



Radical Relational Psychiatry: Toward a Democracy of Mind and People

Karen Minikin

To cite this article: Karen Minikin (2018): Radical Relational Psychiatry: Toward a Democracy of Mind and People, Transactional Analysis Journal, DOI: [10.1080/03621537.2018.1429287](https://doi.org/10.1080/03621537.2018.1429287)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03621537.2018.1429287>



Published online: 15 Feb 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



ARTICLE



Radical Relational Psychiatry: Toward a Democracy of Mind and People

Karen Minikin

ABSTRACT

The radical psychiatry movement of the 1960s and 1970s challenged the medical model of psychotherapy, positioning alienation as the root cause of all mental and social distress. Both cause and solution were seen as residing in social relationships. Currently, we are seeing a rise in political tyranny in many quarters of the globe. This has inspired political engagement because of polarizing positions. In society this encourages passion for values as well as hatred and intolerance of otherness. The author proposes that intolerance feeds regressive defenses such as projective mechanisms and splitting, and she explores these in relation to alienation. In the search for a contemporary perspective, she offers the pursuit of social, political, and psychological pluralism within a radical relational psychiatry.

KEYWORDS

Radical psychiatry; otherness; hatred; alienation; oppression; mystification; subjugation; trauma; dissociation; pluralism

For the role of the state is not only to preserve society: it is also to safeguard the individual against the tyranny of society. (Hussain, 1966, p. 32).

Alienation Then and Now

In the 1960s and 1970s, Claude Steiner, Hogie Wyckoff, and their colleagues developed their thinking about alienation (Steiner et al., 1975) as the root cause of social and psychological distress. Through this, they challenged alienating systems and processes in mental health that were associated with the ideology of capitalism and the objectifying of psychiatric patients. These ideas, known as *radical psychiatry*, had as their backdrop what was happening socially and politically in and with the United States around that time. There had been the civil rights movement during the early 1960s and continuing into the 1970s, the war in Vietnam, and the general political climate of the Cold War accompanied by greater political and social consciousness in the West about the oppressive use of power. This inspired many social and psychological thinkers to write about the influence of political processes and culture on people (e.g., Greer, 1970; Laing, 1971). Understanding the significance of social, political, and psychological oppression brought exciting new paradigms to the fore that encouraged fighting talk, that is, a narrative that challenged the establishment. The promise of social change

CONTACT Karen Minikin ✉ karen.minikin@icloud.com 📍 Stable Barn, New Road, Hellingly, East Sussex, BN27 4EW, United Kingdom

© 2018 International Transactional Analysis Association

and liberty gave birth to validating personal and social identities that have become part of an inclusive democratic society.

However, given what is happening socially, politically, and psychologically today, it seems that ideas from radical psychiatry are far from outmoded. At the time of writing this, there has been a revival of support for nationalism across Europe and in the United States alongside the ongoing political and social traumas in the world and the humanitarian crises associated with refugees and immigration. Hence, the ideology of radical psychiatry, with its focus on recovery from alienation, continues to have great relevance. In one sense, we are more than one generation on from the original ideas, yet here we are again, facing fights that are similar to those of our predecessors.

In transactional analysis we have been aware of oppression since the birth of Berne's original ideas. Berne was a man with his own personal and professional experiences of oppression, and these informed the philosophy underlying his ideas. Over the years, many TA practitioners have addressed power dynamics in politics, culture, and interpersonal dynamics (see Jacobs, 1987, 1990; James, 1983; Tudor & Hargaden, 2002). Hence, an awareness of the use and misuse of power is part of our TA culture and frame of reference. I am interested in how we hold this inheritance alongside contemporary developments in the fields of psychology, sociology, and political science. These include writings from feminist academics and other practitioners who have known and lived with various forms of oppression. Therefore, I am asking how the meaning and recovery of alienation in our contemporary world can be positioned. To explore this, I revisit radical psychiatry to honor our past while building on it with ideas that complement and add to the original. Initially, I present the philosophy of alienation, then I explore experiences of psychic and cultural death, and I finish by describing my approach to working with these dynamics.

The Premise of Alienation

Extended individual psychotherapy is an elitist, outmoded, as well as non-productive, form of psychiatric help. It concentrates the talents of a few on a few. It silently colludes with the notion that people's difficulties have their sources within them while implying that everything is well with the world. ... *People's troubles have their source not within them but in their alienated relationships, in their exploitation, in polluted environments, in war, and in the profit motive.* (Steiner, 1969/1975, pp. 3–4)

The concept of *alienation* has its roots in Marx's (1867/1967) philosophy. The premise is that capitalist economies promote a sense of estrangement (*entfremdung*) among people. In other words, the ideology behind capitalist economic structures cuts people off from their sense of humanity; they become disconnected from the meaning of their productivity and from engaging in intimate social relationships. Marx indicated that people become objectified by being seen as resources, subjugated (Shaw, 2014) to the "higher" goals of the economic establishment.

