

Paulo Freire and Melanie Klein:
Thoughts on the pain of symbolization in the lifeworld of the mind

Deborah P. Britzman

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Melanie Klein and Paulo Freire: Thoughts on the pain of symbolization

Deborah Britzman, FRSC and Distinguished Research Professor

York University, Toronto

Two intertwined predicaments bring me to join the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein who argued that depression is the origin of the human condition with Paulo Freire's call for a radical humanization to release oppression. The first concerns our understanding of transformation with the question of what transformation transforms, while the second inquires into the relation depression and oppression have to loss, mourning, and symbolization. Between Paulo Freire's (1968/1988) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Melanie Klein's (1975) *Love, Guilt, and Reparation* I trace a signifying loss that orients education as an emotional situation, and, more readily is felt as fraught relations between interiority and exteriority, self and others, desire and denial, and psychoanalysis and politics.

Difficulties

Word for word, *oppression* and *depression* signifies loss of inner and outer worlds. Misery, exclusion, disappearance, and emptiness of affective life unnerve the primacy of the subject's capacity to communicate, belong, and desire thinking.¹ We can speak of the oppressor and the oppressed, though within recessive depression, no such couple exists. Instead, psychical representations fail, or rather, they collapse into themselves. By design, these emotional situations affect the imaginary and reception of psychoanalysis and education and create a twofold predicament: psychical and social loss marks our work and, in concert, loss of self and other unconsciously impresses our understanding of transformation and what we imagine becomes transformed. The first belongs to the advent of anxiety in transformation while the second involves unconscious relations depression and oppression has to loss, mourning, and symbolization.

My inquiry into the pain of symbolization leans on a psychoanalytic reading of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*² and its call for a radical humanization to release liberation with Melanie Klein's volume, *Love, Guilt, and Reparation*³ and her rethinking on the formative significance the infancy of depression has to the adult mind. Each title carries the startles of love and hate,

¹ My understanding of psychical emptiness and transformation is influenced by

² Paulo Freire (1988). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. by Myra Bergman Ramos. NY: Continuum Press. [Original pub.1968].

³ Melanie Klein (1975). *Love, Guilt and Reparation & Other Works, 1921-1945*. London: Hogarth Press.

affects that are primary, immediate, arrive before understanding, mark the handling of the fissures of knowledge, and are founded by the radical situation of relationality. In Wilfred Bion's terms, "An emotional experience cannot be conceived in isolation from a relationship."⁴ For Bion, there are three elemental emotional relationships that compose psychical life: "(1) X loves Y; (2) X hates Y; and (3) X knows Y."⁵ His equation figures the transit of affect as simultaneously intra-psychical and intersubjective. Bion argued that variations of love, hate, and knowledge compose the psychoanalytic situation and, beyond the clinic, lend value or disparagement to mental states and group life. Knowledge has a particular flavor; what Bion calls "K" can only mean the process of getting to know emotional experience without having to hoard knowledge as a secret possession or evasion of life's uncertainties and frustrations.

There is always a danger in speaking with the emotional world; for us all, the inner life is subject to wishes, misunderstanding, phantasy, anxiety, and defense. And the words that bear the weight of these as transformations may feel crazy, nerve wracking, accusatory, a perhaps narcissistic. These are also the hovering qualities of phantasies, dreams, and wishes, all archaic revenants that flounder on forgotten scenes of love and hate. Objections to the naming of affecting matters through their unconscious impressions tend to sustain the anxiety that somehow, in doing so, historical reality, consciousness, and political

⁴ Wilfred R. Bion (1994). *Learning From Experience*. P. 42. Northvale NJ: Jason Aronson Inc. [Original pub. 1962].

⁵ Ibid. 43.

life will be pushed aside and people, rather than the conditions they face, will be normalized, deemed pathological, and dissolved into diagnosis. Clearly, environmental, social, material, cultural, and political provisions of care and choice are the elemental scaffolds for the freedom to think otherwise. But so too is the unconscious and the idea that of consciousness of one's situation also carries a kernel of psychical resistance. Without a curiosity that can tolerate the variability, urges, and reach of the inner world and the unknown, our representations of exteriority fail.

