

## *Rapaport-Klein Study Group*

<http://www.psychomedia.it/rapaport-klein>

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Dear *Rapaport-Klein Study Group* Members,

We are pleased to invite you to the **52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the *Rapaport-Klein Study Group*** which will be held on June 13-15, 2014 at the *Austen Riggs Center* in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. We think you will be very pleased with this year's program. Below are our speakers' brief biological statements and, in some case, extended descriptions of their presentations.

### ***Friday Night***

The Study Group will open with a presentation by **Myron A. Hofer, M.D.**, titled, *The New "Evolutionary Developmental Biology"... from Freud to Epigenetics*. **Myron** is *Sackler Professor Emeritus* and was founding director of the *Sackler Institute for Developmental Psychobiology* (2001-2011), in the Department of Psychiatry at *Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons*. After graduating from *Harvard College* and Medical School, Myron began his research at *Cornell-Payne Whitney*, the *National Institutes of Mental Health*, and the *American Museum of Natural History*. He did his psychiatric residency at Columbia. He has served on the editorial boards of the journals: *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *Behavioral Neuroscience*, and *Developmental Psychobiology*, and is the author of many research papers, theoretical chapters and several books, including *The Roots of Human Behavior: An Introduction to the Psychobiology of Early Development* (Freeman & Co., 1981). He has been president of the *American Psychosomatic Society* and the *International Society for Developmental Psychobiology*. Among his awards are the NIMH Research Scientist and Merit Awards, the Salmon Award Lectures, the Sandor Rado Lecture and the Senior Investigator Award of the *International Society for Developmental Psychobiology*. Myron lives in New York City with his wife, Lynne Hofer, a psychoanalyst. They have 3 grown up children and 8 grandchildren.

**Description of Myron's Presentation:** Hofer and his colleagues have explored the basic developmental processes taking place within the mother-infant relationship. Using an animal model system, they found hidden regulators of physiology and behavior within the mother-infant interaction and showed how these can have long term, even transgenerational effects on later vulnerability to illness. Through an experimental analysis of the psychobiological events that enmesh the infant rat and its mother, Hofer has forged a new understanding of the early origins of attachment, the dynamics of

the separation response, and the long term shaping of development by that first relationship.

Recently, he has become interested in theoretical aspects of development and its role as a participant, as well as a product of evolution. The emerging field of Evolutionary Developmental Biology, or “Evo-Devo”, fueled by a wave of new genetic and epigenetic knowledge, is forging links between the two great historical processes of biology that had been developing independently for most of the past century. In his presentation, Dr. Hofer will discuss this research and its implications for psychoanalysis.

### ***Saturday Morning***

Following the group’s informal go-around about current research activities, we’ve decided to try a new format of Saturday morning’s presentation—an open group discussion focused on the mind-body interface titled, *Language of Mind; Language of Brain; Language of Psychoanalysis*. The discussion will be facilitated by **Andrew Gerber**, and **Larry Friedman** has kindly agreed to open the discussion and has provided the following set of observations and questions as a place to start.

**Larry writes:** Psychoanalytic explanations usually refer to **purposes**, both conscious and unconscious. We have historically been concerned with **motives** for mental and physical **actions**. Psychoanalysis has studied how people handle conflicting motives, conflicting **wishes** that cause people to act and **desire** things from other people.

As a modern research group, we are now also interested in the **brain structures** and patterns of neuronal **transmission** (e.g., neurohumors) and brain arrangements (e.g., fiber tracts and connections) that **accompany** people’s thinking, feeling and acting.

We would like to know the **relationship between these two discourses**. There often seem to be parallels, but we are not sure exactly what the relationship is (e.g., between the dramas in the dynamic unconscious, and the various descriptive non-conscious systems). Sometimes the items of mind and the items of brain seem so similar as we talk about them that they seem to coalesce, or, indeed, should be refined so that they will coalesce.

I think one big question is **whether – and/or to what extent – talking about people’s purposes and personal meanings is like talking about their brains**, and vice-versa. Another big question is what aspects of human life are more profitably talked about one way, and which are more profitably talked about the other way. Can we talk about both together? Half-and-half?

**The Big Question: DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO TREATMENT IF THE ANALYST THINKS HE IS DEALING WITH A BRAIN AND NOT JUST A PERSON? (AND WHAT, EXACTLY, IS A PERSON?)**

Philosophers have much to say about this, and there’s also a pretty large psychoanalytic literature on the subject. Without making this a philosophy seminar, we should bring the uncertainties up from the unspoken background, so that we will all have them roughly in mind when we consider the exciting research reported here, and the suggestions for refinement of theory and treatment.

### Some examples:

(1) A lecturer points to a brain circuit in all primates that is primarily involved in the affect of disgust. He wonders whether that location will enable psychiatrists and psychoanalysts to alleviate some phobic symptoms by acting on that center. A psychoanalyst in the audience expresses his interest in the discovery, but says that he is professionally more interested in the meanings (associations) that elicit disgust, and he cites a patient who reacts with disgust where someone else would react with anger.

