The foundational level of psychodynamic meaning:

Implicit process in relation to conflict, defense and the dynamic unconscious

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Traditionally, intrapsychic entities such as conflict and defense were assumed to determine what happened at the interactive level. The interactive level was seen merely as the instantiation of such deeper forces. The authors delineate the upside-down theoretical conception of the relationship between the supposedly 'superficial' layer of immediate interaction and the supposedly 'profound' layer of intrapsychic entities such as conflict and defense. Here they suggest that the interactive process itself is primary and generates the raw material from which they draw the generalized abstractions that they term conflicts, defenses and phantasy. Conflicts and defenses are shown to be born and reside in the domain of interaction. It follows that relational living out is the deep layer of experience, while the abstractions used to describe the repetitive aspects of these relational strategies, such as conflict and defense, are secondary descriptors of the deep level, but not the level itself, and exist further from the lived experience. These relational processes have largely been written about abstractly and even metaphorically, however, rather than in terms of specific exchanges at the local level of the interaction. Here the authors are redefining the intrapsychic as lived experience that is represented at the implicit level. They suggest that conflict and defense, as explicated in language, are useful abstractions, which are derived from the implicit level of lived interactions. However, they are secondary. The past is carried forward into the present at the level of lived experience. As such, the level of relational action is the foundation for the grasping of the psychodynamics to which the analyst will respond implicitly and interpretively.

Keywords: psychodynamic meaning, relational meaning, intentional and implicit meaning, verbal and non-verbal, interactive level

Opening statement

Psychoanalysis has increasingly been grappling with the interactive, intersubjective aspects of the psychoanalytic situation. For several decades, clinical writers from a variety of perspectives have described the intersubjective aspects of the

patient–therapist treatment situation. Relational analysts (e.g. Aron, 1991; Beebe and Lachman, 2002; Benjamin, 1988, 1995, 2004; Ehrenberg, 1992; Mitchell, 1998; Knoblauch, 2000) have recently been at the forefront of these efforts. Several of these thinkers have brought a developmental orientation to their perspectives. And all who have Sullivan, and later Mitchell, as their intellectual mentors have understood the importance of the interactive in the creation of the intrapsychic, as have others, such as Renik (1999). However, a more encompassing theoretical foundation for grounding this clinical thinking in development has not yet emerged.

In our previous work, we had yet to attempt to try to conceptualize the foundational intersubjective processes that contribute to mental life, beginning at the outset of early development and continuing throughout life. As we considered this task, it became clear that there has been a fundamental confusion in previous theorizing as to what is surface and what is depth. This confusion arose both from a failure to examine closely the local level of exchange in the psychoanalytic situation, and from a lack of knowledge of implicit forms of knowing and representing in infancy, and also in adulthood. In short, previous psychoanalytic theory had the surface/depth distinction upside down.

By implicit knowing in infancy we are not referring to the infant's cognitive function, but to the way that physiological and then social/behavioral regulation is carried out between the infant and its caregiver, and represented and 'remembered' by the infant. These earliest forms of biological regulation emerge from the basic capacity for adaptation in living beings as it intersects with the deeper biological origins for motivations, which are the source of the initiatives that trigger exchange. The fact that these earliest forms of biological regulation are stored in memory systems, have mental concomitants and are psychologically meaningful has been intuitively grasped by some, but is not widely understood. Through representing these dyadic regulatory exchanges, the human infant moves from being a physiological to being a psychological being [Boston Change Process Study Group (BPCSG), 1998; Nahum, 2000; Sander, 1962, 1985].

Implicit processing consists of the representing of the relational transactions that begin at birth and continue throughout life. Such implicit processing guides the moment-to-moment exchanges that occur in any interaction, including the psychoanalytic situation. All the things that are the stuff of the interactive flow, such as gestures, vocalizations, silences and rhythms, constitute this moment-to-moment exchange, which we refer to as the local level (BCPSG, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). It is important to emphasize that by implicit we do not mean non-verbal. Our field has a long history of dividing verbal and non-verbal. We do not slice it that way, as we hope will become clear. Even in a spoken narrative, there is meaning between the lines, which is implicit. We will also be pursuing this further in a paper in preparation entitled 'Meaning across the implicit, explicit and narrative domains'.

