author’s sensitive and well-considered clinical illustrations, whether dealing with the “oracle” of dreams (chapter 3), a clinical chapter on a woman’s denial of time and reality (chapter 4), or full and empty spaces in the analytic process (chapter 6). Perelberg, through a complex and diverse set of clinical material, shows herself to be a sensitive and intuitive clinician who is attempting, wherever possible, to stick to a “red thread” of her ideas on après coup.

I found that Perelberg’s chapters on infant observation (chapter 10) and the infant and the infantile (chapter 11), though interesting, detract somewhat from the author’s main ideas. My own view is that the first nine chapters have been a successful attempt to integrate her theoretical and clinical ideas. The last two chapters make the book look like an example of the “collected papers” of this author.

This is a psychoanalytic work that requires several readings to appreciate how the clinical material interweaves with the author’s views on après coup. What is well demonstrated here, which is consistent with the main theoretical tenets of this book, is that the analyst can understand only retrospectively what has transpired in a particular analysis. An example is Perelberg’s asking a patient—for some reason unknown to her—whether he had ever had a homosexual relationship. Only much later in the analysis does an important dimension arise around the confusion of sexual identity.

Perelberg shows us how going with the flow in an analysis, being acutely attuned to one’s counter-transference, and the general atmosphere in the analytic situation, will often reveal something which was tacitly understood by the analyst without her consciously knowing it. This is a book well worth devoting the time it will necessarily take to explore the nuances provided in the clinical material.

Steven Rosenbloom
2104 De Vendôme Avenue
Montreal, QC H4A 3M5
sbroenbloom@sympatico.ca

Guilt and Its Vicissitudes: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Morality
by Judith M. Hughes

Joseph Sandler (1960) was among the first to recognize the flight from the superego that characterized psychoanalysis for almost half a century. Ironically, at the very time it was studying narcissistic characters inca-
pable of bearing guilt, psychoanalysis was itself evading it. But early in
the new millennium the repressed began to return in psychoanalytic dis-
course in the form of books and articles with titles such as You Ought
to! A Psychoanalytic Study of the Superego and Conscience (Barnett, 2007);
Guilt and Its Vicissitudes: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Morality (Hughes,
2008); The Quest for Conscience and the Birth of the Mind (Reiner, 2009);
The Still Small Voice: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Guilt and Conscience
(Carveth, 2013); “Reflections on the Absence of Morality in Psychoanalytic
Theory and Practice” (Frattaroli, 2013); and Guilt: Origins, Manifestations,
and Management (Akhtar, 2013). (See Carveth
2012 for a review of some of these titles.)

In my view, the fact that this intellectual
shift took place virtually simultaneously
with the 2007–2008 crisis of “casino capi-
talism” was no coincidence: our thinking
forms part of the ideological superstructure
that, however much its elements may cor-
respond to varying degrees with inner and
outer “reality,” is profoundly influenced, if
not ultimately determined, by the socio-
economic substructure. This is as true of
psychoanalytic thought as of any other.

While “the culture of narcissism” (Lasch, 1979) created by consumer capi-
talism put the study of narcissistic pathology on our agenda, it simultane-
ously infected us with it, giving rise to our five-decade-long “forgetting” of
the superego and of what I distinguish as the conscience (Carveth, 2013).

In Reshaping the Psychoanalytic Domain: The Work of Melanie Klein,
the emergence of psychoanalytic object-relations theory. In Guilt and Its
Vicissitudes (2008) she focuses in depth upon the evolving understand-
ing of morality in the work of Freud himself and that of Melanie Klein
and various of her followers who further developed it (Hanna Segal, Joan
Riviere, Wilfred Bion, Betty Joseph, John Steiner and Ronald Britton). A
historian by training, Hughes writes about psychoanalytic ideas not only
with scholarly depth and sophistication, but also with a clinician’s under-
standing of the issues.

Having carefully reviewed the development of Freud’s thinking in this area,
Hughes then traces the development of Klein’s important contributions and
those of her collaborators (Riviere, Segal), who, despite their innovations,
remain close to her own understanding, and then the more recent work of contemporary Kleinians influenced by Bion (Joseph, Steiner, and Britton), who shift significantly in their thinking about morality, stressing less the role of love in the ambivalence of the depressive position in generating concern and reparative guilt and more the role in moral functioning of cognitive development and the capacity to think. Thus, in the course of her survey, Hughes manages to highlight important theoretical tensions that remain controversial today. As someone who has recently come down on the Kleinian rather than the Bionian side in this debate (Carveth, 2013), my only regret is that ultimately Hughes roots for the wrong team—the thinkers rather than the lovers. Given Freud’s own rationalism, his wish to establish a dictatorship of the ego over the id and superego (as if an ego-dominated person could be anything more than a pathological narcissist), the neo-Kleinian shift from an emphasis upon loving concern for the other to a stress upon thinking and reality-testing (as if that could ever tell us right from wrong) represents a regression from Mrs. Klein’s hard-won advance beyond both the father in and the father of psychoanalysis.

