

**BOOK REVIEW**

# FREUD'S "OUTSTANDING" COLLEAGUE/JUNG'S "TWIN BROTHER": THE SUPPRESSED PSYCHOANALYTIC AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF OTTO GROSS

Gottfried M. Heuer

Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017. 252 pp.

For me the Christmas period leading up to 2017 was characterised by excess. From the safety of my sofa, I overindulged in TV repeats, gorged myself on ice cream, and read far too many biographies. By the time the postman delivered a review copy of Gottfried M. Heuer's fascinating *Freud's "Outstanding" Colleague/Jung's "Twin Brother": The Suppressed Psychoanalytic and Political Significance of Otto Gross* (2017, Routledge), I was already engrossed in four other personal narratives: H. G. Wells (by Lovat Dickson), Paul Mattick (by Gary Roth), Aishah (by Nabia Abbott), and Shakespeare (by Stephen Greenblatt). It is a measure of Heuer's achievement that eventually I was reading all the others through the medium of his work. That is the first point worth noting: Heuer's is not merely a biography of Otto Gross; it is also a reflection on the potential of the biographical form.

"Everything factual is already theory" (*Goethe, quoted p. 19— all page numbers refer to Heuer's book unless otherwise stated*)

The first two chapters, therefore, are dedicated to outlining Heuer's methodology. And, whilst the mere mention of the dreaded "M" word sends shivers down the spine of academics and students alike, they need not fear it in this particular case. For what Heuer does here is to rather cleverly cobble together a novel approach based on familiar discursive resources. From Hegel he borrows the notion of *aufheben*, a German word with a multitude of meanings, including the way thesis and antithesis interact with each other, creating a new synthesis. Walter Benjamin is utilised to ensure the correct synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity, individual and collective, fact and fiction. The endgame for Heuer is one all radical psychologists would share: the need to overcome dualism, the bane of mainstream psychology.

Reminiscent of the "anarchist" author Freddy Perlman, Heuer provides the reader with a story that foregrounds its own mythic components (cf. Perlman, *Against His-Story, against Leviathan!* 1983). Stylistically, the beginning of Heuer's book owes a great deal to both Dada (with its penchant for creating a text composed entirely of quotations) and the Letterist International's concept of *détournement* (the reintegrating of past intellectual productions into a superior construction). He describes quotations lovingly as "the souvenirs, the fruits of moments of suddenly discovering the hitherto unknown—and yet immediately familiar" (p. 24). In a very Bakhtinian sense, the juxtaposition of these quotes sparks its own "creative momentum" (*ibid.*).

But what exactly is the aim of such an approach to biographies, you might ask? Well, I think for Heuer the main aims are to reveal the historically suppressed truth about Gross, forge a psychosocial path to emancipation, and, perhaps most generously of all, to facilitate the redemption of "wrongdoers." In this respect "wrongdoers" refers to

figures such as Freud, Jung, and Hans Gross (Otto's father) who were directly implicated in suppressing the contribution of Gross. Inspired by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Heuer seeks a retroactive bringing together of these men "for a trans-historic redemptive purpose" (p. 23), where the intention is healing rather than judicial punishment. Having sketched the contours of his methodology, Heuer spends the next two chapters informing the reader about Gross's ideas and practice.

"He is an anarchist, too, in the most serious pathological sense" (*Anon., quoted p. 120*).

Chapters three and four chart the complex web of psychoanalysis, politics, and philosophy Gross weaved for the rest of us to decipher. At a time when most psychoanalysts restricted investigation to the intrapsychological plane of existence, Gross deliberately expanded the purview to include the inter- and extrapsychological dimensions as well. Like Reich and Fromm after him, Gross was determined to narrate a multifaceted story. In theoretical terms, he strove to overcome the "will to power" with the "will to relating." In practice, this meant a more egalitarian therapeutic alliance and experiments with group therapy years before Bion formulated his ideas (p. 54).

However, unlike Reich and Fromm, he found inspiration for his interrelational psychoanalysis not in Marx but Kropotkin—especially the latter's concept of "mutual aid" (p. 63). It was through mutual aid that revolutionaries changed society and just as significantly, changed themselves since all previous revolutions "foundered because the revolutionary . . . had been carrying . . . [the authoritarian structure] within himself" (Gross, quoted on p. 36). Gross's take on anarchism was also deeply influenced by Proudhon, Stirner, Rousseau, Fourier, and Nietzsche.

Periodising a psychologist's work is an exercise fraught with danger but, as far as I can tell from Heuer's book, Otto Gross began his short career partially influenced by a "biomedical" paradigm. During this phase he was keen to achieve a linkage between Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Kraepelin's psychiatric concepts (p. 47). Gradually he garnered more social and psychological ideas until the biomedical transformed into a "biopsychosocial" paradigm. Later still, he broke with the positivist and mechanical presuppositions of the biopsychosocial approach and embraced "an artistic and increasingly radically psycho-political orientation" (p. 60).

Heuer claims a number of firsts on behalf of Gross. It was Gross who first suggested that the "personal is political" (p. 104); he is credited with formulating the notion of a "super-ego" 14 years before Freud (p. 71); he pioneered the notion of an "authoritarian personality" before Reich and Adorno (p. 72); his ideas on "psychological types" influenced Jung (p. 96); and, perhaps most importantly, Gross advocated the notion of "intersubjectivity" (p. 96), which years later became a bedrock of so many strands of post-Freudianism.

