

ABSTRACTS

PSICOTERAPIA E SCIENZE UMANE

Translated and Abstracted by Gina Atkinson

The Italian quarterly journal *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* (“Psychotherapy and the Human Sciences”) reached its fiftieth year of continuous publication in 2016. During this half century, the journal has followed the development of the psychotherapies and of psychoanalysis, taking into account both clinical and theoretical issues as well as professional training. Its mission is to keep readers apprised of innovations and debates within psychoanalysis and psychotherapy and to stimulate critical thinking not biased toward any particular school of thought or institutional affiliation.

The journal was founded in 1967 by Pier Francesco Galli of Bologna. Galli continues as a coeditor of the journal, along with Marianna Bolko and Paolo Migone. The Editorial Board includes several prominent Italian analysts and others based in Zurich and Vienna, as well as some notable American members—among them Morris Eagle, Drew Westen, and a member of *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*’s Board of Directors, Lawrence Friedman.

Founded as a truly interdisciplinary forum, the journal publishes psychoanalytic contributions alongside those of disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, the educational sciences, and history. One of the journal’s objectives has long been to serve as a critical stimulus for professional organizations and mental health services, especially those pertaining to the topics of training, technical theory, and the relationship between psychotherapy and the human sciences in debates among colleagues who represent various types of training.

The journal has always been independent of any professional association or institution and has never accepted financial support from any public or private company, whether of an academic, governmental, charitable, or other type. It is financed solely by bookshop sales and subscriptions. The journal's website (www.psicoterapiaescienzeumane.it) is in English as well as Italian. The journal retains membership in the International Council of Editors of Psychoanalytic Journals, which meets annually in the United States, and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). It is indexed in various international databases, including Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing (PEP-Web) and Web of Science (*Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* is the only psychotherapy journal in Italy, including psychoanalytic journals, indexed in Web of Science).

Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane publishes original articles, editorials, clinical case write-ups, and book reviews and review essays—as well as abstracts of specific issues of psychoanalytic and other journals, including not only *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, and *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, but also psychoanalytically relevant material from such sources as *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. There is also an interesting section called *Tracce*, or “Traces,” which is devoted to materials (published or previously unpublished) that try to reconstruct a sort of history of psychology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy, at times with the emotional impact of anecdotes and personal experiences to convey the “back story.”

Since 1982 (and informally a decade earlier), *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* has organized an ongoing series of “International Seminars” in Bologna. These comprehensive programs are designed for colleagues who have completed training. The objective is to provide ongoing training in theory and clinical practice in the disciplines of psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and the human sciences. Experts from Italy and abroad are invited to present at these programs. Typically, about one-half of the speakers are not Italian-speaking, and participants are provided with written materials in translation in advance of the meetings. Small-group discussions are included as part of the program. In the last few years, presenters at these programs have included René Roussillon (Lyon), Bruce Reis (New York), René Kaës (Lyon), Dominique Scarfone

(Montréal), Vittorio Lingiardi (Rome), Otto F. Kernberg (New York), Elisabeth Roudinesco (Paris), and Horst Kächele (Ulm).

Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane celebrated its fiftieth anniversary of publication with its third issue of 2016. For this special issue, sixty-two renowned psychoanalysts from various parts of the world were interviewed and asked a set of questions pertaining to the history and development of psychoanalysis, its theoretical and clinical evolution over the past century, and its aspects that continue to be particularly relevant today.

In what follows, I will briefly summarize some of the comments made in response to these questions by four leading Italian psychoanalysts: Simona Argentieri of Rome, Marco Bacciagaluppi of Milan, Sergio Benvenuto of Rome, and Anna Ferruta of Milan. I will also summarize the replies given to these same questions by *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly's* Editor, Jay Greenberg, and by four members of the *Quarterly's* Board of Directors and Editorial Board: Antonino Ferro, Lawrence Friedman, Robert Michels, Thomas Ogden, and Dominique Scarfone. In addition, I will cite comments by a former *Quarterly* Editorial Board member, Glen Gabbard.

The first question posed to these analysts was an open-ended one:

“Which aspects of psychoanalysis strike you as especially important or as ones that you would like to comment on?”

