**Relational psychoanalysis and anomalous communication:**

**continuities and discontinuities in psychoanalysis and telepathy**

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**Introduction**

Since the 1970s, a new approach has emerged in psychoanalytic psychotherapy that emphasizes the importance of relationality and intersubjectivity for our understanding of mind, the aetiology of psychological and behavioural disorders, and crucially, the dynamics of the therapeutic encounter between analyst and patient. My interest in relational psychoanalysis centres on its stance towards ostensibly paranormal experiences: affective and cognitive communication between patient and analyst that seems to operate outside of known communicative channels and capacities. In contemporary language, these phenomena would be described as telepathic experiences. In the language of academic parapsychology, they are often referred to as forms of anomalous mental phenomena (May, Utts and Spottiswoode, 1995) or anomalous cognition (Palmer, 2015).

Intersubjective and relational psychoanalysis became more prominent as a distinctive approach to psychotherapy from the 1980s, when postgraduate training in relational approaches was introduced at New York University, and with the establishment of the journal *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: the International Journal of Relational Perspectives* (Aron, 1996). Therapists and academics working in the relational/intersubjective paradigm reject the traditional position that the prime therapeutic responsibility falls on the analyst's interpretations of the patient's discourse. Instead, psychoanalytic therapy is viewed as the 'science of the intersubjective' (Atwood and Stolorow, 1984: 41). The interplay and relationality of the patient's and analyst's subjective worlds are taken to be central in understanding what happens in therapy. Although intersubjective and relational approaches are not the same, they have much in common, and I will use the term 'relational psychoanalysis' to capture the commonalities in their approaches to psychoanalytic theory and practice.

There has been a sporadic but consistent interest in telepathy within psychoanalysis from its start. Relational psychoanalysis, however, seems more receptive to experiences between patient and analyst that suggest ostensibly anomalous communicative capacities.

To establish this openness to telepathic phenomena with relational approaches, I examine a selection of papers recently published in leading academic journals in relational psychoanalysis. This demonstrates the extent to which telepathy like experiences are openly presented and seriously considered in the relational community. I then discuss those characteristics of the relational approach that may facilitate greater openness to telepathic experience. However, it is important to locate the relational stance toward telepathy in respect of the longer history of psychoanalytic writings on these (and related) topics. This broader historical narrative forms the first substantive part of the paper.

While there are of course continuities between the relational approach and earlier perspectives within psychoanalysis, it is important to recognise that it marks a distinctive departure. So for example, relational psychoanalysis should not be interpreted as a development from the British Object Relations school, despite the common appearance of the word 'relation'. In the latter, relationality is conceived in relation to classical Freudian drive theory and *obectified* ideas of other people, whereas the relational approach both rejects the drive theory of mind theory of mind, and is entirely focused on the interactions of two real individuals in the therapeutic setting. Consequently, the conception of relations in Object Relations theory is wholly different to the way relationality is conceived the relational psychoanalysis. Indeed, one of the leading scholars of the relational perspective has argued that it is only from the abandonment of Object Relations theory that psychoanalysis began to take account of the lived dual subjectivities involved in the therapeutic context (Aron, 1991). Later in this paper there will be further discussion of the extent to which relational ideas constitute a radical break from classical psychoanalytic theory.

But first, terminology: this is a minefield, as right from the start in Freud's writings, there is ambiguity and confusion. Terms like 'telepathy' and 'occult' are sometime used interchangeably; and discussion of telepathy can bleed into discussion of spiritualism and other supernatural beliefs. This terminological confusion can still be found in more contemporary analysis of the history of psychoanalytic interest in telepathy papers (for example, Massicotte, 2014). Moreover, different scholars have a range of investments in particular terms; some colleagues, for example, may object to the use of the term 'anomalous' in a previous paragraph because that contradicts the view that for Freud, telepathy (or 'thought transference', or 'transference', or 'unconscious communication') was normal in psychoanalysis. At the risk of upsetting lots of people, I will use telepathy to refer to experiences in which cognitive or affective interaction between patient and analyst seems to occur outside recognised channels of communication. I will also, for the sake of variety, use the term 'anomalous' to refer to these experiences, because they are: they suggest mechanisms of interaction between humans that are not accounted for by Newtonian physics, not accepted by mainstream science, and which seem to run counter to common sense understandings of how the world works.

