
A MEMOIR

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Symposium in honor of Morris Janowitz

When I first thought of my participation in this celebration honoring our dear friend Morris, I meant to prepare a paper that would try to live up to his intellectual standards and his exacting scholarship. But nothing I was able to put down seemed good enough, in view of my desire to show how highly I value our nearly life-long friendship. After many wrong starts, I finally decided to forget about scholarship, knowing full well that others here will do more than justice to its requirements, and I decided to fall back on my personal relation to Morris, which is of such a nature that I may be permitted to speak mainly about myself, to show the esteem I hold for my friend by sharing some quite private events that happened to make a great deal of difference in my life. These events first led me to my profession, and in roundabout ways permitted me to make some contributions to the life of the man whom we honor today.

It remains one of the great satisfactions of my life that I was able to render Morris two real services, although in each case my contribution was quite insignificant. It was he who made them achieve importance, which is so typical of him. Of these contributions, one was very private and of the greatest significance, although all I did was to say a very few most ordinary words. With these words, I introduced Morris to his future wife, telling both that they ought to get married -- he was my student, she my assistant at the Orthogenic School at the time. I added a presumptuous remark that I thought they were made for each other, which of course offended these two young people, who both promptly formed other relations, which proved to be unfortunate for both. Then, happily, they got together and got married, and have stayed married.

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The point I wish to make with this most personal and indiscrete recollection is my belief that what counts most in social relations, as well as in all other endeavors that lead to really important consequences, is a good intuition, either one's own or that of another person. Such an intuition can achieve more of real significance than can volumes of scientific studies about some matter.

The second and much less important contribution which I was permitted to make to our friend's life, related to both his personal and his scholarly development, which I believe cannot be separated. While the first of the two contributions just mentioned more than anything else made for the permanence of our close personal friendship, the second contribution was of a more public and professional nature. This was the opportunity for Morris and me to work together as colleagues on a research project that eventually became a book on the causes of prejudice, which we revised many years later.

I was not the first to acquaint Morris Janowitz with psychoanalysis; he had known about it before we met, but mainly in a theoretical way, as an interesting topic of study. It was my privilege to introduce our friend to psychoanalysis first as a clinical experience by acquainting him with the work of the Orthogenic School, and then second, as a personal experience, permitting one to understand oneself that much better, and finally as a useful research tool. It is this sequence which is so important for a true understanding of what psychoanalysis can contribute to our understanding of all human problems. When psychoanalysis is received in the opposite sequence, it remains much too abstract.

And this finally brings me to my topic: How I myself became acquainted with psychoanalysis. I wish to speak about this because how

such a thing happened some 65 years ago was very different from how it happens today, and it illustrates something about the changes that occur as a social science becomes established and accepted, and with it objectified. At its beginnings, psychoanalysis was highly personalized.

There are strange similarities between the two separate events which were important in my becoming a psychoanalyst, and those important in my relation to Morris. These two events in my life were both rather fortuitous and unconnected, as were the two influences, if one may call them that, which I was permitted by chance to have on our friend's personal and professional life. One similarity is interest in a young girl; the other is an intuitive remark which was also somewhat presumptuous and intrusive. Maybe because of this spontaneous intuition, which had such an important and positive impact on me, I came to believe there is much that is important in intuitions, no matter how presumptuous and intrusive they may seem at first.

But first, how I came to psychoanalysis: It certainly was not within the framework of academic studies, or as a planned part of my education. Although psychoanalysis eventually became the most important ingredient of my intellectual life, this was actually a matter of pure chance and due to a most personal experience. In the Spring of 1917, I joined the Viennese youth movement. An important part of its activities during these war years were regular weekend excursions into the Viennese Woods, outings which were equally conducive to forming radical ideas and affectionate relations. So it was there that I formed my first adolescent attachment to a girl my age. All seemed to go well until one Sunday, when a young man in uniform visited our group, of which he had been an important member before he had been drafted into the army.

This young man named Otto was only a few years older than we were, and at the time he was on leave from front duties to finish his study of medicine. Much to my dismay, Otto concentrated his interest on the girl to whom I was attached.

