

December 2023, Vol. 83, Issue 4 Special Issue: Truth and Lies: Psychoanalytic Perspectives.

Articles

Harrang, C. (2023). **Introduction: Truth and Lies: Psychoanalytic Perspectives.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 443–464.

I begin this introduction by offering thanks to all of the authors, individually and as a group, who have generously contributed to this Special Issue on *Truth and Lies*. Earlier versions of these papers, except for Civitarese’s contribution which was invited later, were presented in the runup to or during the Thirteenth International Evolving British Object Relations Conference held online over two weekends in October 2022 and sponsored by Northwestern Psychoanalytic Society and Institute located in Seattle, Washington (USA). Given the pressing nature of the conference and Special Issue theme—there isn’t a day that goes by without my reading a newspaper article or hearing a radio or television journalist reporting on the topic of truth and concerns over the spread of disinformation, deepfakes, and lies (including an alarming increase of fake studies in academic journals²)—it seems imperative to share these papers as a collection in a timely manner.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09431-9>

Abel-Hirsch, N. (2023). **What Might Be in So Close That as Psychoanalysts We Miss It?** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 465–475.

Abstract: What if the author were to position herself as a liar? Not of conscious lying, but an ignorance of what is so close to our collective noses that as psychoanalysts we miss it. Drawing on Harari’s (2011) description of liberal ideology, the author suggests that our contemporary psychoanalytic focus on feelings, countertransference, and intuition is more determined by our cultural era than generally recognized. It is suggested that prevailing ideology may at times serve a defensive function. The author discusses a 1970s clinical seminar in which Bion observes that the presenting analyst’s attention to feelings is “excusing” the patient (and himself). A second example, from Bion’s *Cogitations* (1991), underscores the complexity of being sensitive to a patient’s feelings without gratifying narcissistic demands. A final example is taken from the author’s work in which there was a pressure to allow the patient’s infantile feelings to determine the analysis. It was subsequently recognized that neither the patient’s feelings nor the analyst’s understanding were the site of authority in the analysis. Rather, authority lies in the analytic process itself.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09418-6>

Harrang, C. (2023). **On Grotstein's 'Truth' in Bion's Theory of 'O'**. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 476–494.

Abstract: In this thought-provoking exploration, the author examines Grotstein's seminal work, "The Seventh Servant: The Implications of a Truth Drive in Bion's Theory of 'O'" (2004), and its relevance to the psychoanalytic concepts of *truth* and *lies*. Drawing on Bion's K-link and Klein's epistemophilia, the paper argues that Grotstein's concept of a "truth drive" is part of a transformative paradigmatic shift in psychoanalysis, emphasizing a focus on ontology and the process of *being with* the analysand. The commitment to truth in psychoanalytic practice demands ongoing examination, open-mindedness, and a willingness to embrace bodily sensations, proto-emotions, and new thoughts. Grotstein proposes that the truth drive is a universal human force that compels individuals towards emotional growth and explains why analysands can accept the analyst's interpretation of painful psychological realities. The intersection between curiosity and evolving 'O' exceeds epistemophilia, bridging knowledge and the unknown for optimal truth-seeking. The paper briefly explores the connections between Heidegger's "Dasein," "Aletheia," and Foucault's "Parrhesia," further supporting Grotstein's discovery. Additionally, it addresses the challenge of distinguishing healthy truth pursuit from pathological manifestations and presents a captivating clinical vignette illustrating Grotstein's response to this question. Finally, the paper delves into Bion's puzzling observation that all thoughts as ordinarily known are *lies*, augmenting the notion of universal emotional truth and its complexities in the clinical context.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09427-5>

Civitarese, G. (2023). **On Bion's Concept of Truth in an Extra-Moral Sense**. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 495–519.