**Freud, psychoanalysis and telepathy**

There is a well-established link between anomalous communication and the earliest attempts to study the unconscious mind, and what today would be called disassociate states, such as the exhibition of multiple personalities (Crabtree, 1993; Ellenberger, 1970). For example: in his writings on hypnotism and animal magnetism, Mesmer (and his followers) used the term *rapport* to capture the mysterious relationship he tried to engender in therapeutic consultations between therapist, patients and the *baquet* (a tool designed to harness animal magnetic energies). Later, Freud developed the concept of transference to identify what appeared to be experience of affective relationships between patient and therapist that seemed to occur beyond known channels of communication; yet in his account of the development of dynamic psychiatry, Ellenberger describes transference as merely the 'reincarnation of what had been known for a century as rapport' (1970: 490). Later still it has been argued by many that the idea of transference depends upon telepathic or anomalous communication. Luckhurst observed that the idea of transference made no sense without the concept of telepathy (Luckhurst, 2002). And the first line of the blurb on the back cover of Totton's (2003a) edited collection on psychoanalysis and the paranormal asks: 'What is the medium through which counter-transference, projective identification, unconscious communication all happen - if not telepathy?' Despite this acknowledged connection, the relationship between anomalous forms of communication and the development of psychoanalysis has been relatively unexamined - relative to, for example, the now extensive evidence that the academic disciplines of psychology and psychiatry were in the 1800s and early 1900s, shaped by contemporaneous investigation of ostensibly anomalous phenomena that would now be called paranormal or parapsychological (Brenninkmeijer, 2015: 117-118; Crabtree, 1993; Sommer, 2012; Shamdasani, 1993; but also see Gyimesi, 2015).

The (relatively) under examined relationship between psychoanalysis and forms of anomalous communication seems to echo the ambiguity Freud had about telepathy.

 (Campbell and Pile, 2010; Massicotte, 2014; Thurschwell, 1999). But perhaps this ambiguity expressed in Freud's formal writings had a strategic import. It is undoubtedly the case that Freud was trying to establish psychoanalysis' claims for recognition as a legitimate psychological science. It was important for Freud 'to reaffirm the scientific status of psychoanalysis and the objectivity of his discoveries…. and to systematize…his flashes of intuition…by making his metapsychological systems consistent with biology and physics' (Mitchell, 2000: 31). And association with the carnivalesque spirit activities of the kind reported in Victorian mediumship (fore example, Oppenheim, 1985: 8) was not going to help achieve scientific credibility. One can understand why Freud exhorted Jung to adhere to classical psychoanalytic theory as a bulwark against the 'black tide of occultism' (cited in Gyimesi, 2012: 135).

There is another reason why Freud was ambiguous about anomalous communication. The idea of the repressed unconscious was the cornerstone of psychoanalytic theory and practice; it stood as psychoanalysis' distinctive intellectual contribution to an understanding of the human mind, and the primary warrant for the distinctive techniques of psychoanalytic therapy. Campbell and Pile (2010) have argued that the idea of telepathy threatened Freud's vision for psychoanalysis because it undermined the core concept underpinning psychoanalytic theory and therapeutic practice: the extent to which the unconscious was indeed repressed. Telepathic experiences suggested that the repressed unconscious could still communicate, which means it is not altogether repressed. They argue that Freud addressed this problem by including within the concept of transference precisely those unconscious transmissions of affect from mind to mind that would otherwise be cited as forms of telepathy. Anomalous forms of communication between patient and analyst were thereby incorporated into a psychoanalytic concept that is still central to the vast majority of contemporary psychoanalytic traditions. Campbell and Pile's argument echoes earlier claims by psychoanalysts that the more mysterious features of the patient-analyst relationship are sanitised in ostensibly scientific sounding concepts. Brottman makes this point with respect to the Kleinian notion of projective identification (Brottman, 2011), and Totten goes as far as to argue that that the entire works of Wilfred Bion (a leading British post war psychoanalytic theorist), 'can easily be read as a textbook on telepathy' (Totton, 2007: 394).

There are, then, strong arguments that telepathy was central to psychoanalysis from its start. Despite this, there was no sustained investigation of telepathy in psychoanalysis in the first half of the 20th century. The majority of psychoanalytic scholarship in this area was collated in an edited collection in 1953, which also included all of Freud's writings on telepathy and occult phenomena (Devereux, 1953). In the latter half of the century there were sporadic investigations of anomalous events in psychoanalytic therapy. Perhaps the most famous is Jung's argument that synchronistic coincidence formalized one kind of anomalous relationship between mind and aspects of the external environment. But there were other more modest, and certainly less well-known contributions. In 1956 Michael Balint published observations on the operation of telepathy in therapy, based on his own clinical experiences (Balint, 1956). Strean and Coleman-Nelson (1962) published an analysis of telepathic events in clinical practice that supported Freud's argument that telepathic phenomena could be observed to obey the same psychodynamic laws as unconscious mental activity. Weiler's (1967) reflections on telepathy in psychotherapy begins by acknowledging that most analysts have experienced psi like phenomena; his analysis of his own data leads him to conclude that it is possible for the unconscious of two separate people to become aligned in some as yet unexplained way. Meerloo (1968) argued that telepathy in therapy was a form of direct unconscious communication, which was both instinctual and currently ' unexplored as yet by physical sciences' (Meerloo, 1968: 60).

In 1975 Dieckmann published the results of a study of transference and countertransference undertaken by a group of German psychoanalysts. This research was not motivated by an interest in ESP or telepathy; rather it was exploring a more affective and relational role of the therapist in the analytic process. To this end, the group decided to observe not only their patients' associations and experiences during the therapeutic hour, but also their own. However, all psychoanalysts participating in this study began to notice synchronistic or ESP like experiences with their patients. It was as if the introspective focus on their own inner experiences during therapy revealed hitherto undetected anomalous phenomena. They also noted that, as they got better at keeping records of their own subliminal associations during therapy, so the ESP events increased. This obviously had a profound effect on Diekmann; he writes about how these experiences provided 'deep insight into aspects of our world's unity and the background of our social communication' (Dieckmann, 1975: 30).