At the time, Otto was attending Freud's lectures at the University of Vienna, and he had become fascinated with psychoanalysis. Like many new converts, he was all excited about the arcane doctrines of Freud. While we had heard these vaguely mentioned in our circle, which was eagerly taking up all new and radical ideas, we knew nothing of substance about Freud and his concepts. So what Otto spoke about was all news to us.

Mostly Otto asked us about our dreams and then tried to tell us their significance, very much including their sexual meanings. This was a most alluring topic to his young listeners, particularly in view of our ambivalent attitude toward sex, characteristic of the youth movement in that period. Rejecting what we considered to be the bourgeois prejudices of our parents, and also the prevailing double standard regarding sex, we were committed to sexual freedom in theory. In actuality, however, we repressed our sexual strivings, pretending that we were following the principles of a superior morality, thus hiding from ourselves our sexual anxieties. With our ambivalence, which expressed itself in embracing sex freedom in theory while being afraid of sex in practice, what our new friend had to say about sex and its important role in man's life was exciting and perturbing at the same time.

It was particularly perturbing to me, as I observed my girl seemed to become more and more involved not only in what Otto had to say, but also in him as a person. The more captivated she seemed to become,

the more furious I became. I felt badly outclassed by all the new and exciting knowledge that this young medical student was spouting off. But since my self-love would not permit me to accept that Otto was much more interesting than I, it all had to be the doings of psychoanalysis, which by the end of the day I thoroughly hated and despised. It was psychoanalysis which I thought had alienated my girl and made her turn her attention toward my competitor. In this manner we parted at the end of this fateful Sunday. Without relinquishing any of my intense anger and scorn of psychoanalysis, during the following night, which I spent sleepless, I decided that if Otto could win my girl by talking about psychoanalysis, I might be able to win her back by the same method.

So the following Monday, as soon as school let out, I went to Deuticke, the only bookstore in Vienna that stocked psychoanalytic publications, which was also their publisher, and bought as many of these as I could afford. I acquired some monographs and current psychoanalytic journals and immediately began reading them. The more I did, the more surprised I became at what I was reading. I soon realized that my Victorian parents, although personally acquainted with members of the Freud family, would be utterly shocked to find me perusing such obscene literature. My solution was to hide it from them by taking it to school and reading it there surreptitiously. By comparison, my studies were utterly boring.

So this was my introduction to Freud and psychoanalysis. While hating it as much as I was able to hate anything because I felt psychoanalysis had alienated my girl from me, I was at the same time convinced that by becoming knowledgeable about it, I could win my girl back. During this week in which I became converted to it, I believed in the

power of psychoanalysis to gain for me a most desirable goal. So a personal hatred of psychoanalysis, and a simultaneous belief in its extraordinary power, stood at the beginning of its becoming an important part of my life.

I have spoken about the way I came to psychoanalysis because from my own experience I cannot help thinking that to come to it in such a personal way, so deeply involved emotionally and with such ambivalence, was not a bad way to come to it; it certainly was not in my experience.

To finish this part of my story, there was a happy ending in all respects, not just in regard to psychoanalysis becoming my lifelong avocation. For on the next Sunday, when my girl friend and I got together again to spend a day in the Viennese Woods and I began to unpack my newly acquired knowledge of psychoanalysis, she told me that this had been fine for one Sunday, but now we should talk about more personal matters. She assured me, to my great relief, that while she had been very interested in what Otto had told about psychoanalysis, not for a moment had she been interested in him as a person, or wavered in her affection for me. So now there was no reason for me to go on with psychoanalysis as far as my relation to her was concerned, but there was no longer any getting away from it, as far as I was concerned. One week of complete concentration on it, and I was hooked for life.

The young lady and I parted ways a while later, but have remained friends for the more than sixty years which have passed since the events just described. My point in telling this story is that her interest in psychoanalysis was theoretical and more or less abstract, so it did not take deep root and played no significant part in her life. My interest was everything but theoretical; from the very beginning,

it had been personal and emotional, characterized by a belief that psychoanalysis could make a most important difference in my life -- and so it did.

As far as I know, the pioneers of psychoanalysis came to it in similarly personal and emotionally conditioned ways, and psychoanalysis flourished under their influence. None of them came to it planning to make it their profession, nor did they have any more formal training in it beyond their own psychoanalysis. It was all a matter of very personal experience, not of any formal training. Today, when an elaborate course of study is required of persons wishing to become psychoanalysts, much of the excitement it once created has gone out of this discipline. This difference and what followed from it is the point of the rest of my story.

