

## THE EGO REVISITED

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This article reviews and critiques the ego concept. Except for the modern conflict theorists, most schools of contemporary psychoanalytic thought tend to eschew metapsychology and the concept of the ego. The author reviews modern conflict theory and the functions of metapsychology and the ego. Conflict theorists assert that their approach bears little resemblance to Freud's drive reduction model. Current theory focuses on conflict, bodily urges, unconscious fantasy, and defense but also views developmental issues, reality pressures, and interpersonal interactions as important. The author argues that conflict theorists incorporate the old metabiology into their formulations. He uses evidence from evolutionary biology, psychological science, and systems theory to suggest that the ego be viewed as a self-generating *process*, functioning within evolutionary constraints and capable of reacting to contingent circumstances in a self-enhancing fashion. Finally, he discusses the implications of this view on the clinical controversies surrounding the role and function of neutrality.

*Keywords:* psychoanalysis, ego, conflict theory, structural theory, neutrality

Contemporary psychoanalysis is pluralistic in nature, with myriad clinical and theoretical approaches that provide an understanding of psychic life and that guide practice. In recent years, however, psychoanalysts have minimized, even eschewed, metapsychology, viewing it as wedded to an outdated 19th-century philosophy and science and as having limited clinical value (Apfelbaum, 1966; Peskin, 1997). Many contemporary psychoanalytic approaches emphasize phenomenological, more experience-near concepts like self and subjectivity, with the psychoanalytic project viewed as more relational (Mitchell, 2000), intersubjective and hermeneutic (Atwood, Orange, & Stolorow, 2002), and postmodern (Chodorow, 1999) in nature.

Viewing the kaleidoscopic nature of psychoanalytic thought, Edelson (1988) years ago referred to psychoanalysis as a theory in crisis. He noted that competing schools of thought are at odds with each other, theoretically, clinically, and philosophically. Rangell (1997), in his article on psychoanalysis at the millennium, referred to our field as more

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fragmented than pluralistic, owing to its multiple, unintegrated frames of references. As an antidote, he advocated his total composite theory of psychoanalysis, total because it includes the contemporary emphasis on elements concerned with interpersonal interaction and external reality and composite because it also maintains an intrapsychic focus and because it embraces all that is significant in metapsychology, including the id, ego, superego, and defense.

Novick and Novick (2002) argue that classical metapsychology, with its dynamic, economic, topographic, genetic, and structural perspectives, is rich, complex, and integrative enough to provide a solid ground upon which all psychoanalytic ideas can thrive. Indeed, modern Freudians (Ellman, Grand, Silvan, & Ellman, 1998), also known as modern conflict theorists or structural theorists, present a psychoanalytic perspective that continues to take classical metapsychological notions seriously. These modern conflict theorists, for example, continue to emphasize the importance of intrapsychic conflict and defense, compromised formation, and bodily urges in the construction of psychological meaning in psychic life. Conflict theorists also emphasize the centrality and preemptory nature of sexuality and aggression as well as the importance of unconscious fantasy.

Modern conflict theorists, however, avoid the classical theory's embeddedness in the old biology and epistemology that emphasized determinism, psychic energy, and inertial forces (Richards & Lynch, 1998). The psychic agencies of id, ego, and superego are seen more as metaphors of psychological functions, utilized to organize clinical observation and to better understand the nature of human conflict and compromise formations.

In the present contribution, I review and critique modern conflict theory, with a particular emphasis on how the ego is seen as functioning. I then present a concept of the ego that is different from both the classical and modern structural notions. I review evidence from a number of cognate scientific disciplines, including scientific psychology, evolutionary biology, and systems theory, that will be integrated into my conception of a contemporary psychoanalytic ego. I argue that a need for the concept of an ego exists in any comprehensive, depth psychological theory of modern life. I then present a perspective of how an updated view of the ego has a subtle but potent effect on the nature of the clinical encounter.

### Modern Conflict Theory

Arlow (1969, 1975) and Brenner (Arlow & Brenner, 1964) may be viewed as pioneers of modern conflict theory. They emphasized dynamic conflicts among the agencies of the mind and the consequent defensive operations and compromise formations required for adaptation. Arlow (1969) in particular stressed the centrality of unconscious fantasies, emergent from within the ego structure and stemming from drive derivatives and defensive functions. Brenner (1994), in a more recent contribution, has radically asserted that the metaphors of the tripartite model should be dropped altogether, as he now views *all* mental content as a result of compromise formations between drive derivatives.

