

# Indiana Society for Psychoanalytic Thought

## COMMENTS ON AN EARLY RECOLLECTION BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

**Leonardo** started keeping a personal journal at about the age of 30. Although the overwhelming majority of the comments pertained to engineering and artistic projects, there were a few individual observations which shine light on the interior life of the great artist. One of these, an early memory, was the focus of a study by Freud (1910). The memory was..."I recall as one of my very earliest memories that while I was in my cradle a kite came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips". From this simple memory Freud deduced Leonardo's latent homosexuality, his difficulty in completing projects, an explanation for his shift from works of art to works of engineering, and his fascination with the feminine smile. This was an impressive piece of psychoanalytic detective work but it was limited by the fact that the essential key to the understanding was based on an erroneous translation of the Italian word "nibbio", or kite. Freud relied on a German translation which had yielded the word "vulture" instead of the more accurate "kite", when referring to the bird of prey in Leonardo's memory, and his subsequent interpretations relied heavily on the importance of the concept and word "vulture". For this reason, subsequent historians have been impressed with Freud's reasoning ability but have also tended to downplay the overall importance of his conclusions (Tyson, 1964). The purpose of the present note is to present an additional interpretation of this memory fragment and to demonstrate how it adds to our understanding of Leonardo's personality without suffering the contamination of a mistranslation.

**According** to Freud (1910) and others (e.g., Bramly, 1992), Leonardo was unusual in that he found almost all sexual expression to be repugnant. He argued that people should be careful and thoughtful before enjoying a loving interchange, and urged the avoidance of spontaneity and abandon in such enterprises, as if they were dangerous activities. Although he had his contemporary artistic rivals, Leonardo was generally reported to be a gentle and kind person who was well liked by all. And even though he was formally charged with sodomy at one point he was

not actually known to have had sexual relations at any time in his life. Most biographers have concluded that his sexual preference was toward young men and boys, and he was known to surround himself with them in his work studio and private life. When he attempted to portray female genitalia and internal sexual organs he demonstrated an ignorance which was not at all typical of his usual scholarly and scientific acumen. These personal characteristics are generally accepted by Leonardo scholars and are reported in easily available summaries (e.g., Wikipedia, 2006).

**Given** this sketch of his interpersonal characteristics, an additional interpretation of the early memory is available. Adler (1929) and others have observed that early memories are usually a combination of reconstructions and new constructions, not memories at all. These constructed ideas and images have the purpose of illuminating the individual's lifestyle, the set of core beliefs around which he creates his world and self-views as well as his life orientation. "Memories" in this framework are not replicates of past experiences but are more like photographs of the current world and self view of the individual. They capture the current personality, not his actual past experiences.

**From** this perspective we can see that it is not at all unusual that a man who found sexual interchanges threatening and possibly repugnant, and who was probably homosexual in orientation, would have a "memory" in which a phallic shaped object was inserted into his mouth by a predatory type of creature and then (perhaps) painfully manipulated while he passively endured the action. What clearer picture could there be of who Leonardo actually was, at least in terms of his interpersonal world, than that provided by this fantasy recollection? We see in this example that Leonardo the artist and engineer was also skilled in the description of key elements of his personality, although as he did with his famous backward writing-style, he presented this information in a veiled and indirect way. **Gary Meunier, PhD**

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## COMMENTS ON AN EARLY RECOLLECTION BY LEONARDO DA VINCI (cont'd from page 1)

Adler, A. (1929). *The Science of Living*. Greenberg Publishing, New York, NY.

Bramly, S. (1992). *Leonardo*. Penguin, London.

Freud, S. (1910). *Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde*. Deuticke, Leipzig & Vienna.

Tyson, A. (1964). *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. (By S. Freud, translated by A. Tyson). W.W. Norton, New York, NY.

Wikipedia (2006). *Leonardo da Vinci*. Internet.

**Gary Meunier, PhD**

### Fundamental Question

The existential quality of our experience as human beings appears to be determined by our vision regarding these basic considerations: How do we really work, what actually are we, and most importantly what are we not?