One respondent, Marco Bacciagaluppi, begins by referencing an early key figure, citing as integral to the field “Ferenczi’s legacy, with the importance of childhood trauma and dissociation as a reaction to trauma.” Another contributor, Sergio Benvenuto, answers by stating, “It strikes me that psychoanalysis, despite denial by many of today’s analysts, remains fundamentally the product of one man, Sigmund Freud.” And Lawrence Friedman, too, begins with Freud:

I think the single most important unique feature of psychoanalysis is the tool Freud discovered for exposing the functioning of the human mind, both in an individual’s particulars, and in its fundamental structure. I am referring to the specifics of the psychoanalytic situation The analytic phenomenon is unique as a non-directive program that precipitates and filters some of

the reflexive, socialized definition of a person's basic personhood, and weaves past and present, conscious and unconscious together in a more comprehensive mental freedom.

Robert Michels highlights the death of Freud in 1938 in shaping the development of psychoanalysis:

When Freud was still alive, psychoanalysis was centered in Vienna, and its definition and boundaries were easily determined; they were whatever Freud said they were. At the end of his life, this consensus was beginning to fall apart, e.g., both the death instinct and lay analysis led to discussions in which large numbers of analysts could differ with Freud without being expelled from the profession Many competing schools developed, usually claiming to be Freud's natural heir.

Dominque Scarfone refers to a central feature of analytic theory and practice in responding to this question: "For my part, I think that the most basic element of psychoanalysis for most of those who practice it is the experience and management of the transference." Glen Gabbard draws attention to another aspect, the notion of resistance; he states, "We know the anxieties that haunt the patient by the way he or she resists the analyst's efforts." He elaborates:

Psychoanalysis teaches us that we hide out from ourselves to avoid knowing who we are A message inherent in the psychoanalytic perspective is that we are consciously confused and unconsciously controlled. No one wants to hear that or believe it.

Jay Greenberg identifies the most salient aspect upon which he would like to comment as "our clinical work . . . first and foremost." He comments that:

Our work keeps us constantly in touch with crucial questions about what it means to be a human being alive in the world, how we understand ourselves in relation to others and to society in general, and how to live lives that are both satisfying and true to ourselves.

Michels also notes that the field faces a number of fundamental dilemmas today. These include the question of whether analysis is primarily about what transpires in the patient's mind or about what happens in the analytic office. Also, should the term *psychoanalysis* be reserved for the classical clinical process, or is the field better served by adopting a broad definition in recognition of there being no clear line to separate psychoanalysis from psychoanalytic or other psychotherapies? "If we address these issues, . . . the discipline will develop and thrive," Michels writes, but: "If we attempt to avoid them and retreat to a safer, less controversial world, we will ensure that this is our last century."

Thomas Ogden responds to the articulated questions by offering his thoughts on the essence of psychoanalysis. "There are three qualities of the analytic experience that, to my mind, are fundamental," he writes, elaborating as follows:

First and foremost, the analyst must respect the patient's defenses.

Second, the analyst must reinvent psychoanalysis with each patient with whom he works.

A third quality that seems to me to lie at the heart of the analytic experiences involves the importance of the analyst's valuing the alterity, the otherness, of the patient and himself.

"If analysis is to progress," Ogden continues,

. . . the analyst must always hold within himself two truths: on the one hand, the patient and analyst have together created an unconscious third subject that is both and neither patient and analyst; and at the same time, the patient and the analyst are two separate people with separate subjectivities.

"Is there an author you find particularly important in psychoanalysis today, and if so, why?"

In responding to this question, Greenberg mentions first Wilfred Bion, and, among living authors, Thomas Ogden and Antonino Ferro. Scarfone, on the other hand, after first mentioning Freud, names Jean Laplanche, whom he characterizes as a "great reader and critic of Freud"

who “knew how to distinguish the basic pillars of Freud’s work from the weaker points that required consolidation.”

For her part, Ferruta first specifies Freud, Klein, Winnicott, and Bion. She also mentions René Kaës, who

. . . maintains that there is a demand for psychic work, imposed on the subject by the unconscious in its double foundation, biological (the body) and intersubjective. The subject is also inhabited by the group unconscious and is less and less the master in his own home.

English psychoanalyst John Steiner is cited by interviewee Simona Argentieri. A post-Kleinian, Steiner has followed in the footsteps of Herbert Rosenfeld, Argentieri notes, in his examination of clinical work with psychotic and borderline patients and in his analysis of early levels of destructive narcissism.