Rangell (1997) agrees that symptoms and indeed all behavior are compromises among the various psychic agencies. Gray's (1986) contributions are in the realm of clinical technique, but theoretically, he stands with modern conflict theorists in his belief that intrapsychic conflict stems from a clash among the bodily urges—the id—with the ego—superego and with external reality.

The ego in modern conflict theory is essentially that part of the mind that allows the subject to adapt to nature and the world of objects. It is that part of the mental apparatus

that modulates anxiety and reacts to danger engendered by conflict among the forces of the id, superego, and external reality. The ego then fashions a response in the form of a compromise formation. Rangell (1997), as with most modern conflict theorists, remains a Freudian in that his overriding clinical perspective points to the past unconscious and stresses “the psychic interior as the specific unique area of psychoanalysis, while including and not overlooking its interaction and reciprocity with all external experiential factors” (p. 473).

Bachant, Lynch, and Richards (1995) point out that Freud’s drive reduction model bears “little relation” to the modern conflict analyst’s view of drive and of the dynamic unconscious. Outlining the contemporary perspective, they note that children are faced with a number of fundamental existential questions and calamities and must cope with immature cognitive functions as well as with psychological urges that are self-centered and genuine. Certain wishes and fears become repressed, take on dangerous and punishing attributes, become part of the dynamic unconscious, and constitute the raw material of unconscious fantasy. The ego is viewed as the executive of ensuing conflicts, defenses, and compromise formations. Psychoanalytic treatment involves becoming aware of and working through the resistances and compromise formations created by both defenses against primitive fear and fantasies as well as confronting the gratifications afforded by the structures of various drive–defense configurations.

Modern conflict theorists give serious attention to both the intrapsychic and the interpersonal. Wilson (1995) emphasizes the Vygotskian process of progressive interiorization, whereby the maturing individual, whose early life is inherently social and interactional, slowly internalizes important functional capacities and consequently develops psychological structures that organize subsequent experience. Representations of structures are viewed as functions that are internalized from experience over the course of development and exist within the ego system. As a contemporary conflict theorist, Wilson’s “mind map” regards conflict as arising via the clash of impulse, prohibition, and defense. The ego’s role is to negotiate an adaptive compromise formation and is manifested in the subject’s symptom complex, conscious self-experience and unconscious fantasy life, and character organization.

Busch (1996), building on Gray’s (1973) work, emphasizes the ego’s role in the clinical process. He describes the ego’s critical functions as those responsible for reasoning, contemplation, and the integration of the external and internal worlds. For Busch, the psychoanalytic process helps patients develop and expand their ego capacity to “stand aside” and make sense of their experience. One’s already existing ego resources are brought to bear on wish–threat conflicts.

## A Critique

Modern conflict theory has evolved from the classical ego-psychological perspective. The economic model of mental functioning, with its emphasis on psychic energy, constancy, and homeostasis, has been deemphasized, as has Freud’s structural tripartite model of the mind (Brenner, 1994). The dynamic perspective and its theoretical constructs have been embraced as a method of organizing clinical data. Thus, modern conflict theory emphasizes the importance of adaptation, conflict, and compromise in relation to drive, defense configurations, the importance of the conscious self-observant aspects of the ego, and the functioning of unconscious fantasy in ego functioning.

Although distinct from the classical perspective, modern conflict theorists continue to

write about drive and derivatives, without delineating an alternative theoretical foundation that may substitute for or update the economic one. Conflict theorists take seriously the driven, at times preemptory nature of inner experience and conflict. The classical metapsychological theory of psychic energy and its associated biological imperatives are considered limited in their ability to account for the complexity of human motivation (Bachant, Lynch, & Richards, 1995). However, it is theoretically unclear what endogenous processes are seen as adding to or replacing the biological concepts of classical theory (e.g., the constancy principle) that are so foundational to understanding human motivation. This is a crucial point, as the classical ego-psychological approach, from which modern conflict theory evolved, has distinguished itself by offering a view of the mind that is deeply embodied.