Major and Miller (1981) claimed that the Freudian notion of thought transference and telepathy are so similar as to be one and the same thing. They drew from parapsychological research, which suggests that, unlike other natural physical phenomena, the agency of ESP and telepathy does not seem to be diminished by distance. Consequently they argued that if telepathy can occur across vast distances,

'it is not surprising that it should occur in the analytic situation with persons who are involved in [a] significant relationship in which they have surrendered to their unconscious mental activity' (Major and Miller, 1981: 454).

Simon (1981) proclaimed himself to be an 'ESP atheist' but still discussed - and took seriously - other therapists' experiences of telepathy in their clinical practice. Mintz (1983) published a monograph length analysis of paranormal experiences in therapy, a book produced in conjunction with Gertrude Schmeidler, a leading parapsychologist and academic psychologist. Silverman (1988) suggested that Freud seemed sufficiently convinced of telepathy that he began to sketch a theoretical account of its emergence and role in therapy, noting for example, that material likely to be subject of telepathy was at the start of the process of being repressed. Silverman contributed to this, observing that his own clinical experiences of telepathy usually occur at the beginning of the analytic hour, and tend to reflect his on-going anxieties about unrelated topics.

Arlow's (1993) methodological reflection provided another example of how debates about uncontroversial topics might be - quite surprisingly - illustrated by casual reference to telepathic experience. In discussing the emergence of the analyst's appreciation of the patient's problems, he alluded quite openly to the role of parapsychological mechanisms, arguing that

At times the process occurs with a surprising suddenness and spontaneity that suggests magical insight. This is especially true when the patient's next productions correspond exactly to what the analyst has been thinking but has not yet said. (Arlow, 1993: 1150)

However, despite scholarly contributions from some respected psychoanalysts, there has been no sustained investigation of the kind of telepathic experiences that are reported to occur in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Many psychoanalytic scholars have noted this. In 1946 Eisenbud observed that within psychoanalysis up to that point there had been 'strange and enduring silences' on telepathy (Eisenbud, 1946: 32). Totten claimed that during the 1940s and 1950s psychoanalysts established the basis for sustained inquiry, culminating in Devereux's edited collection in 1953, but that: 'Thereafter - *silence*.' (Totton, 2003b: 4; emphasis added). More recently Rosenbaum has argued that parapsychological phenomena have been 'shunned' by psychoanalysis (Rosenbaum, 2011: 57).

**Relational Psychoanalysis and telepathy**

Since the emergence of relational psychoanalysis, however, there seems to be a more sustained consideration of parapsychological experiences that arise from interactions with patients. It is noticeable that many of these papers are published in journals sympathetic to relational psychoanalysis, although not exclusively so (for example, Allik, 2003; Cameron, 2013; Georgescu, 2013; Hogenson, 2009; Marlo and Kline, 1998; Massicotte, 2014; Rosenbaum, 2011; Schneider and Grady, 2014). But the case that relational approaches are more sympathetic to parapsychological experiences does not rest on the number of papers addressing this topic, but on the way that they are addressed in those publications. We will consider in more detail three key examples.

The first is Altman's (2007) paper 'Integrating the transpersonal with the intersubjective', published in *Contemporary Psychoanalysis,* another journal with an explicit editorial policy to publish work in relational psychoanalysis. Altman's argument is that the transpersonal psychological processes occur in the therapeutic relationship. By 'transpersonal' he means

in the sense that persons seem to recede in significance in favor of larger, more inclusive, processes….These processes result in patterns of influence between people, indeed between people and nonhuman animals and perhaps inanimate objects, that defy explanation in conventional scientific terms. (Altman 2007: 526)

Here are two clear references to parapsychological phenomena: telepathy/ESP (communication - or in his terms, processes of influence - between humans), and psychokinesis (unmediated mental interaction with physical objects or systems); and an explicit acknowledgement that we currently lack a scientific explanation for both. He goes on to argue that our reluctance to accept that interpersonal influence can be unmediated is rooted in a deep and rarely acknowledged commitment to a materialist understanding of the world. He challenges this materialist commitment by reference to the arguments of biologist-cum-parapsychologist Rupert Sheldrake. Sheldrake argues that living organisms are enmeshed in what he calls morphic fields: non physical species-specific assemblages of connections that underpin forms of psychic communication, shape patterns of behaviour in large animal collectives, and facilitate the transfer of skills across a species without direct contact between discrete organisms. Sheldrake is an enormously controversial figure. When he first published this theory of morphic fields (Sheldrake, 1981) the then editor of *Nature*, John Maddox, denounced it as a book 'suitable for burning' (Maddox, 1981). His more recent work on human-animal telepathy, telepathy in phone calls and emails, and the power of staring, has brought him to the attention of the public. It has also put him the cross hairs of the sceptical community: there have been several attempts to demonstrate this his empirical studies do not present the compelling evidence for telepathy that he claims. Rhetorically, then, as a support for an anti-materialist position, citing Sheldrake is a bold move, and can be taken to exhibit Altman's strong conviction that Sheldrake is on to something important, and has identified something of relevance to the relational dynamics of psychoanalysis.