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The second episode of which I wish to speak took place nearly fifteen years later. While my partner in the first event was a highly intelligent, charming young girl of my own age, in the second case the other character was a psychotic boy, twenty years my junior. This incident also involves my own experience during psychoanalysis, into which I entered more than fifty years ago now.

The reason I entered into psychoanalysis was not due to my great interest in it, but rather because I had become dissatisfied with many aspects of my life, more than I consciously realized, and I wished to gain clarity about what I wanted to do with my life. Although I desired an academic career, the chances for it were slim, given the political situation at that time; and my studies had left me unsatisfied.

At that time, in the 1920s, psychoanalysis meant six weekly sessions at exactly the same time each day. Analysts treated their patients

in their homes and not in offices; so did Freud himself, as did nearly all Viennese physicians. Characteristically, Freud's treatment room, the way it was furnished and most of all, the collection of archeological artifacts which filled it, were testimony not only to his dominant interests but also a clear and definite expression of his personality, about which one could neither be mistaken nor disregard, for the display was too obvious, and Freud himself not infrequently referred to it. Thus the original settings in which psychoanalysis took place were very personal, reflecting the individuality and interests of the therapist, in stark contrast to the impersonal and rather sterile settings which present-day American psychoanalysts prefer for their work.

During their working hours, most Viennese analysts -- like most other physicians -- used their living room as the waiting room for their patients; thus it, like the treatment room, was an integral part of the analyst's home. This was true for my analyst, and since his wife was one of the earliest child analysts, her patients also used the same waiting room. When husband and wife were analysts, they tried to arrange things so that their patients would not meet. But with one patient coming a bit earlier than scheduled, or the other being late, patients whose session times overlapped occasionally encountered each other in the waiting room. Such meetings were awkward because one was tense, waiting to meet one's analyst; but curiosity tempted one to become acquainted.

About the time of the day I saw my analyst, his wife treated a psychotic child whom I shall call Johnny. It was many years before specific diagnostic terms were used for children, and so his disturbance had no name. Without worrying about etiology or classification, one

called such children abnormal and attempted to help them analytically. Johnny's utterly withdrawn and bizarre behavior did not invite interactions. Still, as we met from time to time, I tried to say a few friendly words to this obviously terrified child. He either did not react or responded with a monosyllable.

On the windowsill of the waiting room stood some small potted cacti, fashionable in Vienna at the time. While we waited for our appointments, Johnny had the disconcerting habit of plucking one of the cactus leaves full of sharp thorns, and putting it into his mouth to chew it. The spines must have hurt his lips, gums, and tongue; occasionally, I saw his lips bleed. Watching him hurt himself always upset me, but for a long time I did not openly react.

However, one day, when I had been in analysis for about two years, I could not restrain myself and, while somehow knowing it was wrong, I blurted out: "Johnny, I don't know how long you have been seeing Dr. X; it must be at least two years, since I have known you for that long, and here you are still chewing these awful leaves!" In response, this scrawny little boy suddenly seemed to grow in stature -- I still do not know how he managed to give me the impression that at this moment he was looking down on me -- and said with utter disdain: "What are two years compared with eternity!" It was the first time he had uttered a full sentence, and it left me flabbergasted.

While I was still trying to recover from my surprise and make sense of what Johnny had said, my analyst ushered me into his office. As I lay down on the couch, I realized that what I had said to Johnny had not been motivated by any unselfish concern about the pain he was inflicting on himself, as I had been convinced when I made the remark.

On the contrary, my involvement had been entirely with myself. For some time, I had been worrying whether there was any point to my analysis. Because of this worry, watching Johnny chew cactus leaves made me wonder whether his analysis was doing him any good, and by implication whether it was doing anybody any good. That was why I had framed my remark so as to suggest that he had made no, or insufficient progress in the years I had known him. Unconsciously, I had hoped that his answer would either make it clear that we both were wasting our time by being in analysis, or convince me that his analysis did him some good despite his continuing to chew cactus leaves, suggesting that my analysis probably also did me some good, although I thought I could discern no signs of it. Having thought this through in silence now helped me to overcome my strong resistance against talking about my doubts, and I began to analyze what was behind them. But I could not get out of my mind what Johnny had said, partly because of my guilt for selfishly trying to use his desperate behavior to solve one of my pressing problems, and in doing so, trying to put into question the value analysis had for him.

