

The analyst as catalyst

Cultivating mind in the shadow of neglect

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Introduction

I describe an effort to cultivate mind and deepen relatedness in patients who exhibit unelaborated thought and constricted relatedness, due to the effects of a certain kind of neglect.

In this effort, I draw on vitalization as viewed by Alvarez (2012) concerning unreachable patients. As she writes, some of these patients may be lost in despair, habituated to deprivation, and so, constricted by atrophied psychic function. Such patients need a "call" to psychic life, Alvarez says (1992), communicated by an analyst's urgent, formative attention to their feelings and needs.

I find that both subjectivity and intersubjectivity may be underdeveloped in some patients raised amidst absent or unresponsive care, which impedes affective aliveness and deepening of connection. To me, some of these patients require the analyst to serve as an enlivening object (Director, 2009a) – that is, a catalyst, who takes proactive steps to summon a psychic realm to the patient's experience, and forge components of dyadic bonds that sow continued growth.

Case illustration

At a glance, he appears unremarkable. I find him leafing through a newspaper, not looking troubled or fraught. I greet him; he does not reply. He never does. He takes his seat in silence, then slowly turns to me to begin. His face is impassive; it tells me he's in place, if not entirely a presence. My spirit sinks a bit, and I gird myself.

This early encounter with my patient – unalive, stamped by routine – provides an entrée to my theme: treating patients who seem very

constricted in their relatedness, due to serious disturbance or, like my patient, encapsulated states of nondevelopment. All analysts would recognize the features: blunted affect, concrete thought, inner lives void of fantasy, more likely occupied by inanimate things. "It is what it is" – so dehumanizing an expression – captures the quality of their speech and asymbolic means of forming experience. Personalities that lack vividness and the play of imagination can make such patients seem dull. I am anxious writing about such patients – perhaps, in parallel, expecting the reader's lack of interest.

I am also addressing neglect, which has not compelled our attention as trauma has. While there are many degrees of neglect, some ordinary forms of neglect, arising from parental limitation, can cause whole swathes of subjectivity in children to lie undeveloped. Such parental limitation can result, as an example, if parents were raised amidst emotional unresponsiveness themselves, so, in turn, lack abilities to recognize affective signals or need, or know what to provide in response (Crittenden, 1993; Seligman, 1994). As stated, such neglect, while unmalicious, can foreclose growth of subjectivity in a child in ways that escape our notice. How? The marks may show up quietly, as areas of unrealized that do not cause gross nuisance (Music, 2009). Unremarkable, as I said, regarding my patient. Actually, research suggests that neglect may cause more damage to the developing brain than trauma (Perry, 2002; Music, 2009). Perry wrote that early lack of stimulation prevents the dendritic growth needed for systems that mediate bonding and communication. "Use it or lose it," Perry warned: the links never made neurally underlie the links that these individuals find it hard to make with other people.

How do we awaken their dormant potentials to build mind and relatedness? I first turn to object relations theorists, who have guided insight into primitive states or unrealized function through their interest in developmental failure. Broadly, the British Independent and Bionian schools mapped the early care needed to assemble cohesion and enable mental life (holding, containment), breaches of which could impair growth. While classical Kleinian theory was not based on provision, Klein's ([1959] 1975) stress on the introjected good object as the core of ego capacity made nourishment and love, phantasied and real, essential to mental development.

However, Mitchell (1988) criticized views of dysfunction grounded in earliest, unmet needs, for depicting the adult patient as an

environmental victim and for confining such needs to infancy. Rather, in Mitchell's view, early conditions of care shape relational patterns with which, however maladaptively, the child-then-adult negotiates such needs throughout life. Dysfunctional engagement, to Mitchell, reflects an adult's complex approach, actively sustained, to conflictual interpersonal situations, including treatment.