It could be said that there are three levels of self discovery: the levels of psychology, consciousness, and spirituality. At the level of psychology we become aware that there apparently is a system to the way we experience ourselves and this system can be examined by paying close attention to our perceptions of thoughts and emotions. These experiences are then blended with our psycho-social history and current environmental circumstance. This is generally the domain of counseling, psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis.

**Awakening** to the level of consciousness involves the awareness that there is more to our lives than these psychological perceptions seem to imply. The ground of consciousness itself is seen as a reality.

It is within this ground, and beyond the reach of perception, that forces, systems, and dynamics exist that project their effects into the field of perception. It is these projections that produce the perceptions that we experience at the psychological level. An awareness of the ground of consciousness does not abrogate psychology rather it includes psychology into a larger vision of the human experience. We know that we are much more than we think ourselves to be!

**Now** just as the discovery of consciousness involves looking backward, as it were, into the psychological field and encompassing that field into a larger vision, the awakening to spirituality involves looking in the other direction. Consciousness which looks away from the material arena peers into spirituality. A spiritual vision of one's life includes also the forces which operate within the ground of consciousness as well as the dynamics of psychology. An important distinction between the realm of spirituality and the other two realms involves considerations of absolute and the relative. Considerations of the field of psychology lies within the domain of the relative as do many of the considerations of field of consciousness. Spirituality, on the other hand is concerned primarily with aspects of absolute.

**That** which is relative can be perceived, worded or precisely conceptualized. Absolute, on the other hand, can't be put into words, is outside the reach of perception and is impossible to conceptualize. The relative is subject to inspection and can be proven. Objects of belief belong to the field of the relative whereas aspects of absolute are considerations of knowing. These distinctions are of fundamental importance.

**For** instance, your own identity is a social relativity. You believe that you are who you are. Your identity can be demonstrated, even proven by your driver's license. Now consider the "what" of you rather than the "who" of you. Your very essence, so to speak, interestingly can't be

proven. You simply can not manifestly demonstrate that you have being and are not some advanced robot or android. Yet you "know" that you have being and are not a robot, this is not a belief! This "knowing" is an example of absolute.

**Why** should anyone be interested in these matters? The human experience is quite difficult. None of us is likely to come through it without much of both pain and anguish. Pain is physical and for most of us fortunately doesn't occupy much of our life experience. Anguish, however, is another matter. At least a low level of anguish lies close under the surface of our everyday life. This anguish commonly called by a variety of names: anxiety, depression, phobia, restless dissatisfaction, guilt, etc. anguish blights the essential quality of our lives and clouds our vision of hope and purpose. Physical pain is inherent in the human experience; as such it is a given aspect of life. Anguish on the other hand is inevitable yet not inherent. Anguish can therefore be healed.

**If** we are not awakened to the psychological level of life we are subject to the highest level of anguish. And as we move up the ladder, as it were, of self discovery, we become more open to the healing of anguish. We struggle with ignorance of ourselves and it is this territory of ignorance that is the well-spring of confusion, anguish and clouding of the soul.

**It** seems to me that all healing is ultimately spiritual. Hence to address these issues our vision with regard to psychoanalysis needs to be sufficiently deep and penetrating to include those forces and dynamics which lay beyond the field of ordinary perceptual processes, beyond our usual view of the arena of psychology.

**David L. Blumenthal, Rel.D.**



## Indiana Society for Psychoanalytic Thought

At this juncture, it is perhaps all too easy to minimize or even neglect the powerful insights of the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. Even if psychoanalysts/psychoanalysis tacitly acknowledges his discoveries, and use[s] his works as a veritable

touchstone, it opens the door for misunderstandings and a presentist perspective on our development as a profession; and, in parallel fashion, our development as individual psychoanalysts. Indeed, Freud's most radical discovery/theory, regarding the dynamic unconscious, has, in many psychoanalytical paradigms, been displaced from its primacy in the discourse of aetiological or treatment considerations. The important contributions of the British Object-Relations School, the American Relational School, and constructivist perspectives aside, there has been an emerging tendency to view clinical phenomena as occurring in a mutually co-constructed relational matrix that, this author suggests, potentially forecloses on the patient's own wording of his or her unconscious, inner world/life.

