The Three Faces of Two-Person Psychology
Development, Ontology, and Epistemology

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With the breakdown of the hegemonic hold of ego psychology on American psychoanalysis, we have been groping for ways to describe, explain, and label a new paradigm. A variety of terms have been offered, including participant observation, social constructivism, and intersubjectivity. In this paper, I use the phrase two-person psychology to embrace all these dimensions of the new paradigm. I suggest that both the ongoing struggle to define this paradigm and the proliferation of names for it are due to the fact that any viable psychoanalytic paradigm must address issues at least at three levels of discourse: the developmental (the origin of self and object representations), the ontological (the essentials of human nature), and the epistemological (on what basis and in what ways can we claim to know anything about anyone's unconscious psychology, including our own?).

Perhaps the most widely recognized part of the one-person versus two-person dichotomy is the developmental component. At the developmental level, the question at stake has been whether we interpret as if children make themselves up or as if they are largely created by their parents. Ontologically, what is ultimately at stake in the one-person versus two-person debate is the fate of the concept of resistance. Any two-person psychoanalytic theory of therapy will be forced to abandon the notions that resistance is intrapsychic and that resistance is the ego's


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primary agenda in the psychoanalytic situation. Finally, any psychology that is "two-person" at the epistemological level will assume that conscious insight, intellectual or emotional, is an event in a dialogue, not an achievement of a lone and private mind contemplating itself.

In any particular case vignette or theoretical essay we may be able to find assumptions that place the work in either the one-person or two-person "camp" at one level of discourse but in the opposite camp at another level of discourse. This makes it more difficult than it might seem to say of a particular analyst that he or she is a one-person or two-person psychologist. It also suggests that other ways of describing and labeling the emerging American paradigm of psychoanalytic theory and practice may be required and that the simple relational versus nonrelational dichotomy is a transitional phase in defining schools of thought within psychoanalysis.

The phrase TWO-PERSON PSYCHOLOGY has become a standard shorthand for our recognition that a new paradigm has taken a firm foothold in American psychoanalysis. With its multiple conceptual surfaces carrying such labels as intersubjectivity, the relational perspective, and social constructivism, this contemporary paradigm is usually contrasted with a traditional paradigm that is labeled classical, drive theory, and ego psychology.

Balint (1950) and Rickman (1957) introduced the phrase two-person psychology into the literature. Lacan (1975), in a 1954 lecture, called it "the most fertile line of thought traced out since Freud's death" (p. 11). In 1983, Greenberg and Mitchell recast the labels of the contrasting perspectives within psychoanalysis as the drive structure paradigm (drive theory plus ego psychology) and the relational structure paradigm (object relations theory plus interpersonal psychoanalysis). Ghent (1989) suggested, in a dialectic turn, that "the very stuff of the intrapsychic" and that, in fact, "it is this intrapsychic aspect of interpersonal relations that offers the new vista for psychoanalytic therapy towards character change" (p. 180).

Finally, Aron (1990) focused on the method of free association to show that key elements of Freud's clinical theory may remain central even to analysts who categorically reject the idea that the contents of the patient's unconscious can, by and large, be brought into consciousness with little contamination by the analyst's personality and theory.

As Kuhn (1962) taught us during the 1960s, when two paradigms coexist, tension is produced between them and an adversarial atmosphere often arises. Formal debates between advocates of the new and the traditional paradigms may take place, but more often the debates are informal because no one really has the authority to specify a proposition on which the debate would rest, the rules of evidence, who would be on each side of the debate, or who the winner would be in any round of the debate.

