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The Human Core. The Intrapsychic Base of Behavior. Vol. I: Action Within the Structural View; Vol. II: from Anxiety to Integrity

By Leo Rangell, M.D.

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Review by Arnold D. Richards

Like Arlow and Brenner, who have effected major revisions in Freudian theory, Leo Rangell extends psychoanalytic theory into new areas. His contributions, like theirs, are not patchwork jobs for an ailing theory but rather proposed solutions to important psychoanalytic problems. In the present collection, 35 papers are selected from the more than 300 Rangell has written over the course of four decades.

In Volume I, *Action within the Structural View*, Rangell re-examines the problem of anxiety in psychoanalytic theory and considers problems of choice, responsibility, and integrity. He provides a set of concepts and constructs dealing with aspects of human behavior that very few psychoanalytic theorists have even considered. As in all his works, his solutions to problems are grounded firmly in the work of Freud and his successors, chief among them Heinz Hartmann, Otto Fenichel, and David Rapaport. Rangell argues that his "postulation of unconscious choice conflict and the contiguous concept of unconscious ego decision-making... is ... quite different from the conventional type of oppositional conflict which leads to a solution by compromise formation" (p. 14). To Freud's concept of signal anxiety and of thought as experimental action he appends four additional concepts: "intrapsychic process" as against intersystemic conflict between, for example, ego and id; a new ego function referred to as unconscious decision-making; the syndrome of the compromise of integrity; and the exercise of will as an aspect of ego autonomy.

In "Psychoanalysis, Affects, and the 'Human Core,'" written in 1964, Rangell introduces his concept of "the human core," which is marked by "the unconscious rather than conscious, the intrapsychic rather than internal-external, and the conflictful rather than the conflict-free and autonomous ..." (p. 61). This harks back to Ernst Kris's definition of psychoanalysis as human behavior seen from the point of view of unconscious conflict. Of interest in this paper is Rangell's discussion of the then hot concept of identity; he remarks that the concept had encountered "less resistance than has almost any other psychoanalytic formulation..."; he argues that this was so because the concept "dynamically act[s] like an inexact interpretation" (p. 65). Identity is rather "an intermediate formation, ... as much the result of pre-existing intrapsychic conflicts and their derivatives and resolutions as a node from which further conflictful or adaptive constellations eventuate" (p. 65). Nearly thirty years later, the identity concept has arguably been replaced by the concept of the self. Rangell's point is that explanations based on identity disturbance or the vicissitudes of self-esteem are "not erroneous, but incomplete and unidimensional" (p. 67).

In "Structure, Somatic and Psychic," Rangell comments on the way direct child observation complements inferences made from adult analyses. One of the myths about "classicists" is that they filter all their formulations through the lens of oedipal dynamics. This chapter illustrates that with Rangell this is not the case. He is concerned with the first year of life, the oral phase in particular. He states that classical analysis has always been concerned with understanding

preoedipal phases and that it has always employed both direct observation and psychoanalytic inference. The concept of psychobiological unity is introduced to bring together Freud's two theories of anxiety; Rangell relates the first to biological and physiological aspects of anxiety and the second to its psychological components. His point is that both are relevant and must be included in any comprehensive theory. This au courant concept allows the integration of recent biological studies of anxiety into a psychoanalytic frame of reference.

Rangell's unitary theory of anxiety is presented succinctly: "The anxiety reaction is always set in motion by an existing traumatic state, either one which has invaded the ego involuntarily from outside of its control (as in Freud's first theory); or one which has been brought about by the ego under its control in a minimal and experimental way (from Freud's second theory)" (p. 305). Rangell contrasts his position with that of Brenner, who would limit anxiety to signal anxiety, requiring an ego capable of anticipating danger. There would seem to be some semantic confusion in Rangell's claim that he retains Freud's concept of actual neurosis. "Actual neurosis" is not simply the equivalent of a traumatic state; "actual" has here the meaning of "everyday" and involves Freud's idea that anxiety stems from unsatisfied sexual needs and the attendant damming up of the libido, which is then converted into anxiety. Rangell, however, seems to take "actual" as meaning automatic. He then insists that the concept be retained, as for him "automatic" does not entail the absence of psychological meaning, but is used simply to mean "occurring involuntarily" (p. 259). Rangell and Brenner would likely agree that anxiety as the presence of a traumatic state is in essence a signal of danger. The danger in trauma, according to Rangell, is in its continuing or getting worse or never stopping.

