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WHY ONE SELF IS NOT ENOUGH:

CLINICAL, EXISTENTIAL, AND ADAPTIVE PERSPECTIVES ON BROMBERG'S MODEL OF MULTIPLICITY AND DISSOCIATION

Abstract. This article brings us into the heart of a long-term analytic treatment relationship in order to illustrate, perhaps extend, Phillip Bromberg's creative thinking about the functions of multiplicity, dissociation, and integration in human self structure. We follow how my patient Tanya's capacity for access to her multiplicity played a key role in deepening the negotiation of our relationship as well as in resisting the environmental pull towards over-accommodating, dissociative integrations—identity foreclosures (Erikson, 1980)—in her own development.

More broadly, the article suggests that the centrality of a dialectical tension (including mind-body tension) between a unified experience of self-sameness and an experience of one's multiplicity goes well beyond its functions in managing individual trauma. It may represent a crucial evolved human adaptation to the existential challenge of creating and recreating meaning in face of the ambiguity, hidden multiplicity, deceptiveness, and bias inherent in even the good-enough relational world.

Patients like Tanya thus require not only that we empathize deeply with their experience, but that we allow them to open the often hidden multiplicity in ourselves. In so doing, we will confront the tensions between multiplicity and integration that are a fundamental dimension of human experience as well as the shared, existential truths carried within each patient's trauma. Bromberg's vision, including his attunement to surprise, irony, and paradox, can encourage the radical theoretical openness—indeed theoretical multiplicity—needed to facilitate this challenging, highly personal, reciprocal process.

Keywords: multiplicity, dissociation, dialectical, evolved, adaptation, existential

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—

Success in Circuit lies

Too bright for our infirm Delight

The Truth's superb surprise

— Emily Dickinson (2010)

Getting to Slant: Tanya, Bromberg, and Multiplicity

Tanya was a beautiful 30-year-old woman who came for analysis because her erotic longings clashed painfully with her equally longed-for attempts at a more settled intimacy with the man who seemed genuinely to love, respect, and want her to marry him. A highly creative, freelance agent for artists, she traveled a great deal, engaging in many flirtations and a few affairs while she was away. “You know, Dr. Slavin, flirtation is actually a playing back and forth across the boundaries,” she’d say. “That’s what it means to be alive. To have a sense of me. Maybe even, even of God, crazy as I know that sounds. Life without it is. . . .” She stops. And I interject, “psychic death?” “Yes!” she nearly shouts. Then cries profusely.

One day as she was about to go off on another trip that meant a week’s separation for us, she turned around to address me at the door. “Dr. Slavin, do you realize how I can see things from every point of view you can imagine. Like, I can tell you what a woman thinks about something, what a man thinks, what a cat thinks . . . what, what this doorknob thinks.”

“Yes, Tanya,” I respond, surprised into a spontaneous, “Yeah, an incredible, creative perch—all that difference in you. Makes life hard as hell.”

“I know, I know, why do you think I’m here.” Adding, later, “you know I’m terrified I’ll never feel whole . . . it’s hopeless. . . . But, remember this, if I couldn’t *see* in this way I’d be finished. I’d really rather die than not see.”

My eyes opened, too, over the years. Opened, through my work with Tanya, to a lot more—of her, her world, to parts of myself. Opened more to what it means to all of us to live, ongoing, in the pervasive tensions between human multiplicity and integration, awareness and dissociation—perhaps the major theme in Philip Bromberg’s work—and Tanya’s life. She opened and moved me further into the mind-boggling intertwining of self-deception, deception, and their sometimes bafflingly close kin—the life sustaining “adaptive illusions” that create (that *are*) the lived meanings in our lives.

Three times a week for nearly 12 years, my eyes opened further to just how crucial our need is to be seen by others, seen by the world, in order, often, to see ourselves. Yet, simultaneously, how much the world needs to view us, to induce, compel, and persuade us to be far more unified—

integrated into *its* illusions—than our inherently multiple nature may need to be.

By borrowing Philip Bromberg’s hugely creative, analytic vision—his grasp of multiplicity, dissociation, and the central therapeutic role of a reciprocal opening of the analyst’s and the patient’s subjectivities—I will try to convey the feel of how my relationship with Tanya evolved. Then, drawing upon my experience with Tanya, I’ll suggest a few modifications and extensions of Bromberg’s perspective and its implications for analytic work.

Seeing Me Being Seen

Flirting may not be a poor way of doing something better, but a different way of doing something else. . . . By unsettling preferences and priorities [it] can add other stories to the repertoire by making room for them.

—Adam Phillips, *On Flirtation* (1996)

Through the opening year of analysis, Tanya increasingly treated my office and any objects within it as a set of clues about me, my life, my habits; a place where, for example, she could see in the piles of papers, the chairs, the home-and-not-home qualities, my shoes, boots, art, books, shirts—the minute and larger changes and what never changes (my habits of work, my putting off work)—the small and big “fault lines” (as I think of it) in my character.

Each of these rather unremitting observations could be interpreted as cleverly violating my space. Or, interpreted indirectly through questions about what she was looking for, her “fantasies.” I did ask some questions. But, frankly, I was mostly curious about what she saw, much of which, I thought, was quite astute. She never really pressed me, but she did want to know—if I would deliver “the facts”: just how much of her imagining was real, and what was not—at least as I far as I knew it to be. I told her a lot about myself in response to her observations. This sharing of imaginings and experiences became a *leitmotif*. And her astute observations and conjectures—as well as my disclosures—largely concerned the nature of my work patterns, as well as a bit more of the basic facts of my personal life.

One day Tanya told me—rather matter of factly, as I remember it—that, whatever might change in analysis, she needed me to know that *she* basically knew that “everyone has a stranger inside them . . . even people

you know very well.” She said that I seemed seem “pretty safe” to her. And, not to take offense, but that she was always waiting for the monster to pop out. . . . “I don’t even mind if you have the monster in you. You wouldn’t actually *be* here with me if you didn’t have some other side to you. Do you know what I mean?”

“Do you mean I wouldn’t be real?” I say.

“Yeah,” she says, “and I suppose I need you to be some kind of real person. But, damn safe, too. And I know, I know, I know, that’s, ah . . . just about an impossible combo.”

Exactly what this safety did, or might entail, I knew in broad, familiar analytic terms. But for a year or more, I didn’t really know. Most significant, by far, I felt was this: Tanya’s repeated experience, I’ll call it, *of experiencing me being observed by her*: that is, my openness to being deconstructed and constructed repeatedly in her fantasy—found, found out, made up, and re-found (a kind of flirtation)—a version of those “boundary crossings.” Mostly, though—as I dimly, intuitively grasped then, but understand much better now in retrospect—it was her, then us, playing with my office space. Playing with my identity as Winnicott (1969), Erikson (1963, 1980), and, I think, Bromberg, might put it. Beyond anything that I consciously appreciated while it was happening during that first year or two, this “see and be seen while the other is seeing” form of playing represented the creation of a very crucial transitional, or potential, space.