Further complicating any "traditional paradigm versus contemporary paradigm" period in a discipline's history is the fact that when either side attempts to define any aspect of the other side's paradigm, the other side claims to be misunderstood and set up as a straw man. One-person (classical, ego psychological, modern structural) analysts have reacted to the assertion that they are being joined, if not superseded, by two-person (relational, intersubjective) analysts. They have reacted with claims that they were relational all along and that the one-person versus two-person dichotomy or dialectic is illusory, as are the terms, such as relational and intersubjective, that are used to capture the two-person side. Modell (1984) argued that transference and countertransference have always been intrinsically two-person concepts. Dunn (1993) suggested that a few references by Freud to the idea of the drives as having been shaped during human evolution by environmental realities allows us to say that the drives are intrinsically relational and, therefore, Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) were making much ado about nothing by counterposing a relational paradigm against a drive paradigm. With an almost identical debating methodology, Dunn (1995) recently argued that counterposing intersubjectivity as a value and technique of two-person psychoanalysis against positivism as a value and technique of one-person (classical) psychoanalysis is equally illusory. His way of constructing his article is something of a prototype for classical reactions to assertions that there is another paradigm in psychoanalysis and that it has something that the classical paradigm does not. Finally, the newcomer's aims have to be made tangential to the real business of psychoanalysis (e.g., interpreting resistance and uncov-
erating the unconscious). Dunn asserts that the intersubjective perspective aims to rid psychoanalysis of its desire to understand what goes on in the mind of the patient. Second, whatever version of analysis is being called one-person (usually classical or modern structural theory) has to be shown to actually contain all the virtues claimed for the new two-person perspective. Dunn performs this damage control by softening the stereotype of rigidity that has dogged classical analysts: they have actually been arguing that only to some extent can analysts directly perceive the patient's mind; they have actually always valued uncertainty and openness in the clinical situation; and, most startling, all evidence to the contrary, classical analysts have actually been using the ideal of positivistically obtained objective truth about the patient to facilitate that very uncertainty and openness. Third, impossible criteria have to be shown to actually contain all the virtues claimed for the new two-person psychology (and that it can be contrasted with something else whether that something else is called one-person theory, classical analysis, or positivistic thinking) cannot make sense of the dialectics apparent in psychoanalysis. Dunn, Sugarman, and Wilson, of the tension between one-person, contemporary (versus classical) paradigm and two-person, dialogical, intersubjective theories. He acknowledged that intersubjective perspectives on human psychology in the two-person paradigm are not useful, if they even have something to do with psychoanalysis. Such dismissive critiques of the idea that there is such a thing as a two-person psychology (and that it can be contrasted with something else whether that something else is called one-person theory, classical analysis, or positivistic thinking) cannot make sense of the dialectics that are driving psychoanalytic inquiry forward because they miss this point: Any concept that is truly central to a psychoanalytic paradigm must ultimately be traceable back to root developmental, ontological, and epistemological assumptions—and it would be startling to find that such assumptions do not exist in counterposition to some alternative. In other words, there must, by definition, be some way to specify the assumptions on which a key concept in any field rests, and, once that has been done, it will invariably become clear that the validity of those assumptions is not self-evident. It is not, for example, self-evident and unquestionable that children do not want to know about the full range of their sexual excitement and rages; that, therefore, they stop knowing about the desires associated with such feeling states; and, finally, that, in analysis, adult analysands will stop (or at least significantly reduce) this intrapsychic not-knowing when we observe and interpret it over long periods of time, whereas, if we tell them about the anger or sexual excitement "behind" the resistance, they will simply take further defensive refuge in our apparent lack of concern about their ruthlessness and malevolence. These are all foundational assumptions that unite a certain group of analysts and serve as starting points for their research. For such assumptions to have any strength in defining a position within the field, they must exist in counterposition to some alternative assumptions. Otherwise they would be trivial assertions. They are only strong and important assertions because they do exist in counterposition to some other foundational assertions. There must, in other words, be a way to question and disagree with a key concept, while correctly understanding what its adherents mean by it. It is at such moments of genuine disagreement that a true dichotomy is created. The so-called two-person (versus one-person), contemporary (versus classical) paradigm has not emerged because of misunderstandings about the "real" principles and practices of classical theory. Schafer (1995) offered a much more balanced assessment than have Dunn, Sugarman, and Wilson, of the tension between one-person, objectivist, structural theories and two-person, dialogical, intersubjective theories. He acknowledged that intersubjective perspectives appear in classical theory only tangentially: "Clearly, certain intersubjective processes, such as unconscious communication in relation to the transference, are acknowledged, but essentially they are not made central to the general theory. Rather they remain subject matter for
the detached observer, specifically the analyst" (p. 227). Although he is also critical of some of the directions in which the two-person literature has evolved, he does not dismiss the reality of what I am calling here the one-person versus two-person dichotomy/dialectic: "[W]e confront a chronic and inevitable conflict between the objectivist on the one hand and intersubjectivist and dialogical participant on the other... this theoretical situation must be regarded as one of ongoing tension rather than one that is amenable to resolution" (p. 229). As troublesome as it is to think, write, and work clinically during a period of tension between multiple robust paradigms, that, I believe, is the situation in which we find ourselves.

In this paper I want to complicate things even further by suggesting that the dichotomy/dialectic of one-person and two-person psychologies is not only real but actually includes three separate dichotomies/dialectics and three distinct debates that are unfolding in the psychoanalytic literature: one at the developmental level, a second at the ontological level, and a third at the epistemological level. The position one takes at each level has direct clinical implications, which I will elaborate on with theoretical discussion and case material.

The Developmental Dimension of the One-Person versus Two-Person Debate

Perhaps the most widely recognized part of the one-person versus two-person dichotomy/dialectic is the developmental component. At the developmental level, the question at stake has been whether we interpret as if children make themselves up or as if they are largely created by their parents. More specifically, over the last decade, the central issue has been the effects of trauma and abuse versus drive-derived fantasy in the construction of those self and object representations through which we experience contemporary others, including the analyst.

