

Review by

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Theories of the Unconscious and Theories of the Self, edited by Raphael Stern, Hillsdale, NJ, The Analytic Press, 1987, 282 pp., \$36.00.

An edited book always faces a dilemma. Ideally, it approaches a topic from various perspectives, allowing experts in the field to present their views on the topic and providing a context in which the reader can discover the similarities and differences among those experts' views. However, if the topic is not clearly defined, if the experts address a variety of unrelated issues, then the sense of interlocking perspectives and the push towards synthesis collapses. It is a thin line between a collection of papers that revolve meaningfully around an issue, and a conglomeration of chapters.

Stern's book balances precariously along this line. It is the outcome of a group of conferences sponsored by the Association for Philosophy of Science, Psychotherapy, and Ethics—an organization of linguists, psychotherapists, philosophers, mathematicians, and neurophysiologists. A diversity of contributors can be an asset: Too many cooks do not necessarily spoil the broth. In the case of Stern's book, the downfall comes from this diverse set of experts addressing, as the title makes evident, a very broad topic. Along the wide vista of the psychoanalytic world, what is not subsumed under the concepts of the "unconscious" and the "self"? The book seems to strive for an identity as a psychoanalytic work, or at least attempts to pivot around psychoanalytic themes—but at times even this focus dissolves.

The lead chapter, "The Dynamic Unconscious and the Self," to which most of the commentaries are addressed, is by Kernberg. The reader must work hard to sift out his penetrating insights from this densely intellectual, abstruse essay. Consider the following introductory clause: "Insofar as the earliest pleasurable peak affect experiences of an undifferentiated self and

object representation under the condition of an 'all good' object relation may be considered a core self experience, . . ." (p. 20). Can the reader decipher the meaning of this clause and carry that understanding through the remainder of the sentence? No doubt the complexities of the unconscious and the self abound, and surely Kernberg, a brilliant psychoanalytic thinker, can meet the challenge of exploring the intricate twists and turns of the intrapsychic world. But can his readers follow Kernberg into the maze?

Following Kernberg's essay are a series of chapters and commentaries loosely organized around the theme of "development." Horner discusses Mahlerian concepts—a refreshingly clear, concise essay with few surprises, its one shortcoming being the usual emphasis on the developmental push towards separation and individuation without recognizing, as Kohut (1984) suggested, that the ideal of achieving "separation" is a culturally determined illusion—that separation is balanced and intertwined with the life-long evolution of the reliance on selfobjects.

Following Horner's chapter are a string of philosophical/psychological essays on developmental research, cultural representations of the self (Jung is not mentioned), moral theory, self-consciousness, the mind/body problem, and introspection. Philosophy has always profoundly enriched psychology, and these papers highlight some important themes at the boundary between the two disciplines. However, psychologists not inclined towards philosophical and metapsychological thinking probably will skip many of these papers. Clinicians in particular may feel alienated from the chapters by Stern and Rubenstein, which apply hardcore principles of logic to explain psychological interventions and the confirmation of clinical hypotheses. Using symbols and formulas to represent people, experiences, and their relationships will surely strike these readers as experience-distant. For those clinicians who view psychoanalytic treatment as an intersubjective process guided by empathic-introspection, any theory derived by purely intellectual efforts without being firmly rooted in clinical experience will be taken with a large grain of salt.

Embedded within this heterogeneous book are a collection of chapters that do coalesce around an important issue for psychoanalytic psychology. Bowers, Eagle, and Safran and Greenberg all examine the unconscious perceptions and cognitive processes that influence behavior. The value of their chapters lies in their attempts to compare, contrast, and integrate psychoanalytic concepts with the findings of empirical research in cognitive psychology. Eagle's chapter, the most solidly psychoanalytic of the three, convincingly demonstrates how research evidence supports the notion of a "cognitive unconscious" consisting of schemata, rules, and propositions that silently guide thought and action. While discussing the work of Weiss, Sampson, and the Mount Zion Psychotherapy Research Group (1986), he offers an important and timely comparison of psychoanalytic and cognitive

behavioral therapies. Psychoanalysis can only be enriched by grounding its ideas in experimental research and uniting its efforts with those of other psychological disciplines. Endeavors to study the self and the unconscious by drawing on the findings of developmental psychology have been highly productive (e.g., Stern, 1985), and the same may be true of cognitive psychology and cognitive therapy.

Eagle's chapter also pulls together the threads of an important theme not articulated elsewhere in this edited volume. It is an old debate. In the development of the unconscious and the self, which is more primary—affects or cognition? Kernberg argues that peak affect experiences constitute the organizing force behind the development of self. Stern claims that emotions are a form of cognition and rationality. Eagle describes how cognitive and psychoanalytic psychology are compatible on the issue of unconscious cognitive processes, but suggests that the information processing approach is not easily reconciled with the concepts of unconscious drives, affects, and impulses—or with the concept of repression. However, by conceptualizing the unconscious as disavowed cognitive-affective structures consisting of rules and propositions that regulate behavior and the experience of emotions, Eagle attempts to resolve these incompatibilities. His position overlaps with that of Safran and Greenberg who suggest that cognition, affect, and behavior are all aspects of the same process, that within the unconscious they are fused into action-disposition tendencies. These views echo contemporary psychoanalytic theories, especially object relations and self psychology, which claim that the concept of “drives” must be abandoned or at least revised in response to the concept of cognitive-affective or self “structures.”

In the final chapter, Mendelsohn and Silverman outline a comprehensive array of empirical research strategies for comparing and testing the ideas of Kernberg, Kohut, Rothstein, and Masterson about treating narcissistic pathology. It is a fine example of the scientist-practitioner model, and in the context of the chapters described previously, a most suitable and impressive ending for the book. In an earlier chapter, Stolorow and Atwood describe the epistemological alternative to these objective methods for studying the unconscious and the self—namely, the use of empathic-introspection to explore the intersubjective world of patient and analyst. Unfortunately, this very brief condensation of their earlier work (Atwood & Stolorow, 1984; Stolorow & Atwood, 1979) is easily overlooked by the time the reader gets to Mendelsohn and Silverman's chapter. A juxtaposition of the two chapters would have highlighted a strength of psychoanalysis as an exemplary branch of science: its potential for versatility and scope in exploring intrapsychic dynamics by combining objective scientific methods with a science of subjectivity.

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