We prioritize implicit forms of knowing and the recognition of action and interaction as part of psychodynamic life because it is in the implicit realm of what happens from moment to moment that affects, conflict and defense become initially organized, later revealed, and potentially changed.

Relational transactions involving action and interaction have been considered the 'surface' level of meaning in previous analytic theorizing. However, the level of implicit representation encodes the most profound aspects of human experience, including their elements of conflict, defense and affective resistance, and this level can no longer be considered 'surface' or superficial. What has arisen from the previous upside-down view of the mind is a privileging of abstraction over interaction and a privileging of the symbolic/semantic over the affective/interactive. The effect on the way psychoanalysis has been conceptualized and practiced cannot be overstated.

We describe here how we see conflict and defense, which are affect based, as revealed at the local level of action and interaction in early development. As we get closer to the specifics of the process of therapeutic interaction and draw on the now extensive body of developmental research, an altered view of psychoanalytic process emerges. The 'deep' level, as depicted in our interpretations, is in fact derived from the 'surface' level of moment-to-moment exchange. In this framework, we assert that the local level, where implicit relational knowing is enacted, is the foundational level of psychic life. It is where psychodynamic happenings, including affect, conflict and defense, originate.

Implicit relational knowing as a form of representation

The question of what constitutes a representation remains unresolved. Traditionally, a representation referred to something stored in a verbal/symbolic or imagistic form. The concept seemed to lack a process dimension that infant research began to supply. Infant research has shown that much is stored, or represented, in some form of memory that does not involve words or images. Sander (1985) showed that, as early as 8 postnatal days, the infant had stored (represented) a gestalt of a feeding sequence that was violated when mothers donned a ski mask, generating upset and feeding disruption in the infants. Such memories could be considered precursors to, or early forms of, implicit relational knowing.

Implicit relational knowing is thus a form of representation. In using the word 'knowing', we do not imply a symbolic process. It is the intuitive sense, based on one's history, of how to be with another. It concerns knowledge and representation that are not language based, so that studies of pre-verbal infants provide an unencumbered field for its study. In brief, implicit relational knowing is based in affect and action, rather than in word and symbol. It is also unconscious but not under repression. Accordingly, it can be brought to consciousness and verbalized, but usually with much difficulty. Further, the complexity of the phenomena as enactively stored will never constitute a perfect or perhaps even good fit with its linguistic and narrated version. What has been most surprising is to realize that, compared to explicit knowledge, which is language based, the implicit domain is exceedingly rich and elaborated, containing greater nuancing than language and instantiating a primary relational meaning system, as we will elaborate below. By design, everything that the pre-verbal infant knows about interactions with others is contained in his implicit knowledge. Implicit knowing also makes up the majority of what we, as adults, know about social interaction, including transference.

Let us give two quite different illustrations of implicit processes, the first from fiction and the second from developmental studies. An excerpt from *The master*, a novel by Colm Toibin, serves as an illustration:

> She knew that everyone around them wished to hear what she was saying and thus she alternated between a raised voice and a whisper. She nodded to some people and spoke briefly to others, but she stopped for nobody. Instead she proceeded through the throng to their box, making it clear from the manner of her gaze that no one was free to join them. (2004, p. 232)

What Toibin manages to capture in his verbal description of this woman's actions and expressions is how she positions herself in relation to others. This is a clear demonstration of implicit relational process, both in her actions and in how these are 'interpreted' by others. She does not have to say to others, to put into words, that they are not free to join her. She has said it with the entire range of expressive possibilities available to an embodied (human) being. It is worth noting that it would be such 'actions' that would lead the psychoanalyst to interpret her conflicts, defenses and desires.

Such interpersonal meanings are embedded in interactions from the beginning of life. For example, in a videotaped home observation of a young depressed mother and her 18 month-old son, the mother is sitting on the couch and her son is sitting a foot or two away from her, drinking from his bottle. She is sitting stiffly in the far corner of the sofa staring into space, smoking a cigarette with one hand and resting her other arm along the back of the couch in the direction of her son. Her toddler finishes his bottle and stands up on the couch, bouncing up and down for a minute or two. Then he pauses before flopping over on to his mother's lap. At this point, without moving her stiff and remote arms, she jerks her head towards him and barks, 'I *told* you not to jump on the couch!'

