

The prosthetic third in violent, psychotic, male patients

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Abstract

The paper introduces the 'prosthetic third', a complex clinical phenomenon evident in work with psychotic, violent patients. The prosthetic third describes the semiotic object, a self-contained pocket of meaning manifest as a story, song or game which is used by the patient as an artificial ego. The semiotic object is also used to deny, control and ameliorate intolerable aspects of reality, the most clinically salient being the reality of the thinking-other in the therapeutic encounter. The paper provides clinical examples of the prosthetic third and concludes with some thoughts on the relationship between the prosthetic third and violence.

A phenomenological perspective on the unconscious

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Abstract

This paper uses the focus on the unconscious of classical psychoanalysis to bridge the theoretical perspectives of phenomenology and psychoanalysis. To this end Freud's theorizing of the unconscious is dialogued with phenomenological understandings. The paper is built around a number of seminal phenomenological concepts: Heidegger's view of man as embedded in his relatedness to his world, Fischer's research on self deception, and Merleau-Ponty's conceptualizations of man as both the subject of experience and the experience itself. Self-awareness is characterized by a central 'blindness' due to experience being initially lived pre-linguistically. As a central feature of the dynamic unconscious, repression, a form of self-deception, is based on our need to keep unknown to ourselves that which is already known through our symptoms and lived experience. A phenomenological understanding highlights that the unconscious is both the ground of experience and that through which experience is known. These concepts convey that we live embedded in already given meanings due to our relatedness to a shared world, but these meanings cannot always be authentically faced. Despite our defensive attempts to deny or negate these meanings we inevitably live these in the pre-reflective foundation of our experience. A clinical vignette is provided to illustrate this phenomenological understanding.

Psychoanalysis, siblings and the social group

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Abstract

The paper argues that, contrary to common assumption, siblings have been well noted in clinical material. The reason that we pay them no attention and only 're-discover' them from time to time is that they have no autonomous place in psychoanalytical theory. It suggests that what the author labels the 'sibling trauma' could constitute a foundational moment for their placement in the metapsychology which will need to be developed along a horizontal axis. After examining this, it proposes that the rite of passage that follows a generic trauma of this kind leads directly into social life, a social life that is gendered, but differently from the 'sexual difference' initiated by the castration complex.