Dreaming Me Awake and into Her World

As the relationship evolves, the processing of “not me” evolves with it because both parties become more conversant with the fact that what they bring to the table includes what they are trying to hide underneath it.

—(Bromberg, 2006, p. 8)

An email arrives from Tanya, who’s away on one of her trips. It is the first time she emails—in fact, the first time I think any patient ever emailed me with more than a schedule issue. The email’s only content is a dream she had while on the road:

Dr. S., Last night I had a dream that we were dancing together, both naked, up close. I feel an erection and I look down and think, “whose penis is that, mine or his?” That’s it. I’m hugely embarrassed. But if I’m going to do

this therapy, I've got to do this. Right? Jesus. Well maybe we'll both forget about it by the time I'm back. Ha. Well, maybe, I'll just never come back.
Tanya

I remember my initial thoughts as something like: Ok. She's dealing with *her* shame, her exposure, by email to keep it more distant, keep it safer for her. Got to keep it safe, so she will come back (which I guess I knew she would), but, also, stay back, safely. Then I realize, hell, she's also dealing with *my* shame, *my* exposure. I'm naked too, after all, in that scene. Jesus, she's giving me time to respond by putting the scene into an email (to which, I assumed, in those long ago days, that she expected no email response). And then, I remember going through a reverberating kaleidoscope of responses: One emotion, one grasp at meaning, shifts to the next, to the next.

A certain sexual excitement enters. Is this the more directly sexual side of her flirtatiousness—which, before, had, in fact, not been very prominently in the room? Is it now coming more directly into the scene? I become aware, too, of a bit of, I admit, insult: What do you mean not *my* penis? Am I not the *man* here? Some anxiety stirs and a string of inner, superego warnings about whether I somehow need to clarify our boundaries.

Tanya arrives a few days later and launches into telling me about the terrifying, nearly unbearable anxiety she had felt at moments on her trip—the maddening aloneness (even, or especially, when with others), the sprinkling of flirtations, near affairs. Then—wondering if maybe I shouldn't bring up the email dream because *she* was either telling me something more relevant about her anxieties on the road, or fending off too much shame—I eventually feel I must. Basically, it was feeling hard to really listen fully to much else.

So, in the voice of my cautious, slow Dr. Slavin self, I hear myself asking about her associations to her dream (which produces little). Then wondering if, in her dream, maybe she was questioning how safe it was to get close to me? “Can we deal directly with sexuality without my shrinking you into psychic death, or, somehow, my turning into that monster?”

Tanya listens politely. And I start suddenly to feel that many of the predictable and utterly reasonable narrations of the dreamscape begin to recede from my grasp like will-o'-the-wisps. Tanya is incontestably here. Of course she was not running away. I can see she is reading me, maybe

a bit like she read the paintings, chairs, shoes, piles of papers on my desk. But now more so. Suddenly, she seems like a bird: perched, or ready to be perched, in some new place.

I know she's interested, waiting for something. What? Then, I realize in my effort to get at the damn meaning of the dream, I'm imagining myself dancing with her in it. I go on, "Maybe you want to know what it feels like to be the one with the penis . . . or maybe, maybe . . ." ("why so many maybe's, Malcolm?" I think) maybe, for me, ah . . . *to be or not to be* (do I actually hear myself turning into Hamlet?) . . . the one with the penis. We're certainly looking down with you at something with immense . . . ah . . . ambiguity."

"What do mean, ambiguity?" she says. I fumble, then, before I can answer, "Yes, "she says, that's it, I think—it's goddamn not knowing what the hell is . . . is real. Or, maybe somehow that . . . that, it's *all* real."

I began to get it. Slowly permeating my awareness is how Tanya is getting me to look with her at who has the penis—not only at who is male, who is female, but at who penetrates whom. Or, really, I think, is it possible, conceivable, because it must be possible, somehow, for both to penetrate the other? For us both to have the power to do that? And that right now, sex, per se, here, real as it is, is probably not the basic thing. Probably not the scariest thing. It's that other, even scarier thing that we've been "dreamed into," staring down at together: What—as it oscillates back and forth—is real? All of it? Anything—any thing—real?

Tanya's dream, as Bromberg (2006) so compellingly evokes, was "awakening the dreamer" in me. Then, as I think you'll see as we go on—in *us*. Was I dissociated initially that day? Yes, I think so. And a big part of it, lay in a kind of fixed presence, initially, a dichotomy in me: Something like, if she has the penis, I lose it. It's one or the other.

Tanya's multiplicity, her flirting, fantasy, and boundary crossings served first to open a crack in that central dissociation—the crack that was sustaining a piece of my identity, as I would call it. Once inside each other, as we became through her dream, we could stare at that other most troubling "truth": Up close, often it feels as though both everything and nothing is true; that a sense of realness, duration, solidity can actually disappear. Become lost? Maybe it was never there?

We are about to glimpse what this really meant to Tanya in what she next told me. For now, let's just say that, as I see it, Tanya's dream represents what Bromberg describes and evokes with irony and surprise in much of his work: How a patient's multiplicity adaptively resonates with

the analyst's multiplicity—resonates in some fashion that sets the stage for held in, dissociative parts of the analyst to come forth. And how, in the process of this resonance, the two create a “trance state” (Bromberg, 2013): A state that releases a reciprocating fantasy in both participants that, in turn, leads to seeing more deeply—not through an excavation of the unconscious facts—but through a reality-challenging use of imagination, revealing what has been “hidden in plain sight” (Bromberg, 2013).

In my language, Tanya's multiplicity was “probing,” to take apart my integration (Slavin, 2010, 2011). Probing to see if, and how, and what it felt like, to both of us if that opening in me happened and my experience came genuinely closer to hers. How do I, as her analyst, experience the (often shameful, anxious) move, not just into some resonating affect state with her? But beyond this, how do I move further, more openly, into my own multiplicity?

In short, as Bromberg often puts it (and I hope this is not schematically reductive), multiplicity induces the *tranceference*, the trance that releases fantasy and unleashes both imaginations. In the process, interpersonally and intersubjectively, the patient gets to *experience* who the analyst “really” is. Or can be, by seeing the analyst struggling with his or her own fraught versions of basically the same *existential* issues that the patient is trying, fearfully, sometimes self-deceptively, to grasp and possibly confront (Slavin, 2011; Slavin & Klein, in press).

