist privileging of the authority of personal experience resonates with contemporary democratic developments in psychoanalysis. In the past, analysts saw themselves as authorizing patients to speak, helping them find their

authentic voices. Now many recognize the patient's authority as equal to their own (see Renik, 1998). This shift in power and paradigm has influenced clinical work, particularly the increasingly common emphasis on countertransference.

The other pole of the tension in feminism insists on the radical, contingent difference of each woman's experience. Even as feminists sought to carve out a new category called Woman, Woman's coherence was disintegrating. As women's historical and cultural and semiotic and intrapsychic variability came to the fore of feminist theory, Woman came to be a variably interpretable subject. Woman is not Woman, but women of different colours, classes, sexualities, politics, or 'white, black, Third World, Jewish, socialist, Marxist, liberal, cultural, structural, psychoanalytic and so forth' (de Lauretis, 1990, 116). Woman has multiple, only partly commensurable histories and subjectivities. And, as she goes, so goes Man. Feminist investigations, sailing 'the postmodern tide of uncertainty' (Benjamin, 1991, 278) question the possibility of any generally valid theory of subjectivity altogether.

There's too much to say, wouldn't you agree? Notice the general public irritation with the cultural and legal requirements that not only gender, but also race and class be taken into account in, say, employment, journalism, or polite speech. Tenacious old prejudices, like racism, certainly figure into this rejection of 'political correctness.' But we might also be suffering what postmodernist literary critic Margery Garber (1992, 16–17) calls a 'category crisis.' Consider the phrase, 'politically correct.' Invented by the New Left to criticize and mock its own rigid tendencies (for example, Stalinism), it has, ironically, morphed into a weapon wielded by the right to skewer progressive politics.

But the phrase's popularity also speaks to dualism's troubles. There are now just too many new ways to think about society, and too many new categories of person to think about. Familiar binaries can't cope. Garber (1992) argues that dualism fails as an organizing structure at just this sort of historical moment, when it can no longer represent the teeming messes of reality. Literature and painting register this disintegration through the transvestite, whose gender-bending thirdness represents the overflow of meaning (Garber, 1992, 17). As part of the general state of confusion, indeterminacy and contingency replace certainty and authority.

To return to the personal part of this intellectual and cultural history, 1979 was such a moment of category crisis and excess, at least for me. It was when my writing cracked, the way Glenn Branca's Symphony No. 3 (Gloria) cracks about four-fifths of the way through, shifting from one plane of musical meaning, whose possibilities have been exhausted, to another. I was to participate in a forum, 'Sex in History,' co-sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Radical Historians Organization and the Coalition for Abortion Rights and Sterilization Abuse (CARASA), in which I was an activist. I was scared. I had too much to say and too little theory to do it with. I knew that sex was at once personal, political, and theoretical. I knew that it was a feminist matter. I knew it was a matter of the unconscious and of history and of practicality. How could I put it all – academics and activism; social theory, psychoanalysis, and feminism; mind, body, and culture – together?

I couldn't. Happily, a friend suggested that I write a set of notes. Unconsciously inspired by Susan Sontag's classic 'Notes on camp' (Sontag, 1964, 275–92), the result of this proto-postmodern experiment

was 'Seventeen sexual propositions, or variety is the spice of life.' Not only its provocative tone but its novel form mirrored its thesis: sexual desire's variability, incommensurability, and mystery in, among, and between individuals, across time and place and disciplines as well. As such, the notes appeared in the radical feminist journal *Heresies: The Sex Issue* (Dimen, 1981). The effort to publish them in a conventional scholarly venue is a story in itself; in response to academic critiques, I wrote several revisions in conventional essay format, only in the end to return to start and redo the piece as 'Seven notes for the reconstruction of sexuality' (Dimen, 1982). There had to be notes because there was no unified theoretical matrix for sex. Instead of a scholarly narrative that pretended to seamlessness, notes could register disciplinary fragmentation, question disciplinary boundaries, and indicate the 'space between' in which something new might emerge. They also mirrored the cultural politics of the time, that small rupture in normalcy, the blip on the screen when, for a moment, everything looked different and everything changed – or seemed to have done.

TENSIONS

To work at the crossroads of social, psychoanalytic, and feminist theory is to operate in a series of *décalages.* You might think of *décalage* aesthetically. Imagine a parquet floor, with a pattern that repeats asymmetrically, its second instance beginning at the midpoint of the first. Or hum a round, a song pattern, such as, *Row, row, row your boat* or, if you're in a French mood, *Frère Jacques.* You sing the little song, then repeat. While you are singing the ditty's second line for the second time, someone else sings the first line. And when the second singer gets to the second repetition of the second line (and you are at your third repetition of the third line), the third singer starts off for the first time. And so on, round and round. The *décalage* from singer to singer and line to line is what makes the whole enterprise fun. Without this design for dissonance, which eschews Mickey Mouse symmetry, the song would rapidly bore. The systematically staggered pattern, a constant renewal of an old design, makes things interesting, and inspires subtle changes by pressing on the original tune, rhymes, and rhythm.