The idea that alienation is the root cause of all social and mental distress is simple yet potent. As a philosophy, it has the potential to reach across disciplines in the humanities. Within transactional analysis, the radical psychiatry movement is associated with the pioneers Claude Steiner, Hogie Wyckoff, and their colleagues and friends. There was a specific challenge to the medical model of psychiatry, which treated

people as if their problems resided entirely in the individual chemistry of their minds rather than in the relational, social, economic, and political dynamics of their lives. The radical psychiatry movement positioned the work of fostering mental health as an art rather than a science. To this end, there was a call to oppose individual psychotherapy in favor of supportive group work while taking social as well as political action. These ideas hold validity today, although in practice, most of us in the psychotherapy field earn our living by working with individuals. So, in this respect, radical psychiatry in its traditional form challenges many of us in the psychotherapy field even now.

I think the reasons that individual-based psychotherapy still dominates the mental health field are complex. In part, there are social and cultural constraints for those of us working in the West. Also, there have been significant changes in individual psychotherapy. At the time the original radical manifesto was written, a one-person psychology (Stark, 1999) was prevalent. This facilitated a “power over” dynamic that Berne and his colleagues challenged with ideas of mutuality and joint responsibility for healing. The philosophy of mutuality continues and has been added to by cocreative (Tudor & Summers, 2014) and relational practitioners. In such methods, both parties have influence, vulnerability, and responsibility. Furthermore, perspectives from radical feminists (Willis, 1984/1992), which argue that the personal is political, are additional ways of addressing the same challenge, that is, how to work from an anti-oppressive frame of reference.

Nevertheless, remaining true to a much earlier tradition, the bias in psychotherapy continues to emphasize the influence of parenting, particularly by mothers. I think early infant care is of fundamental significance in influencing psychic functioning. However, context is also crucial in terms of care and here-and-now relationships. Context includes the family environment as well as the wider natural, social, economic, and/or political environments. Our outside influences our internal psychic processes, and our internal processes shape our perception of the outside. External and internal psychic landscapes are, in my view, relationally bound. This is not new to us in transactional analysis given that Berne (1961) aligned the Parent and Child ego states as interactive, and many subsequent authors have expanded on this idea (Chinnock & Minikin, 2015; Erskine, 1993; Little, 2006).

Therefore, I understand the idea of alienation within a framework of social (macro) and psychic (micro) relational dynamics. I draw on developments in contemporary psychotherapy thinking to position a radical relational psychiatry, and I move between political, social, cultural, and personal frames of references in search of ways of speaking about dynamics that are interrelated. I start by suggesting that an alienated state of mind includes experiences of psychic and cultural death.

Psychic and Cultural Death

The emptiness of Hitler's internal world is strewn with the dead objects that form the furniture of his world. (Wieland, 2015, p. 159)

Some contemporary literature has revisited the difference between the mechanics of repression and those of dissociation (e.g., Novak, 2015). In terms of alienation, I think of intolerable psychological states as being either banished or killed off. Some

experiences are known and related to but not wanted; these are the suppressed or repressed. This links to Sullivan's (1953) ideas about "bad me." In transactional analysis we might relate this to our experiences of ourselves in script (Berne, 1972). I think of script as including identities we wish to banish because they arouse guilt or shame. Hence, they are pushed into hiding while efforts are made to present parts of ourselves with which we are more comfortable. To illustrate this, I introduce a client whom I call "Emma."

Emma presented a social self that was kind, generous, and open minded. She knew her father was extremely racist and that, with enough provocation, she too could resort to a racist state of mind. She felt ashamed of this in herself, and it was painful to confess it to me given that I am a woman of color. She described the terrible conflict she faced as a child when her father refused to allow her best friend (who was black) to visit their home. In other words, Emma knew that part of her script involved her guilt and sense of bad me for choosing a black friend. This identity held when she was with her white family. With me, she experienced some shame, a bad me that was also connected to feelings of betrayal. In other words, Emma's confusion and challenge with her personal and social scripting was this: How could she move between a white excluding environment into one that allowed for cross-racial connection? Both experiences involved guilt associated with betrayal of her family or shame with her chosen companion and therapist because of her heritage of white racism. I suggested to Emma that she had suppressed those feelings, which formed part of the bad-me identities that she wanted to banish. In addition, there were other states of her mind that evoked a different defense mechanism: dissociation.

In dissociation, identification with an overwhelming feeling becomes intolerable, so the whole subjective experience is killed off. I think that is different from the repression of a feeling. Therefore, dissociation of some subjective experiences is more like our coping mechanisms during trauma. A number of writers have described this as the process of dissociation, including those who have written about posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (e.g., Lifton, 1974/1985) and others, especially from interpersonal and relational psychoanalytic perspectives, who have written about developmental dissociation (e.g., Stern, 2011; Sullivan, 1953). These authors have described how some states of mind are so threatening and anxiety provoking to the sense of self that they must be obliterated from psychic knowledge. They literally cannot be experienced, thought about, or tolerated. They can only be identified as belonging to others. Hence, I think of not-me identities as having undergone a psychic death. To illustrate, I return to Emma and her effect on me.