All this may very well be accurate (and intriguing) but for me, establishing chronological priority is less vital than demonstrating whether Gross's ideas are an improvement on existing ones. In some cases they clearly are (e.g., Gross's championing of sexual revolution [p. 68] and women's rights' [p. 62] was an improvement on Freud's views of women). However, in areas related to self-knowledge, play, and beauty (p. 88), I cannot envisage how his ideas are an improvement on, say, Vygotsky's far more comprehensive investigations.

"My aim is to contribute to a redemptive renewal" (*Heuer, p. 12*).

Heuer gathers up all the descriptive information available about Gross's therapy techniques. In our risk-averse society, Gross's maverick style would probably be frowned upon, but I imagine many therapists would be surreptitiously envious of the freedoms he enjoyed. His therapy style was intense, deep, and short. He could affect a dramatic change in the client within a matter of weeks. His anarchist friend Mühsam, who was also analysed by him, claims to have been "completely cured" within six weeks. Gross's interrogative Q & A could "cause a whole *crust* of the illness" to slide off (Mühsam, quoted on p. 51). However, Gross's intrusive questioning could also create resistance. The same Mühsam would later recount, "I broke off the treatment when the doctor [Gross] asked questions concerning the utmost discrete issues of the erotic life, to which I responded curtly by saying, 'That's none of your bloody business!'" (Mühsam, quoted on p. 53).

Despite the occasional failure, Gross was determined to replace Freud's technique of the "opaque mirror" with a more approachable style that encouraged the patients' "inborn will to relate" (p. 66). And, whilst Freud restricted his practice to mostly bourgeois patients, Gross analysed a more varied clientele, focusing on the needs of petty-bourgeois, proletarian, and lumpenproletarian patients instead (p. 54). There was another key difference with Freud in this regard. Gross took risks to advocate for his disempowered patients (p. 129), whilst Freud shunned advocacy in favour of a cool intellectual detachment.

The picture that emerges from Gross's therapeutic practice suggests an iconoclastic troubadour therapist who travelled geographically, culturally, and sociologically in order to bring psychological insight and well-being to all and sundry, irrespective of ability to pay. One could say it was "potlatch" therapy, a feast for interrelating, based on gift-exchange.

"Our pain doesn't come from the love we weren't given in the past, but from the love we ourselves aren't giving in the present" (*Williamson, quoted on p. 32*).

In an interesting structural reversal, it is only after Heuer has dealt with Gross's ideas and practice that we are treated to the kind of titbits other biographers consider the mainstay of their craft.

As Chapter six unfolds, Gross emerges as a contradictory character. His anarchism promoted peace (but occasionally also violence); his feminism was genuine (but also tinged with a domineering attitude); his writings on children insightful (and yet he was negligent towards his own children); he loved and cared for animals (and yet he was capable of alienating friends and loved ones). The drug problem certainly played a role in dragging his soul from one extreme display to the next. He became addicted to arsenic in adolescence (p. 161). Later in life, Gross claimed "Every word I have written has been written under the influence of cocaine—I've never been able to write a single decent sentence without its effect" (p. 32). Less sanguinely, Freud once described him as "probably in the early phase of cocaine paranoia" (Freud, quoted on p. 75).

Gross suffered "from what appears to have been an emotionally absent mother and an overpowering father" (p. 30). His father would plead with therapists to intern Otto, partly because he had become a family embarrassment and partly because internment was considered Otto's only chance of a cure (p. 74). When one adds to this Jung's deliberate misdiagnosis of Gross as suffering from dementia praecox, it is easy to see how Gross could have become bitter and suspicious (p. 81).

"A hundred years ago, Otto Gross wrote theory for the therapy of tomorrow" (*Lois Madison, p. viii*).

I think Heuer's is a key text deserving of sustained and serious attention. I hope I have managed to convey something of its vim and vigour. Otto Gross is a man viciously cast out of history, first by Freud and Jung and later by Adorno, Fromm, and Russell Jacoby. Even Cooper and Laing, ignored his "anti-psychiatry" legacy. In Chapter seven, Heuer attempts to reverse this trend by describing how interest in Gross has been gaining momentum in recent decades. Ironically, even being reduced to a comic footnote in Cronenberg's 2011 movie, *A Dangerous Method*, has gained Gross new fans. What Cronenberg fails to see, however, is that Gross was more "authentic" than Freud and Jung combined! He was authentic in the sense of wanting to harmonise the private and public spheres of living. And, like Foucault and Antonin Artaud, Gross lived his own experiments, and paid the price. In an age, when pseudo-authenticity can propel one to the Presidency of the United States, real authenticity becomes a vital element of resistance against authoritarianism.

But I feel there is an even more urgent reason for reanimating Gross. When Lev Vygotsky analysed the crisis within psychology all those years ago, he only had to contend with *one* mainstream crisis in *one* discipline. Lucky-boy-Lev used to live in an era when crisis was singular and pantomime baddies wore recognisable thatched moustaches! Today, the persisting crisis in mainstream psychology has dragged even critical psychology into a quagmire of irrelevance. Similar crises have engulfed the rest of social science. The task of radicals today is immeasurably more arduous than Vygotsky's. We must post post-modern without falling into the trap of yesteryear's failures in the shape of modernism and pre-modernism. And this posting of post-modern must include the return of both the

politically and psychologically repressed forms of class struggle. If for no other reason, this is why we need the likes of Otto Gross today. We owe Gottfried M. Heuer a debt of gratitude for reanimating the (useful) dead!

Babak Fozooni  
*Open University, UK*

**Babak Fozooni** is a critical social scientist who has obtained six degrees. He completed his PhD in Psychology at Manchester Metropolitan University. He currently works as a tutor at the Open University.