For psychoanalysis and education, the difficulty of putting words to such human events is not only that the naming has no end. Life itself is confounded as much as it confounds the putting of affecting words to it. At times, naming is barred by psychical presentations that resist and destroy contact. Then words are felt as so much litter to be expelled. Such configurations of loss, despair, and no communications are painful to meet, partly because we are rendered helpless, partly because the transference of emotional situations contain their tendency to repeat, and then because the nature of transformation is contingent on recognition of the primacy of anxiety, the pain of symbolization, and the work of mourning.

Freire and Klein give depth to the advent of symbolization with their insistence that reading inhibitions are not due to the failure of cognition. Freire's pedagogy proposes the paradox that if words call upon anxiety, they may also break open uncanny reality. Klein works within unreal reality or the urgency of

bodily anxiety prior to words. She begins with two assumptions: birth ushers the infant into its emotional situation and the adult mind has its roots in infancy. Our earliest anxieties situations over loss of love, fear of annihilation, and destruction, Klein speculated, create needed defenses such as projection, introjection, omnipotence, splitting into good and bad, ideality, and identification, all procedures that are both constitutive of the mind and at first, function *as if* they are emissaries from reality. She understood this early rushing depression as oscillating between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Klein then made a novel claim: our prehistory of loss and separation, beginning with the loss of the breast, is the basis for phantasy, then imagination, and eventually, for our capacity to think and symbolize self and other without having to deny the frustrations and uncertainties entailed.

Depression

What then is this prehistory of loss and how does it repeat over a lifetime?⁶ Freud's metapsychological paper, "Mourning and Melancholia,"

⁶ While it is beyond the scope of this essay to trace the early psychoanalytic views on mourning and melancholia, readers may find the work of Karl Abraham (1877-1925) illuminating for our contemporary debates. Karl Abraham, a colleague of Freud and Melanie Klein's analyst, expanded Freud's work on mourning and melancholia, with a focus on the regression of libido and the processes of introjection. This led Abraham to speculate on a theory of libido in early life. In a letter to Freud, Abraham wrote: "I have assumed a basic irritation in infancy as a prototype for a later melancholia. In the last few months, Frau Dr. Klein has skillfully conducted psychoanalysis with a three-year-old-boy with good therapeutic results. This child faithfully presented the basic melancholia that I had assumed and in close combination with oral erotism. The case offers in general amazing insight into the infantile instinctual life." (Abraham to Freud, October 7, 1923, p. 471, In Paul Falzeder (2002) *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham 1907-1925, Complete Edition*. Translated by Caroline

remains a touchstone for psychoanalysis and for cultural theory's turn to affect and the body.⁷ It is as much about the question of identification with loss as it is about the work and functions of internalization as defense against loss. Freud's depiction of the self when the beloved object is lost incurs a comparable diminishment of mental states. For both mourning and melancholia, thoughts recede from the world and become caught in a painful, persecutory negation that the object is not gone. Within "the crushed state of melancholia" Freud wrote, "the shadow of the object fell upon the ego."⁸ The loss is incorporated. The only distinction Freud gives between the work of mourning and melancholia is that in melancholia, while the ego knows what is lost in the world, there is no awareness of what has been lost in the self. The loss, Freud supposed, can only be made significant through the work of mourning that involves the painfully slow decathexis to death and a new cathexis to an unknown world. Mourning, then, is highly symbolic work as well as a frame for what the pain of symbolization involves.

In a sense, Freud's model for mourning and melancholia refers depression and oppression to his technical conception of "working through resistances."⁹

Schwarzacher. London: Karnac. For further discussion on Klein's relationship with Abraham, see Deborah Britzman (2016). *Melanie Klein: Early Analysis, Play, and the Question of Freedom*. London: Springer Press.

⁷ Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia ([1917] 1915." SE 14: 243-259. London: Hogarth Press, [1957] 1968.

