BOOK REVIEWS


Since its birth, psychoanalysis has demonstrated an unfortunate pattern of ignoring, marginalizing, or disparaging differing viewpoints. The classic criticism is that these theories are not "psychoanalytic" (and therefore irrelevant). In the current culture, with the ascendancy of managed care, psychoanalysis is no longer valued as it once was, and it has been criticized for lacking scientific evidence demonstrating its validity. Unfortunately, after many decades, there has been only minimal progress in integrating psychoanalysis with general psychologies, particularly those grounded in empirical research.

There are, of course, exceptions to these generalizations, e.g., the increasing attention being paid to infant research, neurobiology, and cognitive science. However, the primary thrust of analysis has always been on clinical data. Complicating matters further, psychoanalysis is not a homogenous entity, but is rather composed of various orientations with attendant theories and clinical practices. Thus, in addition to a tendency to ignore other psychologies, there are conflicts among the orientations. It is rare for analysis within one orientation to have substantive knowledge of others. More common is polemical divisiveness, based on superficial knowledge of alternative views, often resulting in fights with straw men.

Peter Fonagy's Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis is remarkable in that it not only demonstrates superior scholarship, but also compares and contrasts attachment theory with a wide range of psychoanalytic orientations in a sophisticated and incisive manner. This book is an integrative study of the subtle and complex areas of overlap between the two fields. Fonagy reviews the history and current state of attachment theory and evenhandedly notes its strengths and weaknesses as well as those of psychoanalysis.
The relevance of attachment theory has become particularly acute given the "relational turn" in psychoanalysis. The past fifteen years or so, psychoanalysts have become increasingly interested in interpersonal and internalized relations. Bowlby’s primary contribution was to emphasize the importance of the infant’s need for a secure attachment to the mother. The large body of resultant research has explored many issues of concern to relational analysts, e.g., the effects of the mother-child relationship on the child’s behavior, cognitive development, and character. Rather than relying exclusively on retrospective speculation about the analysand’s early experiences, analysts have a rich body of research to explore.

The first two chapters of Fonagy’s book outline the development of attachment theory and its key findings. This includes a discussion of the course of Bowlby’s work and his conflict with psychoanalysis, as well as a review of various researchers, including Mary Salter Ainsworth and Mary Main. In chapters three through ten, a host of psychoanalytic theories and theorists are summarized and points of contact with and divergence from attachment theory are outlined. Fonagy begins with Freud and includes ego psychology, the British school, Daniel Stern’s work, the interpersonal model, and psychoanalytic attachment theorists. He concludes with two chapters discussing what psychoanalysis and attachment theory have in common and how each can benefit from the other.

In Fonagy’s phrase, there has been a long history of “bad blood” between psychoanalysis and attachment theory. Since Bowlby published “Grief and Mourning in Infancy and Early Childhood” (1960) in Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, analysts have criticized attachment theory for being mechanistic and reductive, for focusing on the surface and ignoring the unconscious, and for minimizing fantasy at the expense of reality. Bowlby strongly disagreed with Kleinian analysts who privileged fantasy over actual early experience in determining development. Unfortunately, Bowlby’s disillusionment with psychoanalysis, and his interest in “the representation of the real rather than the reality of the representation” (4), led to the diversion of attachment theory into a line of experimental research with a largely behavioral emphasis. To date there continue to be some analysts who disparage attachment theory.
However, on closer inspection, these incompatibilities are not as self-evident as previously thought. As Stephen Mitchell argued in *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity* (2000), in contemporary psychoanalysis the boundary between reality and fantasy is more permeable than in classic psychoanalytic theory. Rather than being linked to drive theory, fantasy is associated with imagination. Fonagy notes that both current attachment theory and psychoanalysis posit an internal mechanism that monitors the discrepancies between reality and fantasy. Thus, the assumption of a major conceptual split between the two fields is outdated. Although attachment research does not use this language, it can be said to explore, and at times demonstrate, analytic constructs such as mirroring, containment, and the organizing impact of early experience on the child’s self-development.

The major paradigm of attachment research has been the Strange Situation procedure developed by Ainsworth and colleagues (1978), which measures attachment in one- to two-year-old infants. The infant and caregiver are separated for two brief periods. The infant’s behavior during separation and upon reunion is classified into four categories: securely attached, anxiously avoidant, anxiously ambivalent/resistant, and disorganized. Secure infants are distressed during separation and reassured upon reunion, suggesting confidence that the caregiver will be soothing. Anxious-avoidant infants show little distress during separation and lack of interest upon reunion, suggesting a lack of confidence in the caregiver and a strategy of trying to control emotional arousal. Anxious-resistant infants, who are distressed at separation and unable to be soothed upon return, seem to have heightened affect in an attempt to secure the caregiver’s attention. Finally, in disorganized attachment, the infant seeks closeness to the caregiver in strange ways.