In "The Psychoanalytic Theory of Affects," Rangell sharpens his critique of Brenner's position that depressive affect is on a par with anxiety as a cause of defense. Rangell asserts that for him anxiety "occupies a supraordinate position since, in contrast to any of the other affects, anxiety is never absent in the intrapsychic sequence of events prior to the institution of the defensive activity" (p. 319). He also refers to Brenner's suggestion that ideation is included within the concept of affects. By contrast, Rangell sees ideation and affect as "separate derivatives of instinctual drives as modified and influenced by ego and superego activity" (p. 321). The connection between affect and instinctual drive is part of Freud's earliest formulations. Brenner would likely argue that the connection moves in the direction of an energy transformation view of affect, energy being either libidinal or aggressive, which has limited clinical usefulness as compared to a theory that replaces the concept of instinctual drive with psychological wish, libidinal or aggressive.

In *From Anxiety to Integrity*, the second volume of *The Human Core*, the emphasis shifts "from the intrapsychic core of human behavior to the core of psychoanalysis itself, as science and as a technical procedure" (p. 471). Rangell is deeply concerned with psychoanalytic dissidence, which he views as fueled by irrational forces and unresolved conflicts in the minds of those dissenting. These have resulted in

a series of linkages, of groups and theories, built around different points of emphasis in repetitive succession. In each there has been the fallacy of either *pars pro toto* or the selection of one pole of what in life is a duality. The external environment at the expense of the internal was selected by Horney, the interpersonal by Sullivan, downplaying the intrapsychic, object relations rather than drives by Fairbairn. Pre-genital determinants are pointed to exclusively, without the role played by the oedipal; the "here-and-now" is sought instead of reconstruction, deficiency rather

than conflict, empathy over interpretation, new experience rather than insight into the past (p. 836).

He goes on to comment on the overemphasis by some theoreticians of one phase of development over another: the moment of birth for Rank, the first year of life at the expense of all that follows for Klein, Fairbairn, Bowlby, and Winnicott.

Clearly, Rangell cannot accept Wallerstein's notion of common ground. As the distance between competing schools increases, "The lines of cleavage are not semantic but substantive, with definitive consequences for the conduct of analysis" (p. 865). Finding the common ground approach inadequate to meet this situation, he advances his notion of total composite psychoanalytic theory. For Wallerstein, clinical theory, unified and universal, is the common ground; different explanatory views are simply metaphorical. Rangell views that distinction as dovetailing nicely with Waelder's view of experience-near clinical theory versus experience-distant abstract theory, but the distinction is not at all that clear-cut, as many clinical concepts are theoretical and abstract, even that of transference. Rangell's response to the question "One psychoanalysis or many?" is a belief in what he calls diversity in unity, multiple phenomena under the umbrella of a single integrated theory. He points to an interesting difference between Wallerstein and Fenichel. Whereas Wallerstein posits a diversity of theories but a single clinical method, Fenichel's view, which is in essence Rangell's, is that there "are many ways to treat neuroses, but ... only one way to understand them" (pp. 867-868). A third position, which Rangell fails to note, is that of Arlow, for whom the treatment of neurosis is tied closely to the analyst's theory of pathogenesis. As there are more ways than one to understand neuroses, so there are more ways than one to treat them.

Rangell finds no basis of commonality with self psychologists, who have built a theory founded on childhood deficits and failures to the exclusion of the intrapsychic and the conflictual, or with Melanie Klein, who stressed the first year of life and de-emphasized the role of later experience. Against Fred Pine's federation of "four psychologies" Rangell asserts that we have but one theoretical country and thus no need to bring into it secessionist theoretical provinces with no justification for having seceded in the first place. Unfortunately, this political metaphor works all too well and suggests that our theoretical differences are often more political than scientific.

Volume II begins with a paper from 1953 that discusses similarities and differences between psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. Rangell defines psychoanalysis as "a method of therapy whereby conditions are brought about [that are] favorable for the development of a transference neurosis, in which the past is restored in the present, in order that ... there occurs a resolution of that neurosis (transference and infantile) to the end of bringing about structural changes in the mental apparatus of the patient to make the latter capable of optimum adaptation to life" (p. 479). Important to his view is that the differences between psychoanalysis and psychotherapy are not based on differing concepts of psychopathology and the mind at work.

The next chapter, "Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychotherapy," was written twenty-five years later. The difference he notes in his technical views is in the direction of flexibility. Now he presents himself as willing to see patients sitting up as well as lying down, to conduct hours on the telephone, to schedule sessions back-to-back or irregularly, etc. He contrasts his position with that of Gill, especially on the issue of transference. For Rangell, transference is "the central

lever of the therapeutic process," but it is also "a means, not an end, a way station through which the infantile neurosis and its derivatives are incorporated into the analytic procedure" (p. 493).