⁸ Ibid. 248-249.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through (Further recommendations on the technique of psycho-analysis II (1914)." P. 155, SE 12: 147-156.

Freud's orientation does not provide us with a pedagogy of the depressed since the analyst must wait and take instruction from what she does not know. Due to the fundamental rule of free association, a new and unknown relation with speech occurs. The analyst, Freud advised, must give up "the attempt to bring a particular moment or problem into focus. He contents himself with studying whatever is present for the time being on the surface of the patient's mind . . ." ¹⁰

Within the slow mutual study of narrative freedom, fixated experience becomes questioned. Two types of emancipations of libido occur: from the dictates of external authority dedicated to the destruction of the self's desire to symbolize, imagine, and care for the social bond and simultaneously, a psychical emancipation from the grip of internal persecutors that fragment the self and the world. Given that meandering thoughts break open the confines of experience, emancipation is never complete; constructions of memory continue to oscillate between the things done and the things yet to do. When does the psychical function of such grief begin? ¹¹

Mrs. Klein imagines grief from the side of the infant. She turns to the situation of weaning, a primary separation that serves as her first model for depression, thought of as the infant's sense of persecutory anxiety. She deems

¹⁰ Ibid. 147.

¹¹ My thinking on the uneven relation between history and phantasy leans upon Christopher Bollas, "The function of history" In *Cracking Up: The Work of Unconscious Experience*, pp. 102-145. (NY: Hill and Wang, 1995). Bollas asked: "Do we have to choose between the imagined and the happened? Are they opposed?" (104). His response is to turn to the psychical and social functions of history and what psychoanalysis may make from the patient's recounting of the details of "deeds done" and the "potential elaborations that surround facts" (110).

weaning as our earliest emotional situation that calls upon infantile defenses against frustration, just at the point when the premature ego is unable to tolerate “the task of mastering the severest anxiety.”¹² The loss of the breast is profound and akin to the experience of the adult’s work of mourning and melancholia. Yet for Klein, symbol formation relies on losing the object and equating the breast to other objects. Identification, then, is “a forerunner for symbolization.”¹³

Ten years later, Klein’s discussion in “Mourning and its relation to manic depressive states,” clarifies her difference from Freud: Her emphasis stays with the mourner’s internal work.¹⁴ One not only slowly comes to accept the loss and reenter the world of others which itself reanimates the experience of grief and being left behind:

But at the same time and by means of [loss] to rebuild with anguish the inner world, which is felt to be in danger of deteriorating and collapsing. Just as the young child passing through the depressive position is struggling, in his unconscious mind, with the task of establishing and integrating his inner world, so the mourner goes through the pain of re-establishing and reintegrating it.¹⁵

Divergences

¹² Melanie Klein. “The importance of symbol formation in the development of the ego (1930).” In *Love*, 220.

¹³ Ibid. 220.

¹⁴ Melanie Klein. 1975. “Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states (1940).” In *Love*, 344-369.

¹⁵ Ibid. 354.

Paulo Freire and Mrs. Klein take as given the pain of symbolization, thought of as both closure and open border between psychical and social life. They agree that life itself already proposes the problem of transformation, though why this is the case is far from clear. They make for an odd couple; and generationally, I imagine them as separated great grandparents affected by the intertwined revolutions of twentieth century life: decolonization, human rights, and psychoanalysis.

Activities of thinking and the evasion of not thinking draw Freire and Klein closer and while each of their theories document the fear of language, dependency, and relationality, their common words such as internalization, separation, anxiety, guilt, and depression carry dissimilar experiences of apprehension. They diverge on the situation, origin, and fate of relationality. I understand their difference as emerging from an on-going dilemma of meeting newness. For Klein, the exemplary couple is the infant meeting the mother's breast. Freire poses this couple through adult teacher and student relations. Beyond this asymmetrical situation, is there a kernel of continuity that belongs to these two sides of life? It may boil down to whether each couple can create a novel relationality responsive to questioning freedom and capable of noticing its strangulations. Yet the argument between Freire and Klein does not simply reside in spans of life or even that of development. Their difference begins with the question, how and why does the outside world become an internal world?