It seemed impossible for Emma to find her protesting voice. For multiple reasons, her father was traumatized. Part of his trauma was the risk of death due to a medical condition that hung over him throughout Emma's childhood. He raised Emma alone, so she was utterly dependent on him and had to maintain her relationship with him. Her potential outrage at her father's tyranny was too threatening to their bond, so she killed it off. The extent and depth of this process could not be reached through words.

Then, many months into our work, during sessions with Emma I became infected with an overwhelming drag into sleep. No amount of caffeine, sugar, fresh air, rosemary, or peppermint oil could keep me awake. I was infused with a leaden, incapacitating, deadening of mind and body. Session after session I would droop. In contrast,

Emma would chat her way through my slumbers, seemingly unaware of my state. Understanding from supervision pointed to unconscious rage.

This invited me to consider projective identification (Ogden, 1992) and dissociation in my countertransference. However, cognitive insight alone did not help. I could understand our dynamics in terms of an enactment (Stern, 2011) whereby I was manifesting the deadness in Emma, with which I could psychically identify. Aspects of her liveliness had been under profound psychic attack, and that was something I could relate to. At that point, there was the danger that my capacity for engagement with Emma was so shut down that the therapy between us would be “killed off.” Thinking further about how vitality between us was being obliterated, I recognized that both of us had a complex relationship with protest. We experienced it as threatening to a critical bond, which evoked a not-me state.

Not-me encounters in society are expressed in the narrative of totalitarian politics that champion forceful power over anything threatening or hated. This validates intolerance, hatred, and tyrannical states of minds in citizens. Dealing with difference in this way promotes banishing and death, which rids the State of possible relatedness with the “other.” Psychically and politically, these oppressive dynamics, as part of alienation, seek satisfaction through vengeance.

Oppressive Dynamics in Alienation

In Steiner et al.’s (1975) original formulation, alienation included oppression. The problem was understood as structures and systems exerting power over humanity. In a capitalist ideology, competition for resources is key, and in the face of austerity, economic scarcity is experienced as a threat. So, additional demands, such as Westerners encountering a humanitarian crisis, arouse hostility or even hate. In the extreme, anyone representing otherness becomes a target. I substantiate this statement with clarification from Keval (2016), who described the racist state of mind this way: “This term conveys a particular constellation of anxieties related to the feeling of being robbed or depleted, which leads to vengeful wishes to thwart and undermine the ethnic other” (p. 118).

So, radical psychiatrists/practitioners understood psychological difficulties as being socially and politically constructed. They appealed for protest, and if people refrained from it, they too were challenged:

By remaining “neutral” in an oppressive situation psychiatry, especially in the public sector, has become an enforcer of established values and laws.... *Psychiatrists should become advocates of the people, should refuse to participate in the pacification of the oppressed, and should encourage people’s struggles for liberation.* (Steiner, 1969/1975, pp. 4–5)

The strong fighting spirit found in these words of the radical psychiatry manifesto is energizing and mobilizing. In times of political and social turmoil, killing off protest may save lives, but finding the voice that expresses outrage may save souls. However, although rhetoric advocating protest mobilizes vitality, it also risks alienating those it aims to attract. Ironically, the call to battle based on values can sometimes be experienced as an oppressive force. In other words, righteousness rarely engages opponents to the cause and can even distance the already converted. The counterculture

movements of the 1970s needed the oppressive systems to rally against. We are seeing a revival of just such a situation in the West today, in which protest and political engagement has accompanied the rise of nationalism.

In transactional analysis we are well versed in ideas relating to power dynamics and have many ways of thinking about them. However, radical psychiatry also talks about the perverted dynamics of mystification married to oppression. I think this is a deeper and more disturbing process. One way mystification is used in politics is through the language of the “people’s choice.” I see this as an abuse of democracy, one that suggests that there is but one position. This is a profound discount (Schiff & Schiff, 1971) of the complexity of social and political splits, conflicts, and differences generally. Thus, unwelcome positions, feelings, and thinking are banished, thereby undermining the dignity of a nation or people.

Having described how oppression exerts domination, I now expand on mystification, which includes how the oppressor colonizes (Chinnock & Minikin, 2015) the mind of the oppressed.

Mystification Is Key

The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.
(Biko, 1978, p. 68)

This quote from Steve Biko describes the psychological intention in gaining power over the other. Whether it be promulgated by a political and social system, a cult, or an individual, mystification is the sinister and deadly component within alienation that allows the oppressor to move in and potentially “purchase” the trust of the oppressed. Gramsci (1971) described this as spontaneous consent, which is possible because the oppressed experience economic, social, and/or psychological dependency on the oppressor. Gramsci’s ideas explain how the mind of the oppressed is controlled in a way that is similar to scripting whereby an infant learns to consent to his or her caregivers.

