

STRAHL: LANGUAGE AND WRITING

continued from page 3, column 1

writer enlarges the point of view, describes the difference between what a person does and what the person imagines or believes he or she does. The writer has the character speak. Characters speak to each other, to themselves. They speak in the present and in the past. They speak about each other. The author comments on what the people say. The writer varies points of view. Sometimes the author speaks through a narrator; sometimes through first person; sometimes third. Artistic variation abounds in richness of meaning.

By comparison, Action Language is fallow. It need not be. We need to employ integrative writing and speaking to use Action Language well. **Schafer** can advance what he has started by heeding and invoking the creative writing model. All of us can think with him about that.

Regarding further linguistic issues, are we to do away with the linking, the intransitive and the passive verbs? Won't we merely be hiding them in active locutions much as a 'ghost in the machine'? Won't there also be ghosts hiding in the adverbs? Who decides, "He acts joyfully"? Does he act that way, "because he is joyful" (linking), or, "because joy has come to him" (passive), or, "because he scintillates," (intransitive)? In, "He acts joyfully," we're not told. Or do we speak of him that way, "because he looks joyful." (to us)?

About adverbs: is what he does 'unconsciously' something he does in an id way, an ego-defensive way or in a harsh, self-critical super-ego way? Is 'unconsciously' a compromise of all the ways, or is it that he doesn't know consciously? We must keep the useful metapsychological distinctions. And we must clarify the grammar (**Bartsch** 1976) of verbs and adverbials, the semantics and the syntax to better use **Schafer's** Action Language. We would hope to remember elegance too.

There are further language issues. One employs words in Action Language in new ways. We are called upon to strip away some denotation and connotation. Think of the new lexicon: action with and without movement; responsibility with no judgement or value. The old 'action' meant to function, officiate, serve, operate, work, play, perform, imitate. The new 'action' means what a person does. The old responsibility meant accountability, answerability, liability; duty, trustworthiness, dependability. It connoted autonomy and guilt. The new 'responsibility' means that one does what one does. **Schafer** has made a strong language shift. To deal with the changes of connotation and denotation, we will have to qualify action words much as we need to qualify the force and mechanics metaphors.

To write about psychoanalysis, one needs to write and think clearly, descriptively, dramatically, poetically and skillfully. We need to use art, craft and theory.

I suggest that **Roy Schafer** add another requirement for the use of his New Language work, Good Writing. If he does, he must allow entry to the pictographic elements that are missing in his *New Language*. Doing that would help him with speaking about issues of perceiving, imagining, fantasizing, dreaming. He would be able to speak more graphically about how one sees oneself and others.

* * *

Schafer advises us to use Action Language for describing psychological events. He would do well to also employ it in

continued on page 5, column 1

GOLDBERG: SCHAFFER'S LANGUAGE

continued from page 3, column 2

physical bodily changes and examined as it is expressive of symbolic meanings. Emotion is defined as what is thought of or imagined to be an emotional situation. **Schafer** wishes also to distinguish the emotional life of the infant from that of the adult, and believes that it is erroneous to attempt to equate the two in any respect. This has specific reference to cognitive functions present in the adult and only potential in the infant. As an extension of this, **Schafer** understands the use of bodily metaphors, such as "heartache", "deep inside" or "pain in the neck" to be remnants of infantile, concretistic thinking. While these formulations are in accord with **Schafer's** view of the adult person as creator through the use of personal symbols of his/her actions, I am not convinced that the connection of the body with the emotions is either infantile or as tenuous as he would have it. His conceptualizations in this regard are so opposed to the widely observed and reported view of a fundamental connection of emotions and physiology as to place the need for more substantial evidence on his side.

Schafer's work is, as I hope I have communicated, exciting in itself and also has heuristic merit. It awakens a relativistic point of view and this is invigorating. In the (probably) eternal conflict between essence (body) and meaning, **Schafer** is clearly on the side of meaning. My own bent is to accept the irreconcilable opposites.