The author has been increasingly concerned with efforts to create and maintain a space for an abiding intra-psychic focus, and subscribe to a psychoanalytical ethos – amidst the attendant impediments owing to the emphasis on scientized and so-called 'evidence-based' or 'empirically-supported' treatments. Thus, the fulsome paper also attempted to articulate some of the daunting exigencies of securing psychotherapy experience for professionals-in-training other than that as valorised by a logical-positivistic, DSM-anchored discourse. Such technocratic paradigms establish the 'teacher' as the One-Who-Knows, and carries the potential

of promulgating a form of discipleship. This can easily be translated into the clinical encounter, wherein the clinician also, in loco parentis, becomes the arbiter of truth and reality, delivering pre-thought 'knowns' for the patient to incorporate as received wisdom. This attendant problem in the transmission of professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes is a pervasive one. It is affecting senior clinicians' practices and ethos, of course.

**Importantly**, however, this impacts individuals who are beginning their clinical practices, and may find it difficult to even consider the possibility of alternative ways of knowing, let alone be encouraged to establish a space for speech given the impediments and strictures of managed care; or the technique-focussed, so-called "best practices" currently being held forth as the center-pieces of solid, ethical psychotherapeutic practice. This leads inexorably to a growing proletarianisation of a healing arts profession, and constructs the professional as 'technician', or agent of the State (eg, the various mandated reporting laws, the loss of privilege) ferreting out social deviancy; and working to 'predict and control' behaviour as in a Baconian, behavioural, deterministic epistemic logic [can political fascism be far behind such psychical fascism?].

**Never-the-less**, it is my contention that the sort of external, social pressures as we see increasingly emerging in treatments, would seem to be a derivative of the potential breaking through not simply of a patient's unconscious conflicts, and associated enfeebled emotional-behavioural controls, but possible enactments that, in the contemporary psychotherapeutic set-up (double entendre intended) preclude exploration for their unconscious meaning structures, and bringing these derivative expressions into language. These pressures inevitably lead to further enactments: to provide active suggestion, correctives, educative exhortations, etc, as demanded by manualised, evidence-based ap-

proaches. Such processes, in short, do not augur a departure from Freud's "rule of abstinence", or abandoning a position of "evenly suspended attentiveness". Rather, it calls for quite the contrary – and, constitute subjects of analysis themselves. For example, might this be a parallel process, reflecting the degree to which the psychoanalyst does not feel 'held' by his or her profession, and thus unable to create a potential space? In short, by maintaining, intact and untrammelled, the principle rule or ethic of the Freudian pair (the fundamental rule of free association), we as psychoanalysts potentially afford our patients that most increasingly rare "commodity" (you should pardon the expression!): a space for the exercise of free speech – and offers to the analysand a more unburdened space (unburdened even of the psychoanalyst's own subjectivity) for self-discovery borne of the "play" in the transference that Freud cogently wrote about, and Winnicott embodied in his writing and professional work.

In this regard, the stereotypical images of the cold and unavailable (read: "Freudian") psychoanalyst often come to mind, but are, the author suggests, unwarranted. The deep paradox here is difficult to convey, but begs a deconstruction of the concepts of "relational" or "related", which are increasingly privileged in American psychoanalytical thought (As in, 'related to what?') As someone who has been well-steeped in the traditions of the British Object-Relations School, influenced by and respectful of a variety of psychoanalytical discourses, it has been of exceptional value to my further professional development, and seems to have been of salutary value to patients, for a [re] turning to Freud, and through this, to the discourse of a psychology of the unconscious – in order to carry out precisely the sort of treatments with severely ill patients that Winnicott and others have so evocatively written about.

David L Downing, PsyD



## Indiana Society for Psychoanalytic Thought

For what do human beings seek? Famous mythologist and friend of Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, suggests, in his PBS documentary interview with Bill Moyers, that human beings seek the experience of “being alive.” The experience of being alive is the experience of oneness with the universe. It occurs when one encounters great beauty, connects intimately with the forces of nature or with a part of creation, feels the warmth of human love, and/or when one is caught up in the “zone” in a creative physical activity like dancing, making music, painting, sculpting, etc. Being alive is an experience of self-transcendence and illumination in which one experiences the infinite and the finite simultaneously. Campbell believes that this experience is more important than finding meaning, which is a “head” experience. When asked how one is to acquire this experience of being alive, Campbell replies, “Follow your bliss.”