While the relational school authorized a more complex, co-constructive role for patients, the emphasis, in some relational theory, on a capable if challenged patient seemed to leave out patients who lack such means. Some patients sit before us seemingly stranded in aloneness, unequipped for collaborative engagement. Even when such incapacity is not due to serious disorder as in autism, marked schizoid states or encapsulated nondevelopment can constrict thought and affect so that object contact appears limited, often mediated along practical lines. Patients who are dulled by concrete ideation and flattened emotion require the analyst to take initiative as an enlivening object, as I (Director 2009a, 2009b) described, to instill links to people and mentalized thought. Across schools, analysts working with unmentalized states are making use of active modes – for example, co-involvement in enactment, attention to affectivity, use of figurability – to sense and build on, or give first voice or organization themselves to a psychic dimension of the patient's experience (Levine, 2013). Here, I focus on neglect's effects in constricting patients, and propose that the analyst must serve as a catalyst to induce elements of a meaning-making mind and the dyadic bonds that promote such function.

Let me delineate my approach further by citing two object relations theorists whom I draw on. Anne Alvarez, post-Kleinian therapist, wrote (2012) that with patients limited to rudimentary thought and relatedness, "vitalizing" interventions, in her terms, take precedence before efforts at explanation. With long-deprived patients, lost to connection and mindedness, the first order of communication need be that their experience has psychic meaning – a "call" to psychic life, said Alvarez (1992) that she imparts with intensified tone, beckoning subjectivity. Feelings and wants need an urgent, formative attention, she explained of some cut-off patients. To Alvarez, interest itself spurs psychic growth in neglected patients, because it challenges the "dumbness" and indifference of their internal objects.

I also draw on Neville Symington (2007), British Independent analyst, who likewise believes that it is the analyst's job "to help the patient to grow [his/her] mind" (p. 1415), through the analyst's emotionally imbued thought. Symington noted that destructive tendencies are grossly visible in people, while goodness dwells in them quietly. Yet it is the patient's good attributes, more than his bad ones, that need our recognition. Why? To Symington, goodness forms the synthesizing basis of the process that he called "mind-building."

In my view, both Alvarez and Symington accord the analyst an agentic role in the growth of the patient's mind, through the analyst's affective, recognizing responses. They seem to emphasize and build on object relations notions of countertransference and Bionian principles of containment to derive their responsiveness (Alvarez, 1992, 2012; Symington, 2001, 2007). Even when enlarged, the frameworks of countertransference and containment tend to confine these analysts' signature interventions to being responses to their patients. But I see their distinctly generative forms of involvement – vitalization from Alvarez, "focused wonder" from Symington, as he called it (2007, p. 1421) – as expressions of their subjectivities informing their responses. The contribution of the analyst's own subjectivity to her responses to the patient and the analytic interchange is explicitly recognized and inherent in the relational model, in contrast to the object relations tradition.

It is because of my self-aware use of my subjectivity that I can expressly argue for the role of catalyst.² Moreover, I believe it is through the relational school's inclusion of the analyst's subjectivity that we can expand the application of object relations ideas. Let me add that, while the analyst's subjectivity is assumed to relationalists, it is seldom examined in its various aspects. Here, in setting out my intention to serve as a catalyst, I express my conscious purpose. As I proceed, I will identify other aspects of my subjectivity, including my "self-reflective responsiveness" (Mitchell, 1997; see also Cooper, 2014), which helps in my self-enlivenment, and ultimately, the unconscious interplay of my object world with my patient's (Bass, 2001, 2003, 2009; Cooper, 2012, 2014; Davies, 1999, 2004, 2005).

My subjectivity is always in play; indeed, my "otherness" is what I utilize to enliven. But as a catalyst, here at work with the sequelae of a kind of neglect, I place priority on using my subjectivity to awaken

my patient's growth. Bion (1994) said that the analyst's goal is to introduce the patient to himself. It is my main goal here for my patient to take his own emerging mind and psychic self with interest.

States of unrelatedness/forms of protection

Joe, in his 50s, called me seeking family therapy for problems in his relationships with his six children (four in their 20s and 30-year-old twins), which had grown during his wife's illness and death a few years earlier. When I met with him for a history, Joe spoke about his children dispassionately, at times in blunt terms that were jarring to me. Reported without affect, businesslike in tone, Joe seemed opaque to his own impact. But his kids' alienation led Joe to this conclusion: "it's tough to be with me." I suggested we work individually on that. We've met twice a week for five years.