Identification with the oppressor is key because then the oppressed can oppress themselves. Usually, people who attend psychotherapy have turned inward, their internalized tyranny killing off aspects of their humanity that have been subjugated. In short, I understand mystification as a deep deception on the part of the oppressor, who is determined not to lose his or her powerful grip on the oppressed. The meaning I make is that aspects of the soul in both the oppressor and the oppressed are killed off or go so far into retreat that recall and recovery is very hard.

One contemporary writer who describes this well is Daniel Shaw (2014) in his writing about the process of subjugation in traumatizing narcissism. He drew from his experience of cults, which may include intergenerational trauma (Minikin, 2011; Noriega, 2010), including the need for the tyrant to find a relational home for his or her disturbance. So the other is colonized, the relational dynamic psychologically structured (Little, 2006) and set. Through a colonizing process, the oppressed serve to host the badness for the oppressor, with whom the oppressed identify. This means relinquishing some aspect of their selfhood. Thus, I think of the colonizing process as explaining how mystification takes place.

Chinnock and Minikin (2015) described the colonizing process using the psychological parallel to historical colonialism. Countries in Africa, Asia, and South and Central

America that were rich in natural resources were dominated by countries from the West. These economic, social, and political structures created dependency and resulted in a profound loss of culture, that is, identity. Post colonialism, such countries were reeling as they attempted to find ways to redefine themselves as nations and peoples. Looking specifically at the mind, we linked colonization with Bollas's (1987) ideas about extractive introjection. He described the deception by the colonizer, who moves in without the colonized realizing what is happening, and the colonized is thereby robbed of aspects of his or her thinking capacity, emotional resonance, and/or soulful autonomy. In its place, the oppressor/colonizer leaves his or her desires and disturbances. Psychologically speaking, this can be a conscious use of power (such as in politics) or an unconscious one (as in scripting). The loss of thinking and identity was described by Bollas as a "catastrophe, from which there may well be no recovery" (p. 166).

Understanding oppression accompanied by mystification clarifies why political and psychological resistance is so crucial if a person or a people are to retain their soul. It also explains why such courage is not always common. Steve Biko and others paid with their lives for such resistance, while survivors are left traumatized with many complexities added to their scripts.

Script as Double Agent

I think of script (Berne, 1972) as protecting alienated parts of the self from further damage. Simultaneously, by keeping these parts at bay, script contributes to the recesses of our soul. So, the scripting process is simultaneously creative as well destructive. Script protects what can be salvaged yet acts as a kind of double agent because it buys into what is on offer in order to maintain relationship and connection with community. It is the dialogue an individual creates within an oppressive system. So, parts that are alienated remain at risk of being lost, never to be recovered. Such components are outside of the script system, although through decontamination and deconfusion, aspects of relational loss may find opportunities to be reexperienced.

Relating this back to Emma, I described how her father wanted to kill off her choice of friend. Emma was without the protection or mediation that a potent mother could perhaps have provided. This left her profoundly alone with her conflict. She was robbed of her thinking and expressiveness. Her choice of friend was met with aggressive outrage from her father, and his terrorism became her terror. So she experienced something of a psychic death whereby something violent, absolute, and cruel had taken place.

Having described oppression and mystification within alienation, I turn now to thoughts about resolution. In keeping with the spirit of political language, I start by summarizing the traditional ideas about resolution that I think of as a social psychological reformation. Then, returning to my work with Emma, I describe how I have critiqued and built on the original, which I call *radical relational reformation*.

Social Psychological Reformation and the Traditional Formulas

The meanings of the word *radical* include root and reformation. I suggest that reformation offers a way of thinking about social and therapeutic change. As I think of banished experiences (script) and psychic death (dissociation), it seems that reformation

needs to include psychic reclamation and resurrection. However, just as colonized nations can never revert to an era before they were colonized, so a return to the spontaneity, vulnerability, and soulful relational capacity of infancy cannot occur later in life. Instead, there is a need to engage with deep mourning for what has been lost. Without this, there is the risk that hate, violence, and mania will take hold and lead to fascist states in mind and nation. So, how can the change posed by radical psychiatry help provide a map for recovery?