The second plank of Altman's anti materialist argument is to argue that we perceive the separateness of objects (including persons) simply because of an unwarranted reliance on Newtonian mechanics. Instead he draws on the mysteries of quantum mechanics, which seem to show that at the very smallest levels, physical particles are entangled to each other in ways that seem to contradict the Newtonian materialist view of the world, as well as common sense everyday experience. He is not alone in appropriating the sheer mind-boggling weirdness of quantum physics to offer a metaphor for the intense intersubjectivity that can emerge from psychotherapy. The same line of argument has been developed by Ehrenwald (1956),Weiler (1957), Field (1991), Wilner (1996), Rosenbaum (2011) and de Peyer (2014). More to the point, it is very common for parapsychologists and scientists sympathetic to the existence of psi to use concepts from quantum mechanics to offer explanations for parapsychological phenomena (for example, Jahn and Dunne, 2011; Radin, 2006). Even quantum physicists who are sceptical of the existence of psi will occasionally acknowledge that, if it exists, it is likely to explicable in terms of sub atomic processes and relationships identified by quantum physics (Rosenblum and Kuttner, 2007: 254-5). Altman's paper, then, not only accepts the legitimacy of ostensibly parapsychological processes, but also seeks explanations grounded in the same area of natural sciences that inform explicitly parapsychological theorising on the underlying properties of anomalous communication.

The second example of explicit acknowledgment of parapsychological processes in relational psychoanalysis is Burton's (2012) article, 'Gettingpersonal: Thoughts on therapeutic action through the interplay of intimacy, affect and consciousness',published in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: the International Journal of Relational Perspectives*. In this paper she explores how her own affective response to, and intimacy with, a patient afforded the opportunity for therapeutic change - both for the patient and the analyst/author. What is significant here is that she reports how her reflections on this topic stemmed from her patient's paranormal experiences in early life and, more relevantly, a seemingly telepathic dream, which conspicuously reflected aspects of the author's private life, of which the patient had no knowledge. (This kind of paranormal experience is very common in the psychoanalytic literature, both traditional and relational.) This is reported in a matter of fact style, and is not modulated by circumspection, hedging, implied scepticism, and so on. She states 'I felt a meaningful coincidence had occurred and that one possible meaning of the dream was her perception that I was struggling with infertility' (p. 670). In other places she reports how in therapy 'internal experiences within ourselves move back and forth between the analytic partners' (p. 663); how 'intense affective states may be contagious or boundaryless' (p. 664); and she concludes that

…when therapy is going well, consciousness increasingly becomes transpersonal….where states of consciousness flow across boundaries of patient and therapist, resulting in powerful affective experiences, including merger with the other, boundarylessness, and ambiguity with regard to identity. (Burton, 2012: 675)

This is as much a parapsychological assessment as it is a psychoanalytic one: it casts consciousness as having an extension beyond the physical confines of the body; it depicts a form of affective communication that is unmediated by normal means of communication, and the dissolution of sense of self that arises from intimate intersubjectivity with the other. This is highly similar to phenomenological features of certain kinds of paranormal phenomena, commonly reported throughput the parapsychological literature on spontaneous experiences. It is particularly resonant of accounts of mystical encounters with the numinous, or cosmic unity (Wullf , 2000).

Burton's paper was published at the same time as two commentaries from senior figures in the field of relational psychoanalysis. Their responses can be read as a barometer of professional academic opinion on the paranormal in the discipline, and suggest a degree of acknowledgement that these phenomena occur, and deserve more serious investigation. The most striking feature is that neither takes issue with Burton's uncritical report of the patient's psychic experiences in her earlier life, nor the patient's telepathic dream that seemed to connect to highly sensitive events in Burton's life. Neither do they question Burton's explicit acceptance of a transpersonal - that is, essentially paranormal - position. They focus primarily on technical matters regarding therapeutic practice or the cogency of Burton's theoretical concepts. So, Slavin (2012) commends Burton for deciding to share with her patient the revelation that the patients' dream captured emotionally painful events in Burton's life; but this commendation reflects Slavin's view that therapeutic change can be achieved through the sharing of such intimacies. S. Stern (2012) merely questions Burton's perspective on the notion of the self. The paranormal elements of the relationship between patient and analyst/author reported in the paper are quietly accepted. And it is certainly not the case that the commentators are reflecting wider anxieties about intellectual legitimacy or professional propriety by discreetly declining to discuss those aspects of Burton's paper that touch on the paranormal. The only time that they are raised in the commentaries is when her willingness to accept transpersonal communication is endorsed. Stern writes:

I find in both her theorizing and her clinical examples experiences and topics that have been occupying my own attention: questions concerning the permeability of psychic boundaries; the nature of the mutual influence between self and other and between self and intersubjective system….Burton uses the word "alchemy" to capture the qualities of interpenetration, co-evolution, and transformation that define this kind of analytic work. *The same word has occurred to me, as I suspect it has to many of this journal's readers. Burton clearly has her finger on the pulse*. (Stern, 2012: 687-688; emphasis added)

Here Stern aligns with Burton's position on the permeability of psychic boundaries (and it may not be accidental that he chose to use the word 'psychic' here to refer inner conscious and unconscious experience, given its popular association with psychical research, telepathy, and so on). But he clearly feels confident enough that she is describing common professional experiences that he recruits the readership of the journal to align with her also.