The silence that Joe entered sessions with, described at the start of my chapter, was not generative, but inert. He seemed depressive, often remote; his face never brightened from an inner source of robustness. Almost always, I initiated discussion. Joe lacked a procedural grasp of engagement, so, talking would lurch: he'd repeat himself with a wearing effect, interject subjects like nonsequiturs, or if the chronology of his account ended, come to a halt. I felt few affective or other cues, not because Joe fought such processes, but because, in his seeming self-enclosure, his capacity for projection struck me as limited. Without the chief link that projective identification provides in communication and comprehension (Bion, 1959, 1962a), I lacked crucial bases for responding to him, or "reading" him at all. However closely we were seated, there simply was no current running between us. There was no "thinking" within Joe, or in me on his behalf, at this juncture (Bion, 1962a).

Silence, however, did not bother Joe; to be an isolate in another's presence was his norm. I internally scanned material for ideas, some times feeling anxious, at times taxed by the effort of keeping us viable. When my thoughts felt stale, I'd flee my mind by asking questions – about his marriage, and so on – which Joe answered matter-of-factly to the end of his data. My questions fruitless and, to me, intrusive given his silences, I was sent back to my own mind. Eventually, my self-reflection would yield guidance. I'd hoped that Joe's exposure

to my thinking about him would rouse his psychic activity, but that wasn't so. He showed no interest in me – outside my problem-solving role – which I could harness by training my focus on him. But I came to find that my thinking about his children captured his attention. So my thoughts about them produced the components that would register, amplify through words, link to other components with the onset of affect, and form roots for building mindedness in Joe (Levine, 2013).

But at first, his silence and stiffness made him look like an anomaly in a therapy suite. How would he – we – ever fit? His humble sense of his own lacks moved me: "I'm not a good communicator, I don't know how." For the modest goal of a "dialogue" with his kids, Joe was there to "fix" what he lacked. We may have joined through our superegos, at the start. Joe would work hard for his kids, I on his behalf: it made for a connection, of sorts. Unbeknownst to me, my diligence was an aspect of an internal object of my own which would emerge later in my awareness and figured into my response to Joe.

"We are not born with a mind but with the potential for creating" one through "reflective communication," Symington (2007, p. 1410) said. Joe is one of ten children of Italian Americans – his mother a homemaker, his father a manager, both observant Catholics (Joe is not). The number of children may partly explain his mother's habit of forgetting his name. Joe's father was short-tempered; he'd had hardship after his own mother died in his infancy. "He was all about survival," Joe said, "what to do to get by." Joe was shy, bad at sports and school, socially awkward. He felt he was disappointing as the oldest son. His father has been partly assimilated by Joe (as in his own anger), but remains a partly separable object – obtuse or disapproving. Joe's struggles didn't engage either parent. They only asked, "Did you do your chores, did you do your homework?" "There wasn't time for emotions," Joe said; to his parents, it was all about just "barreling through."

Joe, too, uses movement and physicality as a self-container (Bick, 1968). Movement, in place of joy, overrides his dulled affect, and gives him agency (Fonagy, Moran, & Target, 1993). An engineer, Joe succeeded at work, muscling through projects. He recalled driving his kids for hours to new homes or jobs without any complaint, but without any conversation.

How pained I was, picturing these silent car trips! – until I found an empathic view. Could there be any more graphic display of Joe's internal world than his driving his children to these meaningful destinations, and right beside them, exchanging no discussion of the journey? Alvarez (2012), drawing on Bion ([1962b] 1984), believes that an infant is equipped with a preconception of a responsive, engaged other, but if that expectation isn't met, a conception of people as "interested," or interesting, never forms. Minds like Joe's, she suggests, might be occupied by "useless" or "empty" objects, versions of caregivers who, however close by, never turned toward their children to delve into their minds. So, Joe lacked an inner fount of interest from which he could originate a current of curiosity about people to use to discover his own children. I began to muse aloud about his children's involvements, to share the way a thought, say about a young person's activity, could be joined to other thoughts to create an overture.