What do you think about this discussion?

(2) In Psychiatry Grand Rounds, a French philosopher of mind who thinks that philosophical issues are best worked out with neurophysiologists says that the mirror neuron system and its circuits show how people are bonded by empathic sharing. A psychiatrist in the audience asks how he accounts for sadism, as in the torturer. Because of current political events, the philosopher and the audience are chiefly troubled by the problem of torture. The questioner, however, was wondering more generally how empathy can be explained without invoking individual meanings, motives, fantasies, object-relations, wishes, defenses, personal history, etc., etc.

ON THE OTHER HAND, the philosopher might have answered that mirror neurons show that there can be an objective *grounding* of one's perception of other people's feeling and motives. But how far does that grounding carry into the net, final outcome?

What do you think?

(3) We used to think that mood swings in Bipolar Disorder were explained by motives and wishes embedded in fantasies, and could be relieved by elucidating them. What other understandings do we have that we will look back on the way we do with Bipolar disorder? How about ADD, OCD, etc.?

Where and how can we draw the line?

(4) We are told that action precedes conscious thought, and the left hemisphere confabulates retrospectively. Of what clinical use are "reasons" that we ferret out of a patient?

### *Saturday Afternoon*

Following lunch, **Adrienne Harris, Ph.D.**, and **Steven Cooper, Ph.D.**, will present, *Comparative Psychoanalysis: Problems in Operator Error and Obsolescence*.

**Adrienne** is Faculty and Supervisor at *New York University* Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. She is on the faculty and is a supervisor at the *Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California*. She is a member and Training Analyst in the IPA. Adrienne is an Editor at *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, and *Studies In Gender and Sexuality*. In 2009, She, Lewis Aron, and Jeremy Safran established the Sandor Ferenczi Center at the *New School University*. She and Lew Aron co-edit the "Book Series Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis", a series now with over 50 published volumes. Adrienne has written on topics in gender and development, analytic subjectivity and self-care, primitive

states and the analytic community in the shadow of the First World War. Her current work is on analytic subjectivity, and on ghosts.

**Steven** is Training and Supervising Analyst, *Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute*; Faculty and Supervising Analyst, *Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis*; Clinical Associate Professor, *Harvard Medical School*; Chief Editor Emeritus, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*; Author of two books: *Objects of Hope: Exploring Possibility and Limit in Psychoanalysis* (The Analytic Press, 2000); *A Disturbance in the Field: Essays in Transference-Countertransference* (Routledge, 2010).

**Overall theme:** We want to develop thinking in the spirit of pluralism, of transdisciplinary work, of work on psychoanalysis that joins (as Freud wished) to a general psychology (and we might argue work joined to philosophy, to cultural studies, and to neuroscience.)

**Description of Adrienne's presentation:** This talk examine two problems in psychoanalytic metapsychology through the lens of field theory (in which I include relational approaches) joined with nonlinear dynamic systems approaches. I will consider the status of intersubjectivity and unconscious communication and the site of speech and language as grounds for change.

**Description of Steven's presentation:** I will propose some scaffolding for thinking about emerging and unintended integrative developments in clinical theory. During the initial phases of psychoanalytic pluralism, a comparative genre developed which featured different theoretical approaches to understanding psychoanalytic concepts. I will discuss some emergent theory that works at a different level of theoretical discourse than explicit attempts at comparative translation of psychoanalytic concepts or theories. In contrast, most of the theory that is explored in this talk involves clinical discourse aimed at solving important common clinical problems. I will discuss the work of a group of authors, among them Jay Greenberg, John Steiner, Anton Kris, Michael Feldman, Steven Cooper, and Charles Spezzano. I will try to discuss these bodies of work as simultaneously embedded within a particular orientation while demonstrating a kind of unwitting reach to a broad swath of analysts. Distinctions between this kind of linking of clinical theory versus clinical meta-theory are explored. I will try to describe differences between theories of technique and clinical meta-theories that operate at levels less directly related to technique. I will also consider some of the educational implications for learning and teaching in a post-pluralistic psychoanalytic world.

### ***Sunday Morning***

Following our business meeting, **William Coburn, Ph.D., Psy.D.**, will address the group with a presentation titled, *A Complex Paradox: Individuality and the Prereflective Systems Consciousness*.

**Bill** is Joint Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*, an Associate Editor of *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, and an Editorial Board Member of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. He is a Faculty Member and Training and Supervising Analyst at the *Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis* in Los Angeles, a Council, Advisory Board, and Executive Board

Member of the *International Association for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology* (IAPSP), Chair of the Publications Committee of the IAPSP, and an Advisory Board Member of the *International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*. He co-edited, with Nancy VanDerHeide, *Self and Systems: Explorations in Contemporary Self Psychology* (Wiley, 2009), and also co-edited, with Roger Frie, *Persons In Context: The Challenge of Individuality in Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2010). He recently published a new book, *Psychoanalytic Complexity: Clinical Attitudes for Therapeutic Change* (Routledge, 2014).