Abstract: The paper explores the concept of truth in Bion's theory and in the post-Bionian context of the analytic field. Truth is addressed on three levels: epistemological, metapsychological, and clinical. Bion criticizes positivism in psychoanalysis, and the same vertex when it appears in psychoanalysis itself, stating that the search for truth at all costs is similar to the arrogance and stupidity of the psychotic part of the personality. He revolutionizes the analytic concept of truth by orienting it to the function of the emotional linking between analyst and patient rather than to content. Post-Bionian analytic theory further develops these concepts. In a field or radically intersubjective perspective, the author emphasizes the shift from an "I/you" perspective to a "we" perspective. The treatment is less about the abstract search for supposed truths and more about the truth being expressed in the process of emotional and affective attunement.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09430-w>

Harrang, C. & Civitarese, G. (2023). **Interview with Giuseppe Civitarese, MD, PHD, July 2014.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 520–527.

The following interview was conducted in the spring of July 2014 by Evolving British Object Relations (EBOR) Organizing Committee Co-Chair Caron Harrang, LICSW, FIPA in advance of the tenth International EBOR Conference in Seattle, Washington (USA).

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09429-3>

Eekhoff, J. K. (2023). **Between the Real and the Imaginary: Truth and Lies in the Psychoanalytic Encounter.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 528–546.

Abstract: When reality is too much to bear, bodymind unity can fracture, creating self-deceptions, distortions, and disguises of emotional experience that amount to unconscious lies. Without clarity regarding what is real and what is imaginary, emotional truth is difficult to discern. Lies disrupt the development of a subjective sense of self, making it difficult to trust sensations, emotions, or thoughts. In the absence of this trust, a patient may form a delusion that they do not exist. Working psychoanalytically with patients traumatized in infancy and early childhood requires the analyst to experience a somatic link between herself and the patient, thereby enabling a process that was inhibited and, in some cases, nearly aborted to resume functioning. Clinical material is presented illustrating a negative hallucination of *not existing* following an emotional experience that could not be borne as well as bodymind dissociation that separated the patient's psychic pain from her childhood narrative. The author concludes that these methods of coping with trauma prevent the grieving necessary for truth to become bearable and the mind to grow.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09419-5>

Case, S. (2023). **Weaving deceptive webs and untangling emotional truths.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 547–565.

Abstract: This paper explores how the allure of magical thinking and *groupthink* contrasts with intuition of emotional truth. Since truth can terrify, the author suggests that a longer learning curve is needed to apprehend what Bion (1970a) called the “evolving O” of the analytic session. Traumatized patients are described as *dream weavers* who spin webs of partial truths and lies around their true selves. For the analyst, untangling these webs involves what Bion (1970b) calls an “act of faith.” Clinical material is presented to show how *groupthink* and other concretions of thought can, under favorable circumstances, be transformed on the wings of psychic truth. Alternatively, uncontained violent emotions

can become calcified, creating a carapace over the chrysalis of the patient's true self. The author concludes that the analyst's desire for a particular treatment outcome can unwittingly lead to the formation of an adhesive web where healthy analytic culture becomes a cult. Paradoxically, it is only when there is equal attention to emotional truth and lies that a trajectory of growth is likely to evolve.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09428-4>

Winters, N. C. (2023). 'A Home to the Lie': The Contemporary (Per)version of Truth. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 566–585.

Abstract: This paper explores the contemporary trend towards relativization and perversion of truth increasingly prominent in American culture, which, in Bion's terminology (1970), has become an ever more hospitable "home to the lie." The anti-COVID vaccine movement emerging in the United States in 2021, and its related network of conspiracy theories, is presented as an example. To make sense of these phenomena the author presents clinical vignettes illustrating (1) Bion's (1970) notions of catastrophic change, the lie/thinker relation, and the messianic idea; (2) Freud's (1921) thinking on group leaders; and (3) Matte-Blanco's (1975) bi-logical theory of mind. According to Bion, the lie is mobilized to avoid the psychological upheaval associated with catastrophic change. The author suggests that developments in American life experienced as threatening catastrophic change provide a hospitable environment for the lie, making the recognition of truth more elusive. In line with Matte-Blanco's bi-logical theory, the author suggests that creation of opportunities for dialogue giving weight to both conscious and unconscious ways of thinking is necessary for re-establishing a culture of truth.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09426-6>

Book Reviews

Turtz, J. (2023). **Book Review: *Ruptures in the American Psyche: Containing Destructive Populism in Perilous Times***, by Michael J. Diamond, Phoenix Publishing House Ltd, Bicester, Oxfordshire, 2022, 139 pp.. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 586–589.