I’d like to suggest that psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy are pathways to bliss for those individuals who participate in these endeavors. The empathy and safety offered by the therapist allows for the development of what Winnicott calls a “holding environment.” In this therapeutic space, the client is able to free associate – which is a form of being. Most of the waking hours of most people are spent striving to live up to the economic and social expectations placed upon the self by objects in one’s external and internal environments. Though these expectations are brought into the therapy space through the process of transference, it is possible to “playfully” analyze the transference in the safety of the therapeutic relationship, work through the unfinished emotional business, experiment with new behavior, and become reconnected with the beam of light that is the path to one’s unique authentic self. Becoming who one is supposed to become is the experience of following one’s bliss. To know one’s true identity is to

experience one’s divinity.

As the therapist and client allow themselves to be in the analytic space, both become aware of their experience. This experience consists largely of feelings, bodily sensations, and ruminations of the imagination about who one is and what the world is like. To enter this space is to enter the realm of play. The freedom involved with play awakens one’s natural curiosity and makes possible the experience of wonder as one encounters the self/environment field. One of the important outcomes of play is the construction of a personal myth or story that gives one a sense of purpose and of place in the world.

In my work as a therapist, the forces of countertransference are a constant nuisance. My most difficult task in participating in therapy is overcoming the perceived economic and social expectations which I feel I must meet – (i.e. offering a worthwhile service through my hard work which is worthy of the financial reward necessary for me to eat, clothe myself and my family, etc. and the striving to be the object(s) that my client needs to become himself or herself so that he or she will come back in future weeks for more sessions!) On many occasions I have found myself searching the archives of my memory for the most meaningful and profound psychobabble with which I can impress a particular client and, thereby, prove myself to be a capable and trustworthy companion on his or her therapeutic journey. Fortunately, I am frequently able to laugh at the folly of my behavior and remember that all I am and all I experience is gift. Mindful of the precious gift of life and my need to be, the process of psychoanalytic psychotherapy has become for me a primary pathway in my personal search for bliss.

David J. Burkhard, M.A.

### Concept Corner

Since Freud the idea of *countertransference* has grown in meaning and importance. The seminal work by Brazilian psychoanalyst Heinrich

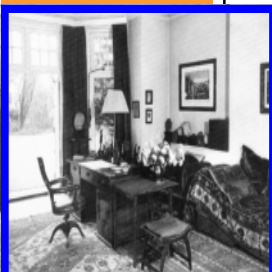
Racker, in his 1957 article *The Meanings and Uses of Countertransference*, takes Freud’s ideas on transference into new directions. “Freud describes transference as both the greatest danger and the best tool for analytic work... Likewise... countertransference may be the greatest danger and at the same time an important tool for understanding... [and assisting] the analyst in his function as an interpreter...”

Racker warns us of the countertransference pitfalls, “...[I]t affects the analyst’s behavior; it interferes with his action as object of the patient’s re-experience in that new fragment of life that is the analytic situation, in which the patient should meet with greater understanding and objectivity than he found in the reality or fantasy of his childhood.” But Racker also says that countertransference can be a very important tool in understanding and identifying with the analysand’s internal objects as well as his id and ego. “Countertransference reactions have specific characteristics (specific contents, anxieties, and mechanisms) from which we can draw conclusions about the specific character of the psychological happenings in the patient.... Awareness of countertransference helps one to understand what should be interpreted and when.”

Racker asserts that countertransference conflicts in the analyst determine the challenges and difficulties in the analysis of transference. To understand the transference the analyst must have the “...capacity to identify with both the analysand’s impulses, ... defenses, ... and internal objects and to be conscious of these identifications. This ability in the analyst will in turn depend upon the degree to which he accepts his countertransference, for his countertransference is likewise based on identification with the patient’s id and ego and his internal objects. One might also say that transference is the expression of the patient’s relations with the fantasized and real countertransference of the analyst.