A one-person psychology, although unlikely to deny that children are abused, traumatized, and otherwise affected by the events of their childhoods, will, by and large, take the position that the facts matter less than what the patient did with the facts. For example, in a 1990 paper, "Fantasy Formation: A Child Analyst's Perspective," Dowling appeared to have taken quite seriously his patient's remembered history of sexual abuse, but his analytic interest in the abuse was largely as a piece of reality that had intensifled the patient's "incestuous and sadistic wishes and fears" and that was now used unconsciously by the patient defensively, to "avoid recognition of her own drive-derivative states of sexual excitement and rage" (p. 98).

Dowling assumes that these affects arise endogenously and that then we must deal with them. The abusing father does not make his daughter sexually excited or enraged. Through his abuse, however, he offers himself as a figure who can be represented unconsciously as the cause of those feelings. This is useful defensively, Dowling implies, because we all want to represent someone other than ourselves as the source of sexual excitement and rage that makes us anxious or guilty.

For the two-person developmentalist, by contrast, the unconscious is not an endogenously created representational landscape. During early development, there is no constant flow of libido and aggressive stimulation arising from the body and impinging on the mind. This does not, however, mean that a two-person developmental psychology must treat all stimulation as exogenous. It may well be the case, as, for example, sleep studies suggest (Ellman, 1992), that endogenous stimulation (although not necessarily a continuous supply of sexual excitement and rage) plays an important role in sex and aggression. This does not, however, lead directly to the conclusions that the developmentally critical representations of self and other that mediate perception of and participation in later intimate relationships are formed simply out of such endogenous stimulation, that children must inevitably become conflicted about such endogenous stimulation, or that children naturally seek to defensively attribute the origins of such stimulation to outside sources. The notion of endogenous stimulation, in other words, does not, even if accepted as true, substantiate Dowling's assumption that the reason a child would make a memory of incest central on his or her unconscious representational landscape would be to defensively attribute the origins of his or her endogenously arising sexual excitement and rage to that event.

Although sexual excitement can occur simply through the child's autoerotic experience of his or her body and rage can occur in reaction to frustrated efforts to act on the world or to control the body, these
feelings often arise in the context of relational events. Further, although the child possesses capacities (ranging from simply distracting himself or herself to the sophisticated psychological activity of representing an affective experience) for keeping these feelings from escalating to levels that overwhelm the immature ego, the intervention of adults is frequently required in these affect-managing efforts. Thus, adults become represented in the minds of children as causes of excitement and rage and as helpful or useless coregulators of these affects.

Such representations are both true and false, informative and defensive. Affects are personal psychological creations, but they are not divine creations spun out of nothing. Anxiety, as a prime example, cannot be usefully understood (in any genuinely two-person developmental psychology) to arise and dissipate strictly as an intrapsychic event. Even if we allow for the prototypical Freudian situation, where anxiety occurs as the ego assesses another emerging affective state, such as sexual excitement or rage, to be dangerous, and even where this other affective state is presumed to be emerging not as part of a relational event but simply because the body is wired to produce such states, a two-person developmental paradigm still urges us to recognize the anxiety as inherently a communication designed to elicit anxiety-reducing responses from others. Depending on what these others do and what opportunities for action they allow or prohibit, the anxiety will escalate, stabilize, or diminish.

As a result, the abusing father of a girl becomes represented as having caused overwhelming sexual excitement, anxiety, shame, rage, and guilt—all in one catastrophic moment—and, to add injury to injury, fails, of course, at that same moment, to perform his expected duty as helper to his daughter in her efforts to regulate these feelings. Furthermore, the very feeling state of being sexually excited has now been linked with anxiety, shame, rage, and guilt in a stable and powerful affective compromise formation. Even if the traumatic event has not been represented (not even unconsciously), sexual excitement has become a perverted affective signal that triggers such painful affects as terror, shame, or rage.

All warded-off psychic contents are either such unrepresented affective states (ranging in level of organization from characterological moods to presymbolic enactment patterns) or they are representations.
talk incessantly about our transferential and infantile sexual and aggressive wishes. Because we do not, some type of intrapsychic resistance is presumed to be interfering. The concept of intrapsychic resistance can only flourish in a theoretical atmosphere heavily infused with the idea that a single human mind could, if it did not suffer excessive anxiety, become aware of the full range of its own psychological activity.