If you, like me, are pondering over the sources and causes of the existential threats to democracy in the United States of America today and are wondering how those in support of the current destructive populist movement called Trumpism are seeing reality so differently from the way others do, then Michael J. Diamond's book *Ruptures in the American Psyche: Containing Destructive Populism in Perilous Times* is a book I highly recommend. Diamond's central theme throughout this book is that by viewing the current populist movement from a psychoanalytic lens (in conjunction with interdisciplinary perspectives), one can greatly enhance and deepen one's awareness and understanding of

what is occurring in this country. A psychoanalytic perspective may also be helpful in finding a path out of this dangerous predicament and into a more hopeful future.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09420-y>

Gonzalez-Torres, M.A. (2023). **Book Review: *The Destroyed World and the Guilty Self: A Psychoanalytic Study of Culture and Politics***, by David P. Levine and Matthew H. Bowker, Phoenix Publishing House, Bicester, Oxfordshire, 2019, 189 pp.. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 590–593.

The idea that today we live in a dangerous world destined for catastrophe often appears in the media, works of fiction, art and even science. So-called collapsology has become a scientific discipline that brings together thinkers from many fields: environmental physics, history, anthropology, heritage studies, sociology, economics... Many are convinced that our world is unsustainable and destined to disappear. Some even dare to claim, with undisguised enthusiasm, that in fact the disappearance of our species could be good news for the rest of the living beings that populate the planet. Many apocalyptic tales share an idyllic vision of the past. There was once a Rousseauian paradise in which humans lived happily, respecting the environment and taking care of their relationships. A lost paradise to which we should urgently return, on pain of becoming extinct and perhaps dragging the entire globe with us to destruction.

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Orfanos, S. D. (2023). **Book Review: *Slouching towards Bethlehem... and Further Psychoanalytical Explorations***, by Nina Coltart, Phoenix Publishing House, Bicester, Oxfordshire, 2021 (Original work published in 1992), 224 pp. ***How to Survive as a Psychotherapist***, by Nina Coltart, Phoenix Publishing House, Bicester, Oxfordshire, 2021, (Original work published in 1993), 162 pp. ***The Baby and the Bathwater***, by Nina Coltart, Phoenix Publishing House, Bicester, Oxfordshire, 2021, (Original work published in 1996), 192 pp.. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 594–601.

In a period of four years, Nina Coltart published three books: *Slouching towards Bethlehem... and further Psychoanalytical Explorations*, *How to Survive as a Psychotherapist*, and *The Baby and the Bathwater*. Combined, the books have a total of thirty chapters. Most of the essays in the 1992 book and 1996 book had been published before in journals and edited books. The second 1993 book contains essays composed specifically for that publication, the themes mostly being about case material, points of technique, and clinical practice. Despite the implications of the title *How to Survive as a Psychotherapist* it is not a how-to-manual but, rather a collection of ideas for beginning and seasoned psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists. All three books have been reissued with new forwards that solidify the reputation of Nina Coltart as a significant and unique member of the British Independent Group.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09422-w>

Koritar, E. (2023). **Book Review: *Coming to Life in the Consulting Room: Toward a New Analytic Sensibility***, by Thomas H. Ogden, Routledge, Abingdon and New York, 2022, 175 pp.. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 602–606.

Giselle – if this is too long, maybe we can omit the highlighted part and substitute with [...]