Intuitively, Johnny must have understood what I was up to: that I was dissatisfied with the comparatively long time -- or what seemed to me too long a time -- I had by then spent in analysis, and that I was using him to unload my dissatisfaction. He put me into my place by telling me that my judgement of time was all wrong, that it did not apply to the work involved in psychoanalyzing oneself. His intuition had permitted him to perceive that what I needed at the moment was to gain a better perspective on time, if I wanted to derive the best results from my analysis. It was this, his intuition, and the concise way in which he expressed it, which permitted me to learn to be patient, first about

my own analysis, and later about the time required by others to reshape their personalities.

With his seven short words Johnny taught me much -- some things which I understood right away and others which took many years to absorb, as is usually true for intuitive insights.

For example, in a flash Johnny had taught me how inclined we are to believe that the wellspring of our action is concern for the other, when often our real motivation is self-involvement. Also, Johnny showed me how much we can learn about ourselves from others, once we accept that what they do may reveal things not only about them, but also about us. I had known this from studying the psychoanalytic literature, but as an abstract concept. Only after this experience did theory become personal knowledge.

Simultaneously, Johnny taught me the difference between objective time, and psychological or experiential time. When one's sufferings are unending and seem eternal, then two years spent on trying to escape them are but a moment. Johnny taught me that the magnitude of one's misery changes the meaning of all experiences, including that of time -- something which I later experienced during a year spent in concentration camps.

Further, Johnny's comment permitted me to grasp that neither I nor anybody else must put a limit on the time one needs to become able to cope, and that trying to hurry up such processes reflects one's own anxieties more than anything else. Only the person himself can judge when he is ready to change.

I appreciated the importance of this last lesson more and more over the years, as I worked with and learned to understand psychotics.

Only when given unlimited time did they come to trust that I was on their side, and not against them, as they perceived the rest of the world to be, since it tried to make them change their ways. Encouraging psychotic children to proceed on the basis of their sense of time demonstrated to them that we considered their reactions to the world as valid for them as ours were for us. When, on occasion, I would get restless after having sat silently for hours, trying to reach a catatonic, I had only to recall Johnny's statement. Then time again became totally unimportant, and I was once more in contact with the patient. This worked like a charm! As soon as I stopped worrying that time was passing and that nothing was happening, I also stopped making inner demands of myself or the patient; I stopped wishing his silence would end. In response, he always did something significant that permitted gaining a better understanding of his experience of the world, and of what it had been in me which had prevented him from relating.

Other lessons took much longer to sink in. Off and on I pondered why Johnny had spoken so clearly to me only on this single occasion, and in a complete sentence to boot. It was only after years of working with psychotics that I came to understand the difference my motive for relating to them made in their ability to relate to me, and in their view of themselves. If I approached them desirous that they should enlighten me about something -- something of great importance to me about which, I was convinced, they possessed knowledge unavailable to me, then this established a bond of common humanity which then could be extended to other experiences. Through learning how to establish such bonds I finally understood that only in this one encounter with him had I treated Johnny as a person who had superior knowledge on a matter

of greatest significance -- was psychoanalysis doing much good? At all other times when we met, I had felt superior to him. This one time, I had unconsciously hoped that this crazy child would solve my most pressing problem. And so he proceeded to do exactly that!

Only when I realized all this did it hit me how little attention I had paid to the fact that as Johnny spoke, he had taken the cactus leaf out of his mouth, which he did on no other occasion before or afterwards when he deigned to reply with some nearly inaudible monosyllable. Not only that -- after he spoke that one time, he had put down the leaf; he no longer needed to chew it. Had I then and there understood what Johnny's behavior could have taught me, I would have learned that when one truly communicates with the psychotic, he does not need his symptoms. Such communication happens when the psychotic is put in control of the interaction, such as in this case by my feeling that he had important knowledge to impart, not about himself -- this most therapists believe to be true of their patients -- but about what was going on in me.