Klein gives to Freire a phantasy constellation or backstory of the infancy of emotional life and joins our infantile roots of the earliest anxiety situations to the make-up of the adult mind. Hers is a lesson for affected being. Freire lends to Klein the foregrounded political insistence on the intersubjective consequences of historical injustice. His is a lesson in doing.

Freire sought the adult's consciousness of history that he argued renders consciousness as conscious of human relations. Klein invested in the unconscious fate of the prehistory of infancy and then had to cast her lot with the early phantasies that constitute the mental positions she eventually named as the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions. Freire too pointed to a Manichean world of terrible splitting and projective identification as he worked his way toward a dialogic pedagogy that, for the sake of a better world, can tolerate the dissonance of working through the compulsion to repeat suffering, injustice, and cultural invasiveness. His great topic was liberation as tied to a critical pedagogy for freeing the mind from the persecuting orders of others. His interest was with the human subject and often he argued that the term "object" could only signify an objectification of the subject.

Klein, however, considered objects through the question of desire and thought of object relations forming the mind. Introjections, projections, and identifications multiply object relations that then become the basis for our emotional situations, themselves sources of anxiety, phantasy, and defences over loss of love. For Klein, the most devastating defense is the denial of psychical

reality that she believed was the basis for all inhibitions. She built her theories not from a culture of silence but from where we all begin: within the wordless helplessness of the infant bereft of historical reality and, while spectacular in dependency, the infant is ready, wants to know, and take in the object. The tiny creature begins her epistemophilia with a desire for the good breast along with an inchoate primal agitation, frustration, depressive irritation, and hatred and fear of bad objects. She learned this from her youngest patients. For instance there was six-year-old Erna. Klein wrote: "She suffered from severe depressions, which she would describe by saying 'There's something about life I don't like.'"¹⁶

Symbolic equation

Bion's (1994) discussion on the difficulties of learning from experience, or what he described as his "attempt to understand our understanding"¹⁷ brought him to grave doubts. He then thinks about a patient's refusals:

"Thoughts are a nuisance" said one of my patients, "I don't want them." Is a 'thought' a thing, is 'no thing' a thought and is it by virtue of the fact that there is 'no thing' that it must be thought?¹⁸

The paradox is that 'no thing' must be thought and, that a thing, or empty thought, awaits a thinker.

¹⁶ Melanie Klein. 1975. *The psychoanalysis of children*. London: Hogarth Press. (Original work published in 1932), p. 5.

¹⁷ Wilfred Bion. 1994. *Learning From Experience*. Northvale NJ: Jason Aronson Inc. [Original pub. 1962] p. i.

¹⁸ Ibid. 35.

How then do we think our thoughts? In Klein's view, only with numerous anxiety situations:

To quote only a few of them: there is anxiety how to put the bits together in the right way and at the right time; how to pick out the good bits and do away with the bad ones; how to bring the object to life when it has been put together; and there is the anxiety of being interfered with in this task by bad objects and by one's own hatred, etc.¹⁹

In all of these matters, it is the work of tethering thoughts to what presents as inexplicable feelings. For Freire, working through the suffering of oppressive relations involves interpreting the world; thinking, he argues, emerges from a painful confrontation with how the world affects mental life, including our emotional attitudes toward literacy, intellectual processes, sexuality, and social change. In my view, analyzing the unconscious dimensions of transformation through the affects of love, hate, anxiety, and guilt involves us with what George Groddeck, a colleague of Freud, termed as "the compulsion to symbolize."²⁰ The compulsion expresses our earliest life with our most naïve or helpless resource, namely the drama of the body.

Now this "compulsion to symbolize," at least for Klein and her colleague Hanna Segal,²¹ begins the bare stirrings of a needed defense against the

¹⁹ Melanie Klein. 1975. "A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states (1935)." In *Love* p. 269.

²⁰ Cited in Michel de M'Uzan. 2013. *Death and Identity: Being and the Psycho-Sexual Drama*. Trans. Andrew Weller. P. 10. London: Karnac.