The original texts offered by Steiner et al. (1975) said “all alienation is the result of oppression about which the oppressed has been mystified or deceived” (p. 11). They wrote this as a formula (p. 12):

$$\text{Oppression} + \text{Deception} = \text{Alienation}$$

Steiner and his colleagues said the first step to reform was to replace deception/mystification with awareness. As a consequence, when people realize they have had the metaphorical wool pulled over their eyes, they will feel angry. Thus, Steiner et al. (1975) wrote (p. 12):

$$\text{Oppression} + \text{Awareness} = \text{Anger}$$

They then argued that people need to feel anger about the oppression. In their final formula, cure/liberation emphasizes connection through social contact with others who have a similar mind. Given their commitment to social freedom, Steiner et al. (1975) wrote this (p. 14):

$$\text{Awareness} + \text{Contact} = \text{Action} \rightarrow \text{Liberation}$$

Steiner et al. (1975) focused on recovery from political and social alienation through liberation that was facilitated by social and interpersonal contact. Although I think this is important, as a psychotherapist I link social and political dynamics with intrapsychic and intersubjective processes. Hence, I will move on now to describing my version of reformation in the realm of deep psychological change.

Radical Relational Reformation

When clients first come in for psychotherapy, I think they are, to a lesser or greater extent, mystified, that is, in a state of personal, social, and/or cultural confusion. Aspects of self are alienated because these individuals were influenced by the quality of their family dynamics as well as social and cultural circumstances. And those who are part of the dominant culture are not precluded from such alienation. For others, there are added complexities because of internalized racism, sexism, and homophobia, to offer just a few examples. Given the deadly dynamics of mystification, I struggle to see how “mystification” or “deception” is simply replaced with “awareness” in the second of Steiner et al.’s (1975) original formulas. I think this process needs to be described. For example, how does a person gain motivation to move out of an oppressive social or psychic system? Given that there may be much investment in submission, I think it takes considerable provocation to disturb it.

I suggest that life events or contact within a therapeutic experience may provoke such disturbance in a stable yet oppressed psychic system. For instance, the death of a

close relative, the birth of a baby, or a partner's affair, as well as political and social change such as the civil war experienced by many immigrants and refugees, are real-life events that potentially destabilize an individual's psyche. This may leave people feeling that they do not have adequate resources to manage these disturbances alone. Minikin and Tudor (2015) wrote about the importance of developing emotional literacy (Steiner, 1997) through a cocreative and relational commitment on the part of the therapist to be profoundly engaged, affected, and willing to shift her or his perspectives. This is crucial to the work and can encourage an awakening of dormant subjective experiences in both parties. Therefore, mutuality and contact are essential in challenging the deadening impact of oppression with mystification. Hence, I propose:

$$\text{Oppression} + \text{Mystification} + \text{Mutuality} + \text{Contact} = \text{Awakening} + \text{Disturbance}$$

"Contact" in the third version of the original formula denoted social support from other like-minded people. This may be important in some situations. In psychotherapy, I think of contact as providing a potential container (Bion, 1959/1988) so that the distressed person can begin to process what has happened to him or her. I think the therapist oscillates between holding (Winnicott, 1953) and containing support alongside challenge and provocation to defensive and possibly destructive psychic systems. So, the quality of contact I think of is the experience of protection, empathy, and attunement as described in the work of Clark (1991), Erskine (1993), and Hargaden and Sills (2002) alongside a provocation to defensive systems with support for the reflective Adult. This starts to build a therapeutic alliance, including the beginnings of the introjective transference (Hargaden & Sills, 2002). This disturbs the oppressive internal systems as well as provides holding and containment for excessive emotional turmoil.

The combination of these provisions will vary and be unique to the context of the work and the cocreative dynamics of the therapeutic dyad. Both client and therapist will also have their versions of alienated states that oscillate between them. Through this process, oppressive frames of reference are shaken, and simultaneously, through the experience of contact, there is the opportunity for a breakthrough from fixated alienated states of mind to one in which movement, and therefore growing strength, becomes possible.

Mutuality + Contact: Emma's Awakening (Bad Me)

Returning to Emma, when she first came to see me, she had recovered from a traumatic miscarriage, her father was living with her family, and she reported "walking on eggshells" around him. She was finding it difficult to cope and was hiding under her duvet and crying a lot. She was having difficulty sleeping at night and would get up and compulsively clean the house. Presenting with an "overwhelmed" mind, she also described an overwhelming social situation clouded by uncertainty and her father's potential death. Since childhood, she had maintained her friendship with Daphne Ann, a black woman of whom her father continued to fiercely disapprove. He prohibited visits by Daphne Ann to the house, even though he was living in Emma's home. Listening to Emma, I too felt overwhelmed by her life situation and distress. Although there are many aspects I could mention, I will limit myself to two key dynamics:

Emma's sense of betrayal and guilt (bad me) and her dissociated capacity to protest (not me).