After the Dance: Annihilation Anxiety and the Method in Her Madness

She realized that if she listened as acutely as possible to all the separate individual vocal sounds (the separate phonemes, literally, that her parents are uttering in their speech) it might come to feel like they are speaking some foreign language—a language that she literally does not understand. Maybe, if she does this she will feel less trapped by the awful, smooth unrealness of their talk. (Tanya's experience at age 14)

Let's go back to the unfolding of our relationship after that pivotal, nude dancing dream, looking at the dissociations it challenged and the intense, imaginative connection it ignited—a connection with some of Tanya's deepest existential anxieties about meaning and the loss of the real.

First, it only happened after we danced our way into a tiny glimpse at the central trauma in her development: The times and the psychotic-like

ways she had lost—or actually moved herself away from—a basic, stable sense of what was real. Which, although she had vaguely alluded to it, I think she could not tell me about, until, in a sense, I had begun to be there myself, and with her, in the nude dancing dream.

It became the detailed story of what she called her “adolescent break-down,” the story of how wrenchingly, traumatically, Tanya’s family, and then Tanya, herself, had broken down in her late childhood and early adolescence. Rife with mind-boggling tensions starting when she was around 10, her parents’ marriage finally came apart in divorce when she was 13 or 14. “That story,” she often said as we went on, “is what has been, probably always will be, haunting me . . . defining me, living me.”

It was a time, she’d say, of “zero sense of control, or only my weird, crazy efforts at control.” Father had never communicated much about himself that made sense to her, even less in those years. Eventually, turning completely away from the family, he finally left to seek what appeared to be a new life—a vaguely freer, single life. Mother was wrapped in a kind of infuriating, untrustworthy, self-deceptiveness about herself and life. Her madness, said Tanya, was that, “she believes what she wants to believe. Always hides it, but in her self-deluding way, it’s obvious, at least to me. She always acted—still does—like the things she’s doing, her whole damn way of being, is for me, while it’s maddening how she, in her oblivious way, manages to put her needs first.”

Her older brothers had gone off to college. Spending a lot of time with housekeepers, “I went nuts. It lasted on and off for a few years.”

“Meaning?” I asked. And slowly I learn, feel with her, finally grasp, in multiple ways over the year or so in which this emerged.

“Meaning,” Tanya would say, “I actually began to wonder if my father *actually existed* when he was not home.” (She was *not* thinking about hidden affairs, or things he did not want to reveal). “It was *totally* weird. Did he, like, totally disappear from the world? Did *anyone* exist when I didn’t see them? What the hell are we anyway—trapped in our bodies?”

Tanya would lie in bed envisioning the blood flowing on the inside of her eyelids, watching and hearing elaborate visions of all the organs and blood vessels of her body working. She’d think she glimpsed bugs crawling behind her, just outside her view—sometimes little devils crawling into her back. Whirling around frantically, she could never actually *see* them.

The seasons, the reality of time itself, seemed to go in some “crazy circle . . . time, itself, became terrifying to me.” In a life and death strug-

gle to rein in her mind, Tanya prayed not to have everything “spin violently . . . as if it all were about to be sucked down a looming hole.”

“A void,” I say. “the abyss.”

“Yeah, like dying,” she says. “Or worse—whatever that is.”

Vivid memories return to me. In the course of the unfolding of Tanya’s story and all its substories, many old, but still all too familiar aspects and parts of myself—of embarrassing, adolescent selves—are in the room with us. My memories emerge, too. Core aspects of my own adolescence. My family was quite stable, my parents, close. Basically, I think I got enough love. Yet, wrenching changes in my world left me, on the cusp of adolescence, with fears, terrors, the absolute, inner isolation—no matter how many friends, girlfriends were around. I, like Tanya, had an intuitive sense that I must invent my own ways, my own thought magic, rituals, and strategies to manage a sometimes overwhelming, adolescent sense of life and death terror.

It was not necessary, most of the time, to share much of this with Tanya explicitly and directly. Nor did I feel moved to do so. By that point in our relationship, I knew Tanya would ask to know more if she needed to. What mattered was that she seemed to know that I was speaking from some place that I knew in my own way. I’d try to convey to her my sense that, “Your whole damn world fell apart, Tanya, in those years. You were working overtime, emotionally, to hold things together. But you sometimes lost, or got rid of, the buffers we all need to blur and soften the terrors that open up when the basic, take-for-granted realities, don’t hold. You saw the raw realities of what was happening in an incredibly direct way. It was overwhelming.”

“What do you mean,” she’d say, “*got rid of buffers?*”

“I guess it feels to me like sometimes you were trying to grasp, somehow, in your way, what in God’s name the world was, is, actually about. The family versions made no sense—they were crazy-making. What could you rely on? What, if anything was real, really real—especially, I guess, when it was out of sight, out of your vision, like, for instance, your own organs, your insides. And, *always*, other people’s motives, thoughts, and feelings. Number one, why the hell was Dad leaving, leaving you, leaving period?”

Then, over time and many sessions, I’d offer thoughts like: “Was your incredible imagination behind it all, at least some of the time, trying to take reality apart, piece by piece? Trying to see in your head all the things that you vitally needed to count on as existing, but couldn’t see? Like

envisioning all the working body parts so they didn't disappear? Everything, it seems, everything, revolved around creating enough meaning, control, in your own head to hold off . . . was it, dying?"

"Not even," she says. "Just not existing. One day I actually asked my father if he was, ah, *anyplace* when he wasn't home. My mother heard it and screamed that I was crazy. So, no more of that."

"But God, it's just good," Tanya tells me, "to think of myself, like you say, as *doing* something in those years—I mean not *just* breaking down. Doing *something*. The thing was that nobody ever knew that my mind was working. No one ever saw me. And I'm still actively terrified of things, you know. Like driving on the highway. Don't even talk about airplanes."

"Listen to what I just remembered," she says, in one of these sessions. She tells me that, one day, in the back seat of the car, she realized that if she listened as acutely as possible to all the separate individual vocal sounds (to, literally, the separate phonemes that her parents were uttering in their speech), it might actually come to feel like they were speaking some foreign language—a language that she literally did not understand. Maybe, she hoped, if she did this she would feel less trapped by the awful, smooth unrealness of their talk.

The magic actually kind of worked, she said—*partly*. Tanya was able to break down her parents' sentences into meaningless fragments. Momentarily she felt a little freer, a bit more able to hold onto her own mind, to think some of her own thoughts. But then she realized, only after doing it, that the other side of her imaginative game did not work so well: Namely, that she could somehow actually "hear" her parents' *real thoughts*, real feelings better, clearer, if she wasn't misled by their words.