²¹ Hanna Segal. 2004. "A psychoanalytic approach to aesthetics." In S. Gosso (Ed.),

unknown. Through the psychical mechanism of projective identification, the compulsion to send out parts of our selves into the world is a prelude to as well as a quality of transformation. Klein's model for thinking about projective identification is the child at play who bestows innate objects with the frustrations of life. Yet due to its defensive structure, language becomes physicality. The child is on the verge of another weaning, itself an anxiety situation. If language is not unhinged from physicality, if the body remains an empire, the self has no means for transforming phantasy into imagination and language play.

Klein names such confusion as symbolic equation, a particular identification with concrete objects that become fused with functions of the mind. In his study of the enigma of schizophrenia, Christopher Bollas²² suggests that the procedures of symbolic equation are a defense against a terrible invasion and thus serve to eliminate the alterity of the object and the self:

The word stands in for the thing, the thing stands in for the function of the personality, hence the word stands for the personality function. To use the name of the object is therefore very nearly the same as physically handling it.²³

Psychoanalysis and art: Kleinian perspectives (pp. 42-61). London: Karnac (Original work published in 1952).

²² Christopher Bollas. 2015. *When the Sun Bursts: The Enigma of Schizophrenia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

²³ Ibid. 131.

And, to physically handle the word is either to crush it or become crushed by it. Such feelings of despair over introjections are one account of why reading is hated.²⁴

Anxieties

Klein passes anxiety through deferred action and so considers its latency. In ““Notes on some schizoid mechanisms,” Klein observed:

The latency occurs by the particular method of dispersal. The feeling of being disintegrated, of being unable to experience emotions, of losing one’s objects, is in fact the equivalent of anxiety. . . . The great relief which a patient then experiences derives from a feeling that his inner and outer worlds have not only come more together but back to life again.²⁵

Klein can then conceptualize two poles of anxiety that she believes constitutes the mind: paranoid-schizoid position dedicated to self preservation and, depressive position oriented to care of the self and the other. She understood anxiety as “phantasies,” or delegates for bodily drives (satiation, frustration, and aggression) that function as a constellation of defenses against fear of annihilation. For the infant, the nature of this panic lends unreasonable reason to the earliest splitting of the object relation into the good breast and the bad breast. Good and bad are felt as love and hate. These are the emotional situations of splitting. By six months, the infant will enter the world of whole objects that

²⁴ Melanie Klein. 1975. “The importance of symbol formation in the development of the ego (1930).” In *Love*, pp. 219-232.

²⁵ Melanie Klein. 1975. “Notes on some schizoid mechanisms (1946).” In *Envy and Gratitude and other works, 1946-1963*, p 21. London: Hogarth Press.

ushers feelings of ambivalence. Only gradually do we become subject to the pain of integration, a feature of mourning and symbolization.

Susan Isaacs, a colleague of Klein, gave us a picture: "the mind as a small society of relations to objects."²⁶ Isaacs identified the dilemma with the notion of phantasy as constituting the mind: we "deny to psychical reality its *own objectivity as a mental fact*."²⁷ For this reason Isaacs proposed the fraught relation between phantasies and words: "At first, the whole weight of wish and fantasy is borne by sensation and affect."²⁸ Words, Isaac thought, follow along with phantasy and phantasy always has to do with the body: "pains and pleasures directed to objects of some kind."²⁹ Again, young children's play with toys is the model for how internal conflict is projected onto objects in the world. This reach leads to Isaacs's key claim: "*The external physical world is in fact libidinized largely through the process of symbol formation*."³⁰ Recall that Freud's discussion on mourning as a working through homed in on the freeing of libidinality. And it is libidinality that allows us to agonize over the loss of love and restore our world.

²⁶ R.D. Hinshelwood .1991. *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*. P. 38. Free Association Books.

²⁷ Susan Isaacs. 2002. "The nature and function of phantasy (1952)." In *Developments in Psychoanalysis*. Eds. Melanie Klein, Paula Heimann, Susan Isaacs, and Joan Riviere. London: Karnac. (Orig. ital., p. 81).