Earlier I described how Emma was both oppressed and mystified by her father. Her childhood had the features of a traumatizing narcissistic relational experience as described by Shaw (2014). There were many examples of how she was subjugated to her father's mind. In the early days of our work, I understood she needed the support of another woman. In this sense, our social identities as "sisters" was an important source of relating. My listening to her story and responding with empathic transactions (Clark, 1991; Hargaden & Sills, 2002) offered Emma an experience she had been short of in her upbringing. The difference in our race paralleled something important to her about her choice of friend. It supported aspects of her autonomy that were still alive. She was attempting to raise her family and cope with her traumatized father with a profound deficit in maternal input. Therefore, my capacity for empathy, relatedness, and connection to the sorts of oppression she had suffered were essential in helping her to build a more reflective Adult ego state. As she did, she became aware of the depth of her guilt for betraying her father's wishes, and it was disturbing for her to recognize the betrayal she also felt toward her friend and then me for having inherited racism from him. Her attachment to her friend and, as the work progressed, to me were key in enabling her to challenge that state of mind. She literally became more awake to it, and she began building her resources. It was then, as I described earlier, that I started to become infused with sleep.

Emma: Awakening + Relational Connection (Not Me)

The breadth and depth of Emma's psychological alienation included interconnecting developmental, social, and other environmental traumas. A relational route to resolution had to come, in part, through my willingness to engage psychically as best as I could with multiple unconscious states of mind at work between us. Generally, unconscious communication and contact comes through transferential experiences, enactments, the imagination, and dreams. I think the strengthening awareness of both myself and Emma was crucial to beginning processes of liberation. However, reaching her not-me state happened through a mutual experience whereby what was being killed off needed to somehow be encountered in the clinical dyad.

At the time I started falling asleep, we had begun to speak about trauma. A recent need to visit the hospital had led to a panic attack for Emma, and we were reviewing her miscarriage with the terror, loss, and helplessness she had felt in response to her body failing her. Historically, we had both experienced a terrible fear of death via the threat of losing a parent. The absence of supportive women in Emma's childhood spoke personally to me too and contributed to my dissociative response of falling asleep. My awareness of shutting down, becoming passive, and not working evoked a bad-me state, hence my fight against sleep to begin with. However, as I reflected, I realized I was being pushed to engage with my impotency in the face of trauma. I took this to supervision, and the suggestion that unconscious rage was at work contributed something important.

After a few sessions, and drawing on reflections from supervision, I asked Emma about her relationship with anger. Initially, she stared at me blankly and did not know

what to say. It was as if she had no connection to that emotion. Alas, my deadening sleep continued. Although I sometimes hold experiences longer than is helpful, at some point I decided to talk directly to her about what was happening, without knowing what might come of it. I said that she might have noticed I had been falling asleep occasionally. Emma looked up and said she had wondered but had not been sure. I was curious to know what that had been like for her, and she said she did not quite understand what might be wrong with me. Well, that made two of us!

Then we began exploring my sleepiness, with associations to hospitals and the real, as well as metaphorical, death of a baby. Without saying everything in my mind, I said enough to let her know that this was something to which I related. I offered some explanation about overwhelming experiences, feelings too strong to hold. We also thought about her insomnia and explored projective identification, wondering whether I had been having the sleep for which Emma was desperate. Then we reflected on how impossible it felt for Emma to voice her objections to her father's racism and general tyranny. As we talked about her father, I was reminded that there had been occasions when I had wished him dead. My persecutory and rescuing fantasies had been evoked in the work, and I think of these as my connection with a fascist state of mind.

As we talked, we drew, by contrast, Emma's attraction to Daphne Ann. Emma felt frozen with her father, yet her friend had been an irresistible choice. Emma had witnessed her friend fighting back at school. Back then, Daphne Ann had been defiant and raging, sometimes physically fighting the bullies who attempted racial abuse. Although this frightened Emma, her friend modeled resistance, which must have retained some relational connection with protest. Although she dissociated from her own capacity, Emma was drawn to her friend, who could "do it." Daphne Ann became an important ally for Emma and, in my imagination, for me. As we talked about her, I recalled my attraction to strong black women who protested. Memories of myself as a teenager, involved with the Anti-Nazi League of 1970s Britain and the associated Rock Against Racism movement at the time, started to enliven my mind during sessions with Emma. I shared a little of those memories of earlier life in inner city Birmingham, an area inclusive of different races, cultures, and faiths in the United Kingdom. Emma seemed encouraged, and so began her conscious relationship with anger, rage, defiance, and protest. The connections between us and the image of Daphne Ann led to an awakening in both Emma and me that was furthered by our processing of the enactment.

Both Emma and I had the more typical role in the family of being peace builders rather than warmongers. Yet it was crucial that both of us could find the warrior, the fighter within to rouse us into a positive state of aggression and engagement with life outside and inside—hence my proposal for resolution to be thought of both socially and psychically. I think we need relationship with diversity outside and inside ourselves if we are to access more of our human potential. My goal for resolution thus lies with plurality, which I think of as a capacity to tolerate and engage with different states of mind as well as differences in interpersonal and social relationships:

Awakening in Self + Relational Connection = Plurality with Self and Others

The danger of totalitarian philosophies, thinking, and actions is that any relatedness with difference has to be killed off. It is as if to hear hurt being expressed is

unbearable and intolerable to contemplate, and thus any shame or guilt within the oppressor also needs to be killed off or banished. To my mind, pluralism counters this position and offers a way forward toward greater acceptance within the self and with others as well as genuinely more creative solutions to social and psychological difficulties.