"To the extent that they noticed anything," she says, "they seemed a bit frightened of me—my acting crazy. And so was I. I really panicked, actually feared for a moment like I'd lose my ability to speak English." Tanya worried that neither their, nor her own language, would survive the game of playfully destroying it in her effort to make the words more real.

Bromberg's overall paradigm, if I'm getting it right, makes it clearer to me what Tanya was "doing" in those painful adolescent years: She was using her capacity to shift through multiple self-states, to break down existing integrations, as it were, in herself and others. Remember how, in my office play space and the dream imagery, she was attempting to use her imagination to break down conventional integrations that were sustained by everyday dissociations. In the adolescent years it was an effort

to break down rigid, familial integrations, sustained by dissociations between overt self-presentations wrapped in words that were radically disconnected from deeper, truer meanings. Tanya was challenging integrations, familial identities, that were not anywhere near authentic enough to provide a sense of connection and meaning that could contain, could buffer, the annihilatory pull of meaninglessness from behind and beneath them. In a sense she fended off both inauthenticity and existential anxiety all the way down to a concrete, emotional questioning of her own and other's existence.

The more I heard of Tanya's struggle, the more I came to see how Tanya's efforts to dismantle, to get behind and beneath things, may well have saved her from a far more depressive, immobilized, false-self accommodation to the overt realities around her. No one in the family "survived," in Winnicott (1969) and Benjamin's (1995) sense, the destruction this entailed. There was no witness (Stern, 2009; Stolorow, 2007). No one saw her. Yet, in her own way, she did, in effect, hold onto a certain aliveness of body and soul—tormented and torn about flirtation and love, eros and attachment—into her 30s when we started our work. In the family, she never had a partner in her efforts.

But, increasingly, outside, in a crucial, if limited sense, she found recognition through her particular kind of romantic flirtation, and sexual experimentation. In this area, Tanya found a powerful, though highly transient, bodily sense of connection, recognition, and desirability. Flirtations and sex kept her temporarily afloat in face of the constant fear of going "down that terrifying hole" of personal annihilation and existential dread. Playing across the boundaries maintained the boundaries without collapsing into them.

"It's like I discovered that boys and sex could do for me," she said, "what . . . I think now something like, maybe, my mother's smell used to do when I was a very little kid. I would sometimes completely lose a sense of who I was or that I was. But guys would see the woman who's often invisible in me." Adding one day, in a verbal crescendo that I will never forget, I see her actually waving a finger at me, declaring, "man, if anyone thinks 'being seen' isn't a basic human drive, they've got another think coming!"

I realize now that when Tanya and I met, I began to engage in the thwarted process of "surviving" through a reciprocal "Brombergian," clinical process of opening myself more to myself, to Tanya—and with her. I "survived" our interaction through the complex, enacted, interactive ways

in which we've seen her use her multiplicity to read me, to dream me past my own dissociations and into pieces of my own version of her multiplicity. The meanings that emerged from our intertwined experience enabled us to create an increasingly coherent picture, a narrative of the overwhelming vividness with which Tanya perceived the precariousness of the thin veil of meaning stretched over the wrenching contradictions in her life. How, throughout, she had drawn upon capacities grounded in her own multiplicity—capacities that might be even better mobilized in our relationship—to help her find ways to create and live a life that was to feel like her own.

Dissociation and Multiplicity-Integration as an Adaptive Dialectic

From an adaptive viewpoint we envision a dialectical tension between a unified experience of self-sameness and a sense of, and access to, one's multiplicity. Multiplicity is thus a brake, a limit, on too much, accommodation; actually a break on integration. It is a functional way of organizing the self in face of the often bidden multiplicity of the world. Of dynamically regulating our human vulnerability to over-accommodation within the ambiguous, deceptive, multiplicity of the world.

—(Slavin, 1996)

As I narrated my experience of Tanya's multiplicity, her adaptive probing, and my response, I was also envisioning another, broader dimension of human relating that may lie beneath and beyond Tanya and me (Slavin & Kriegman, 1992; Slavin, 1996). I'm talking about those human capacities that may have evolved precisely to guide the process of negotiating enactments. Specifically, I'm addressing why it may be useful to pose the question of *why*—in broader evolutionary and existential terms—it may have been vital for something like the deep structure of the human psyche to have become organized and wired around a fluid tension between multiple self states and a relatively flexible integration—managed, in part, through a process of dissociation.

Here's one way to think about it. Broadly speaking, in the relational model there is an implicit assumption that multiplicity arises simply as a learned set of self-other configurations patterned on role relationships that fit with relational variations in the early environment (Mitchell, 1993). Bromberg, however, grounds his model in a more general conception of how the mind works. He envisions the mind as structured to operate

through the use of multiple self states, regulated, in part, by a normative process of dissociation. This innate, adaptive design is highly sensitive to further shaping by life's significant relational contexts. And it is particularly sensitive to trauma.

Yet, when Bromberg alludes to the general, adaptive nature of multiplicity and dissociation—as distinct from the particular maladaptive functions it may serve while entwined with individual pathology—he generally describes the process in very broad terms: Namely, in terms of the presumed flexibility and range of responsiveness that is likely to be an inherent feature of multiple self structure.

Equally, the neuroscience Bromberg often cites contains similarly general allusions to the adaptive functions with regard to the ways we are presumably hardwired, for example, to select from a repertoire of neural nets (Edelman, 1989), to use multiple codes (Bucci, 1997) to support a subsymbolic system of implicit relational knowing and hemispheric differentiation (Shore, 2011) in traumatic dissociation. These neuroscience models give us a picture, a set of sometimes compelling new metaphors, for what evolutionists would say are the “proximal mechanisms,” by which—or through which—the brain works (Dennett, 1996; Konner, 2011; Mayr, 1974, Pinker, 2002). Essentially, if they are correct, the neuro models are paradigms for *how* complex mental phenomena are encoded and represented in the human brain.

They do *not* directly address the persistent evolutionary-adaptive question of *why* the human brain may have become structured around multiplicity and dissociation, a structure that—as we clinicians well know—is unbelievably complex, prone to all manner of maladaptive dysfunctions and breakdowns, and is incredibly vulnerable.

In short, I don't think most neuroscience addresses the central question that any evolutionist would pose concerning something so basic in our psychological design, so innately present and unfolding that it shapes the whole way we construct a human identity, how we learn, regulate emotion, and, often—with great complexity, difficulty, and vulnerability—change. What were the greater selective advantages of a design that works through a highly complex system built around multiplicity and normative dissociation? Why would it be favored by natural selection? Historically, the evolutionist asks—and this is crucial—what were, and probably still are, the recurrent relational problems, the complex challenges, and uniquely human adaptive dilemmas for which *multiple selves*

in interaction with other multiple selves represented a distinct, functional advantage?