Complementing Joe's movement was an inertness which had hindered his growth. I sought any sign of affect to build on. For example, he attended an important job fair with a newly graduated child, and said, meagerly, it was "good" to go; I said it felt important to him, so he'd gone to the same job fair now for a third time. He sent a link about a bowling tournament to a distant son, "because it's his hobby"; I said he seemed eager to renew their contact. After months of such plodding efforts, I asked Joe what kept him coming? "I miss my kids," he replied, flatly. Could he say more? In his literal fashion, he said, "I'm their father, they should be with me. I don't know." I nodded, and added, I sensed that there was more to his motive.

Making contact with emotions and objects

My early efforts involved always stressing the psychic source of Joe's behavior, helping to build units of thought, and turning my "interest" from a standing attitude into a dynamic force whose vitality affects (Stern, D.N., 2010) might propel further thought. But these efforts would not have had the immediate effects that several crises did, which demanded more from Joe. Hardest was a daughter's abruptly moving abroad, amidst minor legal offenses.

Joe felt to blame for his daughter's problems, due to his marital unhappiness, which had hardened long before his wife's illness. I was

now startled to learn that, while Joe felt guilt for his marital failure, he felt none for having started a new relationship, with a younger woman, during his wife's illness. To Joe, his marriage had "died" long ago, and his kids didn't "know." Since his wife's death, his companion had joined his life publicly, and Joe started getting emails from his children with questions about his relationship. Never having had his intentional acts framed within the views of others (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002), Joe did not realize that his behavior could be seen as hurtful to his children, nor could he empathically grasp their sense of betrayal.

Our sessions became a primer on theory of mind, and to Joe, "the big takeaway of treatment." They were beneficial to me, too, because his incapacity for perspectivism, and nondefensiveness about it, defused my potential anger at him for his lack of consideration of his kids, in this context. I led Joe to grope for his feelings about his marital problems. But it was not only our formulations of his mental states that initiated mentalization, but also Joe's goodness that played a role, as Symington suggests. These discussions were laborious for Joe, but he was fueled by reparative urges. His effort in these sessions could not have been as noticeable to his children as his lack of consideration had been, but it was synthesizing in effect: Joe wrote back to his children to account for his behavior, and, having realized it himself, admitted failing them in mishandling his marital unhappiness.

Joe's goodness forged another crucial link – to me. Writing was hard, Joe said, which was obvious as he read aloud his draft letters and tripped over his bad grammar. He'd then crane his arm awkwardly around his paper, and in cramped script, correct himself. This simple sight and his halting explanations to his children touched me deeply. Joe's penmanship may have been crude, but he had decency written all over him.

Affect and mind grow in tandem, we might say. My warmth, now, for Joe opened a pathway for me to my own inner bond to my father – a man unlike Joe, but similar in humble, hardening origins, who could be tender toward his children. I wondered if I had drawn on a fondness, as well as diligence – both aspects of my paternal bond – to incline me toward Joe from the start? For Joe, assembling a more mindful coherence (Levine, 2013) from past, fragmentary events opened pathways to his affects – at times, painfully. The hardship he had caused his children now caused him regret and self-recrimination. But I consistently

pointed out his restorative steps because, as Symington says, constructive processes need our recognition to grow. With my focus on his reparative longings, and his history a running narrative, further affect was stirred in Joe.

Joe found that, if he tried talking to his kids about his past behavior instead of writing, he'd "choke up." Joe said: "It's like I've got these feelings, and they're trapped." His observation itself conveyed augmented thought – about himself, to me. We were now talking.

A favorite neighbor then died. When Joe reported "choking up" while thanking a sibling for attending the funeral, I noticed aloud how he sometimes faltered over positive feelings. "Gratitude," as he called it, concerning his sibling, sounded like an experience close to love. I asked what it was like, in his family, expressing love? He replied, "I guess I knew I was loved, but nobody ever said it."

Joe paused, then said: "My father thought I was a crybaby. I just didn't have faith in myself, that I could *do* anything." His father had been motherless, and had gotten through it. "So he'd just say, 'What do you have to feel bad about? You've got two parents, and siblings.' It was like, 'Stop it!'"

A few moments passed between us. Then, I said quietly, "He made you feel weak for having feelings." "Maybe that's the reason I learned to keep feelings in," Joe replied.

