

**Forces Of Destiny:
Psychoanalysis & The Human Idiom**
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Idiom – a peculiarity, a specific property, a unique feature.

The human idiom is that peculiarity of person(ality) that finds its own being through the particular selection and use of the object.

In this sense, to be and to appropriate are one.

2018 Preface

- *Winnicott gave us the concept of the ‘true self’ as the kernel of our being, invested with a positive ruthless demand to realize its potential through the ‘use of the object’.* This was in important step forward in the psychoanalysis of human character.

We can conceptualize the ‘true self’ as our unique form-in-being, or ‘idiom’, that expresses itself through our effect upon the other.

Winnicott called this the ‘maturational process’, a forward moving momentum that is intrinsic to human formation. Winnicott emphasized the role of the ‘good enough mother’ as a ‘facilitating environment’ that is crucial in determining whether the infant’s true self can realize its potential.

This raises a central theme – the distinction between *fate and destiny*. (Melville)

We all suffer fateful interventions in our life that may compel us to change course, but with luck we may also continue to develop intrinsic potentials that are realized through the use of objects.

We are all gifted with ‘futures’ – potentials of our true self – which we may or may not realize in the course of time.

- *The therapist’s receptivity to the idiomatic form of the client can support the release of that person’s true self to realize futures that have been unknown to them and have been unexperienced by them.*

This receptivity depends on the therapist’s ‘stewarding intelligence in sustaining the therapeutic process’ on behalf of the client.

Good therapy can facilitate the liberation of the true self – through the receptivity to the ‘use of the therapist’ by the client, and through the expressive creativity of the free association process.

However disturbed or disturbing a client may be, it is crucial that the therapist celebrates the individual’s true self, allowing the person’s idiom to shape the sessions in order to express the logic of the self.

- *The processing of one's character involves a careful balance: facilitating the articulation of idiom while concentrating now and then on disturbing and self-defeating constellations of destructive self-organization.*

Introduction

Psychotherapeutic work is most intriguing.

- *A therapy process can provide a client with transference objects that seem to facilitate the person's spontaneous expression of 'unthought known' elements of his own character.*

The client can use certain different elements of our personality to exercise personality potentials of their own, which seems to establish a certain sense of themselves.

Alongside ordinary and essential therapeutic work, this just seems to happen, to be important, but it is not something to be processed. In this way, a client's use of us is natural and not any type of defensive maneuver, and not any kind of projective identification with us.

Bollas noticed that, with the birth of his son, he was who he was from the start. His son seemed to be in possession of his own personality from the very beginning, and his unique configuration in being (the idiom) has never really changed over time.

With his clients, Bollas noticed that one of his functions was to be of use for their 'idiom moves' – for private articulations of his personality potential – which could only be accomplished by eliciting different elements of his own personality.

Bollas noted that when his clients elicited his sense of humor, wanted him to do something in particular, wanting an affective response from him, in ways that just seemed natural to do. They were just living their lives.

This is a form of play in which the subject selects and uses objects in order to materialize elements latent to his or her personality. There is a natural urge to articulate the true self – a destiny drive – which is linked up to the forces of the true self to elaborate potential.

This kind of available therapist is someone who struggles to create meanings in the midst of substantial unthought knowns, sometimes successful and sometimes on the wrong track; who thinks about clinical life by the merciful lights of futures, and from points of perspective that allows for renewed thinking and self-correction.

CHAPTER 1 – A Theory For The True Self

The success of a therapy rests not simply on the transformation of unconscious conflicts into conscious awareness, but also on fundamentally new psychic experiences generated by the therapeutic container and process, particularly those sponsored by transference states.

True Self – Winnicott – the inherited potential that found its expression through spontaneous action. He conceptualized a feature of therapeutic relationship and life that had not been theorized before.

Psychic movement that takes place when the patient is free to use the therapist as an object through whom to articulate and elaborate his personality idiom. This usage is difficult to describe, and has been something that we have been unable to think about.

□ *The true self as 'the inherited potential which is experiencing a continuity of being, and acquiring in its own way and at its own speed a personal psychic reality and a personal body scheme'.*

□ *The spontaneous gesture is evidence of true self. The true self is aliveness itself.*

It is important to stress how this core self is the unique presence of being that each of us is; the idiom of our personality. We are singular complexities of human being.

□ *The true self exists before object relating happens.*

It is only a potential, however, because it depends upon maternal care for its evolution.

One of the outcomes of a dialectic between the human idiom and human culture is psychic life.

The psyche is that part of us which represents through self and object representations the dialectics of true self negotiation with the actual world.

Conflict is essential to the usefulness of the psyche which depends, in part, on the healthy balance of forces between the true self and the actual world.

Psychic representation owes much to the freedom of expression guaranteed by the mother and father.