Thomas Ogden has provided the analytically informed reader over the years with a thinking space to profoundly examine and explore the analytic experience from both epistemological and ontological perspectives. His prolific publications in psychoanalytic journals are the result of his own digestion of the analytic experiences with analysands and symbolic representation of the experiences using a synthesis of theoretical constructs and his self-analysis of the experience-in-the-moment resulting in a unique and vital narrative precipitated in the analytic space with each analysand. Periodically, he pulls together various of his publications with a common theme and publishes a book which is an in-depth reflection on the theme. In his current offering, he introduces the theme in the introduction (which is original) in asking the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” (p. 1). In doing so, he shifts emphasis in analysis from the epistemological exploration of the unconscious mind to the ontological experiencing of the environment and its impact on the individual’s going-on-being. The early relational experiencing provided by internal and external parental object relations has a significant impact on individual growth and psychic development. Ogden’s thesis is that adverse environmental conditions lead to arrested development. Consequently, psychopathology can be considered as “...the inability to grow, to come more fully into being in a way that feels real.” (p. 7). He links the sense of aliveness with the ability for growth, whereas arrested development imparts a sense of deadness, which is managed by coping mechanisms such as repression and dissociation resulting in psychopathological symptom formation. From this perspective, the aim of psychoanalysis is the re-establishment of the growing process through vital experiencing in the analytic space with the analyst. In the process, the growing individual is challenged with the gradual diminishing of the influence of early identifications with parental objects. The gap left behind by the elision of the historical parental introjects may then be filled with what feels real and vital to the growing individual. Ogden refers to this process as “coming to life in the consulting room” (title). In the rest of the book, Ogden explores this process in depth.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09425-7>

Paniagua, C. (2023). **Book Reivew: *A Fresh Look at Psychoanalytic Technique: Selected Papers on Psychoanalysis***, by Fred Busch, Routledge, Abingdon and New York, 2022, 244 pp.. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 607–611 (2023).

A Fresh Look at Psychoanalytic Technique is a fifteen-chapter collection of Fred Busch's most important papers published in the last three decades. I think it will become must reading in all psychoanalytic institutes, and it should be recommended as well to students and practitioners of psychotherapy. The first thought that crossed my mind upon reviewing this excellent book, was "I wished I had read it when I was a Candidate," but that was long before this text was written.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09421-x>

Cooper, P. C. (2023). **Book Review: *Bion's Legacy in São Paulo: Theoretical Applications from the São Paulo Psychoanalytic Society (SBPSP)***, edited by Evelise de Souza Marra and Cecil José Rezze, Routledge, Abingdon and New York, (2022), 193 pp.. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), 612–614.

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During the 1970's the British psychoanalyst, Wilfred Bion, conducted a series of talks in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasilia, Brazil that were recorded and published posthumously ([1980](#), [1987](#), [1990](#)). The present edited collection demonstrates the impact of his teachings on the members of the São Paulo Psychoanalytic Society. The articles in this collection developed out of ongoing discussion groups and were initially prepared for presentation for a conference held in 2008. The editors describe the resulting articles as "a broad range of papers, and relied on stimulus-driven presentations" (p. x). For example, Chapter Fifteen (pp. 135–138) simply lists "nine points for reflection" from Bion's article, "Caesura" ([1977](#)), which the author, Luiz Tenório Oliveira Lima, notes, ". . . were intended to stimulate a discussion group organized by the author during the 2008 conference, "Psychoanalysis: Bion: Transformations and Developments" (p. 138). The individual articles in the collection address a wide range of theoretical, clinical and speculative topics, often presented in novel ways that range from short, sometimes graphic, highly personal straightforward pieces to lengthy, dense and abstract discussions that emerged through ongoing study groups. In this regard the collection represents a moment in time of the evolution of the group processes conducted by the contributors. They can be loosely divided into abstract theoretical, clinical/experiential, and multi-disciplinary categories. For example, in Chapter One (pp. 1–13), Cecil José Rezze, a co-editor of the collection, "tracks the evolution" (p. 1) of many of Bion's new concepts and the emotional impact they may have on the analyst. In Chapter Eight (pp. 70–83), Claudio Castelo Filho discusses theoretical issues related to "cure," "improvement," and "abnormality" in relation to the psychoanalytic encounter. Similarly, in Chapter Nine (pp. 84–90), Cicero José Campos Brasileiro offers an in-depth discussion of Bion's theory of "alpha-function" in relation to the clinical experience of presence.

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