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# Let Us Not Forget the Clinic

ERIC ANDERS

The idea for a journal crossing deconstruction and psychoanalysis came to me about a year ago. This idea was inspired most directly by Alan Bass himself: the analyst, the scholar, and the author, especially his two books, *Difference and Disavowal: The Trauma of Eros* and *Interpretation and Difference: The Strangeness of Care*. As many of you know, Dr. Bass is both a senior psychoanalyst and a scholar of deconstruction who has translated four books by Derrida. Except for Freud and Derrida themselves, Dr. Bass's work—his two books and several essays—constitutes the most significant contribution to this field that brings together psychoanalysis and deconstruction, this field that struggles to be one, this potentially monstrous offspring born of this crossing of two parents that might be seen as different enough that the crossing should be imagined as an impossible one between different species. How we manage or negotiate these differences, and this crossing, seems to me to make all the difference with respect to what this journal will be, or should become.

I want to open this conference with the hopes I have for this journal, but framed to some degree as concerns. I would even say mine are ethical concerns, especially with respect to the ethics of the crossing we are attempting. In *Archive Fever*, in the context of a discussion on the necessary and simultaneous injustice and justice of "the very constitution of the *One*," Derrida mentions what he imagines as a "crossing" of "a certain 'psychoanalysis' and

a certain ‘deconstruction’” (1998, 77). The subtitle of our journal is “A Journal of Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis,” the “and” suggesting that there will be a kind of equality or mutuality of parentage. But, judging by the conference titles, this university setting, and what I am guessing is the lopsided ratio of academics to clinicians in the audience, I am concerned that there has not been the mutuality I had hoped for with our crossing so far. Given the absence of clinical issues in the paper titles and panels, I am concerned that the clinical is being pushed aside already as we inaugurate our journal. The title of my opening remarks today, “Let Us Not Forget the Clinic,” is a takeoff on Derrida’s title, “Let Us Not Forget—Psychoanalysis.” I read Derrida’s title as asking that everyone not forget the revolutionary “Freudian breakthrough” of psychoanalysis, but also asking psychoanalysis itself not to forget itself, not to forget this essential revolutionary aspect of itself. My title is simpler in that it asks those of you in the audience, those of you interested in our journal, not to forget the clinic. More to the point, it is asking deconstruction and academic psychoanalysis not to forget the clinic.

Dr. Bass wrote the following for the journal’s website:

Deconstruction—the analysis and transformation of metaphysics—intersects with psychoanalysis. Both are engaged with thinking beyond consciousness. This new journal is a forum for those working at the borders of these two disciplines. Its name, *The Undecidable Unconscious*, refers to the broadest aspect of psychoanalysis—the theory of unconscious processes—and to Derrida’s thinking about undecidability—the irreducible oscillation and chance of non-metaphysical processes. The name, then, speaks of psychoanalysis *as* deconstruction.

I celebrate the notion of “psychoanalysis *as* deconstruction,” and I agree with Dr. Bass that this encapsulates a type of essential hope or goal for the journal. “The Freudian breakthrough,” as Derrida calls it, was and is revolutionary indeed, but it also was and is incomplete. Deconstruction supplements psychoanalysis

with respect to “thinking beyond consciousness” by completing it more, so to speak, while simultaneously adding to it. Derrida is a “friend” of psychoanalysis, acknowledging his debt to it, often praising it, but also critiquing it, at times even violently. I agree with Derrida when he argues that psychoanalysis needs this type of supportive yet critical friend in order to survive.

But what about deconstruction? Does it need this type of friend to survive? Can psychoanalysis be this type of friend to deconstruction? How might psychoanalysis praise deconstruction? This journal might be seen as having the potential for such praise. How might psychoanalysis critique deconstruction, even if not violently? Doesn't deconstruction need productive or friendly critique to survive? We might even ask, how might psychoanalysis complete and add to deconstruction? Wouldn't “deconstruction *as* psychoanalysis” also be an appropriate hope for our journal? What would “deconstruction *as* psychoanalysis” be? What would this mean?

I speak to you today as a psychoanalyst who has done some academic training but who has no institutional status in academia. As I see it, there are two primary “worlds” of psychoanalysis: the world of academic or so-called applied psychoanalysis and the world of clinical psychoanalysis. With respect to this type of simplistic division, there would be only one world of deconstruction, an academic one—despite deconstruction's destabilizing relationship to the university.

I would argue that the clinic has been foreign to deconstruction, despite Derrida's many writings on psychoanalysis, and despite what might be called his proximity to the clinic and to several clinicians. In *For What Tomorrow . . .*, Derrida makes much of the fact that he was never analyzed. He uses this as the basis of his positioning vis-à-vis psychoanalysis as a praising-critical “friend” who helps psychoanalysis, especially by reminding psychoanalysis of the radicalness of “the Freudian breakthrough.” Of course, there is a certain arrogance of psychoanalysts deflecting any criticisms of themselves or any criticisms of psychoanalysis that come from the outside, by saying that outside critics can't