²⁸ Ibid. 92.

²⁹ Ibid. 99.

³⁰ Ibid. 110, Orig. ital.

How then does this libidinal reach grow capacious when the world is so subject to destruction? Julia Kristeva raised the interminable question in her discussion of Melanie Klein:

Under what conditions are the anxieties that tear us apart amendable to symbolization? That is the question that Klein uses as she reformulates the analytic problem, a question that places her work – unwittingly so since she was most notably a courageous clinician and in no way a “master of thought” – at the heart of humanity and the modern crisis of culture.³¹

Freire too refused to be a master of thought. He mentions psychoanalysis as lending a hand but only for understanding the oppressor’s dissociation from her or his own dehumanizing actions: “A psychoanalysis of oppressive action might reveal the ‘false generosity’ of the oppressor as a dimension of the latter’s sense of guilt.”³² While bad conscience is split off from the greed and envy that compels the destruction of the other as much as it fuels the hatred of dependency, for Klein, guilt presents a different order. She proposed that guilt is felt with remorse for one’s own destructive capacity, whether in actuality or in thought. Guilt is one of the qualities of the depressive position and by nature is relational. Feeling the pangs of guilt is also the means to try to put right the self

³¹ Julia Kristeva. 2001. *Melanie Klein*. Trans. By Ross Guberman. NY: Columbia University Press. P. 14.

³² Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy*, 142.

and the other and sustain what Klein described as “making reparation.”³³ Here is our best example of Melanie Klein’s insistence on the pain of symbolization: the subject’s tie of thinking to loss and symbolizing suffering has a great deal to do with an admission of the fragility of the self and other relations.³⁴

Dialogue

The difficulty of dialogue, a key term for Freire’s pedagogical relation, also belongs to the psychoanalytic situation, though the clinical dialogue struggles with free association and empty thoughts and the analyst must wean herself from education’s goals. For Freire, dialogue can contain the shock of unexpected replies provided that the educator weans herself from treating knowledge as a possession to dispense. The other side of dialogue is inhibition, thought here as consequential to a primal anxiety of annihilation leading to withdrawal, the breakdown of meaning, fear of thinking one’s thoughts, and hatred of development and education. These difficulties sink the soft ground for both pedagogy and psychoanalysis. I understand dialogue as the capacity to tolerate the frustration of not understanding while questioning the wish to know. Dialogue may only invite curiosity and further consideration for why words matter.

³³ “This *making reparation* is, in my view, a fundamental element of love and in all human relationships...” Melanie Klein. 1975. “Love, guilt, and reparation (1937)” p. 313. In *Love*.

³⁴ Deborah Britzman. 2016. *Melanie Klein: Early Analysis, Play and the Question of Freedom*. London: Springer Press.

Dialogue thus contains a personal dimension, even an irritation that cannot be extricated from intersubjective life, though what is personal can be denied, diminished, silenced, and rendered useless. André Green's discussion, "On the edge" admitted the startling complications of psychoanalytic listening and speaking.³⁵ The human is utterly affected:

According to psychoanalysis, whichever side of the couch one is on, man is conceived of essentially in relation to the disorder which is intrinsic to the human condition and which, in certain cases, may develop in such a way that the person who is going through it has the feeling that the incredibly complicated consequences resulting from it cannot be solved through the means, opportunities or situations which he has at his disposal during his life.³⁶

It is then within dialogue that the limits of knowledge, experience, and relations to authority, love, and desire become uncertain. And the work of symbolization is affected by a certain disorder that escapes apprehension and returns as the oppressed.

Freire proposes the task:

While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been man's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern. Concern for humanization leads at once to the

³⁵ André Green. 1999. "On Edge." In *The Work of the Negative*. Trans. Andrew Weller. Pp. 257-268. London: Free Association Books.

³⁶ Ibid. 258.

recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality . . . Both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for man as an uncompleted being conscious of his incompleteness.³⁷

However, for Klein, the inescapable concern is anxiety over loss of love that gives birth to phantasies, identification, symbolic equation, and symbolization.