The Multiplicity of the World

Well, briefly, consider this. All human relationships in which we need to be profoundly influenced (shaped, constructed) by taking in another person or group (child-parent, patient-therapist, and many other formative environments) inevitably embroil us with the roles, loyalties, ties, and meaning frames of those others. They embroil us and connect us with the huge, ambiguous Otherness of the world. Perhaps Bromberg has spelled out how a system built around a tension between multiplicity and integration may serve as a vehicle for dismantling, probing, seeing, and knowing enough about the other (who the other is “beneath the table”), so we can evaluate who—beyond their manifest self-presentation—they are likely to be in relation to us and our needs.

Indeed, if human parents were themselves regular and utterly consistent integrators of the child’s experience, there would, indeed, be no need for multiplicity in the child—no need for the capacity to organize oneself in both multiple (essentially semi-integrable) ways. But real parents are far more complex, inconsistent, often not very self-aware (indeed, to some degree, self-deceptive and deceptive) beings (Slavin & Kriegman, 1992; Konner, 2011; Trivers, 1974, 1985).

I’m suggesting that these naturally divergent aims are a feature of the average good-enough family, and that, further, from cross-cultural, anthropological, and historical studies there is reason to believe that even in the earliest, simplest human communities it was not likely to have been very different (Hrdy, 2010; Konner, 2011). Thus, from an evolutionary-adaptive point of view, children who were not capable of using a strategy organized around an inner multiplicity might, in fact, be psychologically lost, stranded. Which is to say that were they not equipped with an innate capacity to develop and use their multiplicity to evaluate, test, and influence their parents, human children might be unable to “use,” in the Winnicottian (1969) sense, the immensely valuable human capacity for learning through complex identifications. In other words, these children might be unable to safely construct an identity in the way human children must—by massively taking in, but powerfully checking and correcting for, the inevitably somewhat biased subjectivities of others, e.g., parents, groups, cultures.

Not only is the good-enough relational world itself multiple (often deceptively and ambiguously so), but these other-centered relational contexts are typically geared to constructing and rewarding us according to their biases, their aims. This is far more than human complexity. It is the inevitability of conflict, clashing aims, overt and covert agendas, deceptiveness, and ambiguity of aims that accompany—indeed, I believe, constitute and give value to—the good enough, securely attached, loving family environment. Though hugely exacerbated and further complicated by the kind of developmental trauma that Tanya experienced, in a fundamental sense this inherent clash of aims, this element of overt and covert bias and ambiguity in communication, will be fundamentally encountered and must be interactively processed by the child in a good-enough, loving family. And, I think, for a patient like Tanya with what was, arguably, a good-enough, loving analyst.

Our world is filled with inevitable, often quite loving pressures to be—for others—often far more integrated and predictable than it may be in our uniquely individual interest to be, no matter how connected and well attached our relationships.

Of course, it is in our interest to achieve a significant degree of overall self-integration—to pursue our aims, be recognized, and trusted by others, and to fashion the sort of subjective, adaptive illusions that maximize life's meaningful, pleasurable, purposeful potential. But at the same time, we need some kind of built-in, highly context-sensitive way of regulating, ultimately limiting or countering, our self-integration. Because, given the powerful incentives and pressures of the world, the more purely integrated self would always run the excessive risk of being integrated into the forms, and on the terms of, the other. In other words, because we are, and profoundly need to be, highly constructed beings, we are thus, in our awesome constructability, precariously close to becoming overly constructed, overly socialized, false-self beings (Wrong, 1994); indeed, absurdly overly socially constructed beings who, without powerful adaptive checks and balances on their vulnerability, would probably never have evolved.

But we did evolve. Maybe precariously, in terms of our existential vulnerability and dependency on dissociation, but we did. And I'm suggesting that, given these pressures and pitfalls of adaptation to the human environment, we evolved a psychological tendency to organize ourselves into a *not totally integrated, never fully reconcilable constellation of versions of ourselves—versions that are ideally integrated and integratable—*

but only up to a point. We experience a certain degree of subjective self-continuity. But, functionally, not too much. In short, we evolved a deep structure that works in a dialectical fashion: To produce and maintain the tension between multiplicity and integration; to maintain and change it through the use of dissociation. This is a tension that, overall, maximizes our chances to negotiate with the identities of needed others who must influence our lives (Slavin & Kriegman, 1992).

As a crucial element of what I'm calling the capacity for multiplicity in tension with integration (or a functional integration that exists in tension with a genuine multiplicity), there is the tenuous, human multiplicity-integration of *body and mind*. I'm suggesting that much of what we have come to appreciate and call "implicit relational knowing" and "procedural knowing," projection (and the experience of emotional influence that some analysts like to call projective identification) may draw upon those parts of us that retained—albeit in partial, fragmented form—powerful, innate, primate ways of knowing. In terms of the brain, much of what cognitive theorists and neuroscientists such as Bucci (1997), Damasio (1999), and Shore (2011) describe as the subsymbolic system of self-and other regulation—of what feels virtually like a bodily knowing and responding to relational realities—may represent one side of the adaptive tension within the larger human dialectic of multiplicity-integration.

What I mean is this. All of our ways of knowing—including the most verbally, symbolically shaped, so-called higher cortical functions—must, of course, be fully represented in the body and the brain. Yet, certain less conscious, innately embedded, ways of reading both the human and nonhuman environment (Searles, 1975; Gallese, Eagle, & Migone, 2007) are deeply informed by bodily experiences. And, as such, represent a crucial check, a potential corrective, to the continuous ambiguity and potential for deception and self-deception that is an integral feature of human verbal communication. This deceptive potential, itself, is partly a function of our extraordinary cognitive and symbolic capacity to represent realities and abstractions that we have never, often will never, directly experience. And, as such, these abstractions from experience are prone to be enlisted as dissociative ways of maintaining illusions of personal integration, singularity, identity. A bodily based access to other ways of knowing—a "different drummer," as it were, embodied in more visceral, nonverbal, subsymbolic perceptions and communications—may ensure that these abstract, verbally dependent integrations are potentially challenged, potentially brought into negotiation with what, in effect, *the*

body knows. A multiplicity of ways of knowing—an ultimately *never full or stably integrable body-mind multiplicity*, may serve as a functional check and balance. An only transiently resolved body-mind tension may thus form a crucial aspect of what I'm proposing as the evolved dialectic of multiplicity-integration.