Third: in 2014 the journal *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* published an article on Freud and general occult matters. In this paper, Massiccotte (2014) argues that Freud was more sympathetic to paranormal experiences than has been acknowledged in the literature on psychoanalytic history. She identifies Jones' biography as central here, arguing that he cast Freud's interest in the supernatural as a sign that even great men can be hindered by irrational beliefs primarily to preserve the scientific credentials of Freudian psychoanalysis. What makes this publication relevant to this argument is that the author is not a psychoanalyst (as most authors in the journal are) but an historian with interests in the relationship between early psychoanalysis and paranormal phenomena. It is a sign of openness to this topic in this journal that it would publish work by an author from another discipline, which, in content, says very little about relational perspectives. As in the case with the article by Burton, the journal published two commentaries (a common practice in this journal); both commentaries are written by authors with professional as well as scholarly interests in psychoanalysis. The first commentary, by Hewitt, takes Massicotte to task for referring to telepathy or the occult interchangeably. She makes it clear that while Freud was not particularly interested in occult matters more generally, he was very interested in telepathy. She argues that that for Freud, telepathic experiences, unlike other occult or supernatural phenomena, were psychoanalytic phenomena that would yield to psychoanalytic investigation (Hewitt, 2014). The second commentary, by De Peyer, could not be more explicit in its acceptance of parapsychological components of psychoanalysis. The first line of her article is 'Psi experiences have been reported since the dawn of human storytelling' (De Peyer, 2014: 109) thereby adopting (without the need for qualification or warrant) the term from academic parapsychology to refer to the capacity that is said to underpin extra sensory phenomena. In her subsequent discussion, she situates the psychoanalytic interest in parapsychological phenomena in terms of findings from experimental parapsychological research, as well as drawing on interpretations of quantum physics that suggest mechanisms by which telepathic communication could occur. She argues that the evidence for psi is sufficiently robust to suggest that psychoanalysts should adapt their clinical practices to recognise unconscious communication in the therapeutic encounter.

Arguments that are sympathetic to telepathy (and related phenomena) can invoke extreme sceptical responses. Evidence for this can be found every time experimental work is published that seems to show statistical evidence of psi. For an example see the flurry of sceptical responses that followed the publication of Bem's work on presentiment - a form of precognition (Bem, 2011). There is potential cost to personal reputation of trying to address anomalous experiences seriously. This is reflected in the decision by Robert Stoller, a leading post war psychoanalyst, not to publish his experiences of dream telepathy in his lifetime for fear of negative reactions from colleagues and patients; instead, they were published posthumously (Mayer, 2001). Consequently it is no surprise that some relational psychoanalysts are more circumspect in the way they treat paranormal experiences in clinical settings, even in the pages of a relatively supportive journal such as *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. In the next section we examine various ways in writers produce more cautious and allusive discussion of telepathy and telepathic experiences.

*Rhetorically circumspect allusions to the paranormal*

Some of the core concepts in mainstream psychoanalysis invoke telepathic mechanisms, but in a veiled or implicit manner. Brottman (2011) argued that terms such as projective identification (developed originally by Melanie Klein to capture the playing out and attribution of negative psychological fantasy) have been developed in such a way that in some places it is used to refer to a seemingly literal psychic evacuation from patient to analyst of unwanted psychological material. The technical term 'projective identification' is used to capture this process, while conveniently relieving analysts of the requirement to specify exactly how this occurs. Hewitt states that 'What Freud meant by telepathy is what contemporary psychoanalysis refers to as unconscious communication' (Hewitt, 2014: 103; abs.). Several of the contributors to Totton's (2003a) edited collection explore this idea in detail. Totton himself has argued that much of core psychoanalytic theorizing is a veiled reflection of essentially anomalous communicative processes; in a paper on the role of paranormality in psychotherapy he remarks, as an aside, that the entire works of Wilfred Bion (a leading British post war psychoanalytic theorist), 'can easily be read as a textbook on telepathy' (Totton, 2007: 394). It can be argued, then, that there is a strong tradition within psychoanalysis of rhetorically crafted allusions to paranormal events between patient and analyst.

In the relational literature there are numerous accounts of unusual forms of communication between patient and analyst. Psychotherapists have used a variety of terms to capture these unusual forms of communication in therapy. For example, Altman (2002) talks of 'implicit or unconscious communication'; Allick (2003) discusses 'unconscious communication'; Gerson (2004) emphasises the role of the 'relational unconscious' and refers to the reciprocal influences of other minds in 'altering subjective sensibilities'; in a paper discussing the role of relational psychoanalysis in gender studies of subjectivity, Suchet (2004) provocatively asks 'Whose mind is it anyway?'; Cambrary (2011) reflects on 'enigmatic' communication and the 'transgressive' properties of unconscious processes; Schneider and Grady (2014) refer to the 'unconscious use of self'; Bromberg (2013) refers to the 'paradox' and 'miracle' of interconnectedness; and Bass (2015) revives Ferenzci's term, the 'dialogue of the unconsciouses', and goes on to argue that 'the patient's views of the analyst are likely to include accurate, as well as distorted, perceptions…[that] *inevitably touch on areas that are beyond the awareness of the therapist*' (2015: 3; emphasis added). These descriptions of and references to unusual forms of communication in therapy seem plainly to be trying to capture the sort of processes that are the subject of parapsychological research. Indeed, it is very hard not to read these as referencing essentially parapsychological phenomena. And while these examples are illustrative, they are by no means exhaustive. The point is that in relational psychoanalytic literature there is a varied vocabulary to describe aspects of the patient-analyst encounter which strongly resonates with, and alludes to, parapsychological elements.