John Bowlby is proposed by Bacciagaluppi as the field’s most important figure. “With attachment theory, Bowlby provided a paradigm that can integrate all the schools of psychoanalysis,” according to Bacciagaluppi. Arnold Modell is cited by Friedman, who considers Modell “extremely interesting in the way he integrates psychodynamics, clinical psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and neurophysiology.”

Antonino Ferro puts forth Thomas Ogden in response to this question, citing Ogden’s “innovative—I would say revolutionary” approach and the “new horizons that continue to open up” in his contributions, leading to theoretical enrichment. Ferro also praises the courage demonstrated in Ogden’s writing.

“What is your attitude toward the proliferation of psychoanalytic ‘schools’?”

“I believe that the theoretical pluralism in psychoanalysis today is an inevitable phenomenon,” states Ferruta. Nonetheless, she identifies a common factor in noting that “so-called ‘contemporary psychoanalysis’ is characterized by the importance given to relational aspects”; furthermore, “the relational aspect lies at the origin of psychoanalysis.”

In a somewhat similar vein, Bacciagaluppi comments, “Pluralism is useful. In every case, what counts is the quality of the therapeutic relationship.” Speaking from a historical perspective, Benvenuto observes

that “the proliferation of psychoanalytic schools had already begun at the beginning of the last century,” and in his opinion, “it is a sign of vitality.” Ferro, too, expresses the belief that “we can be happy that there are many schools; it would be tragic if there were only one ossified school It would be nice, however, if the various schools talked with one another.”

“The proliferation of psychoanalytic schools reflects the freedom of thought that analysis itself produces,” writes Gabbard. Like Ferro, Gabbard “appreciate[s] and value[s] that we are no longer wedded to a rigid and monolithic view of what is and is not psychoanalysis.” Also similarly to Ferro, however, he notes that “the heated debate between opposing factions has led to schisms in psychoanalytic institutes and training centers at a time when we need to stand together as a field.”

Similarly, Scarfone states that:

The problem is how to foster an authentic dialogue between the so-called schools. The scandal lies in observing that in this field, analysts demonstrate not wanting to (or not knowing how to) offer their colleagues of rival schools what, in principle, they know how to do best: listening to the other with the premise that no one is in possession of “the truth,” and that reciprocal understanding of the other’s theory is definitely an incomplete translation.

Greenberg summarizes his view of the situation with the following comments:

I find this development [the proliferation of analytic “schools”] healthy, even vital for our discipline It is crucial that we allow different ideas to interrogate each other; we may not change our minds but we will be curious, and that is an essential aspect of an analytic attitude.

“Do you think that some changes in analytic training will be possible? Which changes would you welcome?”

“First of all,” Scarfone replies,

. . . aspiring analysts must be liberated from the obligation to be in a personal analysis with a training analyst, considering all the

inappropriate influences, and not only institutional ones, that result from this system Then I think that the supervisor must not himself evaluate the clinical competence of the candidate in supervision. In other words, I would ask for the same extraterritoriality of both the supervision and the personal analysis The training institute must find a way to verify the candidate's analytic capacity without contaminating the supervisory space, which must remain, like the analysis, a space of listening and of very private words.

Bacciagaluppi's and Ferro's comments about analytic training agree with Scarfone's; Ferro adds that "I would emphasize the importance of very different supervisions, but this is obvious." Also in general agreement with Scarfone, Bacciagaluppi, and Ferro, Benvenuto writes: "The so-called 'didactic analysis' is an absurdity because here the analyst is at the same time the analyst and the requisite evaluator. Besides which, every analysis, done well, is a didactic one."

Friedman adopts a slightly different focus, writing that:

The most important improvement [in analytic training] has to be in classroom teaching Analytic theory has been taught too much like anatomy. There are two unfortunate consequences: one is that candidates' *thinking* doesn't get activated. The other is that when graduates become more sophisticated, they feel they have been duped because it isn't like anatomy at all. The answer is to teach in depth, with meaning and implications, identifying questions that were being worked on in terms of the theory, with all its variations, uncertainties, presuppositions, and incompleteness.