Joe and I had spoken of his parents' failure to notice his aloneness, or to seek out his hobbies and skills. Now, compounding this awareness was the sense of shame Joe recounted with his father, for his inabilities. Joe became a big doer, in time, but his "glass half-empty" view of himself, in his words, persisted. His self-criticism still extended, at times, to his tone with his children, which I reflected. As he monitored that tendency, another dimension of Joe opened – as in this session, after Joe reported catching himself being negative.

He finished his account, and paused. Then, Joe began to tell me about "this guy named Don," who'd been a church member and family friend. Joe had begun to drink as a teenager because it helped with his insecurities, he thought. He had an incident of disorderly conduct, and Don had a talk with him. "Don said – you know, nothing judgmental. He didn't say, 'Stop doing those bad things!' He just put it across, 'OK, you did this, I understand where you're at. But – you know, this can't happen any more.'"

We were quiet. Then, I said: "He spoke to you with understanding. How come your parents didn't notice how you'd struggled as a kid? Don saw you were having a hard time, and spoke to you with awareness." Joe said, "He led by example." I nodded, then asked: "How do you make room for his influence? It feels like only your father's influence takes hold of you."

I was touched by Joe's memory of Don, who softened both of us with his entry. My easy empathy for Joe, and the kindness he had received, told me that projective processes were under way, reciprocally. If inchoate at the start, an unconscious link between us had gathered strength and continuity.

Joe's object world had now filled out. Alongside the internalized object of his father, there was another paternal object, courtesy of Don, offering acceptance. Joe's mother seemed a figure who furnished elementary needs. I began to talk with Joe about the inner presences that I sensed within him – his uninterested or disregarding father, and the facilitating, though less available, Don. Relational analysts who draw on a model of multiplicity might use the language of self-states, assembled in relation to objects, to identify the varying factors affecting a patient's self-experience. But in my attempt to talk with Joe about the effects of these inner influences, I alluded to his internalized objects for several reasons.

First, Joe's sense of self was too spare to support the framework of self-states. The otherness of internal objects offered a useful means of entry into his internal world. Of course, internalized objects occupy a person's own psyche; they are "split off parts of the personality," Ogden (2002, p. 768) suggested. With a patient like Joe, who has not yet claimed such "parts," and their place in his own selfhood, or even recognized that they are there, it seemed a fitting first step to name them, and explain their presence as possible effects (real or imagined) of a closely known "other." Ideally, my goals would be to raise Joe's awareness of these inner forces, to make possible his own exercise of greater influence over processes of identification and differentiation. Specifically, my aim would be to help Joe become aware of powerful inner forces that made him feel dismissed or undervalued, and continued to constrain him; much fainter experiences of acceptance and changeability; and the ways in which aspects of the stronger attitudes had made their way unconsciously into his own character as a subject – with the hope of enabling reorganization of inner influences, toward

Joe's greater attainment of his desired way of being a father himself. Admittedly, these were long-range goals.

Some relational analysts write of using metaphor (Cooper, 2014) or descriptive characterizations of variable "selves" (Davies, 1998, 2004) to address the grip of internalized objects on patients' self-organizations. These approaches assume a capacity for self-reflectivity (if inaccessible at times) beyond the effort to establish mentalized content that I was working on. With Joe, naming influences in such form as "your inner Don" was a basic step – and the concreteness of internal objects, as originally conceived by Klein, gave me terms for talking about internal forces that were aligned with his manner of mentalization (Lecours & Bouchard, 1997). Another example of my use of such terms follows in an excerpt shortly.

Yet I saw the higher potential for building mindedness in Joe's object relation involving Don, because of its dynamic aspects of listening. As Alvarez (1992, 1996, 2012) said in post-Kleinian terms, the neglected patient poses a twofold challenge: not only does his self have deficits, but also his internal objects are remote or dumb. In other words, a patient with undeveloped thought might be further deadened by lack of expectation that what he thinks could be found important to anyone. In effect, Alvarez suggests, a meaning-making mind entails internalization of listening: thoughts have to have been given importance by a listening object for the self to find its own thoughts worth hearing (see also Laub, 1992; Fonagy et al., 2002; Stern, D.B., 2010). Invoking Don gave me a ready-made link to Joe's internal experience, possibly deepening the impact of my own listening voice. It may also be that Joe's memories of Don were revived by his work with me, a view I will return to later.