What does this concept of an evolved multiplicity-integration dialectic mean experientially? We just heard a particularly inventive version of it, I think, in Tanya's creation of the "language game"—the desperate effort at playfully breaking down the false integrations in parental speech, the vehicle of a deceptive family culture. The intuitive attempt at literally dismantling their symbols worked to "destroy" their dissociated meanings—freeing her, in a limited sense, from their deceptions. Yet the lack, at that point, of any parental recognition of what she was intuitively attempting to do, impeded the effort to penetrate and reintegrate around a less dissociative meaning frame—turning, instead, into a painful affirmation of what they, and thus she, took as her eccentric craziness.

Tanya's body propelled her use of adolescent sexuality as a strategy for maintaining a form of recognition and identity. She was able to keep the more massive "tsunami," as Bromberg (2011) would say, the "abyss"—of a traumatically induced annihilation anxiety—from even more completely overwhelming her psychic survival.

The viscerally driven sex and flirtation may have heightened and affirmed her capacity to experience herself as a woman and, at least, to feel the sort of elemental touching that, echoing much earlier moments of maternal holding, transiently restored a degree of personal intactness and cohesion. Eventually, it was the degree to which this form of integration, useful and indeed playful as it was, required an ongoing degree of dissociation of eros and intimacy that brought Tanya to ask for help.

The broader adaptive message may be that human children needed to evolve effective, partially innate, bodily rooted, subsymbolic, implicit ways of knowing and influencing the adult, parental world—that is, a form of knowing and influencing that potentially gets around, beneath, and through the sometimes slippery adult veil of language. "Grown-up Words," as Bromberg (2011) calls it, may be seen as the universally dissociated side of adult experience that is especially obscured from children by linguistically more fluent and practiced adults (Cosmides & Tooby, 1987; Pinker, 2002; Trivers, 1974).

Thus, the core process of building a human identity may require com-

plex adaptations that make use of multiple, innate cognitive as well as visceral, bodily adaptations—a major one being sexuality—for getting beneath and challenging the manifest (often dissociated) level of influential, formative relationships. Basically, I'm suggesting that, in evolutionary terms, Bromberg's clinically derived model of multiplicity-integration may represent a fundamental human, evolved adaptation: A built-in, innate dialectical process that, from infancy onward, anticipates and guides our adaptation to all the ambiguous, partially dissociated environments—from parents to culture—we will encounter in the course of the human life cycle.

The Stranger Living Inside Her

Then I remember who she is. Then, only then, resonating with me, does she remember. It was, she said, the thing, the only thing, she could believe.

—(Slavin, Note to myself after a session with newly pregnant Tanya)

It is now a few years after Tanya brought me into the world of her adolescent “madness.” We are both struck by her sense that, whatever is still troubling her (and there is much), she is somehow more present, alive—“here,” as she pithily called this both more expanded and cohesive state of being. Several key, prescient dreams had begun to convey an embodied, almost mysterious, inner sense of greater power and coordination in face of danger. What is more, Tanya had, begun increasingly to direct the challenging use of her multiplicity—her demanding way of pulling for the other's multiplicity—far more directly and assertively towards her boyfriend, Rob.

Tanya had used herself—her exceptionally diverse, heterogeneous, multiple self—to reciprocally awaken both me and herself and to promote a mutual recognition. Yet through those years she had always largely “spared” Rob. Spared him, protected him from the kind of expressive dismantling of identity, challenging of dissociations, that she had so fruitfully done with me. Now, after three or four years, her approach to that relationship shifted. A new, extended period of challenging him—including an openness to conflict, to fighting, emerged quite a bit more. Rob proved up to the new period of challenge, opening and revealing much more of himself than he or she had let themselves see. Their relationship became, as she felt it, substantially more alive, more present. She

felt as though, she said, “for better or worse, and it’s pretty much better, it is simply like I am *here*, I’m *here* living my own life.”

The analysis continued. And a few years later, she and Rob married and Tanya made large changes in her professional life—productive, risky changes that opened and expanded her enormous capacity for creative expression.

Tanya was now pregnant. With the pregnancy (which she and Rob planned), she completely panicked. As the increasingly fraught first trimester rolled on, Tanya became gripped by a kind of terror reminiscent to both of us of some of the scariest dreads and demonic presences of adolescence.

More frightened than I had ever seen her in my office, she repeatedly asked, “Am I breaking down again? Is this thing that’s happening to my body going to finally be my undoing?”

“What do you see?” I finally said over a session or two—having struggled, it felt, to return, to remember her deeply in face of her massive anxiety and my own mix of fear and awe at the bodily experience of pregnancy. Her presence finally pulled me to remember her way of taking things apart, breaking integrations apart to see what was real. I started to remember with whom I was sitting. I remembered the kind of almost x-ray vision that her fantasies often compelled us to join in seeing.

“What do you see, Tanya?” I asked.

“Some . . . thing, some damn alien thing, will actually take possession of my body . . . take me over and grow itself inside me . . . then burst out. . . . I’ll be essentially enslaved to it . . . for the rest of my life. What in God’s name, Dr. Slavin, is happening to me? Am I like those mothers driven to kill their kids? I’ll abort this first.”

Hit by the sudden force of this, pulled in by the extent and quality of her fear, pushed back by my own need to remove myself from the strangeness of it to me as a man, I try to buy a little time by asking her more about what she’s feeling. I remember looking at her hard, trying to do what I sometimes do in such moments, but had become less necessary with her—to simply breathe her in: Tanya who could not enter the integrations that others held out for her. Tanya, who saw what she saw from every imaginable, often terrifying angle. Saw into her body, even if what she saw felt like it was driving her insane.

I take hold of the version of myself who at so many moments was awakened by her. The self who, I think Bromberg would say, had become dissociated from the parts of her that had opened me to myself,

including many of my own fears, and, as I said, genuine awe at the mystery and power of a woman's body. Slowly, I restart to see what I am seeing, as it were, through her eyes, from and through *her*.

"Tanya."

"Yes?"

"Tanya, you're seeing something, I think, that's actually going on. *Seeing* in your own, raw, direct way the incredible things that are happening in you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I mean you're seeing, really seeing that there is, as you would say, a stranger inside you, the same stranger that you've taught me exists in every intimate loving relationship. In Rob. With me, for years. Maybe still. Seeing what a man thinks, a woman, a cat, doorknob—now what a fetus thinks."

"You mean. . ." she says.

"I mean like in adolescence when your mind was working like crazy to break down what was going on so you might grasp what you were seeing, intuiting, so vividly about yourself and the world. Seeing, now, the incredible relationship between you and the fetus that is taking shape inside you."

"Jesus. Jesus," she says, something like "I know this is the ultimate creative act, isn't it? Creating life with my body, a child in me."