Given the timing of her attack, her distaste did not have to do with his standing on or bouncing on the couch but with his making playful, physical contact with her. In other sequences on the same videotape, we see her son walk up to her and reach out his hand towards her knee, only to pull it away suddenly before actually touching her. His mother's aversion to affectionate touch appears to have led him to inhibit his own initiatives around seeking physical contact with her. As this pattern is repeated over time, it is being preserved as part of his implicit relational knowing and is likely to color later interactions with others.

One can plainly see in the mother the intense affects accompanying her attempts to shut down certain forms of dialogue with her infant (e.g. warm, accepting exchanges), which the infant then incorporates as a part of his own attempts to shut down those same forms of discourse within. This is quite different from Fonagy's idea that the infant of a borderline mother actively inhibits his ability to reflect on the parent's affect because of the unbearable 'content' of the representation of the parent's hate (Bateman and Fonagy, 2004). The alternative view is that the parent's hate is expressed through particular processes in the parent–infant exchange, such as stepping away from the infant's approach for comfort, or repeatedly interrupting and overriding the infant's attempts to exercise initiative. These maternal actions

are implicit and become internalized by the infant in their process form (not their content form) as 'hate for attachment bids', that is, profound resistance to reaching out for help.

Developmental findings have made it clear that experiences that are stored implicitly are not impoverished events limited to sensorimotor experiences or to the impersonal realms of procedural memory discussed in the cognitive research literature. Rather they can involve highly complicated knowledge involving affective responses, expectations and thoughts. Implicit knowledge is also not necessarily more primitive. It is not replaced when language appears, nor is it necessarily transformed into language later in development (Lyons-Ruth, 1998, 1999). Rather, the implicit domain continues to grow in breadth and elaboration with age. Implicit knowledge certainly is a far larger domain of knowing about human behavior than explicit knowledge, and at all ages, not just in infancy. Even more importantly, in development, language and symbolic forms of meaning are intrinsically grounded in these early forms of implicitly represented relational experience (see Hobson, 2002, for a detailed developmental account). Appreciating the scope, sophistication and affective dimensions of implicit relational knowing is important because it changes how one views the unconscious, as we will elaborate.

Intentions as organizers of relational meaning at the implicit level

There exists a basic level of experience organized around intention. Viewed from the outside, it consists of reading affects and actions in terms of intentions. This goes on from the outset of postnatal life. There is an innate mental tendency to parse or chunk human behavior into intentions and motives (Carpenter et al., 1998; Meltzoff, 1995; Trevarthen, 1979) inherited from our primate ancestors (Tomasello et al., in press). As such, the intention forms a basic psychic unit of implicit meaning. It is an expression of motivated activity that is grasped implicitly. The concept of intention does not imply self-reflective thought.

Intention units include not only the desire and idea to act but also the action, the object of the action and the goal. Some argue that these are inherent in the concept of an intention. We wish to emphasize that point because studies of preverbal infants support this idea. It is relevant that brain imaging observations have identified 'intention-detection centers' in the brain, which get activated in a subject when he observes behaviors in another that lead him to infer an intention (Ruby and Decety, 2001). In addition, studies of mirror neuron systems now demonstrate that one participates in the intentional states of the other at a neuronal level by activating the motor neurons corresponding to the intentional actions observed in the other, but without having to imitate the other's actions (Decety and Chaminade, 2003; Gallese, 2001). Accordingly, this foundational structure belongs to the non-verbal, implicit, local level.

The suggestion that an intention unit exists at the implicit level, and that the process leading to its formation is a mental given, is supported by the fact that intention units are found in pre-verbal infants where all experience is implicit, and not reflected upon. Recent developmental observations suggest that even for pre-verbal

infants the primary task when watching human behavior is to grasp the intention that makes the seen acts coherent and meaningful. For instance, a pre-verbal infant watches an experimenter try to drop an object into a bowl, but miss. At first, the object is dropped before it is above the bowl. Then it is dropped after it has passed beyond the bowl. The infant never sees it being dropped into the bowl. Later, when the infant is given the bowl and object with the invitation to imitate what he saw, he immediately drops the object directly into the bowl and seems contented with himself. The infant grasped the intention of the experimenter even though he never saw it successfully realized. He gives priority to the intention he has inferred over an action he has seen (Meltzoff, 1995; Meltzoff and Gopnik, 1993).