In sum, investing my presence with a vibrant interest, naming Joe's objects and their effects, and activating links to internalized experiences of listening responsiveness were part of my effort to augment mental content and associativity, and promote shifts in Joe's internal world.

Enacted experience/unconscious communication

Vitalizing Joe's feelings and expanding affective resonance (Demos, 1984) lay the ground of relatedness. Some gains occurred with his children; much strain remained. A few unanswered emails to them led Joe to ask if it would "be better for the kids if they don't see me at

all?" – sounding a question about himself that, to me, harkened back to boyhood. I pointed out the importance of an outing with one child, his advice sought by another. Invigorating Joe with my conviction was expressive of my subjectivity and my premise: to enlarge his worth, as Symington might say, would strengthen his inclinations toward openness and seeking – in effect, his desire to know (Bion, [1962b] 1984) – again, building mindedness.

An upcoming performance by one of his twins, a musician, caused new tensions. The prospect of Joe bringing his new partner, when his deceased wife had been so supportive of the son's music, stirred intense distress among the older kids. When Joe turned to me, I asked if a family session with the older kids might help. Since Joe had sought family work from me, it seemed right for me to mediate such a meeting. Joe agreed to it; the twins and other involved sibling did, too.

I had Joe's children come early to address powerful concerns they'd raised, and help them think about ways of constructively conveying them; Joe was to come soon after for the session. The discussion with the children needed to be separate, but it wasn't separate enough, for as I was still attending to their exchange of opinions, my buzzer sounded Joe's arrival. I stepped into the waiting room to ask Joe for a minute, so I could wrap up with them. As he sat, I was struck. The incongruity of the situation – Joe, in the waiting room, and me, in talking with his kids – "woke me up" to the enactment that I'd been engaging in (Bromberg, 1998, p. 285; see also Stern, 2004). Joe had spoken of his inabilities as a boy, and the shame they had caused him with his father; he had spoken a few times of embarrassment when he struggled to express himself in session. But the portrait I now faced of his seeming diminishment, as I had managed to exclude him, however circumstantially, from his own children's exchange, made me realize how I must have made him feel inferior and inadequate as a communicator all along, even by the sheer nature of psychotherapy. After all, Joe had told me that he didn't know how to communicate; yet, our every session relied on it. Symington (2007) captured the experience Joe must have had of his therapy when he described the particular shame of "being seen ... in an undeveloped state" (p. 1413).

What accounts for my inattention to my own role in causing Joe shame? Different schools would offer varied views. I will focus on

ideas stemming from the interface of object relations and relational domains. Remember where Joe and I began? In our joined superegos? Symington (1983) wrote that that position could lock an analytic pair in. I was working, in earnest, to help Joe reach a goal that he was pursuing conscientiously. He was making progress – which, however real, may have dimmed my awareness of my other effects. Cooper (2012) saw a split between the analyst's experience of himself as a supportive external object, and awareness of himself as an internalized object that endangers. The patient's very success can serve the analyst's resistance to finding himself as that endangering internalized object. Until my waiting-room realization, I hadn't actively looked for myself as an internalized object that posed a shaming threat to Joe – which may have suited Joe, who wouldn't have wanted to see me that way.

Maybe I should have just *let him be*, and accepted the obtuseness and distance that endured within him (Bergstein, 2009), including with his children. I step back from this unusual session to look at this question. I took a proactive approach with Joe because he seemed to have “given up” on relating, causing an “atrophy” of function in him, as Alvarez (2012, pp. 22, 133) has described. It is true that Joe found withdrawal to be of defensive benefit, but I don't think that was the source of his condition. Rather, I think his potential for engagement had not been fully developed, so a self-enclosed position, with its appearance of withdrawal, became characteristic.

Let me return to my unawareness of my part in causing Joe shame, which crystallized for me at the family session, to consider another source – my grandiosity. That is, I wished for Joe even greater success with his kids than he had managed, to date. To me, by now, Joe was not all *stop* and *go*: he had a genuine goodness in his love for his children – a willingness to do anything for them – that I'd fully felt, and hoped they might perceive as well.