**Characteristics of RP favourable to telepathy**

Relational psychoanalysis seems to foster a greater openness towards the idea of telepathy than has been generally exhibited in psychoanalyses. Why is this? What is it about relational theory of the mind that more easily accommodates ideas of telepathic communication? And what is it about the practice of relationally informed therapy that predisposes analysts to infer telepathic processes between them and their patients? I think the following four characteristics of relational psychoanalysis will be central to answers to these questions: the emphasis on the social nature of mind (and the corresponding rejection of traditional Freudian concepts); the focus on interaction in the therapeutic encounter; the idea of emergent realities, and the subsequent rethinking of the solidity of personal boundaries; and a greater introspective sensitivity by analysts to changes in their own affective conscious experience. These are complex (and occasionally overlapping) issues, and I can only sketch the broad outlines here.

*The social nature of mind and**rejection of traditional psychoanalytic concepts and assumptions*

Relational psychoanalysis and its related approaches constitute a radical departure from traditional Freudian psychoanalysis, if not a paradigmatic shift (Giannoni, 2003: 618; Mitchell, 2000: xiii). The Freudian theory of mind is a one-person psychology in which asocial and presocial drives within the individual seek expression (Mitchell, 2000: 34-35). Although Freud's theory of mind was a post-Cartesian psychoanalysis, in that he expanded the dynamic domain of mind to include the unconscious, it was still a bounded and self-enclosed subject or mental apparatus. The relational view, however, emphasises the social nature of mind. This is not merely the idea that social dimensions of mind emerge from the aggregation of discrete individuals, but a view that consciousness and the unconscious are fully constituted in social relations and therefore wholly social in nature (Colman, 2013). As Stolorow puts it 'all…forms of unconsciousness are constituted in relational contexts' (Stolorow, 2013:384). In this view, this fundamentally social mind is merely 'focalized and secondarily elaborated by individuals' (Mitchell, 2000:xii).

These are general arguments, but they are echoed in literature focused specifically on understanding the aetiology of psychological illness and therapeutic practices. For example, consider the work of Lyons-Ruth, who is a member of the influential Process of Change Study Group from Boston, Massachusetts. She argues for psychoanalysis informed by a 'relational, intersubjective, and social-constructivist stance', associated with a focus on the implicit transactions between patient and therapist (Lyons-Ruth, 1999). Her argument is that the relational dynamic between patient and analyst is implicitly procedural and unconscious, and that recognition of this has implications for understanding what causes change in the therapeutic encounter; moreover, that the unconsciously enacted processes do not require verbalisation, because they are 'in some sense' known. This position attributes a clear agentic or dynamic and independent role to the unconscious - it is operating with effect without having to be articulated. This raises questions about the utility of what for many in the field are core principles of psychoanalysis. She argues that

Such implicit enacted procedures for being with others are central to therapeutic work but are not well captured by previous divisions between primary and secondary process, between ego and id, between verbal and non verbal, or even by the construct of the dynamic unconscious. Implicit relational procedures are often neither conscious and verbalizable nor repressed in a dynamic sense. They are not reducible to unacceptable drives or impulses and do not have their origins in essence in fantasy. (Lyons-Ruth, 1999: 589)

This is illustrative of a more general (but still radical) departure, in that it entails rejection of: the conventional Freudian id/ego topography of the mind, the role of the individual dynamic unconscious, and the idea that some mental material might be subject to repression. This abandonment of classical Freudian ideas does not in itself facilitate a greater receptivity to anomalous communicative experiences; but it does underpin other characteristics of relational approaches that do.

*The importance of interaction in therapy*

In relational psychoanalysis, as the name implies, the relation between analyst and analysand is paramount. This emphasis on the relationship between patient and analyst is far removed from the traditional Freudian view in which the analyst is a detached listener to the patient's free associations, drawing upon scientific knowledge of the psychodynamic forces that operate in the unconscious, to apply consensually validated interpretations that expose the roots of behavioural or psychological problems, thereby effecting positive change in the patient. The more participatory framework of relational psychoanalysis explicitly rejects the idea that the analyst is a 'blank screen or mirror, functioning to observe and interpret the contents of the patient's mind' (Aron, 1996: 189).