Although conflict theorists continue to view derivatives of sexuality and aggression as paramount forces that shape psychic life, they do not integrate additional biological and psychological data to articulate a perspective on how psychobiological processes influence inner life, motivation, and unconscious fantasy. For example, Levy and Inderbitzin (1996) emphasized the ego's role in modulating instinctual—sexual and aggressive—discharge. Bachant et al. (1995), like Gray (1986), talk about drive derivatives, but they do not identify a scientifically updated perspective on the endogenous biological principles contributing to the drivenness of the psyche, nor do they specify how a more up-to-date understanding of biology and motivation affects ego development. Busch (1995), in his influential book, has only one reference to motivation. Although impressed with “how the ego becomes compromised by . . . unconscious fantasy” (p. 44), he makes no mention of the endogenous processes contributing to unconscious fantasy, leaving the reader to assume that he continues to use the classical, outdated metapsychological theory.

Save the modern conflict theorists, a disinterest in the concept of the ego exists within the broader scope of contemporary psychoanalytic theory and practice. This may be accounted for by the notion that the ego is wedded to a passé metapsychology and biology (Marcus, 1999; Peskin, 1997). Marcus (1999), after reviewing many of the influential classical ego-psychological theorists and researchers who have contributed to modern psychoanalysis, concluded that the contemporary analytic zeitgeist has reacted against the metatheory of ego psychology. He observed, however, that the ego-psychological concepts of adaptation and integration are universally accepted as crucial aspects of the clinical description of patients. One may ask, however, how modern theorists who have been influenced by classical ego psychology conceive of these concepts in light of contemporary findings from the psychological and biological sciences. Implicitly incorporating outmoded biological ideas, like Rapaport's (1954) view of adaptation as dampening the outflow of excitation, is conceptually insufficient.

Of interest, the ego itself is not well defined from within the modern conflict approach. It is viewed as a coherent organization of mental processes (S. Freud, 1923/1961a; Loewald, 1971), and it unmistakably plays an essential role in the defensive management of motivations, psychic conflict, and the development of compromise formations. But, with the old biological model minimized or discarded, how has the contemporary view of the ego changed? Is the ego still viewed as a structure that is differentiated from the id, with the id driven by only sexual and aggressive instincts? If the ego is, in part, a product of identifications, are those love objects still cathected by the id's sexual and aggressive energies, or is investment of the love objects conceptualized from within a different or broader motivational theory? The lack of an articulated, updated metapsychobiology interferes with the modern conflict theorist's claim to offer a contemporary psychoanalytic

theory. It also impedes an appreciation of the ego concept's significance to a depth psychological theory of mental life.

### Evolutionary Biology, Psychological Science, and the Psychoanalytic Ego: Integration

In his contribution, Peskin (1997) reconceptualized drive theory and the endogenous motivation systems that play a part in the formation of mental life. He asserted that any contemporary psychoanalytic theory of motivation must integrate the evolutionary sciences. Using the concept of inclusive fitness (Hamilton, 1964) and natural selection (Smith, 1989), he concluded that "the purpose of psychoanalytic drive theory is to capture the adaptive self-enhancing agenda of all species, an agenda in some form endogenous to each of us" (Peskin, 1997, p. 386).

Following the lead of Slavin and Kriegman (1992), Peskin (1997) noted that even in close kin ties, considerable divergence of interest exists and conflict is inevitable. Going beyond existing psychoanalytic theoretical work on motivational systems (Lichtenberg, 1989) and consistent with the theoretical and empirical review on psychological science and motivational theory of Westen (1997), he asserted that the underlying evolutionary agenda of action is to maximize gene survival. This agenda is preeminent and gives order to all other motivations as well as other aspects of psychic life, including wishes and affects (I would add defense; see Nesse & Lloyd, 1992).

Peskin (1997) noted that what subjectively motivates particular individuals is in the purview of the psychoanalyst, not the biologist. Conflict generated by a clash of interests is an intrapsychic, highly individualized event. He defended the idea of the drive as a psychological concept that captures an endogenous push compatible with evolutionary theory and the intrapsychic dynamics and conflicts sketched out by the psychoanalytic project. I will continue Peskin's reformulation of basic drive theory by developing a conceptualization of the ego system that is anchored by contemporary evolutionary biology and by the psychological sciences as well.