While decrying the "hierarchical and authoritarian" tendency of training institutes in the past, in which "creativity and even questioning received wisdom was often not encouraged," Greenberg notes that improvements have been made, though he feels some caution is in order:

In many parts of the world, at least, we have a "buyers' market" for psychoanalytic training, and this can lead to accommodations that result in training being less rigorous, and in some cases to lowering of standards. I believe strongly that an "analytic attitude" is a fragile thing; it is difficult to develop and perhaps

even more difficult to maintain. In light of this, I think training needs to be quite intensive, even immersive, and I worry that in our attempts to attract students, this intensity is vulnerable to compromise.

“Does the concept of the Oedipus complex still have meaning, and if so, in what way?”

Scarfone has this to say in response:

The importance of the Oedipus complex relates, on the one hand, to the culture to which one belongs, and on the other, to the translational possibilities available to the child in the context of the family. And so it's possible that not everyone is confronted with the oedipal situation as it was originally understood by Freud It should not be conceived as a developmental phase, but as a task that involves numerous variations; its function is that of a myth designed to “explain” the differences between the generations and the place of the child within them.

Echoes of Scarfone's closing remark can be found in Argentieri's statement that the oedipal situation may not always be relevant within the familial context, which after all is variable, but that it anticipates an individual's “recognition of the two great differences: that between big and little, and that between masculine and feminine.”

Ferruta comments on the relevance of the oedipal situation as follows:

[It is] the experience that every human subject cannot help but undergo—that of going through the painful emotion of feeling oneself excluded from the intimacy and intensity of a loving unification between two persons, [an experience that] is related . . . to necessary thirdness.

Greenberg, too, sees the concept's emphasis on the developmental transition from duality to thirdness as a valuable element. He writes, “I continue to believe that the triangular structure dictated by the Oedipus complex, in contrast to the emphasis on early dyadic relationships that is currently popular, seems valid and important.”

Benvenuto suggests that:

The oedipal concept, like most of Freudian theory, must be taken as a myth. It is, however, a fruitful myth One can also not believe in this myth, but it is certainly very powerful No one has proven it, but how can we understand a great part of the contemporary world without this myth?

Ferro appears less convinced of the usefulness of the oedipal concept, writing that its “greatest meaning today” is “to impede our grasp of all the other myths”; it has “an obstructive meaning in that the hyper-illumination of the Oedipus complex is similar to the sun’s brightly shining influence in impeding our view of the stars by day.” Nonetheless, in its time, the concept opened up new horizons in a revolutionary way, Ferro adds.

Bacciagaluppi also appears ready to relinquish the concept. He writes: “From the interpersonal point of view, ‘oedipal’ problems are created by the parents’ problems. On the theoretical level, the concept of the Oedipus was surpassed by Erich Fromm’s book.”¹

“What do we retain of the Freudian theory of dreams and, more generally, what role do dreams play in the therapeutic process?”

“Dreams are extremely important in analysis as long as they are no longer decodified in the way they once were,” responds Ferro. Instead, they should be seen as possible contributors to “the formation of new thoughts and new journeys in the formation of the unconscious, not as decodification of the unconscious,” he explains.

Ferruta notes simply that “the most authentic meaning of the dream [in analysis] is the opportunity it provides to expand the capacity to think.” The dreamer’s subjectivity is continually emerging and being reorganized through the act of dreaming, she continues, making previously unmentalized experiences “literate,” so to speak, given that encounters with the not-me object, with the other-than-self, are processed intrapsychically via dreaming.

Like the oedipal concept, the Freudian theory of dreams must be taken as a productive myth, writes Benvenuto. “Freud gambled boldly on

¹ Fromm, E. (1951). *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales, and Myths*. New York: Rinehart & Co.

the idea—which coincides with common knowledge—that every dream imaginatively realizes a desire,” he states. He adds that “for me, dream analysis remains an indispensable tool.”

Scarfone writes that Freud considered the manifest dream to be an emerging part of much more extensive psychic processes. The true objects of study in examining the dream are the processes that gave rise to the dream. “The dream is thus not an entity to be interpreted in itself, but a window that opens out onto wider vistas of the psychic panorama,” he writes. “The dream that we are concerned with in analysis is a fact of communication; it is addressed, inserted, into the frame of the transference and must therefore be treated strictly on the communicative level, not as a discrete object.” Furthermore, Scarfone asks rhetorically, “What better phenomenon than dreams can be invoked as an indicator of the impact of the unconscious on mental and relational life?”