"But," I say, "I think you know in that scary vision, you know that you're not, in fact, doing this alone with your body. Your fantasy captures the reality that your fetus does, indeed, have its own agency, its own agenda. That, as I see it, it will be signaling back and forth to you across the placenta, negotiating, yes, negotiating with you, your body, lots of the exchanges between you and it over the next seven months."

"I can't believe you're telling me I'm right about the alien inside me."

A long silence. I say nothing. We stare at each other.

Finally, she says, "It's the only damn thing you could tell me that I'd believe."

Tanya soon calmed down. "I think I'm worried," she goes on to say, "about myself as a mother. I'd rather die than be as selfish and preoccupied as my mother. But it's hard to envision an alternative that doesn't have me giving *everything*. With no life left for me. I know that's nuts. But there's a lot to work out."

"Yeah," I say, "there is."

Tanya could not let herself live with some idealized view of blissful,

mother-child harmony. Maybe, in her mind-bending multiplicity, she knew what Winnicott (1947/1958) put in his dramatically exaggerated way: “The mother hates her infant from the word go” (p. 201). Actually, I believe so-called hate. Bigger than hate, per se. Really, the struggle over her and the child’s otherness. The struggle, given her extraordinary multiplicity, to authentically integrate a sense of her separate self-interest in a loving, reciprocal relationship.

Tanya went on visibly to flourish and create her own fantasy-filled “bubble,” as she says, of potential space in her pregnancy. And then, for years, to thrive on the magical, “apart from the world,” as she calls it, deep joyful sense of connection to her child in the early years of motherhood.

We still meet every month or so to share thoughts about her life. Maybe we always will. A while ago, in her inimitable fashion, Tanya teasingly reminded me,

Don't think, Dr. Slavin, that you absolutely cured me or anything. O.K., I've got an awful lot better feeling about myself. And a hellova better life I'm creating. Maybe all that old stuff. . . . I don't know, maybe I'm saving it up, somewhere, as they say, for future reference. Who knows, maybe I'll need some of that flirtation magic, or whatever it was, again . . . some day.

What Trauma Knows, the Analyst's Multiplicity and Analytic Multiplicity

Truth is not found in a dream, but in many dreams.

—Pasolini, *The Blossom of a Thousand and One Nights* (Irwin, 1994, p. 292)

Tanya's vision, due in no small part to her capacity for multiplicity, engaged me deeply and continues to do so. She challenged my dissociations, awakened—through playful probing, dreaming, existential terrors—a greater multiplicity in me, as well as a larger capacity for imagination and empathy. I've tried to tell our story as Bromberg might tell it: The story of how we enacted a movement into Tanya's world, entailing several moments that shook my working integrations and dissociations in the relational process, getting me further into my own mind and hers. In these last pages, I'd like briefly to offer some thoughts that I hope may push us further into what I see as the existential, as well as clini-

cal, implications of Bromberg's (2012, 2013) extraordinary vision of the "miraculous" workings of multiplicity and dissociation in the clinical encounter.

What Trauma Knows

In my experience, patients like Tanya, who have needed to grapple with the challenges of trying to probe for the elusive grains of trustworthiness in a traumatic, unstable environment, often become extremely attuned, precisely, to the most challenging universal dimensions of human experience—challenges that, in some fashion, we all suffer and share. What I mean is that, often, patients who have maintained a high degree of multiplicity—those for whom any current integration or identity is potentially experienced with dread—have not simply suffered the distorting and dysregulating effects of adapting to a dissociated, highly self-deceptive family. They have also experienced—in their fashion, up close, directly—the undisguised underside, the existentially precarious and conflictual context of *all attachments*. They have seen and known the existential void, the precarious and illusory dimension of all meaning, the potential loss of self that, arguably, is *always* a background feature in human experience (Hoffman, 1998; Stolorow, 2007; Slavin, 2011; Slavin & Klein, in press).

Tanya knew, and I came to see far more clearly through her eyes, these facts of life. She saw them often in a raw, direct, unmediated way. She saw the dangers that originate in the existential realities of transience, loss, deception, and otherness—the inevitable stranger in the intimate other. Yes, she often saw these realities in only a partially formulated, less than coherent form, a form that needed me to both "survive" her vision with her and empathically get its message, while simultaneously opening reciprocally to the resonances of her experience in myself.

Part of this kind of empathy entails understanding that the dangers she saw with vivid clarity were often those that most of us are often able to keep adaptively dissociated—self-protectively at bay. In Tanya's form of insecure attachment (Beebe & Lachmann, in press), the trauma she experienced has, in its way, laid these truths bare (Eigen, 2011). Her father's disappearance, combined with her mother's highly self-deceptive approach to life, represented the kind of traumatic exposure that often will not substantially abate until the messages it carries are sufficiently heard. The messages about *both* one's unique, painfully aberrant individual ex-

perience *and* the larger, potentially redeeming message about the universal truths and haunting dangers that an insecure childhood attachment may, in fact, uniquely equip one to see.

The Analyst's Multiplicity: Existential Dimensions

These are, in one immediately relevant sense, the complex resonances of both the patient's self and their parents' selves *in the analyst*—particularly the less immediately accessible aspect of *multiplicity* in the analyst's identity. For Bromberg, what allows the traumatic past to speak is the patient's inviting and opening up our own struggles around our shared dissociations, shame, and elements of personal trauma. As I read him, I think he clearly wants to extend this sense of shared experience to the more universal, existential realm, the realm of human realities that, as I've just said, Tanya and, indeed, most traumatized patients, have known in a raw, direct way. Known in a special sense, more than our normal, buffered worldview will readily let us know. Known, up close: our human terror around inevitable loss, loss of meaning, and mortality as well as our elemental moral conflicts over self-love versus our love for the other—others.

Will our patients come to know us, to experience us viscerally, not simply in contrast to their parents' various forms of damaging badness, but, in addition, as struggling with our own versions of the universal existential dilemmas with which they (as well as their parents) struggle? Will they come to know us, despite what may have been years of their less than effective probing of their parents to engage in precisely this same way?

Yes, much of what, defensively, we're often tempted to see and call "manipulative," such as requesting changes in the therapeutic frame, pulling for personal information, so-called testing the analyst's limits in other ways is, indeed, a search in precisely all the hardest places for a more believable attachment. In other words, a safe, but not too safe, stranger, as Bromberg and Tanya would say. Someone who will allow our especially challenging, probing patients to evoke our own deeper annihilation fears, conflicts, and self-deceptions, as these aspects of our multiplicity also pervade our relationships with them. Failing this, we intensify what is the worst aspect of their trauma: The way it separates them continuously from the world, because very few, if any of us, can bear the truths of what they've seen.

