

DIARY OF A TRAINEE PSYCHOTHERAPIST

Autumn Term 1980 Part One - Object Relations and the Beatles

Week One

Starting my second year training with seminars on Object Relations. The big catch is that it is nothing to do with objects at all. Objects are actually people, and part-objects are people's naughty bits. It's all quite simple really. Just keep saying to yourself "Libido is object-seeking".

Week Two

Am starting to read Guntrip's "Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and the Self". It has taken me three weeks to master the title. Have now renewed the book at the library and confidently expect to open it any day now. Perhaps Object Relations isn't so simple.

Week Three

Persevering with Guntrip. Am practising saying "Do you realise that is a schizoid defence mechanism?" Tried saying it to boss re paper she has written. After all, she has been in therapy longer than I have. Boss replies "Crap". What does Guntrip have to say about the anal phase? Not a lot, as far as I can see.

Week Four

Given up on Guntrip. Try Melanie Klein. Good grief! Klein seems to think that babies think their mothers have a supply of broken-off penises inside them. What a funny woman. Still, now understand why we are supposed to talk about part-objects, especially when talking to the uninitiated. Can you imagine going to your doctor with a pain in one of your part-objects and telling him about it in Kleinian language? You wouldn't get out of the surgery with a prescription for Valium, you can bet. Wonder if they still use strait-jackets.

Week Five

At last! The breakthrough I have been waiting for! Having given up on Guntrip and Klein, I sat down this evening and put on an old Beatles record from 1967. This time of year in 1967 I was in Afghanistan, heading for India. I still have the Afghan coat, from Ghazni, not Oxford Street. It still smells, though not quite as much as it did in 1967. Brave chaps, the Afghans, but terrible at curing sheepskin.

Those were the days, handing out flowers and singing Beatles songs like "All you need is Love". Hey, wait a minute: isn't that the same as saying "Libido is object-seeking"?

Suddenly I find myself in the position of Moliere's M. Jourdain in "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" who discovers that he has been speaking in prose all his life without realising it. Just think, I knew all about Object relations way back in 1967. Look at some of the words to "All you need is Love":

*"Nothing you can say, but you can learn how to
play the game"
- that's Winnicott's 'false self'*

*"Nothing you can do, but you can learn to be
you in time"
- that's Winnicott's 'true self', and also the
process of psychotherapy.*

Object relations is easy after all - if you're a middle-aged hippy!

Linda Thompson