Psychoanalysis absorbs changes in social and intellectual thought with 'glacial speed', as Adrienne Harris (personal communication, 1995) has tartly commented. But the academy and feminism are equally stubborn. Psychoanalysts do not understand, I think, how indebted feminist thought is to social theory in general and Marxism in particular. They therefore have not reckoned how much, in hungrily incorporating gender theory and critique, they must also contend with social criticism (of, for example, power differences between men and women, between heterosexuality and other-sexualities, and so on). Nor do they yet grasp postmodernism's debt to psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis's late recognition of feminism and postmodernism is matched by the academy's continuing refusal to acknowledge the contributions of clinical psychoanalysis. Eager to absorb the text-friendly reading methods provided by Jacques Lacan's linguistics-inspired theories, academics are cool with postmodernist detachment, but uneasy with consulting room empathy. As one professor joining a psychoanalytic feminist seminar said, with self-irony but real revulsion, 'I don't want to have to help anyone.' And, although feminism, for its part, may find itself more at

home in the personal realm of caring and sharing, there is a danger that it will forget – or has forgotten – the political dimensions of its project, the problem of power in gender and sexual relations.

I want to conclude by noticing a tension inhabiting psychoanalysis, social theory, and feminism. Marxism and psychoanalysis share a focus on the truth beneath appearances, widespread in nineteenth century thought and reaching into the twenty-first. Classical Darwinism argues that not the visible phenotype, but the hidden genotype determines survival potential. So in Marxism it is not the observable contractual relations but the obscured class relations between individuals that shape their fates. According to psychoanalysis, our unconscious wishes and fears, not our conscious intentions, drive us forward, backwards, and forward again. And postmodernism is nearly obsessed with absence to the exclusion of presence, with looking beneath, behind, between, rather than at.

A special case, the feminist variant of this tension may illuminate the others. Feminism, like psychoanalysis, has two main but contradictory goals. One of these is ameliorative, the other, revolutionary. This contradiction generates a tension between two impulses: to improve women's lives and to change them altogether. This paradox appears in my thinking about women's lives, about the inequities of classism and racism, homophobia and sexism, about how to help my patients feel better (Dimen, 2003). This contradiction does not trouble me, for it constitutes the problem of digging up the ground beneath your feet, a problem encountered in any situation of change, whether social or psychological.

I am, however, a little embarrassed by the contrast between my earnest, do-gooder wish to solve problems and my ironic sensibility. The contrast between earnestness or sincerity, and irony, is a poorly recognized tension in feminist thought. Earnestness – the wish to make things better – comes across as a mite naïve, in comparison to the world-weary sophistication of irony – the recognition that no good deed goes unpunished. In the tension, sincerity/irony, do we encounter the disjuncture between modernism and postmodernism? According to Terry Eagleton, postmodernism's irreverent rhetoric mingles with a schizoid style and 'contrived depthlessness' (Harvey, 1989, 6). This habit of irony, while contrasting with self-deluding disciplinary claims to Deep Truth, also comes up short on depth. When compared with the passion of engaged politics and, we should add, of engaged psychoanalysis (see Benjamin, 1998; Dimen, 2000), irony without compassion rings a little hollow. The nihilism loitering around postmodernism ill suits clinically and socially progressive stances. Yet it is hard to relinquish the postmodernist point: one's Marxist utopianism and therapeutic zeal like as not blind one – me – to the inevitable backfire of the best laid plans. Enlightenment rationalism, some say, led straight to the twentieth century's techno-fascism (Marcuse, 1955).

I seem unable to resolve this tension (this dualism of my own). Indeed, my difficulty in eliminating it may explain the literary forms – the third – I have chosen (Dimen, 2003). Notes, fragments, dual and multiple voices (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) – these heteroglossic forms permit a certain provisionality. A unified thesis is difficult to change, but you can always add another note. This flexibility is a good thing, since different languages, unveiling different features of reality, are differently useful (Rorty, 1989).

You never know. It may be that what I have been doing to resolve the tension is

choosing not to resolve it. And perhaps that paradoxical choice is yet another provisional resolution of dualism. Both/and. In contemporary psychoanalysis, the relation between dialectics and paradox is not so clear. Maybe it is no longer so clear in social life either; perhaps there never was going to be, as so many believe and believed, a single, universal solution to economic injustice. For psychoanalysis, anyway, paradox may be how we presently understand contradiction (Benjamin, 1994, 93), and out of that understanding emerges contingency – possibilities for multiple answers to old questions, varied solutions for varied problems on psychic and social fronts alike.

Why, anyway, should we have to choose? Earnestly recognizing that problems exist and that they invite solution, we might also keep in mind that solutions come and go. We could ironically reflect that, as poet Norman Fischer said at his installation as co-abbot of San Francisco Zen Center, 'There's no end to trouble.' Or, like the late Stephen Mitchell (1986), we might borrow Nietzsche's metaphor of the sand castle you build at the shore, knowing the wave will knock it down, but building it anyway.

I have written this essay at a crossroads, the provisional nexus of mental and material, one of whose principal features is reflexivity. I draw here on Giddens' argument that the language of any social or psychological discourse regularly enters and transforms its referents as 'part of the frames of action which individuals or groups adopt' (Giddens, 1992, 29). Neither dicta nor manuals, mind and matter map out a terrain of debate. You cannot know, in any given instance of human affairs, which has determinative force. You can only decide after the fact, and only case by case. Matter is determining, but matter is made of mind. 'Like beauty', writes Arthur Danto, 'disgust is in the mind of the beholder, but', as one of the mechanisms of enculturation, it 'is an objective component in the forms of life that people actually live' (Danto, 2001, 25–6). Owen Lattimore (1951) held that cultural change tends to occur at cultural borders, the regions of Otherness where diverse ways of being, doing, and thinking meet, clash, mix, and change. At such heterodox (Bourdieu, 1977) crossroads, reflexivity intensifies, yielding hope, the possibility of new experience, thought, and action, and the chance to think the unthinkable, speak the unspeakable, and ask whatever you want.

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