“How do you see the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and outcome and process research? How do you see the recent developments in neurosciences, and in general in neurobiology, vis-à-vis psychoanalysis? And what about the relationship between psychoanalysis and research in psychology and, in general, in other disciplines?”

Ferruta comments:

Research has had important consequences on psychotherapeutic technique, as demonstrated by studies on brain functioning and on mother–baby interactions [Nonetheless] the major difficulty is that of identifying basic observational unity that can describe the process of an analytic interaction.

The intent of such research is good, but the methodology is in general imprecise, writes Argentieri, and therefore it “risks becoming fixated in the confirmation of what is already known.”

Benvenuto observes:

Some neuroscientific discoveries and theories are very interesting, but up till now, clinical psychoanalysis hasn’t known what to do with them. It is as though a biologist who is an expert in frogs and toads wanted to apply quantum mechanics to his area!

He adds:

The fact that psychoanalysis has been welcomed with open arms into nonscientific environments seems to me to confirm its non-scientific nature (which does not mean its unimportance) The disciplines in which psychoanalysis has had the greatest success are actually literary criticism and philosophy.

Ferro's comments regarding process and outcome research are in some ways more direct. He writes: "I have trouble seeing a relationship, if not merely a very general one, between psychoanalytic theory and empirical research. It has its relevance for insurance, reimbursements, etc., but I find it difficult to make connections." Regarding neuroscientific research, he states even more explicitly: "I view developments in the neurosciences and neurobiology as among the most fascinating journeys that the human mind can make, and like astrophysics, they have nothing whatsoever to do with psychoanalysis."

A certain level of skepticism can also be discerned in Greenberg's remarks:

With respect to outcome and process research, my first concern is always that the findings depend on the questions that are asked, and determining which questions should be asked is not simply a neutral decision. With respect to neuroscience, despite the enormous burgeoning of interesting data, there are still unresolved questions about the compatibility of the discourses of clinical psychoanalysis with things we learn about the brain.

"How do you explain the growing marginalization of psychoanalysis?"

Ferruta raises a few queries of her own in response to this question: "Does the marginalization pertain to human beings' resistance to coming into contact with their own unconscious? Or to the economic power of drug companies . . . ? Or to a society that favors the superficiality of appearances over the internal world . . . ?" "Yes and no," she answers herself, adding that she sees the way in which psychoanalysts may organize their professional associations and ways of practicing in a self-isolating way as another factor in the potential marginalization of the field.

Bacciagaluppi feels that insufficient integration of certain key factors into the field of psychoanalysis has contributed to its marginalization—namely, the concepts of trauma and dissociation, attachment theory, the family dimension, and historical-social factors.

Benvenuto is not certain that there really is a widespread diminution of analysts and analytic patients. “However, it must be said that psychoanalytic listening goes well beyond the analytic setting since many psychiatrists, psychologists, and educators have also been trained in psychoanalysis,” he adds. “A certain marginalization of the classical setting—three sessions per week over a period of years—is an effect of the fact that such a commitment can only be fulfilled by a clientele that can manage it, and thus a restricted one,” he continues. In the end, Benvenuto concludes, the difference is a socioeconomic one; psychoanalysis holds sway for the elite (culturally and ethically as well as financially), while the masses may opt for a form of psychotherapy—but the psychotherapies are all descendants of psychoanalysis, Benvenuto points out.

Greenberg takes a sociocultural view in reacting to this query:

I think that the . . . reason is our insistence on the complexity and the ambiguity of human experience. That’s not a popular position to take in today’s world, with the idealization of certainty. Consider the popularity of therapies that are self-characterized as “evidence based”; the term itself is a claim of efficacy. Questions such as “what is the evidence?”—for instance, over what period of time is outcome tracked, and “evidence of what?”—i.e., what outcomes are investigated—apparently don’t warrant exploration.

And finally, here is Ferro’s reply to the question of marginalization:

But are we sure that psychoanalysis is so marginalized? I think that psychoanalysis may be a little like rivers that run partially underground and periodically disappear, only to be regenerated some meters or kilometers farther afield, stronger and richer than ever.