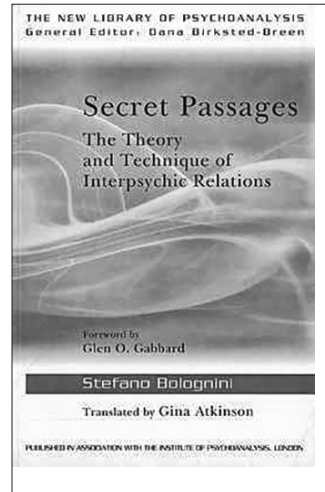


## **Secret Passages: The Theory and Technique of Interpsychic Relations**

*By Stefano Bolognini, translated by Gina Atkinson*

London: Routledge, 248 pp.

Stefano Bolognini, a psychiatrist, training and supervising analyst, former president of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society, and current president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, has written a delightfully clear text on the diverse perspectives of contemporary psychoanalytic theory and practice. Bolognini guides us through the current landscape of psychoanalysis, narrating theory, clinical vignettes, and personal experience with warmth and openness. In a sense, this text reads like a shared voyage with an avuncular psychoanalytic surveyor journeying through important but difficult psychoanalytic terrains and passages.



In his introduction to the book, Glen Gabbard points out that “Bolognini is like a cultural anthropologist studying the various psychoanalytic civilizations around the world with assiduous scholarship and contagious enthusiasm . . . a veritable tour de force of international psychoanalysis today” (p. xiii). Gabbard highlights the impact of globalization on psychoanalysis, with the explosion of rapid communication traversing traditional divides of geography, language, and social group. Faced with the dilemma and potential dissonance of pluralism, Gabbard suggests that today’s analyst struggles with diverse theories within one’s own psychoanalytic community as well as theories/approaches derived from languages and cultures that are unfamiliar. In this regard, the analyst balances a binary opposition—retreating into an insular orthodoxy seeking a preferred form of psychoanalysis, potentially disregarding “those who think differently from oneself” versus the alternative: exploring the unfamiliar, learning from others who see and think differently from oneself.

In this text Bolognini balances his narrative—from traditional aspects of classical analysis to the contemporary elaborations of psychoanalysis from North America, South America, Great Britain, and continental Europe, citing as an example Gabbard and Westen’s (2003) illuminating paper on rethinking therapeutic action. Bolognini’s approach is two-fold:

first, to relate the complex transformation of diverse theoretical approaches to convergences/divergences, and second, to survey the linkages between the intrapsychic and the interpsychic.

Bolognini divides his text into three sections. Part 1, "Three Prefaces to the Discussion," begins with Freud's creative singularity in developing psychoanalysis. From this, Bolognini traces forward to the pluralities of psychoanalysis, reviewing therapeutic factors, such as the setting, and also the therapeutic alliance, where the

therapeutic nature of the cooperative experience in analysis depends heavily on the patient's capacity to introject the experience in an authentic and deep way, structurally acquiring it as his own so that he can reproduce it in extra-analytic situations as well. (p. 31)

Bolognini supports Gabbard and Westen's (2003) view, citing Mitchell:

There is no general solution or technique because each resolution, by its very nature, must be custom designed. If the patient feels that that the analyst is applying a technique or displaying a generic attitude or stance, the analysis cannot possibly work. (Mitchell [1990], quoted in Gabbard and Westen, 2003, p. 826)

Bolognini's acceptance of the analysand's capacity to know the analyst relates to the balance between revealing/concealing counter-transference and the judiciousness of self-disclosure. Space does not permit discussion of these absorbing issues; however, Bolognini's writing allows us space to reflect on them and points to the analyst's task of creating space for the analysand. In poetic style, Bolognini describes analysis as a fluid medium holding conscious-preconscious-unconscious between analyst and analysand, where provision of support and basic analytic competence bond with the constancy of self-analysis. Bolognini concludes part 1 with a chapter on words and things, referring to Bion's alpha and beta functions describing the variable density of words/metaphors communicating meaning or their lack of meaning to the other. This section closes with a caveat relating to analysts' preference for theoretical expression and jargon when speaking amongst themselves rather than clearly describing clinical situations in simple terms.

In part 2, Bolognini devotes six chapters to review the ongoing process between the intrapsychic passages of the patient and the intrapsychic passages of the analyst, adding that the intra- and intersubjective dimensions cannot be separated during treatment, despite oscillations between one

and the other. He avoids the caricature of fixity on one or other axis, but suggests a dialectical equilibrium during analysis, and he questions the idealization of the mirror-like analyst. Offering a clinical anecdote, Bolognini first explicates an intrapsychic register, where intersubjective space was limited and his patient's mental involvement was more self-determined and relatively less co-determined. Mindful of the analyst's official declaration of principle, Bolognini supports the European Psychoanalytical Federation's "Theoretical Working Party" statement that "all indications of belonging to one school of thought rather than another should be tested in the field." Bolognini argues,

For an intersubjectivist, the interpsychic can be a limiting and relatively little known category since it concerns phenomena of superimposition or coalescence of exchange and at times of cooperation between areas and functions of two minds, which do not correspond to two subjects in the strict sense. (pp. 68–69)

There is a full discussion of this area in chapter 4 of this part, where relational models integrate intrapsychic and interpersonal approaches and where two psyches communicate in the psychic space that produces psychic change. At this point, Bolognini cites *figurability*—"shared acted experience"—and refers to European analysts such as Minazio, Botella and Botella, Haber and Godfrind-Haber, Perron-Borelli, and Racamier, working in the interpsychic sphere. He describes a second patient, to demonstrate an interpsychic view and "the complexity of the relationship between subjects" (p. 73).