I had been convinced that my study of Freud had taught me one can truly understand the other only from his frame of reference, not from one's own. I had learned this well as a theoretical concept. But it was Johnny who taught me how extremely difficult it is not to see things only from one's own frame of reference when one's strong emotions are involved. As often as I had with inner shudder observed Johnny's chewing the cactus leaves, I had viewed it as sign of his craziness, not as it was from his point of view -- the indication of his most pressing needs and of their not so symbolic expression.

I had believed that I had truly learned, if not only from Freud, so even earlier from Terence that humani nil a me alienum puto,

that to be truly human meant not to be alienated from anything human. Still, I had not known how not to be alienated by, and with it from, Johnny's behavior. My shame at being so insensitive to his suffering that I did not understand why he acted as he did was what convinced me that from then on, what anybody else did would seem the most natural thing for me to do, were I in his situation. I believe it was this conviction that permitted me years later to understand the behavior of SS guards in the concentration camps, and it helped me greatly to survive being there. Again, later, when I began to work with psychotics, it permitted me to understand them, to be attuned to whatever they did.

Because Johnny's chewing of cactus leaves had horrified me, I could not realize that when he was doing something so painful, it must be of tremendous importance. Not accepting it as a challenge to my understanding, I had failed to concentrate on discovering the meaning of his behavior, because I knew not how to comprehend it. To understand what Johnny did, I had to ask myself what would induce me to do it. As I tried to imagine what would make me inflict such physical pain on myself, I knew that if I were to live entirely wrapped up in an endless nightmare of persecutory and destructive fantasies, compared to which Hieronymus Bosch's Hell would be a pleasure garden, then anything that would at least temporarily obliterate these fantasies would be a relief. Severe physical pain makes it practically impossible to think of anything else -- enough reason to prefer it to extreme mental anguish.

When pain is self-inflicted, it is limited in degree and time, while the psychotic's mental suffering is unlimited in time and severity. Finally and most important, if pain is self-inflicted, the self is in control of it, can start and stop it; while at other times the psychotic

is at the mercy of mental tortures over which he has no control. How understandable, then, that Johnny wished to replace the most intense sufferings from his delusions, over which he had no power of control, by suffering over which he had complete control, as he had when he chewed on cactus leaves.

It took me a very long time until I understood other significant aspects of Johnny's behavior, having to do more directly with psychoanalysis, what it is all about, and what one hopes to gain from it. That Johnny's original trauma had been an oral one explains the particular choice of pain: hurting his mouth. The origin of his misery had been extreme traumatization at the beginning of his life, when he was unable to do anything about it. By inflicting on himself a parallel pain, he not only tried to obliterate through pain the mental images which tortured him, but to convince himself that now, he could be in control of a pain over which he had no control whatsoever when it destroyed him as a human being. Had I understood this at the time, Johnny would have taught me all one needs to know about the causes and meaning of self-mutilation.

The cacti in the living room were, as Johnny either knew or surmised, of interest to his analyst, as they indeed were, for it was typical of the lady of the house to take care of the plants in her living room. Thus the cacti leaves were something that came from her and were connected with his analyst. Much more important: what Johnny hoped for himself to gain from his analysis was that through something received from her -- as were the cacti leaves -- he would be able to replace being helplessly at the mercy of powers beyond his control, to gain control over what life did to him. With his seven short words, Johnny

had thus conveyed to me also the essence of what a patient hopes to achieve for himself through his analysis and what analysis should do for each patient: permit him to become able to control what goes on in his life.

I wish I would always have been able to teach what is most essential about psychoanalysis to my students in as short, concise, and impressive a form as Johnny taught it to me. Yet my ruminations over Johnny and the cactus leaf finally taught me just how many years it may take until one understands what psychoanalysis is all about, not just with one's head -- that is easy; but also with one's innermost being -- which is hard -- as Johnny taught me through chewing the terrible cacti leaves.

My early experiences with psychoanalysis, of which I have recounted two, convinced me that it is not the theoretical mastery of a problem which permits its deepest understanding, it is personal experience that motivates this. I accept that many may disagree with me about it, and try to keep their scientific investigations apart from their personal experiences for the sake of an objectivity about which I have my doubts. But I wished to share these experiences, since this is how I came to psychoanalysis, and because psychoanalysis has played such an important role in bringing Morris and me together, a relation which I cherish more than I am able to put into words.

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