Since the child desires to destroy the organs (penis, vagina, breasts), which stand in for the objects, he conceives a dread of the latter. This anxiety contributes to make him equate the organs in question with other things; owing to this equation these in their turn become objects of anxiety, and so he is impelled constantly to make other and new equations, which form the basis of his interest in the new objects and of symbolism. Thus, not only does symbolism come to be the foundation of all phantasy and sublimation but, more than that, it is the basis of the subject's relation to the outside world and to reality in general.³⁸

So the problem of dialogue returns us to the psyche and soma matrix, to our bodies and its psychical representations that cannot be an empire in its own right. The body can only be subject to others who are also incomplete.

Symbolization loosens the hold of somatization, concrete objects, and paranoid

³⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy*, p. 27.

³⁸ Melanie Klein, 1975. "The importance of symbol formation in the development of the ego (1930)," pp. 200-21. In *Love*.

anxiety. It is probably obvious that the missing piece of life in Freire's quest for a dialogic pedagogy is the place of the body as mother, baby, father, other children, and as internalized object relations.

The use of intrinsic concepts

In our attempts to honor the open question of how the external world becomes internalized, we face the difficulties of intrinsic concepts. Such concepts may suffer from symbolic collapse if the intrinsic is mistaken for the absolute, and destroys symbolic associations. We find the term "internalization" used throughout Freire's *Pedagogy*. It is as if the world is orally ingested. Internalization remains a vexing concept, partly due its idiomatic procedures, its transit between internal and external worlds, and to unconscious dynamical qualities of condensations, displacements, substitutions, reversals, and capacity for contradictions. The concept seems to answer the question: What drives our capacity both for passionate attachment to the other, and on the plane of negativity, to the terrors of persecutory anxiety?

For psychoanalysts, internalization is used as borderline construct made to express the fate of libido as tied to the ego's defenses against anxiety. In this sense, we speak of object relations as an unconscious constellation of psychical procedures--introjections, projections, and identifications -- that make up the mind. Internalization of oppression is meant to signify a process, a function, and a consequence of self/other relations: the ways in which the external world is taken inside but also its stretch into persecutory anxiety such as the unconscious

phantasy that oppressor is internally housed inside the oppressed. Notably, Freire mentions Anna Freud's formulation of identification with the aggressor, a late ego defense.³⁹ The question thus becomes: What is internalized?

Laplanche and Pontalis note two dynamic features of internalization: the introjection of the parental imago and the internalization of conflict with the authority of the father.⁴⁰ Internalization is thus a procedure for object relations: emotional attitudes, defenses against anxiety, and phantasies of retribution and reparation. These psychoanalysts posit a relation and rent between the ego and the super-ego. Essentially, an intersubjective relation has an intra-psychical foundation that is split.

The contingencies of interiority propose further difficulty if imagined as the border between biology and meaning.⁴¹ Alix Strachey's "A Note on the Use of the Word 'Internal'" argues that while the word is commonplace, there are at least three different experiences conveyed.⁴² "Internal" is used as a metaphor for functions, structures, and workings of the mind. Strachey links the term *internal* to defense mechanisms, states of mind, imaginative processes, free-floating and invasive or persecutory thought feelings, and even dreams. A second use of the

³⁹ See Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of defense, Revised Edition*. In *The Writings of Anna Freud, Volume 2, 1936*. NY: International Universities Press, Twelfth Printing, 1995, p. 109-121.

⁴⁰ J. Laplanche, J. and J.-B Pontalis. 1973. "Internalization." In *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 226-227. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. London: W.W. Norton & Co.

⁴¹ Julia Kristeva, 1995. *New Maladies of the Soul*. Trans. Ross Guberman. NY: Columbia University Press.

