

Reading Chapter 1

Why Psychoanalysis?

- Psychoanalysis, as a clinical practice, and teaching have much in common. Foremost is the impossibility of both to ensure *mental hygiene*. The term “mental hygiene” was used by Kris 1948 to describe the contact between psychoanalysis and education (teaching practice) so that education becomes more than expert modification of learners.

(p.g.xvi introduction) *Kris (1948) declares that through contact with psychoanalysis, education has extended beyond expert modification of children to include “mental hygiene” (p. 622).*

“Mental hygiene” implies some cleaning up or sanitization, which in the context of the mental life of children is impossible.

- Felman 1987: Psychoanalysis is education and therefore to speak of a psychoanalysis of education is to speak of an education of education. One gets lost in the semantics.
- Perhaps the more pertinent question is: why do we teach? What do teachers hope to achieve through their work?

(p.g. xvii) Education might be something beyond a system of socialization for employment and civil engagement. Education could be an intervention for social justice and by extension psychic resolution. In other words, education could be more than that which Kris (1948) refers to as the “...measures applied by adults, expert or non-expert, teachers and parents, to influence the behaviour of the growing child in a desirable way” (p. 622). Education, as mental hygiene, could be more responsible and more responsive to social traumas that affect the mentality of learners.

What is Pedagogy?

Pedagogy – the art of teaching and learning.

Socialization versus education

- We understand the family and home to be the space where primary socialization happens. When a child is old enough, they are sent to school where secondary socialization happens. In this space they learn that the values and norms of their family home are not necessarily the same as that of others. They learn to learn. Not all lessons that take place at school are intended by the teacher. This is one of the elements of impossibility. The teacher cannot guarantee that the child will learn, what the child will learn and how the child will learn. When educational spaces neglect this understanding, wild education is the result.

(Pg. 5) Wild education is not child-centred as it focuses more on the idea of a child being educated rather than the child her/himself. Wild education is perpetrated through fantasies of a child being educated by the teacher who is an emotional figure standing for authority. Britzman (2011) reminds us that because of our psychic functions and dysfunctions, both teaching and learning are typically at odds (p. 127). She suggests that education adopt a psychoanalytic style from which pedagogy may garner a passion for alterity or a desire to learn from otherness:

Passion for alterity may bring us into a different sense of the teacher's otherness: the vicissitudes of unconscious life, found in the call of dreams, mistakes, sexuality, and jokes. Here uncertainty may signify new beginnings. It may mean interpreting the link between love and loss and presence and absence. It may mean asking the enigmatic question, where is the pedagogue in the pedagogy? (p. 115)

- Everybody within the classroom is both teacher and learner. The difference is in power and authority given to each one.
- Authority is embodied in the teacher's alterity. The teacher is the Other
- Winnicott's "good enough," is a way to view how education might socialize and account for alterity. A good enough education allows for the subject of education – the child – to inhabit their own alterity because it is not so much focused on educating the subject but actually focuses on what is good for the subject.

(pg. 4-5) The term "good enough" used by Winnicott (1960) to describe the parent that provides a holding environment and facilitates transition through stages of maturation aptly describes socially just education. Winnicott explains:

With the care that it receives from its mother each infant is able to have a personal existence, and so begins to build up what might be called a continuity of being. On the basis of this continuity of

being the inherited potential gradually develops into an individual infant. If maternal care is not good enough then the infant does not really come into existence, since there is no continuity of being; instead the personality becomes built on the basis of reactions to environmental impingement. (Winnicott, 1960, p. 594)

A good enough education provides the learner a conceptually similar holding environment and facilitates opportunities to become. Another psychoanalyst to use the term “good enough” is

Bruno Bettelheim (1987) who speaks of good enough parenting as civilizing to children. Bettelheim illustrates how good enough practices help a child develop moral and civil awareness and states:

When a child acts out this understanding [of order against chaos and good versus evil], he begins to appreciate a lesson which cannot be taught to him convincingly in a purely didactic fashion: that to fight evil is not enough; one must do so in honor of a higher cause and with knightly valor - that is, according to the rules of the game, the highest of which then has become to act with virtue. This, in turn, will promote self-esteem, a potent spur to further integrate id, ego, and superego - that is to become more civilized (p. 285).

What is Transference?

