

Trauma Theory, Attachment-Detachment Theory, Defensive-Fantasy Theory, and How Freud Got the Oedipal Complex Partly Wrong

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One thing that I have come to learn in my lifetime of researching different psychological theorists and theories is that no one holds a monopoly on 'truth'. For me, better 'renditions or representations' of truth come about through the recognition that different theorists can each hold different 'portions or pieces' of truth, and better representations of truth -- both 'clinical truth' and 'abstract theory truth' -- can come about by the 'mixture' and 'integration' of different ideas from different theorists. This is what I call 'multi-bipolar, integrative representations of truth'.

And so we come back to perhaps Freud's most controversial concept and theory, famous and infamous, loved and/or hated -- the concept and theory that introductory psychology students love to laugh at when they hear that the little boy wants to 'have sex with his mother' (or sole erotic possession of her with 'dad' as his chief competitive 'rival').

There are some theorists (like myself) who have obsessively striven to make the Oedipal Complex a 'better concept-theory' -- one that better satisfies Freud's assertion that The Oedipal Complex underlies all human neurosis -- that it is the 'core nuclear conflict' in any and all human personalities -- that its effect is 'universal' -- albeit possibly with an endless number of different, 'individual, customized, clinical variations' of the same 'generic, Oedipal Complex'.

We can become 'pigeon-holed' and 'stereotyped' by either a 'name' or the 'concept' that the name is supposed to represent, as 'the concept' or 'concept-theory', in turn, is supposed to represent some 'life and/or clinical phenomenon'. There is a significant part of me that wishes that Freud had never come up with the name 'Oedipus Complex' because, by calling it that, he limited, restricted, confined, even eliminated the 'potential evolutionary growth' of the concept -- although different theorists have gone 'Beyond The Oedipus Complex' anyway...

Every known psychoanalytic theorist has had their own partly unique perspective on 'the Oedipus Complex' -- or 'Beyond The Oedipus Complex'. I go 'way beyond' the Oedipus complex which can create further confusion and/or disagreement as the question inevitably surfaces: 'At what point am I no longer talking about The Oedipus Complex'. Perhaps a different name might be more appropriate such as: 'The Attachment-Detachment Complex'; or

'The Love-Hate Complex'; or 'The Approach-Avoidance Complex'; or 'The Phobia-Counter-Phobia Complex; or 'The Phobia-Obsession Complex'; or 'The Good Object-Bad Object Complex'; or 'The Rejecting Object-Exciting Object Complex'.

'Objects' in our discussion here can be viewed as 'transference figures' and 'Oedipal Period Objects' can be viewed as 'Oedipal Period Transference Figures'. Even when I expand the concept of 'The Oedipal Complex' to 'The Oedipal Period Complex', we are moving 'Beyond The Oedipal Complex, if you know what I mean. Because there are a lot of different things that can happen in the 'Oedipal Period of Development' (partly arbitrarily 2 or 3 years old to 6 or 7 years old) that go beyond a small boy or girl wanting to 'erotically possess the parent of the opposite sex while being rivalrous with the same-sex parent'. Freud's definition of the Oedipus Complex was just too confining, and I think even Freud, over time, knew it the more that he came into contact with different clinical exceptions.

For example, even though I have to go back and re-read more closely Freud's papers connecting paranoia with homosexuality or bisexuality, there is no way from my vantage point here and now, that Freud could have made such a connection without having 'stretched the boundaries' or having gone 'beyond his Oedipal Complex Theory'. This is subject to confirmation and verification, but, unless shown differently, there is no way that Freud could

have connected paranoia with homosexuality and/or bisexuality without bringing some Kleinian, Object Relations ideas into the picture (or at least without introducing some ideas that came to be connected with Kleinian Object Relations Theory).