MEMO ON SCHAFFER'S A NEW LANGUAGE FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS

By GERALD J. GARGIULO

In this short communication I want to focus primarily on only one chapter of **Roy Schafer's** work, namely chapter three entitled: "The Psychoanalytic Vision of Reality." Originally published in 1970 in I.J.P., **Schafer** discusses the various presuppositions operative in psychoanalysis and subsumed under his headings of the "comic vision", the "romantic vision", the "tragic vision" and finally the "ironic vision". The value of these categories, it seems to me, is in their capacity to transcend the particularities of an individual analyst's technique by articulating a philosophical cadre which makes our work more comprehensible both to us and to our patients.

What **Schafer** tells us, first of all, is that, "psychoanalysis is a special form of knowing about human existence and history." It is primarily, I believe, an odyssey into the mind which has, as one of its consequences, therapeutic effects. "Cure," to whatever extent that word has meaning, is a statement about a person's reinterpretation of his life situation, a re-evaluation of lost memories; a capacity for a broader definition of oneself. Within that definition one abandons the childhood absolutes of right and wrong — of good and evil. Rather than a moralistic approach, a psychological one is substituted and, as **Schafer** says, "antagonists are found to be rigid and ridiculous rather than evil and truly dangerous." And, therefore, the world is open to change and one does not have to hope for a heaven to achieve it. The comic vision, **Schafer** notes, is built on the hope that there is an "unqualified hopefulness regarding personal situations in the world."

A new beginning, — the quest for salvation in religious

continued on page 5, column 2

STRAHL: LANGUAGE AND WRITING

continued from page 4, column 1

speaking *about* Action Language. Otherwise, he acts inconsistently according to the value he tries to prove. I would suggest that in speaking *about* using a clarifying locution, one should use that locution rather than the less clear ways of speaking. Perhaps **Schafer** would sound stilted. But he could qualify his stylistic departures if he wished.

Finally, **Schafer's** view of ideas such as determinism and repetition compulsion conflict with **Freud's**, **Bohr's** requirement of complementarity of scientific view is not met here. The failure illuminates the philosophical and conceptual conflict. **Schafer** changes the psychoanalysis he comes to when he offers his version of such concepts (the biological and social too.) He creates a new psychoanalysis. That is no surprise. There have been many versions. Perhaps, as many as there have been analysts. Psychoanalysis is not any one thing we agree upon. In **Schafer's** Action Language, it is a broad general way in which we work, i.e. psychoanalytically. (He might note this in speaking of the "psychoanalytic vision.")

Perhaps better psychoanalytic writing would help articulate the differences. Fogging perpetuates each of us to hold our own private idea of psychoanalysis. It even keeps us from seeing that our idea may differ from the way in which we practice psychoanalysis.

* * *

Action Language deserves an opportunity to become our New Language, but we will have to work on speaking and writing with it and thinking about it with more concern. Lending our creative thought, perhaps we can extend the work of **Dr. Schafer** as he has extended the work of others, skillfully, courageously, and hopefully. **Schafer** has brought new light as well as a new language to analysis, figuratively, of course. Perhaps we can give that light a sharp focus, in a manner of speaking.

PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND A NEW LANGUAGE

By ROBERT FRIEDMAN

Writing both as a philosopher and student of psychoanalysis, I would like to offer several critical observations in the spirit of **Dr. Schafer's** own thinking — to stimulate further theoretical and methodological clarification.

A New Language for Psychoanalysis, proposes to retain the empirical substance of Freudian depth psychology while simultaneously rejecting its conceptual metapsychology. **Dr. Schafer** challenges psychoanalysis to eliminate inappropriate causal explanations as well as philosophical mentalism. Instead, **Dr. Schafer** offers a comprehensive psychoanalytic language which describes the individual person as the agent of meaningful actions. The structural and topographic concepts of metapsychology are redefined in behavioral terms, while causal explanation is replaced by the interpretation of meaning and reasons. **Dr. Schafer** considers his psychoanalytic theory to be essentially pragmatic, phenomenological, and humanist.