know about psychoanalysis because they have not done the work of psychoanalysis, the crucial work of the clinic, first as an analyst but also as a supervisee and then an analyst. It is not hard to argue, however, that it is at least highly questionable when those on the outside profess to know about what Derrida called the “absolute originality of [the] ‘secret’ space” (2004, 168) of psychoanalysis without having done any clinical work. Derrida seems to make the claim that not having been analyzed, not having been trained as an analyst, gives him a kind of objectivity vis-à-vis psychoanalysis. It is hard not to think of how often Derrida has been attacked by philosophers who have not read him, or who have not read him well—that is, who have not done the basic work of deconstruction, the work of a basic respect—as Derrida so often points out in his myriad defenses. But did Derrida consider what not having done the psychoanalytic work might have precluded from his understanding—how this work of the clinic is part of what makes psychoanalysis otherwise, and so this work is that which comprises the other to which Derrida would have an ethical responsibility? When he says that “I, too, deal with people who are suffering, and I think sometimes that I am more of an analyst than those who are paid to be one” (2004, 169), does this not reveal a certain defensiveness with respect to what it means to really be a psychoanalyst, to have really done the work of being a psychoanalyst, let alone a misunderstanding of the psychoanalytic frame? Doesn’t his insistence that he is “more of an analyst” show a similar anxious and unconscious avoidance he accuses psychoanalysts of having with respect to deconstruction? Could we consider the clinic as a space of one of the “resistances of deconstruction”? Might psychoanalysis have something to say about this and other “resistances of deconstruction”?

Dr. Bass’s work has done much to bring deconstruction into the clinic. We also need to bring the clinic into deconstruction, especially if we are going to have a deconstruction informed by psychoanalysis as much as we plan on having a psychoanalysis informed by deconstruction. How much each informs the other seems to me the crux of the ethical question before us. Another ethi-

cal question before us is what role, if any, the clinic will play when it comes to psychoanalysis informing deconstruction. My strong belief is that, just as the clinic has and *always* has had very much to teach psychoanalysis itself, the clinic also has much to teach the “certain” deconstruction we are concerned with for this journal.

My primary hope and concern for the journal has been, from the beginning, that it not become yet another academic theory journal, and that it would attempt to engage a wider audience that would include both the academic and the clinical worlds of psychoanalysis more fully. We might also consider using the psychoanalysis of the journal to be in some way outside deconstruction, psychoanalysis as a “friend of deconstruction,” so that the journal is not simply a journal of deconstruction that takes into consideration its friend psychoanalysis.

Early in my academic training, around 1992, I decided to learn psychoanalysis more completely by becoming a psychoanalyst. I felt strongly then, and still do today, that there is much about psychoanalysis that one cannot know without having gone through this training. I also felt then that applied psychoanalysis in the humanities had gone awry by not taking into consideration the question of what works clinically—and that this was one of the reasons why Lacanian theory held such a dominant position in American humanities departments, a position that seemed at the time to be even above Freud. These suspicions of applied psychoanalysis were poignantly presented in a 1992 essay titled “Applied Psychoanalysis Today,” written by George “Mac” Pigman. Professor Pigman was my training analyst and the first scholar-analyst I worked with who was also a former student of Derrida’s. In his essay, Pigman agreed with another former teacher of his, Peter Brooks, when he argued that psychoanalytic academics in the humanities were embarrassingly “out of touch with clinical psychoanalysis.” Here is Pigman in that essay:

Judging from the number of academic works that present themselves as psychoanalytic and the major awards granted to a few of them, one might say that the future

has spoken and that Freud's hopes [for the application of psychoanalysis to the humanities] are being realized. Unfortunately, most of this work is out of touch with clinical psychoanalysis and unaware of the methodological implications of the stimulating, if confusing, variety of ideas and schools on the contemporary scene. I find myself in agreement with the judgment passed by Peter Brooks but would extend it to applied psychoanalysis in general, "Psychoanalytic literary criticism has always been something of an embarrassment. One resists labeling as a 'psychoanalytic critic' because the kind of criticism evoked by the term mostly deserves the bad name it largely has made for itself." (1992, 145, quoting Brooks 1988, 145)

If our journal becomes yet another academic theory journal disconnected from the clinic, I believe we run the risk of this kind of embarrassment, or worse: not being read and therefore not mattering. We have just as much hope of pulling in clinically trained readers as we do of shifting the psychoanalysis and deconstruction in the humanities more toward a clinical awareness.

So my hope is for a greater mutuality in the parentage of the journal, which would mean that psychoanalysis, clinical and otherwise, will continue to learn from deconstruction in a way that will continue to transform psychoanalysis radically, as Dr. Bass's work has started and I hope our journal will continue. Mutuality in parentage would also mean that deconstruction and academia would be more open to those aspects of the clinic that have been foreign to them, and that the scholars in question will do what they can to make the clinic less foreign to them personally. In other words, my hope is that the scholars in question here will not assume that deconstruction or the academy can know about this space, the clinic, because it has read Freud, Lacan, Derrida, and others so well.

So, "Let Us Not Forget the Clinic." Dr. Bass and I are planning to have a guest editor for each issue of the journal. I will be the guest editor for the 2015 issue with psychoanalyst-scholar Jared

Russell, and we are hoping that the 2015 issue, and all the issues to follow, will be more engaged with the clinic, much like most of Bass's work, and Russell's paper in this issue.

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