Another experiment also shows how goal-directedness is prioritized. The infant watches an experimenter try to pull the spheres off the ends of a dumbbell-like object but fail. Later, when the infant is given the object, he immediately pulls the spheres off and seems to feel good about what he has done. The control experiment consists of a robot who, like the experimenter, tries to pull the ball-like ends off and also fails. However, when infants are given the dumbbell-like object after they have watched the robot fail, they do not try to pull the ends off. These infants have implicitly understood that robots do not have intentions (Meltzoff, 1995). There are many other observations bearing out this general priority of intention over action (Gergely et al., 1995; Gergely and Csibra, 1997; Rochat, 1999). Moreover, the act must seem meaningful in order to capture the infant's attention. Decety and Chaminade (2003) showed that an infant who would imitate a mother putting a doll to bed would not imitate her putting a toy car to bed.

Subjectively, intentions are felt to have a thrust or a leaning forward of the intention itself towards its felt or to-be-discovered goal. There is an implicit agent. There is a line of dramatic tension made up of feelings and affects as the intention fulfills its destiny. All of this occurs in a span of time with a temporal architecture that accommodates this unfolding structure. That is to say, it is temporally dynamic (Stern, 2004). In short, we claim that the parsing of motivated human behavior into intentions is a fundamental property of mind/brain; this results in a basic structure, the intention unit, which is implicitly grasped and represented non-symbolically. Thus, intentions are the elemental psychodynamic units at the level of perception and interaction and, from these, other psychic structures are composed.

All presentations of intention, whether in action, in words or in stories are based on intentions at the local level; accordingly, a large degree of continuity in meaning is assured across the levels of the implicit, explicit and narrative. The intentions of most interest to the psychoanalytic endeavor are those intentions to make and adjust the state of the relationship.

Relational 'knowings' as implicit forms of meaning

Thought is not synonymous with verbal language and symbols. A primary source of confusion in previous theory stems from the equating of symbolic functioning with thinking and the generation of meaning. Analysts must now consider the possibility that the most important levels of psychodynamic meaning are carried, enacted and

expressed through non-symbolizing processes. Perhaps the confusion surrounding this assertion stems from a belief that meaning can only be generated through symbolization, and that a being (the infant) incapable of reflecting on its actions cannot act meaningfully.

However, the example regarding the mother's response to her infant's playful contact illustrates that the infant does indeed create meanings before the advent of a symbolic capacity. We therefore assert that meaning need not be symbol connected. Viewing videotapes of mother–infant interactions leaves no one questioning that the mother's actions mean something to the infant and that the infant's responses reflect the meanings generated within him. That is not to say that the infant is reflecting upon the meanings he is creating, only that he is acting on them, something we are all too familiar with in clinical work with adults. In fact, in agreement with Hobson (2002), we claim that primary apprehension of relationships is foundational to our meaning systems, to our subjectivity.

Even more fundamentally than cognitive meanings, affectively relevant and relationally embedded meanings that organize one's directions are central to psychoanalysis. Many psychoanalysts find this assertion problematic, not because they do not work with relationally embedded meanings, but because the theory of the 'talking cure' has not been conceptualized in this way. It was assumed that the flow and exchange of 'words' was where therapeutic action was contained, that is, 'making the unconscious conscious'. With this has come an implicit assumption that meaning inheres in symbolization and reflection (e.g. Litowitz, 2005). Infant observation and the attendant illumination of implicit forms of meaning have high-lighted some of the problems with the older thinking. Interestingly, these studies have buttressed some of the central tenets of relational psychoanalysis (Aron, 1991; Benjamin, 2004; Ehrenberg, 1992; Fosshage, 2005; Mitchell, 1998; Stolorow, 2005).

Given that this is not an entirely congenial way of thinking, it is worth elaborating further how defense, conflict and the psychodynamic unconscious are all conveyed and transacted in the implicitly represented relational processes. It is from this level that analysts extract and attempt to translate into words general patterns of thought, feeling and relationship that are termed dynamic processes. However, these processes are initially conveyed and grasped through implicit, local-level phenomena. Psychoanalytic observers have been mapping out this implicit level of experience for over a century. The error has been to equate what was observed in relational interaction with the superficial, while reserving the idea of a deeper level for more abstract, generalized, experience-distant verbal renderings of those patterns.