Concluding Thoughts: The Goal of Pluralism

In the original formula set out by Steiner et al. (1975), transformation from alienation to liberation was a passionate plea to stand up and take social and political action. I still hold dear the idea of freeing people from oppression in all sorts of ways. Script is, after all, one version of an oppressive system. In terms of working with trauma, I think along the lines described by Novak (2015) and view developmental dissociation as a process that is outside of the script system because it has never quite been allowed enough processing to be part of it. Developmental dissociation results in alienated, cut-off parts of the self that I have linked to Sullivan's (1953) ideas about "not me."

Borrowing from Batts (2002), I propose a goal of pluralism at many related levels. Alienation as the difficulty and pluralism as the goal can be thought about at the personal (intrapsychic), interpersonal, group/organizational, and social/cultural levels. I propose that these ideas and reflections may be applied to all four fields in transactional analysis (psychotherapy, counseling, organizations, and education).

I think pluralism is the capacity to be self-determining (linking with our ideas in TA about autonomy) and to suspend our own position to engage at the edge of our psyche. This expands our personal possibilities, which helps us interpersonally as well as with the social and cultural levels of our life experiences. I think of pluralism as the relational engagement with diversity. Diversity alone cannot achieve anything without an engagement, that is, a meaningful encounter and relationship with difference. I believe this is what helps our psyche and our societies. The intention of pluralism is to keep us alive to interest and curiosity and to seek to understand across differences. If we do not do this, we cannot tolerate otherness in ourselves or others. I write this with a sense of urgency because it seems these are the very values under threat in our "vengeful world." I think that pluralism requires relational contact, that is, a capacity to claim what we know and believe in while responding to new learning as well as understanding and considering how many truths can coexist. In other words, I conclude that pluralism requires a democratic state of mind.

I think we can meet differences in others if we know ourselves and feel safe in our skins. The parts of myself that I shunned and alienated myself from because I hated or feared them need the opportunity to be experienced. The experiences with my friends, colleagues, and clients—including those with whom I have fought and argued—have helped further my personal and social engagement with pluralism. I am still learning that to be alive to ourselves allows us to receive and consider others. Pluralism, to me, is a psychological, social, and political commitment to democracy in mind, attitude, and approach to social encounters.

I started this article with a quotation from my father's book, which has come into my possession this year. My father is from the Punjab region of India and Pakistan, which alongside Bengal experienced some of the most terrible atrocities toward the

end of colonialism and the subsequent violent partition of India in 1947. As a teenager, he witnessed those traumas, which continue to haunt the Indian subcontinent today. Those experiences have been difficult for him and people of his generation to talk about. Professionally and academically, he learned from his era and committed himself to a career in international relations. This year I discovered his capacity as a young man to think about the relationship between the psychology of the individual and society. It has been transformational and has helped revitalize my bond with him. So, I take the liberty of quoting him again here:

Thus, social psychology shows us that, in order to change his character, the individual must be given a sense of purpose and a feeling of participation in the adventure of national progress. If this is not achieved, volumes of speeches will not succeed in building bridges which will enable the individual to cross from the claustrophobic atmosphere of parochialism to the wider spaces of national interest. (Hussain, 1966, p. 43)

Disclosure Statement

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes on Contributor

Karen Minikin, BA (Hons.) (counseling), MSc (psychotherapy), UKCP-registered psychotherapist, BACP Senior Accredited Supervisor, Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst (psychotherapy), Diploma in Clinical Supervision, is a member of EATA, IARTA, UKATA, and the ITAA. She runs a private clinical and supervision practice in Hellingly, East Sussex, England, and is a peripatetic tutor and supervisor. She can be reached at Stable Barn, New Road, Hellingly, East Sussex, BN27 4EW, United Kingdom; email: karen.minikin@icloud.com.

References

- Batts, V. (2002). Is reconciliation possible? Lessons from combating "modern racism." In I. T. Douglas (Ed.), *Waging reconciliation: God's mission in a time of globalization and crisis* (pp. 35–76). New York, NY: Church Publishing.
- Berne, E. (1961). *Transactional analysis in psychotherapy: A systematic individual and social psychiatry*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Berne, E. (1972). *What do you say after you say hello? The psychology of human destiny*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Biko, S. (1978). *I write what I like: Selected writings by Steve Biko*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Bion, W. R. (1988). Attacks on linking. In E. Bott Spillius (Ed.), *Melanie Klein today: Developments in theory and practice. Volume 1: Mainly theory* (pp. 87–101). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1959)
- Bollas, C. (1987). *The shadow of the object: Psychoanalysis of the unthought known*. London: Free Association Books.