But in serving as family mediator, which may have carried my wish into my role that day with its potential for advocacy of him, I had slighted him myself, not only by briefly excluding him. When I asked Joe to wait, he took a seat in my waiting room – quietly and unquestioningly. It was in the nature of Joe's goodness to be unassuming. Goodness, after all, is not perfection. Perfection commands attention

in its show of excellence. Goodness, in its ordinariness, asks nothing for itself. Had I made an assumption of Joe's cooperation, in my inadequate attention to scheduling that day, and taken his goodness for granted? I believe so. More broadly, Joe's selfhood itself, of which goodness was a part, was not yet fully established, so he did not know to stand up for himself, including with me. Taking a seat quietly may have reflected Joe's tenuous sense of a right to anything better. That I attended to Joe's weakly held right to self-regard by assuming a role in his meeting with his children but lost sight of it myself in my arrangements speaks again to the split in my ability to hold awareness of both my supportive and abandoning effects – a limitation theorized by Cooper, as earlier noted, My careless handling of Joe's selfhood in this way, and his goodness, put me most in touch with shame in myself.

It may have been the internalized object of my father – a man whose unheralded acts of generosity defined him, along with his shortcomings – that helped me grasp the modest essence of Joe's goodness, underscored on this occasion. My more nuanced appreciation for Joe's character, which included his flaws, led me to a further consolidation: if adequately secured, Joe's goodness would be *good-enough*, to qualify his fatherhood as amply loving and, when needed, thoughtful. In the deepening of our unconscious connection, I could now identify with Joe: in my offerings as his therapist, I hoped that my own goodness, given my lapses that day and others to come, would prove good-enough as well.

Conception and conclusion

Over time, my discussion of shame opened up with Joe, as we now saw his habit of “choking up” as an effort to prevent shame, and ways of removing himself as also protective. I raised my own inattention to the way that I brought on his shame. Joe admitted that therapy made him face his limitations as a communicator, with me and his kids – but that was his agenda, not my doing, he said. My role, for Joe, was still fitted to category; he viewed me as his “therapist,” someone seen for professional services. Efforts I made to raise aspects of our relationship failed, as yet, to strike a chord.

But we had some humor now. Another time, Joe said it still wasn't natural to communicate, and maybe the reason was, "a bad teacher." He had a mischievous look, and we bantered – playfully but with an edge. He closed it, saying he "wouldn't be here if it wasn't effective." But the exchange was a way that he brought in, and I acknowledged, my limitations.

In fact, my need to face my own limitations was Joe's offering to me in our work (Suchet, 2015). Embedded in his reference to me as a "bad" teacher, however jokingly, was his recognition of the errors and inadequacies that I might bring to bear on his growth. I had to temper my commitment to my efforts as a catalyst with a realization of my own inadequacies. People change within the bounds of our capacities, as well as theirs; that was Joe's humbling reminder to me.

Symington (2007) often advises a student to "sit back, stay further from [a] patient" (p.1409), for a fuller perception of him. Looking across at Joe through these years, I realize that my perception of him has shifted greatly: from my first impression of him as wooden anomaly, to my image of him as homespun writer, to my recognition of his non-narcissistic goodness at core. My perception has given way to a conception, in Bion's terms, of his meaning. Joe, who began for me in impersonal facts, has become a symbolic being. The idea of Joe, *who he is as a person*, has gathered form in my mind. Joe had eventually married his girlfriend, and recently, I asked if he'd want a child with her.

"I would, if she does," Joe said. He talked about their different backgrounds, hers Hispanic, his Italian American, before concluding, "I think a child we had would be an interesting person." I had warmed, as I listened to him, with associations to men in my life, not only my father, who had been nurturers. The phrase, "maternal men," came to mind – with some wonder, in Symington's terms, at its occurrence now with Joe.

I said, about his wanting a child, "It's a way of being creative. It's the 'Don' in you. In you, like him, there's a caring provider, who wants to raise a young person and give him the resources and opportunities to make his way in the world."

Joe squeezed his cheek to manage emotion. I kept him company, saying lightly, "It's emotional, I feel it, too." Once composed, he said, "You're

right. How to bring a young person into the world and give him what they need, to be whatever they want – that is something I care about."