Psychodynamic conflict and defense originate and reside in implicit forms of meaning

Conflict and implicit meaning

The ideas of conflict and defense must be introduced into our consideration of implicit forms of meaning for this concept to have psychodynamic implications. As

we have said, it is in the realm of immediate relational transactions at the local level that conflict and defense become initially structured.

In early life, psychodynamically relevant events are easily observable in relational contexts. Observations of infants aged 12 months reveal the presence of defensive stances at the level of enacted relationships (Ainsworth et al, 1979). When parents leave their infants in an unfamiliar room and return after a brief interval, infants show different patterns of attachment behavior towards the parent, some of which are termed 'insecure'. Infants who display an avoidant pattern of attachment behavior towards the parent do not look to the mother or greet her on reunion, as do 'securely' attached infants. Rather they ignore her and seem to act as though her leaving and returning were not important. Physiological indices of stress belie this impression, however (Spangler and Grossmann, 1993).

In this situation they are, in fact, in conflict and behaving defensively. They have implicitly learned that seeking to be comforted by their mother will probably elicit some subtle discomfort or rebuff. They compromise by suppressing attachment overtures, such as sharing pleasure at reunion or seeking contact with her, and seem to ignore her. A large body of research work supports the inference that they have come to 'know' that, if they do not approach her for comfort, she will respond less aversively to them. These year-old infants have put into effect a coping (defensive) strategy to maximize their security and proximity to their mothers.

This avoidant strategy operates completely at the implicit or local level, takes only a few seconds, and is made up of very few relational moves. Yet, the strategy clearly conveys psychodynamic meaning that eventually might well be an analyst's clinical focus as he tries to find ways to address with his patient an avoidance of intimacy and tendency to dismiss the significance of attachment relationships.

In one videotaped example, after his mother has left him in the laboratory room with a lab assistant, an 18 month-old boy is standing at the door, ignoring the lab assistant's overture, calling for his mother and banging and kicking at the closed door through which she has left. When she returns, he is still at the door but, immediately on seeing her, he wrenches his torso around and begins to dash in the direction away from his mother. In spite of his attempt to escape, she reaches for him and grasps him awkwardly under the arms to pick him up, keeping him at a significant distance from her body. He protests by pushing away from her shoulders and screaming his resistance. His mother smiles over his screaming in a strained masklike way, but she eventually complies and puts him down. He then backs away from her to the far wall of the room and drops his head and shoulders in a slumped, defeated posture. The striking conflict in this boy's responses can be seen dramatically in his sudden shift from the prolonged banging at the door and calling for his mother to dashing away from her as soon as she appears. It is difficult to explain this behavior in terms of a coherent set of motives and goals.

While examples of conflict behaviors from the attachment realm have been extensively replicated (Sroufe, 1999), conflict is also observable earlier in the first year. For example, in a clinical consultation with a mother and her two month-old son, mother and baby are interacting, with the child in an infant seat in front of his mother. His mother is very active, very emotionally expressive and a little too

intense for the baby. Her voice is too loud, her timing is too fast, her transitions in expressions are too abrupt. The baby looks at her with widened eyes and a tense body, alternating his expressions for an extended period between pleasure and distress. The baby is in conflict. On the one hand, he wants to join her in the interaction; on the other hand, the interaction is too intense for him and he is on the edge of turning away from his mother and falling into a distress state. Stern (1971, 1977) and Beebe et al. (2000) have also described conflict behaviors early in the first year of life.

As we have elaborated in a previous paper (Lyons-Ruth, 1999), defensive infant behaviors around attachment needs are precisely the evidence we need to locate the onset of defensive processes in implicit, non-verbalized interactions. In our view, both non-conflicted affective exchanges, as well as the more conflicted defensive stances that may be a part of those exchanges, are grounded in lived experiences with others and do not originate in primarily intrapsychic phenomena.

While words begin to be used during toddlerhood, throughout the lifespan relational meaning continues to be conveyed primarily through the apprehension of relational acts. So, although words are used for the first time in the service of relational procedures during toddlerhood, the embedding of words into already meaningful actions does not make the meaning of these actions available to reflective thought or symbolic representation. The 3 year-old may be able to use the terms 'good' and 'bad' but he cannot represent consciously (or verbally) that he inhibits his impulse to reach out for comfort to his father because his father's physical withdrawal and cold voice tone communicate disapproval of comfort seeking. Most relational behavior remains non-conscious and implicit even though the child's new words and understandings may be incorporated into these implicit relational procedures.