In a two-person psychology, by contrast, an individual's self-reflexive consciousness is not an outgrowth of unconscious mentation (the cortex of the mind theory of consciousness). In fact, for there to be any meaning to the phrase two-person psychology at all, discourse about human psychology, we must think of consciousness as a creation of multiple minds. To make my point clear, it is necessary to create the appropriate context for this assertion. Since the 17th century, theories of mind have by and large sought to reduce the mental to the physical and have, in the process, had little if anything to say about consciousness. Freud recognized this and adopted an ontologically subjectivist attitude toward consciousness; that is, consciousness for Freud was not describable from outside. It is the one thing in nature that must be described from the inside out to have any validity. Freud, in other words, implied what Searle (1993) has recently made explicit: Consciousness is an inherent biological property of the human nervous system—one that has the unique property of subjectivity. Although many psychologists—wearing their various behavioristic, functionalistic, and information-processing hats—were trying to eliminate subjectivity so that they could take their rightful places as investigators of the real world rather than as ghost-busters, psychoanalysis maintained that consciousness was part of the real world and worth investigating through psychoanalytic research carried out while conducting psychoanalytic treatment. What I am adding here and what I am labeling a two-person ontological proposition about mind is that the how and why of intentional (or even simply meaningful) consciousness has eluded capture in one-person psychological paradigms because consciousness is a property of two or more minds. Consciousness is both necessary and understandable only because there are other minds besides one's own.

This assertion can be hard to digest to the extent that we, even in psychoanalysis, remain attached to the proposition that conscious awareness is necessary for complex psychological activity. Freud implied that it is not, and Jaynes (1976) openly asserted that consciousness "is not what we generally think it is" (p. 46) and that well before we learned to do it, we spoke, judged, reasoned, and solved problems. Jaynes argued that the unconscious is not simply the seat of condensation, displacement, and other defensive and distorting mechanisms. It is the seat of reason and judgment as well. In fact, Jaynes concluded, even civilization is conceivable without consciousness (p. 47).

Consciousness is a mental activity undertaken with the ultimate aim of sharing mental contents, not only communicating to others our affects and representations but making them available to be mixed with those of others to create something new and better. This inherently intersubjective consciousness allows changes to take place in unconsciously held representations at rates faster than evolution or even trial-and-error learning could have allowed. Thus, it is a double-edged sword: by opening each of us up to the affects and representations of other minds, consciousness makes us vulnerable and improvable. We are vulnerable to becoming the ruthlessly and malevolently exploited objects of others, but we also obtain the ability to reflect on our affects and representations. Because other people receive my affects and representations through my various expressions of them, they can hold them in mind and give them back to me (although in a form inevitably modified) as stimuli coming from outside so that I can study and reflect on them. Thus, from a two-person perspective, it is not possible to have a one-person theory of mind because that theory would have no way to explain the origins of consciousness. If affects and representations can be generated and acted on unconsciously, as psychoanalysis in all its theories insists, then consciousness, for which any psychoanalytic theory of mind must account, has no purpose. It is only from a two-person ontological perspective that consciousness makes sense.

The radical idea that consciousness is inherently intersubjective also has emerged in contemporary American philosophy, the other discipline that, along with psychoanalysis, was largely taken over in the late 1930s and early 1940s by the ideas of the Viennese who fled here to escape Nazi persecution. In philosophy the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle of philosophers dominated American thinking and writing until the social upheaval in the 1960s. At the same time, ego psychology became virtually synonymous with psychoanalysis in the three faces of two-person psychology.
United States. At the heart of both intellectual takeovers was the making sacred of language.

American philosophy became almost entirely consumed with the analysis and clarification of the language of empirical science and the language of mathematics. Ideas other than the scientific and mathematical propositions that appear in human consciousness were treated as self-comforting illusions about which nothing useful could be said. Subjects like metaphysics and ethics were, one might say, resistances to facing the reality of the world.

Similarly, American psychoanalysis increasingly focused on the resistance of analysands to talking about their oedipal sexual excitement, rage, anxiety, and guilt—the four affects that Freud had determined to be at the heart of psychic reality. Consciousness, with secondary process language as its modus operandi, was assumed to an adaptive capacity that developed autonomously in each mind so that the mind could expand its repertoire of ways to implement its sexual and aggressive agenda. If an analyst did not participate in enactments that gratified libidinal and aggressive wishes and, yet, the analysand was not thinking and talking about those wishes and the anxiety and guilt associated with them, then that analysand was resisting. This could be known a priori because a mind whose main task is to manage sexual excitement and rage would talk about nothing else unless anxiety about doing so got in the way.

This led directly to the clinical position illuminated recently in an article by Sugarman (1992). He begins his account by remarking that his analysand's reluctance to use language to express his feelings and fantasies or to reflect on himself was evident from the beginning of the analysis. Instead he brought in material that demonstrated how his reluctance to use language to express emotion was rooted in his severe conflicts over aggression [p. 441].