Instead, the emphasis is on the immediacy of the jointly but implicitly enacted moment in the therapeutic encounter, and the way that therapeutic change occurs because of the relational dynamics between patient and analyst, and not just because of the interpretations offered by the analyst (Tronick, 1998). This offers a new understanding of the patient's problems. For examples, fantasies described in therapy may not be drive determined, nor reflect expectations based on accretion of past experience. Rather, they relate to the patient’s attempts to come to terms with the analyst’s subjectivity (Aron, 1991). The patient's interest in analysts' subjectivity and experience is therefore taken to be central to the effectiveness of therapy.

One concrete implication of this view has been increased discussion of the therapeutic usefulness of personal disclosures of cognitive and affective experiences the analyst might offer during therapy (indeed, this was one of the main issues raised by one of the commentators to the paper by Burton discussed earlier). Instead of the acting as detached scientific interpreter of the patient's free associations - a detachment reflected in Freud's decision to position himself out of sight of the patient in the therapy (Campbell and Pile 2015: 18) - the relational analyst is fully a part of the encounter. The analyst's self is viewed as an instrument of therapeutic change, and often not just for the patient. Consequently, to maximise the potential therapeutic benefit it is necessary for the analyst to monitor in closer detail their experiences during the session: affect, embodied responses, the coming to conscious of unbidden memories, thoughts and images, and so on. In this perspective, the analyst is invited to reflect on their own inner experience during therapy 'and how that is shaping and being shaped by the patient's way of being and relating' (Bass, 2014: 666).

This increased introspective stance means either that otherwise subtle forms of telepathic experience are more likely to be detected (if one accepts the evidence for psi), or ensures that otherwise unnoticed but normal events in phenomenal consciousness may be interpreted as evidence of paranormal communication (if one does not). This was precisely the finding reported by Dieckmann (1975) in his account of the attempt by a small group of analysts to explore their own (countertransference) experiences during therapy. To do this, they systematically paid more attention to their own experiences, and began to notice an increase in ESP like phenomena.

*The emergent properties of intersubjectivity*

Relational approaches view therapy not as the combined verbal contributions of two discrete individuals but as something that can generate an additional, agentic intersubjectivity that is not reducible to the patient and analyst. This 'analytic third' (Ogden, 1994) 'is the product of a unique dialectic generated by/between the separate subjectivities of analyst and analysand. It is a subjectivity that seems to take on a life of its own in the interpersonal field' (Ogden, 2004: 169). Others have also described the emergence of an independent subjectivity in therapy (Altman, 2002; Benjamin, 2004; Kieffer, 2007). Within this literature, the emphasis is on the therapeutic implications of this emergent form of subjectivity.

It is important to recognise the quite radical position being proposed in the idea of an emergent analytic third. In a commentary on Ogden's paper, Mitchell and Aron state that '[h]e portrays the minds of analysand and analyst as essentially permeable to each other, with their confluence generating a 'third subjectivity', an intersubjectivity, distinctly different from the forms of subjectivity either brings, by itself, to the analytic encounter'. (Mitchell and Aron, 1999: 460).

The relational view of an emergent agency in therapeutic encounters is essentially a sociological position: that the interaction of discrete agents both generates, and is shaped by, social forces that are independent of those agents. But it is also an anti reductionist view. Reductionism - especially reductive materialism - underpins the sceptical argument that telepathy can not occur, as it contradicts known and well tested physical laws, and there are no physical or neurological processes by which it could be explained. The anti reductionist view encapsulated by accounts of the emergence of the analytic third aligns more easily with openness to the possibility that some forms of human communication may transcend known physical processes and boundaries.

*The porous self and permeable subjective boundaries*

The occurrence of implicit forms of communication and the emergence of a relational subjectivity 'with a life of its own' raises profound questions about our sense of self as a discrete, independent entity. Mitchell and Aron refer to the 'essentially permeable' nature of mind. Another leading figure has written that

'psychological phenomena, including even unconscious conflicts and defenses, are understood as properties of an intersubjective system…taking form at the interface of interacting subjectivities. *Inexorably, we are led to question the very concept of an isolated mind or psyche.*' (Stolorow 1991: 176l emphasis added)

Others have also observed how, in therapy, traditional boundaries between self and other seem to become porous and malleable (Bromberg, 2013; Ogden, 1994; Sands, 2010; Schwartz-Salant, 1988). Prominent in these accounts are reports of how changes in sense of self are tied to intense emotion and affect arising from the emergent intersubjectivity of the therapeutic session. The emphasis on the analytic relationship, and an appreciation of the agency of a collaboratively generated analytic third, facilitates an openness to question the conventionally held view of the person as a separate entity bounded by the skin. It is no surprise that therapists report experiences in therapy when their sense of an independent self seems to dissolve in deeper intersubjective moments of intepenetrability and entanglement. And the view of the self as a porous and permeable entity facilitates a receptivity to the idea that ostensibly 'inner' mental experiences may not actually be anchored solely in one individual. Indeed, it almost mandates acceptance of the possibility of intromissive experience.