While we are describing here the earliest manifestations of conflict in the domain of the implicit, it is crucial not to equate the implicit with the non-verbal or the pre-verbal (Lyons-Ruth, 1999). The implicit can be revealed through verbal as well as non-verbal forms of interaction. However, the implicit aspects of meaning are not in the content of the words themselves. The implicit meaning exists, so to speak, between the lines, as the earlier quote from *The master* makes clear. There are also forms of conflict that are transmitted implicitly through verbal interaction, as well as through non-verbal forms of interaction. While, with development, verbal exchanges increasingly become a part of interactions with others, the 'rules', or syntax, underlying interactions are negotiated through affect and intention cues from the beginning of life, and are rarely raised to the level of conscious verbal description. Instead, they remain a part of our implicit relational knowing.

Such 'rules' for interaction include expectations about what forms of affective relatedness can be expressed openly in the relationship and what forms need to be expressed only in 'defensive' ways, that is, in distorted or displaced forms. Like the syntax governing language use, we begin deriving and using these rules, rules that structure our conflicts and defenses, as part of our relational procedural knowledge, long before we are capable of generating any conscious verbal description of what such rules are like.

Reserving the more developmentally complex and relationally meaningful aspects of experience for later verbally rendered forms of meaning is an example of the upside-down error of current theory. This version of theory is not now congruent with current understanding of the critical role of earlier forms of implicit meaning as developing into and foundational for later forms of meaning and thought (e.g. Hobson, 2002; Stern, 2004).

Defense and implicit meaning

We argue that the established defenses that we see in the clinical situation have roots in internalized two-person dialogue structures and are in the implicit domain. These phenomena are the essence of clinical dynamic material. They have always been considered 'intrapsychic'.

However, attachment studies have demonstrated that many defensive strategies are not best viewed as resulting from a particular intrapsychic conflict or an interpersonal perturbation confined to a specific developmental epoch. Instead, defensive strategies are likely to constitute one component of a much broader interpersonal arrangement that has endured over a significant period of the patient's life. Developmental research has revealed, for example, that a child's tendency to suppress vulnerable feelings of anger or distress, and to displace attention away from relationships and on to impersonal activities, should not be viewed as an obsessional defense resulting from control struggles in toddlerhood. Rather, for a sizeable number of children, such behavior is reliably evident by 12 months of age and is related to particular forms of parent–child affective dialogue over the first year of life, including parental suppressed anger and discomfort with close physical contact (Main et al., 1979) and parental mock-surprise expressions to infant anger (Malatesta et al., 1989). Such restrictions in the parent–child affective dialogue are foreshadowed by the parent's style of discussing attachment experiences in interviews prior to the child's birth and they remain evident in the parent's organization of thinking about attachment-related topics long after infancy (van Ijzendoorn, 1995, for meta-analytic review; Main et al., 1985).

Attachment researchers have demonstrated more dramatically than any other group the contribution of enduring patterns of relatedness to the deletions and distortions in thinking commonly thought of as defensive. If negative affects, particularly hateful ones, produce hostile attack, intense devaluation, shaming or withdrawal by the parent, they may be excluded from further dialogue and thought. Exclusion of negative affects from interaction also excludes these affects from the integrated developmental elaboration and understanding of anger-related behaviors, affects and experiences that might come from more balanced acceptance and inclusion in interaction and discussion.

Attachment research has consistently grounded defensive maneuvers in infancy, such as infant avoidance of affect, not only in temperamental qualities of the infant, but in the behavioral and affective responses of caregivers, responses based on the caregiver's own implicit models of relationships. This literature demonstrates that much that has been viewed as intrapsychic emerges from the interactive matrix and comes to constitute the intrapsychic domain. There is no other separate intrapsychic domain (see also Lyons-Ruth, 2003; Ogawa et al., 1997).

This view of defenses as partially grounded in the structure of exchanges with important others is also congruent with the increasing awareness among analysts that interactions between patient and analyst instantiate the defensive exclusions or contradictions of the patient's implicit procedural knowledge. Currently, mutual reflection on 'enactments' in the therapy is seen as a rich source of insight about these implicit procedural knowings, including the resort to defensive distortion or exclusion of affective information. Developmental research further establishes that many of the defensive deletions and distortions evident in enactments have 'two-person' origins.