Sugarman here uses "reluctance" as an equivalent for "resistance" and goes on to describe, in this light, his confronting, as a resistance, the boy's preference for enactment over verbalization during sessions. He writes: "Although these enactments within the analysis provided useful analytic content, they also served his resistance against expressing his impulses and feelings directly with words" (p. 442). When his patient became anxiously silly at Sugarman's attempts "to turn the session to his feelings or other aspects of his subjective world," Sugarman pointed out the defensive aspect of these behaviors and interpreted the boy's resistance to saying in words that he simply did not want to talk about what Sugarman had said.

Sugarman's assumptions about the natural relationship between affect and language are at the heart of what we have come to call one-person psychoanalysis. Not only is it assumed that one's affects should become words, but it is also assumed that the words should form first in one's own mind. These assumptions always lead to an emphasis on resistance. Sugarman wants the patient to think and talk in a straightforward and logical way about his sexual excitement and rage. Anything short of that indicates that a resistance is at work.

Yet, despite a longstanding emphasis on resistance and its interpretation among ego psychological analysts, there is significant confusion among them over resistance analysis: "While most analysts know that interpretations of resistances take place first, exactly what this means, how it might be done, what one needs to look for, still seems mysterious" (Busch, 1992, p. 1113). Busch wrote in the light of two decades of seminal writing on resistance analysis by Gray (1973, 1982, 1990), who complains that too many classical analysts tell the patient what they find themselves thinking about the patient's unconscious drive-derived fantasies. In my view, that makes them not wrongheaded one-person analysts but creative two-person analysts. Gray, however, wants them to focus not on what the patient doesn't know and thus doesn't say about himself or herself, but on what the patient does to not know and not say what he or she is doing unconsciously.

Gray, whose work is intellectually exciting and compelling, assumes that the ontological validity of the concept of resistance is beyond question. Human beings are simply constituted in such a way that during childhood they predictably feel a need to stop knowing that they are capable of sexually excited and enraged wishes to ruthlessly use and malevolently destroy others, and, as a result, do manage to stop knowing. The task of analysis is to make them aware of how they perform this task of not knowing because it is assumed to be a deviation from natural conscious awareness of all of one's wishes.

If, however, we start from the opposite ontological premise, that we are preadapted to unconsciously think affectively and to communicate
our feelings to others, and that it is only after this happens that we
come to be able to reflect on our feelings, then a patient's not knowing
about his or her sexual excitement and rage is not understood to be a
resistance within the mind of the patient. From such an intersubjective
perspective all of us have come to know our emotional lives only to the
extent that our affects and our allusions to them were recognized by
others who could tolerate in themselves whatever they felt in the face
of our feelings, could think about what they felt, and could then com­
municate to us something psychologically usable by us. This intersub­
jective ontological foundation generates a fundamentally different
paradigm of psychoanalysis, most remarkably one without the concept
of intrapsychic resistance. In this intersubjective paradigm, people
come for psychoanalysis because there is something they cannot forget,
something they cannot stop telling others about their lives, not, as the
traditional paradigm assumes, because they do not want to remember
something and so are doomed to repeat it. Prior to contact with the
analyst, we all carry on our analyses out in the world, attempting to use
all available others to recognize and make conscious our unconsciously
generated feeling states. The purpose of analysis is to concentrate this
analytic effort in the relationship between clinician and patient.

The role of the clinician in this paradigm is to make available to the
consciousness of the patient as much of what emerges into the clini­
cian's consciousness as can be put into a useful communication, rather
than, as in a one-person paradigm, to keep as much as possible from
getting in between the patient's unconscious and conscious psychic
processes. In the two-person paradigm it is precisely the mind of the
analyst that is between the patient's unconscious and conscious psychic
processes, just as it has always been other minds that have been
between the patient's unconscious and conscious processes. In a very
real sense, because of this ontological state of affairs, all of us can be
understood to be carrying on our analyses throughout our lives and in
every contact we have with others. The task of the analysis is to try to
focus this drive to be recognized and analyzed into the analyst-patient
relationship as much as possible.

Consider one aspect of a first meeting with an 18-year-old as an
example of work carried out within this paradigm. There are many
ways to think about and respond to his having begun to talk almost
immediately about "his addiction" to "bondage games." I emphasized
his desire to have me recognize the most tormenting element of his per­
sonal psychology and his struggle to control it through erotic activity.
So I made an early and speculative interpretation in which I related
being physically bound by a girl to having his worst anxieties bound up
inside of him.