Specifically, the connection would go something like this in 'the splitting of the ego' of a little boy in his Oedipal-phallic stage of development (2 to 7 years old). Take note that the fact that I am talking about the Oedipal Phase of development here is 'Un-Kleinian' because Klein connected the 'paranoid-schizoid' phase of development with the age of birth to 6 months. And she connected it with Freud's 'biological, genetic, death instinct' meaning that she believed that 'paranoia' was or is a 'natural stage of development' starting from the 'projection of the death instinct from birth'.

Schizoid is connected with the defense mechanism of 'splitting' although I connect it more with 'distancing' or 'dissociating'. 'Splitting' does not have to mean 'distancing'. For example, I distinguish the 'paranoid-confrontational' personality or 'position' or 'ego-state' from the 'paranoid-schizoid personality/position/ego-state'.

In contrast to Klein's emphasis on the death instinct and her birth to 6 months period of development, I generally view 'paranoia' as arising during the Oedipal-phallic stage of development (2 or 3 years old to 6 or 7 years old), and it being connected to Oedipal Period 'trauma, splitting, good object vs. bad object, and attachment vs. detachment conflict' -- more clinically and scientifically verifiable in that between the ages of 2 and 7 years old, the client has reached a period of 'remembering memories and relationships' during this time period'.

Thus, now we are stretching 'The Oedipal Complex' into 'The Oedipal Period Complex' and also into the area of 'Oedipal Memory-(Encounter) Complexes' and 'Oedipal Relationship Complexes'. And since the 'Oedipal Period' represents a period of time of about five years with lots of potentially different people being involved -- not only mom and dad -- well, you can start to see the Oedipal Complex expanding 'Beyond The Oedipal Complex' into 'the Oedipal Period Complex' which may or may not involve mom or dad. There could be a brother or sister involved, an uncle, a stranger, a friend, the possible types of encounters and/or relationships during this period can take us 'way beyond' Freud's original, generic, and 'anally retentive' definition and description of the 'Oedipal Complex' so tightly associated with the mythology of 'Oedipus Rex'. Where is this taking us, and how do we explain the 'paranoia-homosexuality or bisexuality' connection?

Well, let's briefly investigate the psycho-dynamics of 'Oedipal Father-Son Paranoia'. This usually requires a righteous, authoritarian, hot-tempered father. We assume in this analysis, in line with Object Relations thinking, the Oedipal son's wish to both love and be loved by his father. Note that this is in contradistinction to Freud's own viewpoint that the son's love is centered on his mother and his competitive animosity is centered on his father.

Thus, Freud's generic definition and description of The Oedipal Complex assumes 'unilateral non-conflicted motives' directed

towards both parents respectively -- in the case of the son, love towards his mother; hate towards his father. This assumption doesn't seem to be clinically validated -- not even in the case of Freud's relationship towards his own father. Psychoanalytically speaking, Freud didn't even fully understand his psychodynamic relationship with his own father -- at least not for public consumption, and/or in terms of his own 'tightly confined' Oedipal Complex Theory.

So what we have to assume here -- at least in terms of Freud's 'sublimated' Oedipal theory which was 'projected' into psychoanalysis from his relationship with his own father -- is that Freud essentially 'repressed' and/or 'suppressed' his wish to both love and be loved by his father. A son's wish to be loved by his father is dictated as much or more by the wish to be 'conditionally loved' as it is by the wish to be 'unconditionally loved'.

Why? Because -- at least traditionally and patriarchally speaking -- the father has usually been raised to believe that he should be the main 'disciplinarian' in the family and that his responsibility as a father is to teach 'tough love', not 'soft love', the latter of which is generally construed -- again, traditionally and patriarchally speaking -- to be the mother's territory, not the father's.

So, how easy it is to gravitate towards mom's 'soft brand of love' rather than dad's 'hard brand of love' that generally requires doing things 'dad's way' -- and 'doing them right!' Or dealing with the 'negative consequences' of 'not doing or saying something right' from dad's point of view.

'Corporal punishment' may be slipping behind us but certainly I have male friends in my generation that experienced 'belts' and 'cords' -- and oftentimes, a father's temper is enough to scare any small child -- without even talking about the possibility of having to deal with a 'mother's temper' as well, or instead of, a father's temper.