With this rich new view of all that happens in interactive and affective life, we would replace the idea of conflict between tripartite structures with this more dyadic view of complex patterns of conflict between the intentional directions of the self and the intentional directions of important others that are represented at the implicit level.

Implicit meaning and the psychoanalytic concepts of action and repression

Action and the process of interaction embody implicit forms of meaning

Freud was Cartesian in separating the mental from the physical. He conceived thought as derivative of (secondary to) an inhibited action. One often forgets that action was primary for him. His classic example was a hungry baby who could not engage in the 'specific action' of the drive (sucking to satisfy the desire) because the mother was not present. Accordingly, the psychic energy normally directed to the motor and sensory functions of the mouth was redirected and channeled to the perceptual part of the mind to create a hallucination of sucking/drinking. Inhibited action turns into a derivative product: mental phenomena. Similarly, the technique of the couch and the prohibition against 'acting in or out' were to force psychic energy into expression via thought, where it could be followed with free association and the 'talking cure'. The result, as Stern (1995) points out, is a strong intellectual current and 'many modern strains in psychoanalysis [that] privilege the narration or interpretation that stands behind … an act rather than the act itself'.

The technical and theoretical prohibitions against action, especially acting in, were also originally put in place by psychoanalysis to contain and redirect potentially disruptive enactments of transference and countertransference towards the mental. How, then, are we to view the fact that we now see therapy, even psychoanalysis, as based on action in the implicit domain, even when we are just speaking and listening?

Part of the resolution of this paradox lies in illuminating a false dichotomy or 'misconception'.

> Freud's starting point, the fundamental assumption that the word and the act are dichotomously alternate modes of expression, is flawed. We now know that words do not restrain or substitute for action: they *are* actions … . For each of us, what we say and how we say it is an extremely important part of our repertoire of actions. (Greenberg, 1996, p. 201, original italics)

From Freud's idea followed the view that action and verbalization were discrete and separable phenomena. It also followed that the technique of psychoanalysis was

to pare down the possibilities for interaction to the verbal domain, with the goal of moving the verbal interaction to the level of reflective (interpretive) understanding. Once these parameters of technique were in place, the analyst's task became one of extracting the history of the patient's interaction patterns (the patient's object relations) from the highly filtered medium of the almost purely verbal exchange between patient and analyst.

However, this ignores much of what makes participating in the psychoanalytic endeavor a rich and highly affectively colored exchange between two people, where the relevant patterns of relatedness are revealed more clearly and the process of understanding the more abstract patterns or 'motives' guiding those patterns of relatedness are greatly facilitated.

At the level of directly observed interaction, what one sees are not unconscious fantasies and oedipal wishes, but particular kinds of relational moves in the here and now, such as attempts to override the direction of the other, attempts to avoid sharing or responding to central attachment affects expressed by the other, becoming disorientated around some topics of conversation such as sexuality, etc. From these experienced moves, psychoanalytic interpretations are drawn.

As an example, in a recent family evaluation by one of the authors, an 18 year-old boy and his father were discussing work possibilities. The father was saying how important it was for his son to decide for himself what he would like to do for after-school work to have the added independence of his own income. The son spoke of how he would like to work at a particular gas station where he knows some of the people and enjoys tinkering with the cars. His father immediately suggested he should start up his own swimming-pool-cleaning business in order to make his own hours and guidelines, and not have to be concerned with others.

The father reiterates a pattern as he almost pleadingly emphasizes the importance of autonomy and independence in speaking to his inhibited son; but, with each assertion of initiative on the son's part, the father has a counter-suggestion. So his explicit emphasis on the importance of being one's own person is accompanied by his immediate dismissals of his son's ideas as to how to do that. These contradictory layers of interactive processes will be represented by father and son in an implicit procedural form despite their being expressed through verbal interaction, and then brought into the analytic situation. Internalized experiences of important others are understood to be the stuff of the transference relationship that is then played out with the analyst. (For an extended analytic process illustration, see BCPSG, 2005a.)