When he then asked if he would be lying on the couch, my agenda
was to keep this dialogue of recognition open, even if that meant
"prematurely" interpreting (or speculating) about his unconscious fan­
tasies. I said that he now wanted to sleep, as he felt like doing after his
orgasms. He asked me to tell him how I knew that. I take this sort of
comment from an analysand to be an expression of at least interest in
what I have been saying. What I was doing, and often do early in anal­
ysis, is to tell analysands what I find myself thinking as I listen to them,
so that they know I am thinking about them in a particular (interpre­
tive) way. So with this young man, I was simply, from my
perspective, saying (and now I would say it more clearly than I did then):
"Here is what I find myself thinking as I listen to you tell me about your­self." Then, when he found himself surprised by the fact that
I seemed to be hearing what he was unconsciously communicating, I
would be able to say: "Well, to the extent that you feel I am under­
standing you, I have to assume you are telling me these things about
yourself." What I did at that time, however, was to suggest that he was
turning me into a magician who could read his mind, but that my name
for what I did in my mind with what he told me was not magic but
thinking.

The Epistemological Dimension of the
One-Person versus Two-Person Debate

Let me turn now to the third level of discourse on which the one­
person versus two-person debate has been unfolding in the psychoana­
lytic literature—the epistemological level. Here, the key question is
what can be known about our own unconscious psychology or that of
anyone else, and how it can be known. Again, there is a striking simi­
larity between the traditional Viennese-American paradigm in
psychoanalysis and in philosophy. Under the labels analytic philosophy,
logical positivism, and logical empiricism, this philosophical paradigm settled into intellectual positions similar in many ways to those adopted by American ego psychologists. Continental philosophers who adopted an epistemological stance more like that of two-person psychoanalysts were marginalized in the philosophy departments of universities in this country. Now, however, even certain American philosophers whose early roots were in analytic philosophy have emerged as two-person intersubjectivists. Davidson, for example, has critiqued the one-person paradigm. "There is one way of doing philosophy," he said recently, "in which you suppose that something is presented to us. That something is either raw experience, sensory data, or stimulations of our nerve endings—it doesn't make any difference" (Borradori, 1994, p. 50). Although Davidson is correct in saying that for his purposes what the something is doesn't matter, we know that in the traditional American psychoanalytic paradigm it is sexual excitement or rage derived from libidinal and aggressive drives. That is what presents itself to the mind and what the mind must work on. The ego inevitably reacts with anxiety to these affective eruptions and finds ways to not know that such feelings are personal creations of the self for which it is responsible. As Davidson says, in one-person paradigms there is always a mind and a thing on which it works privately to "construct a picture of an outside world and of other people" (p. 50). Davidson calls these epistemologies "empirical and Cartesian because we can develop a picture of the world all by ourselves, and we could do so even if there were nobody else in the world" (p. 50).

Davidson's current view, by contrast, is similar to psychoanalytic intersubjectivity and constructivism. Whereas ego psychological therapy aims for an ego that will be more objective about its world and its affects, Davidson advances the idea that no degree of objectivity is even conceivable except in an intersubjective context. Objectivity, in other words, is a property of intersubjectivity and not an intrapsychic achievement. "Until we have an idea of what's going on in the minds of other people," he argues, "it doesn't make sense to say that we have the concept of objectivity, of something existing in the world quite independent of us" (p. 50).

Like the one-person psychoanalytic psychologist, the empiricist assumes that the first step in knowing about the world is knowing what is on one's own mind. The form this assumption took in the clinical theories of American psychoanalysts in the 1940s and 1950s can be captured in the question: "What is it that I hope the patient will come to know about his or her mental processes if I make the interpretation I have in mind?" Ultimately the answer was "a compromise formation," but the immediate answer was "a resistance." The underlying epistemological assumptions were: (1) whatever is conscious at the moment is keeping something else, something more anxiety-provoking, out of consciousness; (2) the resistance is the only part of his or her unconscious psychology that the patient can really come to know at that moment, the only part of the patient's psychology that can emerge fully into consciousness, ideationally and affectively; and (3) to interpret anything else would not really help the patient come into permanent conscious possession of a previously unconscious element of his or her psychology and might even lead to the construction in conscious­ness of a facsimile of that element, which would become another bar­rier to the emergence of the real thing, a facsimile that would essen­tially be an idea from the mind of the analyst that the patient had come to know and was now treating as something from his or her own mind.

Davidson assumes, by contrast, that a person's knowing what is on his or her mind, knowing something about the outside world, and knowing what is in somebody else's mind all happen at the same time. Conscious insight, intellectual or emotional, is an event in a dialogue, not an achievement of a lone and private mind contemplating itself. New knowledge of what happens inside ourselves, Davidson claims, follows only from some insight into a world shared with other human minds and into those other minds themselves (Borradori, 1994, p. 51).