How do we, as analysts, make a difference in our patients' inner lives? In this exchange, I again risked serving as the bad object, potentially prompting Joe's shame due to his surging feelings and incipient tears. But, to use another of Cooper's (2010) ideas, maybe I brought "newness" to that bad experience, through my own message of tolerance for feeling and shortcomings, including my own. I also gave voice to Joe's potential for identifying with Don, toward an internal lessening of his father's influence.

Of course, along with my reference to the "Don" in Joe, was my awareness of my own role as a "caring provider" for him. As I raised earlier, the synergistic effects of my own caring attention and the humane wash of feeling that came over Joe in evoking Don cannot be precisely sourced. In partial answer to my question, in the preceding paragraph, I agree with Bromberg (1998) and Cooper (2014) that the analyst creates the object, as it emerges through her own engagement with the patient, which entails the activation of internalized experiences and her own authentic offerings, in the dynamic, affectively tinged here and now (Joseph, 1989).

But that is only part of my answer (here pertaining to the junction of my listening responsiveness and that of an internalized relation with Don). Where neglect or other damage results in a patient's unrelatedness, concreteness of thought, and associated atrophy of function, the analyst creates an object of a different order. The analyst-as-catalyst is wholly new, or a wholly new dimension of the object, featuring: a robust presence in a world formerly felt to be largely empty or isolating, exuding an enlivening interest and proactive intent to engender growth. In brief review of my work with Joe, I sought to rouse inceptive processes of relatedness, entailing such steps as: reaching for him and drawing him toward engagement (Alvarez, 1992); kindling affect and forging resonance; directing efforts at connection away from behavior into expression of feeling and other states. It was my aim to build mindedness by: infusing his statements with unclaimed motive and desire; encouraging him, at times, in his flatness to search within himself for another thought; undergirding thought with words, and once begun, reverie-born connection; above all, hearing, inferring,

even giving prospective sound to a psychic register in his action and speech that I imported into my comments to him.

To date, I had seen the properties of Joe's thought progress, at times, from concreteness and discharge-through-action, to a higher degree of abstraction and elaboration within (Lecours & Bouchard, 1997). Ultimately, I hoped that Joe would gradually introject my containment, leading him to cull ideas from his experience, and further his own assemblage of a meaning-making apparatus.

Let me close with a recent production of Joe's mind. He planned a gift for a son, who had been awarded a plum job as a top recruit at his business school. The gift was a leather briefcase, embossed with the son's initials, and the school name inside. Joe mentioned that his own father had given him a briefcase for work when he graduated college, but he'd never used it. When I ventured a comment about his particular choice of gift, Joe snorted, "It's about briefcases!"

Some weeks later, I asked Joe if he'd given his gift. He unfolded a draft of the note he'd written his son. It said:

When I graduated college, my father gave me a briefcase. But the school wasn't fancy, so the gift wasn't a big deal. Yours is a prestigious school. Your success is fantastic. You had a dream of that program, went after it, and made this happen. I hope this briefcase reminds you how you went after your dream. It could also begin a new tradition in our family.

I had tears in my eyes when I finished reading. Joe was pleased that his son had loved the gift, "but it wasn't the briefcase – it was the note." He went on, "It's a lesson, of how I have to reveal more, about where things come from."

I said, "A briefcase is not only a briefcase."

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I am grateful to Joe for permission to publish aspects of our work, and I express my admiration for his honesty, spirit of determination, and willingness that he brought to all our work.

His given name is common; he is one of a kind.

Notes

- 1 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to cite the many analysts who write of enactment and affectivity, and their own participating roles, as phenomena that can render meaning from "unmentalized experience," so called by Mitrani (1995). Figurability refers to the process described by Cesar and Sara Botella (2005), whereby an analyst's regression from rational thought enables him to produce an image that captures an irrepresentable experience in the patient.
- 2 I (Director, 2009a, 2009b) used the term catalyst in elaborating my view of the analyst's role as an enlivening object. I then came across Levine's (2013) use of the term to describe an analyst's active role in helping to construct representations in patients who lack the means. He does not foreground the use of the analyst's own subjectivity as a principal factor, as I do.

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