**Description of Bill's presentation:** This paper has as its point of departure several key elements in the evolution of contextualism: first, the work of Louis Sander and his preoccupation with the paradox and resolution of the idea and experience of personal individuality, on the one hand, and the necessity and gravity of the radical embeddedness of such individuality in intersubjective, affect-regulatory, complex systems, on the other hand; second, the combined and robust research into complexity theory, emanating from many diverse disciplines over the last several decades, and its application to psychoanalysis – what I refer to as *psychoanalytic complexity*; third, the increasing attention paid to the problem of reconceptualizing human individuality in light that such individuality is now understood as radically and relentlessly embedded in, and is an emergent property of, larger complex systems; and fourth, the clinical ramifications of theory choice, in particular *psychoanalytic complexity*, which are best understood through the way in which the attitudes that are implicit (or explicit) in any theoretical framework insinuate themselves into the therapeutic relationship. And thus, how we hold our personal conceptualization of the nature of individuality, for example, calls forth specific, corresponding attitudes that can have profound effects on how we respond and interact in the clinical setting.

If personal individuality *is* so systems-dependent, not simply influenced and contextualized by larger complex systems but indeed is always and already an emergent property and product thereof, has it been rendered conceptually too ephemeral, inapprehensible, illusory, or even nonexistent? Will our complexity theory and contextualist strivings and sensibilities ultimately abolish our sense of individuality, our sense of uniqueness? Does retaining the notion of the individual, bounded person, theoretically and clinically, perpetuate the Scylla of pathologizing and decontextualizing emotional experience and relational patterns presumed to emanate from an isolated mind, and, alternatively, does over-contextualizing, or over-complexifying (Sucharov, 2013), one's experiential world encourage the Charybdis of it being rendered or "reduced down" solely to an illusory epiphenomenon, thereby privileging systems over human individuals? In what way might we hold, live with, and "[work] with a complex paradox" (Harris, 2013)? As Harris writes, "...there is no single problem giving more worry, in every branch of psychoanalysis, than the question of how the system and the person co-mingle, co-construct, and evolve. ...theorists are *trying* to establish the site or purview or habitation of the individual while living and practicing and theorizing in the full absorption of the porousness and intersubjective experience of any living beings..." (Harris, 2013). On the one hand, what is left of us, and what will become of us, after all this contextualizing, systematizing, complexifying, and

conceptualizing through the larger, broader lens of interpenetrating world systems? On the other hand, to paraphrase Mark Twain, if indeed the rumors about the death of the self have been greatly exaggerated, how then can we today conceptualize the individual in a world of radical contextualism and a complexity sensibility?

This presentation highlights these questions and offers speculations about alternative ways of conceptualizing the individual, including its impact not just on our theorizing but also on how we work clinically. In doing so, it underscores the vital implications of acknowledging and examining on what level of discourse we are thinking and speaking: the *phenomenological* or the *explanatory*. It also introduces the concept of the *prereflective systems consciousness* (a modification and extension of Sartre's concept of "prereflective self consciousness") – our ever-expanding awareness of the larger contexts that, seemingly paradoxically, give rise to our personal sense of individuality, singularity, agency, and autonomy. This paper references and draws from the idea that human consciousness is an emergent property of a vast array of interconnected complex systems (Piers, 2013) and that such consciousness is exactly that which allows for, but does not always guarantee, a felt sense of individuality and singularity.

### ***Website, Guests, and Dues***

Our website remains <http://www.psychomedia.it/rapaport-klein> to review the history of every meeting since the beginning of our group including many of the papers presented at our meetings (this year program's web page is <http://www.psychomedia.it/rapaport-klein/june2014.htm>). If there are any changes in your e-mail address, please notify Paolo at <migone@unipr.it>. Again we expect that some of the papers presented this year will be posted. Any suggestions for improving our website are welcome and should also be sent to Paolo.

We need to remind you that dues (\$100) and fees for guests (\$50) need to be paid as soon as possible. Space is limited and we request no more than one guest per member. Kindly email Craig ([craig.piers@williams.edu](mailto:craig.piers@williams.edu)) as soon as possible to let us know if you are inviting a guest. Overnight accommodations should be made soon since, as you know, it is busy time of the year in the Berkshires. Members who wish to stay at the Red Lion Inn should call 413-298-5545 before May 12 and refer to "Group Reservation # 177508: Rapaport-Klein Rooms."

We look forward to seeing you once again and enjoying our weekend together.

Warm regards,

Craig Piers, Andrew Gerber, and Paolo Migone, *Co-Chairs*