When the patient and the analyst have succeeded in fashioning an interpretive dialogue that can contain and regulate the affects being defended against, they will—together—become conscious of those aspects of the patient's unconscious psychology in which those disturbing affects originate. The patient wants them to be known and wants them to be held in consciousness, but he or she wants this to take place first in a mind that can manage them. Underlying this assertion is a theory of mind that posits an unconscious psyche constantly driven to bring its contents into consciousness, and which is character­ized by no indigenous resistance at all to this basic drive. This drive toward consciousness is, however, dialectically wedded to another
equally powerful drive to maximize the positive affective state of the self. Holding in one's own mind alone all of one's affects and unconscious self and object representations would lead to disturbance, pain, and, eventually, madness and breakdown. Thus, the drive toward consciousness must make use of other minds. This premise is the foundation of a fundamentally intersubjective view of human psychological life and it argues strongly for us to recognize that patients are always trying to communicate something—even if it is anxiety about communicating something else—and thus the analytic effort is to identify the patient as unconscious communicator and not resistor.

Never is this intersubjective epistemological agenda of the analytic work more significant than in moments when the patient and analyst are talking about some aspect of their relationship. Patient and clinician come together to talk about the patient's unconscious. As they do this, the very dialogue they create to carry out their task offers itself as another reality competing for their attention. The most radical intersubjective epistemology might argue that they can actually talk about nothing else. Every attempt to do so will land them right in the middle of questions about their own dialogue. But even analysts who do not embrace this most radical possible position have gradually moved toward accepting the inevitability of enactment's being a component of many, if not all, therapeutic exchanges.

Kleinian analysts have held this position at least since the late 1940s. They began to embrace it when Klein described patients as trying to force parts of their ego into the analyst. The increasing use of the concept of projective identification is, I think, due to its being an explanation for the power of the patient's fantasy life to draw the therapist into unwittingly playing out certain roles other than that of interpreter—the roles of various versions of self and object in developmental narratives held unconsciously by the patient.

Both Kleinian and interpersonal analysts talked about this clinical phenomenon not so much as countertransference (in the sense of something to be weeded out of the therapist) but as an integral part of the clinical process, a key method available to the patient to communicate his or her internal states to the therapist. To bring this idea into the ego psychological mainstream of analysis in this country, "permission papers" were required. In such papers, analysts of a particular school find a way to give permission to their colleagues to use a clinical theory and a corresponding technique previously identified with the thinking of another school, whose members are generally considered to conduct wild analyses or, worse, not to be doing real analysis at all. Chused (1992) and Renik (1993) have recently recognized "the extremely subtle ways in which repetitions, actualizations, and enactments occur with almost every intervention" (Chused, p. 163) and have concluded that we don't even become aware of our emotional responses during sessions until we have translated those responses into action (Renik, 1993). I believe that what Chused and Renik are getting at is that, since both patient and analyst do most of their thinking unconsciously, we, like our patients, only come to know what has been going on in our minds when the results of this unconscious mental activity emerge into preconsciousness or consciousness. By that time, these unconscious affective and ideational productions must have had some impact on our words and actions.

Observing variations in how we interact with the patient provides clues to that impact and to the unconscious processes in which it originated. I have become aware, for instance, in working with several male analysands relatively close in age to me that each of them has found himself with a particular idea about how much older than him I am. When I become aware of these ideas about me, I react in different ways. Sometimes I notice how I am reacting and at other times the analysand notices my reaction before I do. For example, in one case an analysand became bothered by my seeming to go out of my way to be empathic with the pleasure he got from some of his recreational activities or with the excitement he felt when playing with his son. What became apparent was that he was trying to position me in his mind as a much older and more tired, worn-out man who wasn't very enthusiastic about being a father, and I was trying to avoid this representational transferential use of me. The key to this understanding was the enactment, which like all enactments is an unconscious dialogue. In this dialogue, when I "say" to him that I know what he means, he says to me that he doesn't want me to know what he means. If I know what he means then I am not the father who doesn't play ball, doesn't play with his son, doesn't have the energy for either. We learn all this and more about what the patient wants, unconsciously, to do with and to his father from the enactment and I am not sure we could have learned it so well in any other way.
This analytic attitude toward enactment, although useful, can, when taken too far, lead to a constant microanalysis of the dialogue and a cautious approach to interpreting the unconscious of the patient—as if analytic treatment at its best is a cycle of interactions and dissections of them with instances of interpretation of the analysand’s unconscious psychology treated as slips into epistemological authoritarianism on the part of the analyst. Such a noninterpretive technical stance is often attributed to Winnicott in what I believe is a misreading of his specific recommendation that when significant breakdowns occur in the analytic process, the analyst should say something about how patient and analyst have created the breakdown before interpreting the unconscious psychology of the patient. I have already presented a detailed portrait of Winnicott (Spezzano, 1993), like Freud, interpreting

What he specifically seems to have meant by his famous caveat against clever interpretations was that we should not interpret either resistance or unconscious genetic content at moments when the patient’s subjective experience is of the therapeutic relationship having suffered a breakdown. At those moments we should observe the breakdown and comment on it as a real event.

