

"More Than One Can Live": Reconceiving Harm and Reparation in the Intersubjective World

This presentation will juxtapose the intrapsychic idea of reparation, based on understanding unconscious anxieties of harming the love object, with the intersubjective ideas of repairing rupture and restoring recognition. From an intersubjective perspective, the "moral third" can be defined as a representation of a world in which repair is possible-- a lawful world of self and other in which attachment is preserved by acknowledging the inevitable violations of expected patterns. Acknowledgment of injury and misrecognition thus becomes an essential element of repair, developmentally and therapeutically. However, when there is a history of failed repair, even the need for acknowledgment is feared to be destructive (destabilizing) to the needed other, who cannot tolerate the failure to be good. Thus both need for responsiveness and need for acknowledgment of failure have the imagined or real potential to so destabilize the other that being injured and harming the other become conflated. Many enactments are governed by complementary, doer-done to relations, by the fantasy that only one deserves to live, only one can be right. The healing of complementary impasses where one must seemingly harm the other, impute harm or badness to the other, there is danger of impasse unrelieved by a third. The moral third might be a way to think about a position from which to metacommunicate about or step out of the deep complementary structure underlying impasse. Klein's idea of reparation, which moved beyond Freud, can work together with the idea of disruption and repair as a basis for Intersubjective recognition theory--in this way we create a vision of not merely repairing the harm done to internal objects but as repairing "the world," the order of things. Restoring the third together *with* the other is to recreate a lawful, meaningful world (representation). In this way a theory of mutual regulation and recognition allows a reformulation both of the dilemma of harm and the conception of repair.