So what I am setting the stage for here is Melanie Klein's idea of 'good object' vs. 'bad object' -- in the same object, i.e., transference figure of mom, dad, or someone else present in a child's Oedipal Period of development.

The Oedipal son wants to be loved by the Oedipal father, but is partly 'traumatized' and 'blown away' by his temper. Freud called this 'castration anxiety'. I call it 'annihilation anxiety'. Father is no longer an 'all-loving object'. He is also a 'dangerous, all-powerful, rejecting object'. Unconsciously, the son, in order to deal with this 'good' vs. 'bad' father-object contradiction, 'splits' his own ego in 'defense' in order to deal with it. Now, the son has two (or more -- we will get to the 'more' shortly) 'ego-states' that start to 'dissociate' from each other: 1. 'the pleasing son or pleasing underego'; and 2. 'the narcissistic-rebellious-righteous son or underego' that takes on the responsibility of maintaining the son's 'integrity of self'. Without the narcissistic and/or righteous underego 'splitting off' from the 'pleasing, approval-seeking underego', the son would completely lose his sense of self -- and self-integrity.

So, psychoanalytically speaking, what all is happening here? In conjunction with the 'splitting', we have the beginnings of possibly

one particular brand of 'psychological passive-submissive male homosexuality' connected with the 'approval-seeking underego' as well as the likely beginning of some greater or lesser degree of 'sub-clinical' and/or 'clinical paranoia'. Understand that there are potentially 'limitless permutations on a theme' here as well as many potential 'polymorphous pathways' that 'The Beyond The Oedipal Complex (TBTOC)' can take. The name that I have given to the TBTOC is mainly 'The MOLD Complex' which also contains Adlerian, Gestalt, and Transactional Analysis (TA) components.

Relative to 'paranoia', here are the 'underego-states' that I am working with now: 1. the passive-submissive underego; 2. the active-submissive underego; 3. the narcissistic-hedonistic underego; 4. the paranoid-schizoid underego; 5. the paranoid-passive-aggressive underego; 6. the paranoid-abandoning underego; 7. the paranoid-depressive underego; 8. the paranoid-confrontational underego; 9. the paranoid-violent underego; and 10. the paranoid-psychotic (schizophrenic) underego.

This is without doing any extensive analysis on the different types of potential 'depressive' developments before, in, or after the Oedipal Period.

The one thing that I didn't cover in this essay -- at least until now -- is the distinction between 'stable' and 'unstable' Oedipal memories and relationships -- and how they play into everything we have discussed above. Generally speaking, 'stable Oedipal Period memories' and 'stable Oedipal Period relationships' create stable Oedipal Complexes. It is the generally 'unstable' Oedipal

memories and relationships that create 'unstable Oedipal, or Beyond The Oedipal, or 'MOLD' Complexes'.

In this regard, Freud's relationship with both his mother and his wife were (to all accounts that I have generally read) 'stable' and 'unobtrusive'. This was the stable part of Freud's personality.

The 'unstable' part of Freud's personality can mainly be connected to Freud's Oedipal memories, and his Oedipal relationship, with his father -- and all the men in Freud's life who were either 'abandoned' by Freud, or they 'abandoned him'.

And 'tucked into' this 'Oedipal Male Paranoid-Abandonment Complex', Freud developed what he even called himself at least a 'psychological homosexual relationship' with Fliess. The subject matter of homosexuality, bisexuality -- connected to paranoia -- was a lifetime 'scholarly obsession' with Freud.

But this 'scholarly obsession' extended 'Beyond his very anal-retentive, generic, tightly defined conceptualization of The Oedipal Complex.

I think we have done a decent job today of covering where Freud's 'Beyond The Oedipal Complex' analysis of paranoia and homosexuality took him, some of which I have developed even further beyond both Classical Psychoanalysis and Object Relations.

This is why I ask you to be clear on exactly when and where we 'leave Oedipus and his mother behind' and enter into 'Beyond The Oedipal Complex' territory.