**Conclusions, continuities and discontinuities**

In the psychoanalytic literature there is long standing recognition that telepathic like communications occur between therapist and patient. There have been scholars who have tried to examine these phenomena in a systematic way; but psychoanalytic investigation of telepathy did not cohere into a sustained research programme with a common set of approaches, ideas, theories and empirical findings. However, since the emergence of relational psychoanalysis, and its institutional grounding in doctoral training programmes established during the 1980s, there seems to be a more sympathetic stance towards ostensibly paranormal experiences in therapy. The basis for this argument is not numerical, as in a comparative count of the increase of articles openly discussing the legitimacy of anomalous phenomena over the years (though such a study would be interesting, notwithstanding the way that some relational psychoanalysts do not explicitly refer to telepathy but clearly allude to parapsychological processes in a rhetorically artful way). Instead, the argument has been made, first, through examination of some significant publications in flagship academic journals that have appeared mainly since the 2000s. The second strategy has been to examine key assumptions that inform relational approaches. It has been argued that in a broadly Kuhnian sense, relational psychoanalysis provides a coherent framework in which otherwise anomalous phenomena of patient-analyst interaction can be understood, and a rationale - indeed, a mandate - for serious consideration.

There are, of course, continuities between early reflections on telepathy and the work in more contemporary relational approaches. In this concluding section, I want to outline briefly some points of continuity and discontinuity in the wider psychoanalytic interest in telepathy.

For Freud, the key question was: what is the psychoanalytic significance of telepathy? He was not primarily interested in it as a phenomenon in itself, as, say, a parapsychologist might approach the phenomenon. Rather the issue was how this form of human activity reflected broader psychoanalytic ideas about the unconscious mind, and could be incorporated into psychoanalytic clinical practices. Within relational psychoanalysis too, the emphasis is on the way in which ostensibly telepathic phenomena arise from psychoanalytic significant interactions in the therapeutic encounter, and offer resources for the achievement of therapeutic aims. And from Freud onwards, psychoanalysts who have concerned themselves with telepathy report that emotionally charged materials are more likely to be subject to telepathic processes.

All scholarly developments reflect their historical and intellectual context. Freud's writings on anomalous communication resonate with the prevailing rationalism and materialism of the day, and his aspiration to ensure 'his metapsychological systems [were] consistent with biology and physics' (Mitchell, 2000: 31) reflected the status of the natural sciences. This influence is seen in such statements from Freud that the 'analyst must bend his own consciousness like a receptive organ towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient' (quoted in Bass, 2004: 307), a characterisation of interaction in therapy which invokes imagery of early 20th century communication technologies. It also resonates with the idea that telepathy is a form of psychic signal, illustrated, for example, in the title of Sinclair's 1930 book on psychic communication, *Mental Radio*. (See also, Campbell and Pile, 2015.) Relational psychoanalysis reflects a very different intellectual landscape. It emerged during a time in which established epistemologies and scientific methods were being challenged by ideas from constructivism, postmodernism and feminist scholarship (Mitchell and Aron, 1999). The implications of quantum physics suggested that common sense or Newtonian understanding of the material world was at best incomplete; and theoretical accounts of particle entanglement, disseminated through numerous popular science books for lay audiences, has provided a metaphor by which to understand human relations suggested by telepathic phenomena.

The emphasis on interaction within the relational literature is occasionally supported by references to ideas and figures that might more normally be associated with social sciences. For example, in his 1996 account of the relational approach, Aron emphasises

that communication between patient and therapist is a form of social action, citing Wittgenstein's arguments about language games as key influence (Aron, 1996: 192). Along with Austin's theory of Speech Acts, (Austin, 1962), Garfinkel and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), Sacks and conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992) Wittggenstein's later work has been one of the cornerstones of the 'turn to language' in the social sciences in the last four decades. In this tradition, the idea of communication as form of information transfer between individuals has been discredited in favour of the analysis of the socially organised properties of talk-in-interaction as the site of and vehicle for, social action (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wooffitt, 2005). Although space does not permit it here, it would be possible to trace the ways in which influences such as constructivism, the emphasis on communication as social action, and the investigation of the organised procedures of everyday social interaction have informed relational ideas about emergence of supra-individual agencies within therapy, and recognition of the importance of interaction between therapist and patient.

Outside of academic parapsychology and psychical research, it is arguable that psychoanalysis is the only scholarly discipline that has - albeit sporadically - taken telepathic experience seriously. Anthropology documented the social role of shamanistic rituals with supernatural components, but has only recently started to discuss the ostensibly paranormal experiences of the anthropologists themselves (Young and Goulet, 1994). Anomalistic psychology is a minor research area within psychology, and is primarily concerned to explain away reports of paranormal experience by reference to fallibilities of human reasoning and inference (for example, Zusne and Jones, 1982). But throughout the history of psychoanalysis, there is recognition that mysterious and baffling communicative experiences occur in the therapeutic hour. In this, psychoanalysis is an example of the way that unusual mental experiences are fundamentally woven into the emergence and fabric of psy disciplines, such as psychiatry and psychology (Crabtree, 2003; Ellenberger, 1970). It is perhaps then no surprise that new traditions within psychoanalysis, such as relational psychoanalysis, would also observe odd moments of interpersonal engagement, and reflect on their relevance for therapeutic goals, and their implications for our understanding of the human condition. What is distinctive about the relational perspective is that many of its theoretical assumptions and therapeutic practices may provide a degree of traction for telepathic experiences hitherto unavailable in psychoanalysis.

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