Are we giving action (or joint action) precedence over thought? Yes and no. Such a question makes no sense from the contemporary perspective of an embodied mind and the capacity for other-centered participation. The recent paradigm shift in the cognitive sciences proposes a mind that is not an independent, disembodied entity. Rather, thinking itself requires and depends upon feelings emanating from the body, as well as upon movements and actions (see Clark, 1997; Damasio, 1999; Hobson, 2002; Lakoff and Johnson, 2000; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Varela et al., 1993). Intersubjective meetings are based on people with embodied minds who act and react physically as well as mentally.

Implicit meaning as a part of the unconscious

To conceptualize the domain of the unconscious adequately, it is necessary to make clear distinctions among types of unconscious processes. Laplanche and Pontalis give us this succinct statement:

> In Freud's writings, 'dynamic' is employed in particular to characterize the unconscious, in so far as a permanent pressure is maintained there which necessitates a contrary force—operating on an equally permanent basis—to stop it from reaching consciousness. On a clinical level, this dynamic character is borne out both by the fact that a resistance is encountered when attempts are made to reach the unconscious, and by the repeated production of derivatives of repressed material. (1988, p. 126)

They continue,

> Freud himself noted that, 'we do not derive the psychical splitting from an innate incapacity for synthesis on the part of the mental apparatus; we explain it dynamically, from the conflict of opposing mental forces, and recognise it as the outcome of an active struggling on the part of the two psychical groupings against each other'. (p. 126)

Very importantly, in Freud's concept, before material could be repressed, it had to be in the explicit domain, that is, in the preconscious or conscious domains.

While Freud clearly equated the dynamic unconscious with the process of repression, many now use the term to refer to a broader array of psychodynamic processes, processes which are not necessarily considered part of the repressed. These processes would include all aspects of early object relations that are re-enacted in treatment, all areas of mental process that are out of awareness, in some way unintegrated with other aspects of thinking, and for which there is affective resistance to including those areas in exchange with self or other. Psychoanalytic usage must now move away from a narrow equation of the dynamic unconscious with the repressed to reflect this altered landscape.

Our argument is that the interactions that come to constitute implicit relational knowing are psychodynamic. They are about deeply held feelings, conflicts and defenses. These phenomena have history, motivational force, and are clearly psychologically meaningful, as well as being out of awareness, but not by virtue of having been repressed. We believe that the concept of the dynamic unconscious, and of psychodynamics in general, must now encompass this broader array of mental phenomena, including implicit relational knowing. The 18 month-old bouncing boy 'knows' that his mother is aversive to affectionate physical contact, not to his bouncing on the couch, and he has clearly begun to represent and internalize that aversion with its attendant conflicts and inhibitions. His thwarted yearnings would be the upshot of the history of such depriving relational encounters. They would certainly be considered psychodynamically meaningful to any analyst. Such behaviors are the pithy essence of what we deal with every day with our patients. In our view, such behaviors demonstrate the psychodynamic centrality of implicit processes. These processes constitute the domain where the heart of analytic work occurs.

Conclusion

The major point of this paper has been to delineate the upside-down relation-ship between the supposedly 'superficial' layer of immediate interaction and the supposedly 'profound' layer of intrapsychic entities, such as conflict and defense. Traditionally, the intrapsychic entities were assumed to determine what happened at the interactive level. The interactive level was seen merely as the instantiation of deeper forces. We suggest instead that the interactive process itself is primary and generates the raw material from which we draw the generalized abstractions that we term conflicts, defenses and phantasy. From these moves as experienced in the interaction, psychoanalytic interpretations are drawn. It follows that conflicts and defenses are born and reside in the domain of interaction, and that this relational living out is the deep layer of experience, while the abstractions that we use to describe the repetitive aspects of these relational strategies, such as conflict and defense, are secondary descriptors of the deep level, but not the level itself, and exist further from the lived experience.

Many have long argued that such relational actions were at the core of psycho-analysis. These relational processes have largely been written about abstractly and even metaphorically, however, rather than in terms of specific exchanges at the local level of the interaction. Here we are redefining the intrapsychic as lived experience that is represented at the implicit level. We suggest that conflict and defense, as explicated in language, are useful abstractions, which are derived from the implicit level of lived interactions. However, they are secondary. The past is carried forward into the present at the level of lived experience. As such, the level of relational action is the foundation for the grasping of the psychodynamics to which the analyst will respond implicitly and interpretively.

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