⁴² Alix Strachey, 1941. "A Note on the Use of the Word 'Internal'." *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (1941), 22: 37-43.

word internal involves the objects, situations, and events that go on to make the imagination. We can call these fictions or phantasies and they seem run parallel with feelings projected to the external world. Strachey's third use comes closest to Freire's sense of an oppressor housed within the oppressed. The situations, events, and other people are felt to be inside the body, gnawing imagos that are frightening, persecutory, schizoid, and insistent. With the third use, we are within Klein's formulation of the paranoid-schizoid position where the world and the self are in bits and pieces.⁴³

Pedagogy's depressive position

The challenge of education, Freire argues, turns on whether there can become a social bond with others: "Pedagogy makes oppression and its causes [the] objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from this reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation."⁴⁴ Freire's method of treating key words as unlocking consciousness to its existential activity continues to influence such diverse struggles as patients' rights, self determination, feminism, the education of teachers, national liberation struggles, and group demands for an everyday life. Before these movements however, are the painful predicaments of symbolic collapse.

Freire insists, that reflection requires a new kind of love made to wean us from a disaffecting education. We owe to Freire the idea that educational

⁴³ Melanie Klein. 1975. "A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states (1935)." In *Love* pp. 236-247.

⁴⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy*, 33.

processes are subject to incurring illiteracy as a terrible splitting that Freire diagnosed as, “narration sickness.”⁴⁵ I understand “narration sickness” as a defense against the unknown freedom of meaning and as a symptom of the educator’s deep anxiety over whether and how engaging with the emotional situation of inner life somehow overrules attention to the wider world of politics. With Klein’s depressive position, I find a revolt: from the beginning of life there is always already an affected and affecting interiority that wants more of the world. On these terms, the disintegration of the ego already supposes that from the beginning, the ego and the other exist as psychical representatives. Indeed, it may be said that the infant faced with weaning first experiences the stirrings of the depressive position. And if this concern for the other with self is disturbed, the depressive position, so needed for symbolization, dissolves into a paranoid-schizoid world, the conditions of oppression and depression.

The demands for education to be in the service of humane public life and contribute to its ethical repair are paradoxical. Humans have never lived in a world without violence and dwelling in the failure of peace and in a history of war may invoke cynicism and hopelessness, forms of forgetting the past that unconsciously repeat what has happened. Education too reflects the people it seeks to affect. After all, teachers were once babies and the pain of weaning would also unconsciously affect both children needing education and the generations charged with their care. To return to André Green, relationality

⁴⁵ Ibid. 57.

involves a shared illness. Learning after all begins with frustration, a weaning or separation from the object met by the libidinal work of identification.

However different their accent, both Klein and Freire relied on the grace of interpretation as our second chance to link disparate, split off experience with new meanings. The psychoanalyst plays in the realm of phantasy, or narrative arguments with the things done, just as the educator appeals to consciousness for oppressive relations to be undone. Both realms are needed to grasp the pain of symbolization. Freire and Klein developed the claim that putting together a fragmented world requires awareness of what tears us apart. Together, their vocabulary also gives us a measure of resignation, due in part to the slowness of change, the oscillating depressive position, and then difficulty of constituting with others a waiting mechanism that symbolization must urge.

As subjects we are caught between transformations in psychical and social worlds and anxious over the loss of the love of mind and the world of others. We can pay more attention to the signs of the paranoid-schizoid position in our work and the stirrings of the depressive position needed to symbolize a lifeworld of the unsayable. We can then consider why latent and manifest content gather steam from residues of one's forgotten history and imagine all these derivatives of life's impressions as the procedures for symbolizing and perhaps transforming the fate of affect. I recall Freud's (1930) analysis of discontentment in civilization where his study of the violence of narcissism of minor differences brings him to

the limit: we idealize love so that we can hate our neighbors.⁴⁶ Bion's formulation then takes on its urgency: "X loves Y; X hates Y; and X knows Y."⁴⁷ We are back, as well, to Kristeva's pressing question, now directed to our education: how then, without being "a master of thought" do we call upon the very thing that tears us a part?⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. (1930 [1929]). SE 21: 64-148. London: Hogarth Press [1957] 1968.

⁴⁷ Wilfred Bion, *Learning*, 42.

⁴⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Melanie*, 14.