My first criticism of, *A New Language for Psychoanalysis*, concerns its methodology. Although I share **Dr. Schafer's** antipathy to pseudoexplanatory jargon, I do not agree that his

continued on page 6, column 1

GARGIULO: MEMO ON SCHAFER

continued from page 4, column 2

terms — a belief in the resolution of conflict, flows from the comic vision and blends into the romantic vision. This belief is manifested, as **Schafer** reminds us, in "the analysand's quest for purification, absolution and redemption through analysis . . ." Yet, of course, the only salvation is to recognize that there is none and, more importantly, need not be any. Furthermore, an understanding of and a capacity to experience the tragic is enough, in a paradoxical way, to bring a type of happiness which is sustainable in the face of the vicissitudes of the id and the proddings of the superego — as well as the ordinary unhappiness of everyday life.

From here **Schafer** gives a prolonged discussion of the tragic vision which, I believe, is enormously insightful. I hope that a few excerpts from this section will convey the quality of his thought: ". . . one knows adaptation to be a costly and endless struggle with uncertain results. One has no illusions about gaining complete and stable insight into and mastery over the mysterious unconscious. The well-analysed person no longer has to deny or merely pay lip-service to the fact that his or her existence has been shaped and in every respect continues to be shaped by specific factors of this sort." And, further, he notes that "the analyst's truly tragic vision of the analysand . . . is not a call to personal intervention or inaction, but a stimulus to empathy, reflection and inquiry . . . all in the face of the awesome power, complexity and unpredictability inherent in human affairs." **Schafer** indicated that such a tragic perspective is necessary to confer poise on the analyst in the face of all that the analysand brings. Poise obviously is not indifference, nor is it the schizoid neutrality which sometimes masquerades as clinical insightfulness. In analysis, as **Winnicott** has taught us, we are in the land of primal play, and in the interplay of the me and the not-me analysis brings an enormous advantage to the patient so that play and culture become possible — but one is always handicapped by one's past. In this sense, analysis makes it possible for a person not only to play but to experience, when necessary, human suffering. Within this framework the necessity for art, philosophy, and the world of culture become understandable. They bind together and symbolize the human community in a way which transcends the particularities of each person's history.

The comic and romantic visions make us hopeful; the tragic makes us sober, and sober enthusiasm is one of the best bulwarks against depression.

Finally, **Schafer** ends his paper by a short discussion of the ironic vision which he characterizes as a, "readiness to seek out internal contradictions, ambiguities and paradoxes. In this respect it overlaps the tragic vision." Obviously all these different perspectives are operative in any comprehensive analysis. "The ironic and the tragic are especially important in the investigative aspects of psychoanalysis, while the comic and romantic have more to do with its healing and emancipating aspects." **Schafer** struggles well in this chapter with the question of meaning for the human situation. In this sense, psychoanalysis is akin to the Greek philosophers; for in searching after wisdom — in philosophizing — they were trying to find a way for man to know himself.

In **Schafer's** understanding of the term, there are probably more visions of reality than the four he enumerates. Their value

continued on page 6, column 2

FRIEDMAN: PHILOSOPHY, ANALYSIS . . .

continued from page 5, column 1

arguments against mechanistic, organismic, and dualistic theories demolish metapsychology in general. On the contrary, contemporary philosophers agree that natural science requires an abstract metatheory which cannot be operationally defined in terms of observable phenomena.

The metatheory provides a unified deduction of empirical laws, and its analogical meaning enables the heuristic generating of new scientific findings. It is this indispensable scientific function that the classical metapsychological concepts play in psychoanalysis (e.g. see **Hartmann's** 1958 **Sidney Hook** Lecture.)

Although these concepts should not refer to a "ghostly" internal world, they also cannot be reduced to a purely behavioral language. The elimination of internal mental processes is not tantamount to the elimination of abstract, higher-order metapsychological concepts as **Schafer** seems to imply.

This basic deficiency of **Schafer's** action language is most apparent in the theory of diagnosis which always distinguishes underlying pathology from manifest symptoms, and in the theory of personality development where concepts of psychic structure provide the necessary explanatory link to the events of early childhood.

A similar criticism concerns **Dr. Schafer's** psychoanalytic theory of the person as the agent of actions. **Schafer** defines the agent as the grammatical subject of a verb in the active voice — including bodily action, private action, and especially inhibitions of action. All concepts referring to mental states are reformulated in "dispositional" statements, while selfhood is translated into terms of behavior and cognitive representations.