A contemporary psychoanalytic view of the ego should begin with a perspective that is vertically integrative (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992), that is, consistent with findings of the cognate disciplines, particularly the biological and psychological sciences. As such, and consistent with Peskin's and Westen's formulations, the ego is viewed as fundamentally arising from the biological substrate (phenotype), as a Darwinian evolutionary process designed to enhance inclusive fitness, long- and short-term viability, and adaptation. Adaptation here is a biological process defined as inner activity and behavior that responds to the variations of reality events impinging on the individual in a fashion that enhances the individual's survival potential and fitness. The ego functions adaptively by processing affective and perceptual data so as to fashion a "best fit" between the needs of the subject and the object. The task is to manage and emotionally negotiate the inevitable intrapsychic and interpersonal conflicts between the individual and his or her objects (Slavin & Kriegman, 1992) in a good enough, adaptive compromise. From within this modern biological perspective, motivations and adaptations are complicated and variegated, necessitating even more so a concept like the ego to organize and integrate the multilayered intrapsychic and interpersonal responses required by the subject to respond in a self-enhancing, adaptive fashion.

The contemporary ego as conceived here is not a *structure* functioning as a template or as striving for equilibration but is a *processing system* that organizes the individualistic,

experience-near (conscious and unconscious) mental processes of perception, affective expression, and defense in a fashion that is subject to the more distal evolutionary constraints. That is, the ego coordinates the biological constraints of random selection, fitness, and adaptation with experience-near, subjectively felt experience. The ego-as-process responds to conflict by giving priority to avoidance of perceived threats to the individual and to the gratification of the individual's short-term interest and pleasure and long-term viability (Cacioppo, 2002). It does so guided by a metabiology outlined above (random selection, fitness, adaptation) and by implementing the proximate perceptual, affective, and behavioral routines typically associated with ego functioning: by establishing a reality testing ability, signaling threat by generating anxiety and other affects, internalizing a conscience, developing and maintaining object ties, delaying gratification, rejecting nongratification, inhibiting aggression, exercising aggressiveness, and using defensive mechanisms to lessen subjective distress and regulate self-esteem and to playfully experience the surroundings (Bellak, Hurvich, & Gediman, 1973; Block & Kremen, 1996; S. Freud, 1926/1961b).

Synthesis is fundamental to the adaptive organization and effectiveness of the ego and deserves further elaboration. The ego along with its synthesizing capacity is part of the evolutionary design and, as such, is a dynamic, self-organizing biopsychological organization (Guidano, 1987). It is subject to evolutionary constraints and to the laws of all dynamic, self-organizing biological systems (Kauffman, 1993). Because much has been written about the nexus of psychoanalysis and dynamic, biological systems (Galatzer-Levy, 1995; Sprueill, 1993), I focus on two salient features of this theory as they relate to the reconceptualization of the ego: randomness and autopoiesis.

Dynamic systems theory is concerned with how processes and order arise from the chaotic, random interactions among many diverse elements and form new emergent patterns (Thelen & Smith, 1994). Random events play an essential role in the evolution of systems and the formation of new structures. All information impacting the system organizes and *reorganizes* for the purpose of a higher synthesis (Goldstein, 1997). The synthetic function of the ego orders and *reorders* reactions to the surround—thoughts, feelings, attitudes, relational and emotional conflicts—so as to construct meanings that reduce unpleasure and enhance safety and a sense of mastery.

The meaningfulness created out of randomness and contingency by biological systems is also influenced by the autopoiesis of these systems (Guidano, 1987; Zeleny, 1981). That is, biological systems are self-generating, with assimilation being subordinate to identity. Reality is not simply objectively internalized but ordered in a self-referential and inherently subjective way, generating responses that are likely to enhance its own fitness, adaptiveness, and pleasure. The traditional ego functions all subserve this life-enhancing systemic feature.

Central, then, to the synthetic function of the ego is its contingent, autopoietic features. The ego is able to appropriate and capitalize on the random vagaries and coincidences of experience and human interaction in a way that is self-referential, self-enhancing, and unique to the individual subject. Fortuitous social and relational conditions evoke emotional and behavioral reactions that further one's interests and needs (Guidano, 1987; Phillips, 1994).

This conception of the ego as a self-organizing, autopoietic, biopsychological processing system functioning under evolutionary systemic constraints is particularly consistent with Edelman's (1992) theory of neuronal group selection and Modell's (1993) application of this theory to psychoanalysis. Edelman proposes that the evolutionary selection process takes place not only over millions of years but also on a neuronal level,

within each particular individual during his or her lifetime, for competition among groups of cells. One form of such a selection process, experiential selection, imposes innate biases on the ordering of experience and on the categorization of memory. These elementary biases are called “values” and are experienced as feelings. The reorganization of experience is based on “values” and serves to enhance individual fitness, just as natural selection enhances fitness over millions of years.