Although Hughes comments upon the essentially sociological nature of Freud’s understanding of the superego as grounded in fear of rejection and consequent introjection of and identification with social authority via the parents’ superegos, she does not elaborate upon the problems of moral relativism this generates. Although he advanced a view of morality mostly as socially constructed, in Totem and Taboo Freud (1913–1914) described the remorse stemming from the killing of the ambivalently loved primal father that led to the establishment of the moral law in the first place. In Freud’s historical myth (and implied in his account of the Oedipal development of the individual), guilt, instead of resulting from the superego, precedes and motivates its formation. Hughes does not really address the contradiction in Freud’s thought between views of guilt as cause and as result of superego development. However, she correctly notes that Klein’s thinking about moral development builds upon the primordial ambivalence that leads to guilt for hating an object also loved and, hence, to reparative wishes. In other words, guilt has its deepest roots in a love/hate conflict intrinsic to human nature as such, whatever additional guilt we derive from socialization into particular cultures.

Hughes is to be congratulated for calling attention to important aspects of Melanie Klein’s thinking—such as her insistence upon the role of guilt due to ambivalence even in psychotic conditions wherein it may be so deeply buried or split off as to be virtually invisible (Hughes, 2008, p. 64). Certainly analysts schooled in relational, self, and intersubjective
Books

approaches focused upon attuning empathically to conscious and precon-
scious experience will remain oblivious to its presence in psychosis and
also in psychopathy and other narcissistic states in which depressive, as
distinct from persecutory, anxiety is warded off by a range of essentially
manic defences, as Joan Riviere so well understood, as Hughes points out.

In relation to the cognitive turn in post-Kleinian thought, Hughes
quotes (p. 82) from a note by Klein to Susan Isaacs in which she indicates
what she feels is the latter’s overemphasis upon unconscious phantasy, to
the relative neglect of the primitive ego’s interest in and influence by real-
ity. Hanna Segal responded to this concern, evolving a more balanced per-
spective that does greater justice to ego development and to what Freudians
call primary and secondary process thinking, which Segal associates with
symbolic equation and symbolic representation respectively. In so attend-
ing to the development and pathology of the ego and its capacity to think
and test reality, Segal in no way departs from the classical Kleinian stress
on the role of object love in the ambivalence that generates concern and
reparation and that motivates symbolism and sublimation. By way of con-
trast to this classical Kleinian stress upon the growth-promoting role of
the subject’s love, Bion’s emphasis upon the role of the containing object
in enabling thinking and learning from experience seems to have contrib-
uted to an unfortunate post-Kleinian preoccupation with the role of think-
ing in moral development—unfortunate because as both Jean-Jacques
Rousseau (1754/2010) and Melanie Klein understood, morality is grounded
not in thinking but in feeling. For Rousseau this was fellow-feeling or pity;
for Klein it was feelings of love and gratitude toward the good object.

As Hughes herself recognizes, this post-Kleinian emphasis upon the
role of thinking in morality runs into difficulty in view of the fact/value
disjunction: one cannot deduce an “ought” from an “is”; science is descrip-
tive not prescriptive; we can reason from value premises. but reason is inca-
pable of authorizing or validating such premises. Hughes seeks to offset her
well-justified anxiety in this respect by referencing in a footnote (p. 120)
a recent philosophical study claiming to have undermined the fact/value
disjunction but, in my judgment, merely complicates it to some degree. A
good deal of modern philosophy seeks to complicate established axioms,
sometimes giving the impression they have been overcome when, in real-
ity, they have merely been complicated. In light of such complication, the
axiom may now seem unsophisticated. But sophistry has always sought
through complication to baffle reason. It is true that clear thinking about
facts is relevant to moral functioning: the fact that smoking causes cancer
is relevant to my decision whether or not to smoke. But the fact that smok-
Lectures

ing may impair my health and shorten my life in no way proves that it is better to be healthy than ill, nor that life is worth living. Those are judgments beyond reason; they are grounded not in the subject’s thinking but in eros—in the subject’s love or lack thereof.

REFERENCES


Donald L. Carveth
York University, Glendon Campus
2275 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, ON M4N 3M6
http://www.yorku.ca/carveth
dcarveth@yorku.ca