- Chinnock, K., & Minikin, K. (2015). Power and the colonizing process. *The Transactional Analyst*, 6, 16–19.
- Clark, B. (1991). Empathic transactions in the deconfusion of the child ego state. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 21, 92–98. doi:[10.1177/036215379102100204](https://doi.org/10.1177/036215379102100204)
- Erskine, R. G. (1993). Inquiry, attunement, and involvement in the psychotherapy of dissociation. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 23, 184–190. doi:[10.1177/036215379302300402](https://doi.org/10.1177/036215379302300402)
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from prison notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Greer, G. (1970). *The female eunuch*. New York, NY: Paladin Press.
- Hargaden, H., & Sills, C. (2002). *Transactional analysis: A relational perspective*. Hove: Brunner-Routledge.
- Hussain, A. (1966). *Pakistan: Its ideology and foreign policy*. London: Cass.
- Jacobs, A. (1987). Autocratic power. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 17, 59–71. doi:[10.1177/036215378701700303](https://doi.org/10.1177/036215378701700303)
- Jacobs, A. (1990). Nationalism. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 20, 221–228. doi:[10.1177/036215379002000403](https://doi.org/10.1177/036215379002000403)
- James, J. (1983). Cultural consciousness: The challenge to TA. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 13, 207–216. doi:[10.1177/036215378301300402](https://doi.org/10.1177/036215378301300402)
- Keval, N. (2016). *Racist states of mind: Understanding the perversion of curiosity and concern*. London: Karnac Books.
- Laing, R. D. (1971). *The politics of the family and other essays*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Lifton, R. J. (1985). *Home from the war: Vietnam veterans: Neither victims nor executioners*. London: Wildwood House. (Original work published 1974)
- Little, R. (2006). Ego state relational units and resistance to change. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 36, 7–19. doi:[10.1177/036215370603600103](https://doi.org/10.1177/036215370603600103)
- Marx, K. (1967). *Capital: Critique of political economy* (B. Fowkes, Trans). London: Penguin. (Original work published 1867 in German)
- Minikin, K. (2011). Transactional analysis and the wider world: The politics and psychology of alienation. In H. Fowlie & C. Sills (Ed.), *Relational transactional analysis: Principles in practice* (pp. 211–219). London: Karnac Books.
- Minikin, K., & Tudor, K. (2015). Gender psychopolitics: Men becoming, being and belonging. In R. Erskine (Ed.), *Transactional analysis in contemporary psychotherapy* (pp. 257–275). London: Karnac Books.
- Noriega, G. (2010). Transgenerational scripts: The unknown knowledge. In R. G. Erskine (Ed.), *Life scripts: A transactional analysis of unconscious relational patterns* (pp. 269–290). London: Karnac Books.
- Novak, E. (2015). Are games, enactments, and reenactments similar? No, yes, it depends. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 45, 117–127. doi:[10.1177/03622153715578840](https://doi.org/10.1177/03622153715578840)
- Ogden, T. (1992). *The matrix of the mind: Object relations and the psychoanalytic dialogue*. London: Karnac Books.
- Schiff, A. W., & Schiff, J. L. (1971). Passivity. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 1, 71–78. doi:[10.1177/036215377100100114](https://doi.org/10.1177/036215377100100114)
- Shaw, D. (2014). *Traumatic narcissism: Relational systems of subjugation*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Stark, M. (1999). *Modes of therapeutic action*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Steiner, C. (1975). Manifesto. In C. Steiner et al., *Readings in radical psychiatry* (pp. 3–6). New York, NY: Grove Press. (Original work published 1969)
- Steiner, C. M. (with Perry, P.). (1997). *Achieving emotional literacy: A personal program to increase your emotional intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Steiner, C., Wyckoff, H., Marcus, J., Lariviere, P., Goldstine, D., Schwebel, R., & Members of the Radical Psychiatry Center. (1975). *Readings in radical psychiatry*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Stern, D. B. (2011). *Partners in thought: Working with unformulated experience, dissociation, and enactment*. Hove: Routledge.
- Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York, NY: Norton.

- Tudor, K., & Hargaden, H. (2002). The couch and the ballot box: The contribution and potential of psychotherapy in enhancing citizenship. In C. Feltham (Ed.), *What's the good of counselling and psychotherapy? The benefits explained* (pp. 156–178). London: Sage.
- Tudor, K., & Summers, G. (2014). *Co-creative transactional analysis: Papers, dialogues, responses, and developments*. London: Karnac Books.
- Wieland, C. (2015). *The fascist state of mind and the manufacturing of masculinity*. London: Routledge.
- Willis, E. (1992). Radical feminism and feminist radicalism. In E. Willis, *No more nice girls: Countercultural essays* (pp. 117–149). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1984)
- Winnicott, D. W. (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34, 89–97.