The Potential Advantages of Analytic Multiplicity

I believe that Bromberg and I share a deep conviction that theory, all theory at some point, seriously tends to remove the analyst from some of the most vital elements of personal, intuitive engagement with ourselves and our patients. Yet, no matter how individual and creative we hope to be, like artists, we operate within powerful, cultural, and aesthetic traditions—schools of painting, composing, narrating, interpreting if you will. All of us inevitably operate within one or another set of dominant metaphors: one or another set or combination of background assumptions about human development, motivation, or the process of change, held lightly or tightly, in or out of awareness, guides our work.

Sometimes, though, multiple stories run almost in parallel. That is, the stories run in a way that intersect, contradict, enhance, compete, and complement the other. Such, I think, is the multiplicity of stories *inside me* about Tanya. Meaning, although the story I've told about Tanya and me has been, largely a Brombergian story—a story of the vital importance of human multiplicity in negotiating a creative process of emergence from dissociation—there has also been another story. Weaving through, sometimes quietly lurking in the shadows or peeking out, is a story focused almost entirely on how thwarted growth and healing are activated and unfold in the context of a certain kind of analyst's steadfast focus on empathic connectedness, selfobject transferences, and the understanding of inevitable ruptures.

Informed by certain classic self-psychological (Kohut, 1977; Ornstein & Ornstein, 1985; Tolpin, 2007) and related intersubjective systems (Stolorow & Atwood, 1987) perspectives, one could attempt to tell Tanya's story with virtually no reference to enactment, dissociation, or multiplicity. Not simply with no reference to these concepts—as though they were simply different words applied to some inchoate, background reality—but no reference even to a view of life in which the highly adaptive role of a multiplicity of selves comprises a central plotline and the central aesthetic coherence of the story. No reference to a story in which dissociatively managed conflict between multiple subjectivities engages in the negotiation of the otherness of the participants. And, yet, I believe that the alternative, call it *single-minded* (for patient and analyst) self-psychological—intersubjective story still would be, in the world of analytic tales, arguably, at least in part, another element of a larger relational story.

But, my point is not to tell that alternate story. Or to argue for its sufficiency as an alternative tale—which I do not believe it has. Rather, I want to close these reflections on Tanya’s life and our relationship through the lens of Bromberg’s contribution by briefly invoking that alternative tale, that alternative dimension of a relational paradigm, to make what I think is, ultimately, a bit of an ironic, Brombergian, point about theoretical multiplicity, a suggestion about how Bromberg’s model can, perhaps, usefully build into itself, complement itself, with a bit more theoretical multiplicity.

Which is to say that I have the impression that while Bromberg’s work (see 1989, 2011, 2013) increasingly includes references to self-psychological-intersubjective thinking many relational analysts for whom his work is central to their basic definition of a relational perspective do not show much if any awareness of that whole alternative narrative (Grand, 2013). For many analysts who now call themselves relational, an emphasis on the necessity of enactment, the analyst’s subjective experience, and the phenomena of dissociation tends to exclude a deeply grasped understanding of the functions of empathy, the selfobject (non-repetitive) dimension of transference and their relationship to psychic growth and healing.

Which, as I said, is not to promote that alternative story, but rather to suggest that the relative absence of a deeper appreciation of the role and meaning of empathy may actually weaken a fuller appreciation of what Bromberg’s model has to offer. And, more relevant here, vice versa: How Bromberg’s perspective can substantially enhance and enlarge our whole understanding of the larger, complex relational context of empathy.

In a few words, what I’m talking about is an intersubjective process that I think some of us (Slavin & Ipp, 2011, 2013) see as working, simultaneously, in two directions. First, when, in pursuit of what I’m calling a more single-minded empathic immersion in which we endeavor to “surrender” deeply to what we experience as the patient’s subjectivity, something very surprising happens: We become aware of multiple dimensions of our own subjectivity that were previously obscured, perhaps dissociated. Strangely, although that alternate, single-minded, self-psychological paradigm presumably has no clear conceptual place for it—I think we become aware of the multiplicity in our own subjective world, that is, the often enough dissociated multiplicity of our analytic selves.

I have few formal data or citable references for this broader *we*. But I’m convinced that this dedicated, sustained form of surrender to what we

experience as the subjective organizing principles of the other often enables us to become far more aware of our own complex, often contradictory, multiple, inner states and psychological process. In pursuing an empathic ideal of looking for the dominant subjective state of the other, we can become aware, potentially, of dissociated versions of our own multiple selves—an awareness that may, in turn, become a crucial aspect of illuminating dimensions of enactment and of freeing imagination.

I stress that this is a *potential* awareness of one's own dissociated state because, lacking a model that conceives of the psyche in this multiple, dissociated way, I think that some self-psychologists may have difficulty framing and making use of this raw, unintended, yet potentially rich, dimension of their own experience. If, on the other hand, this unintended consequence of a disciplined, sustained empathy can be recognized as illuminating the analyst's own dissociated multiplicity, I think it speaks for the incredible value of incorporating a deeper grasp of the self-psychological-intersubjective perspective into the larger, more complex, interactive Brombergian model.

For me, the idea that empathy is *achieved* in this more complex, relational context enlarges my understanding of what is, indeed, vital in the idea of empathic immersion. It helps save the practice of empathy from devolving into a flatter, analytic technique. I am struck by the unexpectedness and nonlinearity in the notion of looking *out there single-mindedly* into the subjectivity of other and ending up experiencing who one is *in here* as vastly more multiple. This ironic, paradoxical quality fits both the spirit of my work with Tanya and, I believe, of Bromberg's whole aesthetic and clinical sensibility.

Ultimately Tanya—seen, known, illuminated in the key of Bromberg—is a never-ending story. A story that reminds me never-endingly that one of the most valuable things that any theory can give us is its openness to other theories. Or, better, its conviction both in its own truths, and—in adaptive tension with this conviction—its *ongoing* openness to other theories (S. Novack, personal communication). In short, the theory's own ways of embodying, being, living out the dialectic of multiplicity-integration that animates our human adaptation to an impossibly ambiguous, inherently (often vitally) dissociated world. A dialectic that, like Tanya's flirtations, crosses boundaries, skirting, if possible, the psychic deadness of becoming a standardized practice, a technique.

In Tanya's words, once more, recently by email:

I remember, Dr. S., when I first came to see you, all those years ago, I said that I just wanted to know who I'd have been had "all that"—the family story, craziness—not happened. And although I know that's impossible, in many ways, I now feel like I know it as well as I ever would have, or ever will be, able to know it. More stories now. And, good or bad, that's worth the world to me—to no longer be written and constantly rewritten through THE same story.

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