Modell (1993) likens Edelman’s concept of the categorization of memory and reordering of experience by values to Freud’s concept of *Nachtraglichkeit*, or the retranscription of memory based on subsequent experience. He emphasizes the point that reorganization of memory and experience are dependent on an autonomous inner entity, a private self that creates itself over time by latching onto contingent experience and that “bootstraps” itself toward a self-enhancing, self-generating existence. The autonomous, biologically rooted self plays a crucial part in the creation of subjective meaning and is the undergrid of phenomenological experience, thus belying the notion of a simple, irreducible subjectivity (Renik, 1993). In many ways, the private self’s *raison d’être* is to help inoculate the individuality and uniqueness of the subject from the press of social expectation. Without such an entity, selfhood would be singularly vulnerable to social reinforcement and expectation.

The ego viewed as a self-organizing adaptive process broadens Modell’s concept of a private, reified self. It organizes multiple functions in an active dynamic fashion, and it integrates and organizes multiple self-representations and self-experiences: Selves are emergent from an ego process that is guided by the self-generated, self-organizing, and adaptive, yet biased, process. Boesky (1983) and others (Loewenstein, 1994) have long argued that a theory of the self is impoverished if not viewed as functioning from within a broader theory of ego functioning. The ego conceptualized as a self-organizing processing system with biological constraint resonates with Boesky’s and others’ critiques and is supported by contemporary scientific approaches to the understanding of ego functioning. Block and Kremen (1996)<sup>1</sup> refer to the ego as “evolution-derived . . . hierarchically organized” (p. 350). McAdams (1998) referred to the ego as the creating, organizing process that orders the many “selves” of experience, which in turn generate the product, a “me” or superordinate self. Various senses of self are possible, depending on the functioning of the ego at any given time (Pally, 1995). Fast (1990, 1998) also referred to the self as a static end product of a primary dynamic ego. Demos (1992), an infant researcher, spoke of the psyche as a dynamic system, *not* a structure, organizing internal and external stimuli. Cervone and Shoda (1999) refer to an “underlying psychological system” that lends coherence to personality by organizing phenomenology and multiple psychological routines and behavior, again highlighting the importance of the ego and its synthetic function to adaptive functioning.

The notion of a biologically rooted ego process underlying selfhood and subjective experience contrasts with the “new view” (Morris, Wolitzky, & Wakefield, 2001) in psychoanalysis, which conceives of the mind as shaped by social interactions (Mitchell, 2000). As conceived here, the self-generating ego is in dialectic relation to the interpersonal and indeed protects the individual from “the tyranny of social experience” (Modell,

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<sup>1</sup> Block and Kremen (1996) note that many psychologists are uncomfortable with the concept of an ego because they view it as using a homunculus. The authors point out, however, that the ego concept is no more homuncular than the current neuroscientific concepts in vogue, such as “left brain interpreter,” used to order and comprehend the complexity of human functioning.

1993). The ego's fundamentally autonomous, self-generating nature, coupled with its capacity to be adaptively influenced by the social and relational, is what makes for the uniqueness of character organization, describes what is meant by the subordination of assimilation to identity, and helps to explain why psychological development is not linearly determined either by the past or by the current relational matrix. Individual developmental trajectories are unique and unpredictable.

### Clinical Implications: The Therapeutic Encounter and the Function of Neutrality

As a self-referential, self-generating process, the ego is capable of ordering random experience and reacting to contingent circumstances in an adaptive fashion. Such a perspective on the ego has direct implications regarding the function of neutrality in the clinical encounter, but for reasons distinct from both the classical and modern analytic ideas on its utility. A neutral therapeutic posture is useful not to maintain an optimal level of libidinal frustration in the patient (S. Freud, 1915/1958; Shill, 2004) or to assist the analyst in maintaining an equidistance from id, ego, and superego (A. Freud, 1936). The clinical implications of this perspective on the ego regarding neutrality also differ from a more contemporary, object relations perspective that views the analytic space created by relative neutrality as formless, allowing for new patterns of experience to emerge from within the therapeutic action (Summers, 2001) or even from the modern conflict theorist's perspective that views neutrality as allowing for the emergence of a transference (Adler & Bachant, 1996). The view presented here suggests that a neutral therapeutic posture allows for the creation of a particular kind of psychological space in which the patient's innately motivated ego system may become engaged and begin to freely appropriate particularized aspects of the therapeutic process and the analyst-as-person for the patient's adaptive use. The analytic space provided by a more or less neutral therapeutic posture provides an opportunity for the patient to rework, bootstrap into action (Modell, 1993), and unconsciously test (Weiss, 1993) previously thwarted aspects of him- or herself and to allow the patient to appropriate particular features of the analyst that are experienced by the patient as psychically valuable. In this regard, neutrality is seen as a kind of proto-enactment in which the patient's ego may begin to crystallize unrecognized, split-off aspects of his or her deep subjectivity for consideration and testing.