(p.g. 13) Freud's initial contemplation of transference was negative as he felt it was an obstacle rather than a tool in the psychoanalytic process (Robbins, 1990), in much the same way that emotionality can be viewed as disruptive to a classroom (Britzman, 1998). With time, however, Freud began to understand the relevance and possibilities in this unconscious displacement of feelings of hostility and/or affection and desires. Eventually Freud saw transference as the key ingredient for a successful analysis (Robbins, 1990); an ingredient also identified as key in education (Verhaeghe, 2001). Freud eventually concluded that transference is an element of any, and all, human relationships, beginning with encounters in childhood, and repeating all the way into adulthood (Robbins, 1990).

- Teacher-learner relationships are transference. It repeats throughout the educational process. These repetitions of love and hate, of ambivalence, and of hope, are crucial to understanding the subject of education and why learning is trauma.
- Transference highlights the emotionality of pedagogy. Within the clinic, the analyst relies on transference to (as accurately as possible), interpret the causes, symptoms, and experiences of the analysand's pathology. The analyst trace repetitions from early childhood and across the lifespan. In the same way, a teacher might use transference to understand the learner's emotional and therefore mental life.

(p.g. 14) Robbins (1990) takes us through the development of transference and countertransference from Freud, Reich, Horney, and Thompson, and finally settles on his own definition of transference as:

...made up of a wish, an illusion, repressed emotion, and character defences, all of which are dynamically related to each other in such a way as to constitute a unified whole. The wish is in the present and is actively effective in present living (p. 39).

This wish, Robbins states, is for a relationship with a parent or parental figure; it is an expression for a longing for fulfilment based on real and healthy needs of a child (p. 39-40). Our deduction is that countertransference and transference is the manifestation of desire within the relationship between the teacher and the learner (de Renteria, 2011). If we consider the impossibility of teaching and psychoanalysis, we might conclude that what makes both of these possible is transference, that repeating hope that occurs through relation and through pedagogy. It is characteristic in psychoanalysis, according to Winnicott (1965), that the analyst does not waste the valuable material that comes up for analysis in terms of the emotional relationship between patient and analyst (p.117).

The Desire to Teach is the Desire to Learn

- What makes a teacher?
- What makes a student?
- The desire that drives the classroom is essential to understanding both the teacher and the learner, but more especially, when we start to delve into social justice in education, desire plays a significant role in determining the nature of the classroom – safe or privileged.
- A teacher is Other, therefore has a strong influence on the desire of the learner. In fact, the learners desire is given to them by the teacher. But who is the teacher's Other? In other words, where does the teacher get their desire?
- Desire emerges through transference.
- The unconscious emerges through transference.

(p.g. 17 - 18) The unconscious, according to Lacan, is structured like a language (Fink, 1995) and as such the unconscious is discourse and within this discourse are specific signifiers, which speak to us. These signifiers reveal much to us about the way an individual understands her own history as well as society's interpretation of that individual's history. Added to the individual's

understanding or awareness of self as a social being is the social reality in which the being must operate.

"...The unconscious is also the Other's discourse in a very straight forward fashion: the unconscious is full of other people's talk, other people's conversations, and other people's goals, aspirations, and fantasies (insofar as they are expressed in words)" (Fink, 1995, p. 9-10).

It is signifiers that help us understand the language of the unconscious and signifiers that highlight the desires of the unconscious. Within my work, I look at specific signifiers such as "Indian," "Black," and "White" as expressing the unconscious desires of those that are both signified; and speaking. Through signifiers of race and sexuality, we can understand some of the underlying facts and meanings behind actions. We can also find signifiers where breakdown in meanings, paradoxes, and complexities of positionality occur. When signifiers are lost, we see this in the condition of psychopathology.

Added to the signifiers in the memoirs are the signifiers of education, such as social justice, such as pedagogy, such as child, and such as teacher. All of these words commonly used within the realms of schooling underscore the desires of individuals acting within the sphere of education. For example, what does the word "teacher" signify in the unconscious? A brief exploration of signifiers in education returns us to Lacan's previous statement on "true teaching" (Lacan and Miller, 1991, p.242).

Lacan in Seminar II states:

...there is no true teaching other than the teaching which succeeds in provoking in those who listen an insistence - the desire to know which can only emerge when they themselves have taken the measure of ignorance as such – of ignorance inasmuch as it is, as such, fertile – in the one who teaches as well. (Lacan and Miller, 1991, p.242)