□ *The idiom of the person is more a set of unique person possibilities specific to this individual and subject in its articulation to the nature of lived experience in the actual world. The life of the true self is to be found in the person's experiencing of the world.*

The Unthought Known

That inherited set of dispositions that constitutes the true self is a form of knowledge which has obviously not been thought, even though it is 'there' already at work in the life of the neonate – who brings this knowledge with him or her as he or she perceives, organizes, remembers and uses his object world.

How much of this knowledge is ever to be employed and brought into the subject's being depends entirely on the nature of this child's experience of the mother and the father. IF the parents have a good intuitive sense of their infant, the he or she *will experience the object world as facilitating.*

When this happens, we have children who take joy in re-presenting themselves, celebrating the arts of transformative parenting and *know from the authority of inner experiencing that latent knowledge can be given its life.*

The Primary Repressed Unconscious

The true self is compatible with Freud's concept of primary repressed unconscious, these 'inherited mental formations' that 'constitute the nucleus of the unconscious'. This core may be the equivalent to the idiom of the true self.

The core of unconscious life is a dynamic form that seeks its being through experience.

The ego is concerned with the processing of life.

The energy of the instincts is intrinsic to and inseparable from the economics of ego life. But the drives are always organized by the ego.

The ego becomes an intermediary between the urges of the true self (to use objects in order to elaborate) and the counter-claims of the actual world.

A part of the ego processes the demands of environmental reality, and its structure changes according to the nature of the interaction with the object world.

When this dialectic is thought about, the thinking occurs in the psyche, where that which is thinkable from the true self experiencing is represented in the internal world.

Signs Of The True Self

How does the therapist identify the presence of the patient's true self?

The true self cannot be easily isolated as an object of study. **As the true self is, however, only a potential, it comes into being only through experience.**

It does not have an established meaning (unconscious or otherwise), as its significance is contingent on the quality of object experience.

In hindsight, it is possible – indeed, often quite meaningful – to indicate how a patient has used one to achieve a self-experience.

Examples

A client who makes an amusing comment. The therapist's receptivity to the amusement is essential to the client's use of the therapist at that moment. This is indicative of true self use of the therapist, where the client is using the therapist's sense of irony or sense of humor.

Or perhaps the therapist experiences instead a sense of awkwardness or irritation, which is evoked by the client's false self act, and this may be complementing the client's own discomfort.

Or perhaps a client becomes highly articulate, evoking the therapist's capacity to interpret unconscious communications. The therapist, then, is used for his ability to concentrate and bring his therapeutic intellect to bear on the task at hand.

- *True self use of a therapist is the force of idiom finding itself through the experiences of the object. The client's aim is to find experiences to establish the true self in one's life.*

The ego is the unconscious organizing process – the logic of operations in adult life that will inevitably be some kind of mix of true self and true self's negotiation with the world.

How does a therapist distinguish between a true self use of him from a paradigmatic, transference use? The clue is in the counter-transference. ([Elaborate on this more here.](#))

It is possible to say that much of what occurs in therapy has not been articulated or thought before, and therefore we need a space for the articulation of the unthought known in the therapeutic process.

It is difficult to see the journey taken by the true self in process work.

- *Yet there are many times when we sense we are being used to process an idiom move, and we know that some of what we are lucidly interpreting or reflecting back comes from that deep, silent, profoundly unconscious movement taken by the true self, and effected, with equal unconsciousness, on us as the therapist.*

One cannot analyze the evolution of the true self. But we can facilitate it.

We can experience its momentary use of our self. We can identify certain features. But we cannot see it all as one piece, in the way that we can 'see' what unconscious meaning there is that lies hidden in the narrative text.

The ordinary joy, found by linking a true self preconception with the object world, is a very special form of pleasure - a *jouissance* – a good definition of the ruthless pleasure of the human subject to find joy in the choice and use of the object.

Essential Aloneness

Shadowing all object relating is a fundamental and primary aloneness which is inevitable and unmovable. And this aloneness is the back ground of our being; solitude is the container of self. Essential aloneness is a positive term for Winnicott, an isolation that is supported by a human environment. We carry this aloneness with us throughout life.

This aloneness is a transitional state between un-aliveness and aliveness characterized by dependence and instinctual life. For Winnicott, **'the recognition of this inherent human experience of pre-dependent aloneness is of immense significance'**.

In our true self we are essentially alone.

- *The absolute core of one's being is a wordless, imageless solitude. We cannot reach this true self through insight or introspection. Only by living from this authorizing idiom do we know something of that person sample that we are.*

In some respects, therapy is a place for the experiencing of essential aloneness. There is a *Waiting For Godot* silence to many hours.

This waiting-about mirrors that interval inside the self, as we rest between psychic registrations. There, in that solitary space, we repeatedly contact that essential aloneness that launches our idiom into its ephemeral being.