One of the primary tools used for measuring adult attachment has been theAdult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan, and Main 1996). Interviews designed to touch on sensitive childhood issues are transcribed and classified according to a system weighted toward narrative form. Coherent interviews are thought to be associated with secure attachment. The various forms of insecurity in caregivers (dismissive,
preoccupied, and unresolved) show corresponding forms of cognitive disorganization. Fourteen studies have demonstrated the Adult Attachment Interview's ability to predict the infant's attachment classification from the caregiver's narrative. Attachment research increasingly focuses on procedural as opposed to episodic or semantic memory—that is, on narrative structure rather than content—to measure behavioral continuity between childhood and adulthood. Other research (Stern 1998) shows that therapeutic change is not determined by reflection or insight into episodic memories, but rather results from changes in procedural memory. Clearly, these findings have relevance to psychoanalysis.

Fonagy emphasizes the way in which attachment research, beginning with Bowlby, articulates the mental representational system that mediates relationships: "the early relationship environment is crucial not because it shapes the quality of subsequent relationships . . . but because it serves to equip the individual with a mental processing system that will subsequently generate mental representations, including relationship representations. The creation of this representational system is arguably the most important evolutionary function of attachment to a caregiver" (31).

Mentalization, the capacity to reflect upon and understand another’s behavior, is a key factor in attachment theory. It includes being able to select flexibly from multiple sets of self-other representations. Specifically, studies have shown the correlation between attachment security and reflective function. This research, Fonagy asserts, suggests that the capacity for reflection is contingent upon the child's observations and explorations of the primary caregiver. Disruptions in attachment are associated with problematic mentalization. The mother's capacity accurately to reflect back and respond to the infant's affective state is associated with secure attachment. Borderline functioning (affect lability, impulsivity, etc.) may result from disrupted attachment experience and its resultant negative effect on mentalization. Thus, both attachment theory and psychoanalysis assert that early relationships provide the foundation for the development of critical psychological functions. Fonagy notes that both Bretherton et al. (1979) and
Main (1991) claim that the quality of mother-infant interactions is critically linked to the development of symbolic function: “These workers suggest that secure attachment frees attentional resources necessary for the full development of symbolic cognitive capacities” (164).

Fonagy makes a strong argument for the mutual enrichment of attachment research and clinical psychoanalysis. He takes complex and dense material and extrapolates the central issues. As a psychoanalyst with relational sensibilities and only a peripheral knowledge of attachment theory, I found that the book imparted a great deal of information in a clear manner. Fonagy reviews the research on the effects of trauma and dissociation, an area of growing importance in psychoanalysis. The concept of mentalization operationalizes the internal processes explored and hypothesized about in therapy:

The notion of an intersubjectively acquired abstract reflexive implicit awareness of mental states, to be distinguished from introspection, has always been at the core of any psychoanalytic formulations of self development. The fruitful integration of this classical idea with the relationship constructs of attachment theory serves to illustrate the potential of bringing psychoanalytic ideas to bear on attachment theory and, perhaps, vice versa. (168)

Attachment research has the potential to validate and develop many relational constructs. It can provide further clarification on the crucial question of what is mutative. The quality of attachment in adults can be used to demonstrate the efficacy of psychotherapy. Clearly, it is time for more interaction and reflection across the two fields. Psychoanalysis is fortunate to have someone who has mined this rich area. Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis is a landmark volume and a model of interdisciplinary scholarly discourse.

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Freud’s Theory and its Use in Literary and Cultural Studies: 

This introduction to Freud for undergraduate and graduate students has many virtues. It is clearly and forcefully written, keeps technical language to a minimum, brings in numerous real-life examples, anticipates at least some of the reader’s possible objections, and firmly opposes many of the current clichés about Freud and psychoanalysis. The author presents Freudian psychoanalysis as a means of gaining access to the unconscious, as a revolutionary social theory, and as a powerful instrument for the analysis of literature, culture, and social change.

In doing so, de Berg concentrates on Freud’s own ideas, ignoring the innumerable revisions to which they have been subjected in the past century, not because he is any kind of Freudian fundamentalist, but on the grounds that one must walk before one runs. But if one were teaching evolutionary biology, would one begin with the present state of knowledge,