In chapter 5, "Interpret-Action," Bolognini states that analysis is not merely interpretation, and he credits Jacobs's work on enactment: "The analyst *tumbling down into the shared unconscious in spite of himself*" (p. 82; emphasis in original), where he has the potential to realize, reflect, and explore enactments with the analysand. Bolognini presents the case of an analysand who elicits irritability and "an echo" in the analyst of being cut off. This is later processed by the analytic couple and Bolognini discusses it from intrapsychic, interpsychic, and relational perspectives.

Chapter 6 is a pleasant excursion into the bond between humans and dogs, citing Freud's and Bolognini's love of canines, combining aspects of transitional objects and space, the intrapsychic and interpsychic, and the coupling of person-dog, mother-infant, which Bolognini refers to as a "*benign and necessary, primary physiological fusional*ity" (p. 99; emphasis in original). Chapter 7, "The Psychosexuality of Mucous Membranes:

Inter-Body and Interpsychic,” begins with an assertion attributed to Ernest Jones that “no psychic process unfolds apart from physical ones,” and moves forward to the function of mucous membranes in delimiting and connecting inner/outer and self/other. Bolognini provides an interesting example in which the patient reports a dream in a somewhat detached manner, in which the analyst passionately kisses her. Bolognini acknowledges that it is through the technical action of the analytic process that the “internal/external contact symbolized by the mucous/kiss contact becomes possible” (p. 113). Chapter 8 is given over to empathy’s complexity, a major area of interest for Bolognini, who references many authors. Chapter 9 focuses on dream work and empathy and is well illustrated by case examples.

In part 3, “From the Transpsychic to the Interpsychic,” the author reviews the analytic comprehension of serious psychopathology in a psychotic patient, who throws a vegetable basket violently at a nurse, yelling, “Alfredo! [his name] What are you doing? Have you gone crazy?” On reflection, the nurse realizes “[h]e had become me, and he made me hear as though I were him.” Bolognini refers to this as “the ‘transpsychic’ which bypasses the individual’s mind, with violent elimination of borders and of normal functions of thinking and internal regulation” (p. 164). Here Bolognini asserts that repetition of micro- and macro-trauma directs itself not only toward what is not remembered, but especially to what has not been mentalized and metabolized. Here the analyst’s devoted therapeutic persistence is likened to the mythic pursuit of Peleus for Thetis and the struggle for internal space. In chapter 11, “The Courage to Be Afraid,” Bolognini returns to myth, to Phobos and Deimos, Fear and Terror, the two sons of Aphrodite’s illicit love with Aries, as well as a cautionary tale about strife’s historic and tragic roots represented in myth, arts, fairy tales, and human existence, touching on Freud, Klein, and Balint’s theorizing about defences against overwhelming anxiety and helplessness. He portrays the axis of fear as it pierces analyst-analysand alike, opening his clinical work to the reader.

In the last chapter, “Trust in One’s Self,” Bolognini reviews Freud’s theories on anxiety neurosis in 1894, followed by Freud’s 1926 revision of anxiety with his work on group anxiety/panic in his 1921 paper, “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” concluding with panic and Oedipal conflict. The author returns to his earlier fascinating case of a hyper-athletic, “fearless,” phallic, narcissistic character suffering from acute anxiety and panic, who has lost trust in himself and his capacity to self-regulate, which bears

upon the analyst's capacity to reflect and expose his own anxiety and fear in the analytic relationship.

*Secret Passages* offers the reader a comprehensive survey of the rich and varied perspectives of contemporary psychoanalysis, organized by an expert guiding us through unfamiliar and unexpected passages, much like an analytic journey itself. The reader may find the style and translation of the original Italian more discursive or expansive than an English text, but in this analytic tour, Bolognini dispenses encyclopedic knowledge with personal integrity, curiosity, vigour, and good-natured charm, never dismissive of other voices—an example for us all.

#### REFERENCE

Gabbard, G. O., & Westen, D. (2003). Rethinking therapeutic action. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 84, 823–841.

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### The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions

by Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven

New York: W. W. Norton, 2012, 562pp.

Jaak Panksepp, chair of Animal Well-being Science, and professor, integrative physiology and neuroscience at Washington State University, has been an outlier in neuroscience research for a number of years. He is known for his YouTube videos of rats laughing and playing when he tickles them. This book is a massive compendium of decades of research, co-authored by Lucy Biven, who trained at the Anna Freud Centre and is, incidentally, the daughter of the late psychoanalyst Charles Brenner. It is intended to be accessible to the informed lay reader but may require patience and fortitude to wade through.