The relative inactivity of the analyst ensures that the treatment does not slip into a vehicle by which the analyst unwittingly appropriates aspects of the patient for his or her use. This is always a possibility in such an intimate encounter when enactments are inevitable, even necessary, for progress and transformation (Boesky, 1990; Jacobs, 1986; Renik, 1995). Masling (2003), using Mitchell's (2000) writings as an exemplar, critiqued the relational perspective for being overly sanguine about the potential for therapeutic acting out in the countertransference. Somewhat surprisingly, the well-known relational analyst Greenberg (2001) recently wrote of his concern with "the danger . . . when the analyst's role in shaping the patient's experience is emphasized too exclusively" (p. 372). In a commentary on Greenberg's contribution, Casement (2001) addressed the pressure on the analyst in treatment to act, to do something, and to take on the role of a good object, rather than sitting still and being drawn into a transference that is "old and ugly." He stressed how the analyst's courage

is an important feature of a successful treatment, as it is essential for the analyst to “tolerate being used to represent the worst in a patient’s experience” (p. 384). I would also emphasize that the psychological space created by the neutral provision affords an opportunity for the analyst to represent not only the worst of the patient’s experience but also the genuine and sublime aspects of experience that had been thwarted. Bollas (1991) stressed how the patient’s use of the analyst in the analytic process serves in part as a medium in which the patient discovers his or her personal “idiom.”

Engaging in what may seem a more natural and spontaneous exchange lessens interpersonal and intrapsychic tensions but may also limit the potential of a patient’s ego to fully exploit the analytic process and therapeutic relationship in a fashion that could lead to the instantiation of features of the patient’s inner experience that cannot be otherwise known or allowed to become integral to subjective life. The neutrality of the analyst provides space that not only protects the patient’s individuality but also provides an opportunity for it to be discovered, for the “spontaneous gesture” (Winnicott, 1960) to show its face and surprise both the patient and the analyst.

A neutral position is not sufficient, however. The analyst’s personhood must also be present to serve as a vehicle for the patient (or the patient’s ego) to adaptively utilize for psychic growth and transformation. As noted by Treurmiet (1997), “For if analysts are merely out to unmask and to discover conflicts and are not also prepared to let themselves be used to bring about a liberation of the true self, they are seriously at risk of analyzing the true self potential out of existence” (p. 603).

The art of clinical psychoanalysis is located in the balance each analytic dyad achieves between what may be called *optimal neutrality* coupled with *analytic authenticity*. The particular expression of each in any given treatment will depend on the unique needs and conflicts of the patient, the analyst’s capacity to engage and be available to the patient, and the analyst’s ability to provide an effective admixture of disciplined restraint with genuine expression and presence.<sup>2</sup>

The dimensions of the therapeutic process and relationship used by the patient to further growth cannot be fully known to either patient or analyst at the onset of treatment or even as the therapy unfolds. Only when the patient senses the analyst’s willingness to restrain his or her interests will the patient feel emotionally safe enough to use the analyst and the particularized, contingent aspects of the therapeutic relationship to experiment with different dimensions of his or her thwarted personhood and with previously repressed aspirations and desires that may not have been known or experienced as such. The neutrality of the analyst and his or her somewhat unnatural and disciplined willingness to hold in abeyance a self-affirming posture, coupled with his or her authenticity, provide both the therapeutic space necessary for an ego-enhancing process to unfold and a deep, psychobiological signal (Slavin & Kriegman, 1991) to the patient that the analyst and the therapeutic process are primarily committed to that patient’s well-being and psychological growth.

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly and ironically, in my training, the centrality of the analyst’s incorruptibility was emphasized by both two-person and one-person theorists: first by the pioneering interpersonalist Dr. Erwin Singer, during my master’s program at the City College of New York, and again by the eminent classical psychoanalyst Dr. Leo Rangell, during my analytic training at the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society and Institute.

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