## ISPT Newsletter Wins Award

The Indiana Society for Psychoanalytic Thought Newsletter wins the **Jack Lindy Enrichment Fund Award for 2007**.



The award was given by the Cincinnati Psychoanalytic Institute (CPI) to Stanley E. Osmunson, EdD to support and encourage his development of the ISPT Newsletter and media outreach. CPI supports media outreach as an efficient means of disseminating information to professionals who seek to understand and acquire knowledge about psychoanalysis.

CPI, through their regional out-reach programming, *Crossroads 2000—vision of the future*, recognizes the ISPT Newsletter for its efforts to encourage, stimulate, and develop a forum for psychoanalytic ideas, psychoanalytic education, and the dissemination of psychoanalytic events at the local, state, regional, and international levels through media.

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For just as countertransference is the psychological response to the analysand's real and imaginary transferences, so also is transference the response to the analyst's imaginary and real countertransferences. Analysis of the patient's fantasies about countertransferences, which in the widest sense constitute the causes and consequences of the transferences, is an essential part of the analysis of the transferences."

Racker, H. (1957). The Meaning and Uses of Countertransference. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 26:303-357.

### Thank You! to the contributors of the Winter ISPT Newsletter

The editor would like to thank Gary Meunier, PhD for his article on Leonardo Da Vinci and dream interpretation, David Blumenthal, RelD for his article on spiritual healing and psychoanalysis, David Downing, PhD for his thoughtful comments about the tyranny of evidence-based treatments and the need to "[re]turn" to the treatment power of the unconscious, and David Burkhard, MA for his inspiring thoughts about psychoanalytic psychotherapy and bliss.

It is the hope of the editor and the ISPT Newsletter that more of the reading audience will contribute their thoughts, scholarly works, or ideas to the Spring newsletter. Submission deadline is March 15, 2007.

(Due to limited space I will continue more about Racker's work in the Spring Newsletter.)

Stanley E. Osmunson, EdD

**New Child Clinical Seminar: @CPI—lead by Sydney Anderson, PhD & Brett Clarke, LCSW. To register call 513-961-8886 or [www.cps-i.org](http://www.cps-i.org)**

### **ISPT Secretary and CE Coordinator Wanted.**

Any one wishing to participate in these two vital ISPT executive positions please contact: Debra Taylor McGee, EdD at [docdebra@sbcglobal.net](mailto:docdebra@sbcglobal.net) or 317-916-1749

## Calendar of Events

Indiana Society for Psychoanalytic Thought  
[www.ispt-news.org](http://www.ispt-news.org)

**January 8, 2007** Laura Mandell, PhD. Miami University. *Therapeutic Effects of Romantic Poetry: William Wordsworth*

**February 12, 2007** to be announced

**March 12, 2007** Marcia Kaplan, MD. Cincinnati Psychoanalytic Institute. *Psychoanalysis and Psychosomatic illness*

**April 2007** *Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual*

American Psychological Association Div 39  
[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

**April 18-22, 2007** Division of Psychoanalysis (39) 27th Annual Spring Meeting, Royal York Hotel Toronto, Ontario

American Psychoanalytic Association  
[www.apsa.org](http://www.apsa.org)

**January 13, 2007** APsA Winter Meeting Waldorf-Astoria, New York

**June 20, 2007** APsA 96th Annual Meeting Denver Marriott City Center

Chicago Psychoanalytic Society  
[www.3b.com/cps](http://www.3b.com/cps)

**January 23, 2007** Psychoanalysis, Terror, and the Theatre of Cruelty

**February 20, 2007** The Telescoping of Generations

**March 27, 2007** Event-Based Psychoanalysis: Psychoanalysis Session by Session

**May 1, 2007** Gender as Soft Assembly: Reflections on Postmodern Gender Theory

International Psychoanalytic Association  
[www.ipa.org](http://www.ipa.org)

**March 3-4, 2007** 8th Joseph Sandler Conference, London

**July 25-28, 2007** 45th IPA Congress, Berlin

International Psychoanalytic Studies Organization

**July 25-28, 2007** 45th IPSO/IPA Congress, Berlin  
[www.ipsocandidates.org](http://www.ipsocandidates.org)

**For Questions and Concerns Please Contact the Editor**

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