Let me pursue this idea further by quoting an interpretation Winnicott (Rodman, 1987) once suggested that Bion should have made to a patient:

A mother properly oriented to baby would know from your movements what you need. There would be a communication because of this knowledge which belongs to her devotion and she would do something which would show that the communication had taken place. I am not sensitive enough or oriented in that way to be able to act well enough and therefore in this present analytic situation fall into the category of the mother who failed to make communication possible. In the present relationship therefore there is given a sample of the original failure from the environment which contributed to your difficulty in communication [p. 91].

Winnicott suggested this interpretation after he heard Bion present clinical material at a meeting. When Bion’s patient was squirming around on the couch silently, Bion appears to have considered the squirming as a resistance to talking, and he therefore said nothing. The patient had the thought that he ought to call his mother soon. Winnicott understood Bion to have failed to see the patient’s squirming as a communication of disturbance and anxiety, which needed to be recognized and given voice. When Bion did not do that, Winnicott surmised, the patient said, in essence, “Your failure to treat my anxious movement as a communication is driving me so mad that I am desperate enough to imagine calling my mother.”

This clinical vignette captures the way in which Winnicott actually used interpretations to open up a transitional space in the analysis—a space in which the past is not used as an explanation for the present, but in which past and present are seamlessly blended in the narrative account of the genesis of the patient’s immediate disturbance. By contrast, as Thomä and Kächele have written, “Anna Freud related transference interpretations almost exclusively to the past, conceiving a situational genesis only to resistance” (1987, p. 66). By making the link between the here-and-now and the then-and-there an uncertain one, Winnicott kept open the possibility of a when-and-if different from both past and present.

The pertinent epistemological question then becomes whether or not this uncertainty can be analyzed back into some unambiguous original state. At the epistemological level of discourse, a two-person psychoanalytic psychology argues that it cannot; that is, the analyst cannot separate, in his or her mind, a transference into its fictional and journalistic components. The patient, however, can do that. For the patient, however, it will be a decision, not simply a recovery or discovery. Each of us decides whether to categorize a particular representational account that materializes in consciousness during our personal analysis as a memory, a fantasy, or something in between. No one can decide that for us and it can never become a nondecision. And this pertains not simply to making decisions about the facticity of accounts of childhood sexual abuse that materialize in consciousness during analysis, but also to making decisions about whether one’s account of what happened in the previous hour or five minutes ago will be categorized as a factual journalistic account or a transference fantasy.

In this epistemological light there is a crucial distinction between the act of recovering a previously repressed or dissociated self-and-object narrative and the act of classifying it as fantasy or reality. Davies and Frawley (1994) illustrate this distinction when they report an exchange

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with a patient in which the therapist notes that she and her patient had never openly talked about the possibility that the patient was sexually abused as a child, despite the many circumstantial clues that had emerged. The patient says it simply isn’t possible that she had been abused. The therapist points out that there is a difference between remaining open to the possibility, and making the decision, that one has been abused. Then the patient shifts to wanting to quickly decide that she had, in fact, been abused. The therapist again intervenes to help the patient hold in consciousness the distress of not knowing, recognizes how tormenting it has been for the patient not to be able to decide, and suggests that perhaps their tolerating the ambiguity together will make it somewhat more bearable.

As this example makes clear, the analyst whose work is informed by an intersubjective and dialogical perspective, with regards to questions of knowing in the analytic situation, does not take the position that the words dialogue and intersubjectivity imply that the analyst and the analysand are in a symmetrical relationship. The analyst is an expert who has been immersed in psychoanalysis (as student, analysand, and practitioner) for years, who thinks spontaneously about feelings and relational events in the language of psychoanalysis, and who is not afraid to point out to the patient that certain ways of thinking (especially about affect) and certain dialogical moves (such as quickly reaching for closure) are counterproductive to the analytic process. The various two-person adjectives (dialogical, intersubjective, constructivist) suggest that the two people are epistemological equals not neatly and accurately placed into one or another side of this dichotomy/dialectic at all three (developmental, ontological, and epistemological) levels of psychoanalytic discourse. Yet, this dichotomy/dialectic does usefully capture many of the tensions in psychoanalysis in the United States at this time.

Summary

Although all dichotomies (even as they mature into dialectics) risk oversimplification, dividing the one-person versus two-person...