Despite the ingenuity of **Dr. Schafer's** psychoanalytic revision, it appears to me philosophically unclarified and reductionistic. Contrary to both the Anglo-American and phenomenological philosophers from whom **Schafer** often borrows, his own psychoanalytic action language is not descriptive but dogmatically prescriptive. The reduction of human phenomena to individual actions denies any real ontological status to the constant structures of behavior. It also denies any real disunity in the self, since conflicting actions still have an identical subject. Finally, **Schafer's** emphasis on the freedom of human action departs from traditional psychoanalysis more than he would admit toward the radical existentialism of **Sartre**. For **Schafer** the "I can't" always reduces to the "I don't." His theory therefore allows no causal influence of past history on the present choice of behavior.

My final criticism of **Dr. Schafer's** psychoanalytic programme concerns the relationship between theory and practice. **Schafer's** action language, it seems to me, is intimately connected with the traditional psychoanalytic technique of interpretation — it adequately explains psychoanalytic interpretation as the process of expanding self-awareness and conscious responsibility for action.

Unfortunately, the elimination of metapsychology leaves **Schafer** no theoretical justification for the non-interpretive techniques of modern ego psychology. By deliberately vitiating his conceptual system, he is unable to describe or to explain the unconscious and indirect methods in which personality changes are achieved through other corrective, nurturing, and restitutive curative processes.

GARGIULO: MEMO ON SCHAFER

continued from page 5, column 2

lies not so much in what they say about the patient, but rather, I believe, in how they can help the analyst understand the unique voyage that the psychoanalytic enterprise is taking him on.

Copyright © 1977

A NEW LANGUAGE FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS AN IMPRESSION

By GEORGE FRANK

My reaction can be summarized by the following association: this book could have had (one, or all of) three subtitles; viz., a) *The Evolution of a Theorist*, b) *Theoretical Regression in Service of a Theory*, and/or c) *Psychoanalytic Behaviorism: Back to Basics*.

As regards the first subtitle: this work of **Schafer's** takes its place in the long line of his thinking and writing that began with his early work with **Gardner Murphy** (on the subjective nature of perception), then, later, with **David Rapaport** (on the application of an ego psychological approach to the understanding of test data), then to his own contribution in applying psychoanalytic theory to the understanding of psychological tests, and finally, to his own contributions to psychoanalytic theory itself [of which the current book is an expansion of earlier work]. The line of his endeavors moves in an ever increasing unique and creative contribution to psychoanalysis.

As regards the second subtitle: as illuminated by **George Klein**, it seems clear that there are two sets of explanatory principles in **Freud's** theory, viz., his clinical concepts [having to do with the vicissitudes of living (and loving), such as: transference and resistance] and his metapsychology. The illuminating genius of **Freud** is never so bright as with regard to his clinical concepts, insights which have yet to be surpassed. The criticism of **Freud's** theory has mainly revolved around his metapsychology. Epistemologically, **Freud's** thinking is the most vulnerable here, since much of the metapsychological concepts involve notions born out of the 19th Century science of which **Freud** was so much a product. Thus, we must remember that **Freud's** first (scientific) love was biology, and 19th Century biology was dominated by: a) Darwinian thinking (with the attempts to establish a continuity between man and animal, seeing both striving to survive, both dominated by sexual and aggressive instincts in service of that survival, and both dominated by the preemptoriness of needs), b) Vitalism, and c) plagued with the need (as all sciences of that era seemed to have been) to fit the data of biology into the conceptual framework of physics (thereby focusing on the vicissitudes of energy, in his instance, what he referred to as psychic energy). To correct the apparent error in **Freud's** thinking that eventuates from that scientific framework, the critics have recommended dropping **Freud's** metapsychology and, in particular, the economic principle, and returning to the basic data of psychoanalysis: the nature of human experience, in order to develop new and hopefully better explanatory principles. **Schafer** is very much in this mainstream in psychoanalysis.

As regards the third subtitle: I do not mean to imply that, as with other **Yaleys** of another time [i.e., **Miller** and **Dollard**] who also tried to construct a new language for psychoanalysis,

continued on page 7, column 1