In "The Psychoanalytic Process," Rangell offers an account of what happens in psychoanalysis:

Only in psychoanalysis, under the protection of the analytic situation, is the patient motivated and willing to produce voluntary psychic disequilibria in a regressive path toward such original nuclear etiological situations. In other psychotherapies only anxiety which is already present ... is accepted to be faced by the patient... only [in psychoanalysis] does interest transcend the structure of the symptom and concern itself in depth with the genetics, dynamics, and structure of the basic surrounding and underlying character (pp. 540-541).

He points out the dangers of an excessive concern with transference.

Patients treated with excessive, even compulsive concentration on transference can emerge looking and feeling analyzed but with a pathetic and clonelike quality of dependence. They cling to their analysts, can become devotees, even benefactors of analysis, but with a shallow defensiveness through which the opposite can break through (p. 551).

As for Kleinians, they generally present interpretations beyond data and below defenses, memories, or preconscious readiness... Analysts backed by ego and structural theory who also give priority to transference phenomena generally impart interpretations of intrapsychic conflict in principle connected with associative data (p. 553).

But, he acknowledges, "Structural concepts can of course also become reified and irrational" (p. 553). "What causes change," he asks, "and—where it occurs—cure?" (p. 562). The factors include a quantitative one connected with the severity of trauma in a given case and with the changes in signal anxiety as a result of psychoanalysis. The result is a wider choice for the ego of what it can safely do, an increase in the area of the patient's "active though unconscious choice." The central idea here is that interpretations given by the analyst can diminish automatic or signal anxiety. This leads to an increase of capacity for active choice. Choices, however, "even with neurotic anxiety sharply diminished, may still not be as free as the analyst thinks or the patient would like" because of "internal limitations which mitigate equally against the expansion of life" (p. 568). Limited ego capacities; a paucity of learning, information, or developed channels of discharge; excessive passivity; a low level of instinctual strength—all are factors that hinder the movement from insight to change.

In "Defense and Resistance in Psychoanalysis and Life," Rangell describes what he considers a characteristic common to Freud's thinking and that of his successors: namely, the tendency to divide larger categories into their component parts. Freud, he reminds us, divided instincts into subtypes and dissected symptoms into "components of which they are the vectors" (p. 582). Anna Freud divided defensive behavior into specific defense mechanisms. Rangell notes that today there is opposition to "differentiating part processes within the whole" (p. 582) due to a concern that "the process of differentiation ... does violence to the subjective integrity of the individual" (p. 583). Rangell, however, insists that mainstream psychoanalytic theory retains an important place for integration as "a parallel process and principle alongside the process of differentiation..." (p. 584). Relevant here is the synthetic function described by Nunberg, the organizing and integrating function described by Hartmann, and, not least, the unconscious decision-making executive function described by Rangell himself.

In "Rapprochement and Other Crises," Rangell warns against the overuse of some Mahlerian concepts, "rapprochement crisis" in particular. He points to a similar tendency, one having even less felicitous results, as regards the concept of projective identification, a term that "has come to be used to explain indiscriminately almost all interpersonal phenomena ..." (p. 617). As for rapprochement, Rangell is concerned about its use as a specific etiological point of pathology. Socarides, for example, has used it in regard to the etiology of perversion, while the Tysons have used it to explain what they call pseudo-narcissistic personality. Rangell writes that the term rapprochement takes its place alongside all such universal tools of insight. But its enlistment as a distinct memory, or as a developmental year or few months of specifically experienced anxiety, trauma or depression cannot be automatically pointed to, or taken for granted from universal knowledge, as an individually exposed and remembered event or condition or series of experiences (p. 623).

He concludes, aphoristically, "Psychopathology stands on a base, not a point."

It is in remarks such as this that Rangell, who so often is taken as the representative of an outdated and ossified classical theory, reveals an outlook that preempts the criticisms of would-be revisionists. In these papers he has elaborated the developed body of Freudian thought in a way that highlights its longstanding attention to both wholes and parts. While he rejects any easy dichotomy that would identify a psychology of the whole as humanistic and a psychology of the parts as mechanistic, he insists that "the self, and the object, as whole entities, have always had a firm place in central unified psychoanalytic theory" (p. 6). That theory is for him not ego psychology but a total composite psychoanalytic theory, embracing id, ego, and superego, as well as the external world. Resisting the widespread tendency to characterize the classical position narrowly as drive theory or ego psychology or structural theory, Rangell presents an approach whose aim is to render unnecessary a plurality of competing theories.