student would emerge with a body of knowledge. Instead of the anecdotal and idiosyncratic teaching which has always characterized great humanistic teaching, a false analogy began to make the whole subject stale.

However, if, for example, one takes as one's model for truth the actual working artist, one could never view learning in that way. To choose a familiar instance: the film *Rashomon* by the recently deceased director, Akiro Kurasawa. In telling a story as seen through the eyes of four different characters, he is not setting us the task of determining whose version is most nearly accurate; instead, reality is understood to be reflected through the consciousness of the observer. Were I to say that I prefer the consciousness of A to that of B, I would be speaking about my own consciousness.

Psychoanalysis -- at least Jungian analysis in its pure form -- approaches the world from a perspective which is compatible with that of the artist because its focus is also on the specificity of individual experience. One of the clinical techniques that Jungians employ involves the circumambulation of the image. The idea this term attempts to convey is that when you put an image -- perhaps from a dream -- at the center and imagine yourself walking around it so that you are describing it from every possible angle, you will come to an understanding of its specific meaning in that context. This understanding is not transferable to other images in the life of the individual nor has it anything useful to say about anyone else.

Unfortunately, psychoanalysis in its diverse schools has not escaped the cultural shift away from the humanistic perspective of the artist and towards the behavioral perspective of mass psychology. (How many people even remember that Freud received not the Nobel prize for medicine but the Goethe prize for literature?) The effect of this movement is to make pathology no longer the issue of the individual soul in its life struggle to achieve a degree of wholeness but a deficit to be eradicated through treatment. Psychoanalysis becomes one of the societal tools to produce more functional individuals. I am not implying that psychoanalysis has abandoned its standpoint as a unique theory of human motivation and behavior, but that it has come increasingly to justify its existence by emphasizing its power to cure where psychopharmacology can only provide symptom relief. In my view, this descent to the marketplace is also being taken over by a pseudo-scientific theory of what works.

I cannot exaggerate the importance of letting a thing be what it is. To draw an example from a place where the societal, cultural, and psychological meet: the psyche of Bill Clinton. What I would underline is that I know nothing about his psyche nor can I in any fruitful way speculate about it. What I do know from the history of his life is that he likes women and sex. I can also easily imagine that he and his wife long ago came to their own understanding, perhaps even are no longer sexual together, as is hardly unusual in long marriages. It also makes perfect sense to me that someone who fitted sex in between appointments -- sometimes even during appointments -- clearly subsumed his sexual appetites under more prominent ones. What I wish to demonstrate is that when you allow a thing to be what it is, nothing more, nothing less, you are freed from the compulsion to draw conclusions of any kind about it. "Bill Clinton had sex with an intern in the White House in very cramped quarters" is not a statement that leads anywhere. If we could cease thinking in humanistic discourse that we are on any road, we would have a purpose again.

It is my belief, sadly, that an interest in complexity -- moral, aesthetic, religious, cultural -- is being profoundly undermined by the rush to judgement in every part of life. I think we are well on our way to a new Dark Age, though this one will have no shortage of books, remedies, miracles, and fountains of youth. What it will not have is soul.

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Impossibile Knowledge: On Teaching Psychoanalysis

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One of the ways Freud classified psychoanalysis (in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," 1937) was as an "'impossible' profession in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results." Psychoanalysis was, he wagered, in some way comparable both to education and to government whose status as "impossible" has been known for much longer. Having spent a good deal of time over the last few years considering -- in attempting both to learn and to teach -- the theoretical overlap between psychoanalysis and politics, this insight of Freud's is never very far from my thoughts.

If each field taken on its own terms is "impossible," what are we to understand as the aim in the teaching of psychoanalysis and politics? For surely, "impossibility" is another way of recognizing a certain lack or incompleteness of knowledge inherent to the system of thought itself and, if this is the case, then the question is not simply one of pedagogy but, in fact, reflects directly back onto the theory underpinning Freud's point concerning psychoanalysis' "impossibility." For Freud, what is clearly at stake is not only the transmission of a piece of knowledge but the imparting of an impossible knowledge, the transmission of a system of thought within which the hole or rupture in knowledge can itself come to the fore. It is only in the relation -- or more precisely the impasse -- between knowledge and "impossible knowledge" that the workings of the unconscious itself come to light. The problem that Freud then faces, and we in our turn, is how to teach a "knowledge" that is, in effect, only in absentia, that is as a lack or impossibility in knowledge? It is in overcoming this disjunction between the unique "knowledge" of psychoanalysis and the limits of "understanding" that the experience of one's own analysis becomes invaluable. It is, no doubt, in the dynamic of the treatment itself that the force of "the hole in knowledge" makes itself felt most insistently and productively.

My concerns are primarily aimed at the academic side of the psychoanalytic institution, outside the realm of training analysis. In the latter field, however, I should point out that the problems involved in the institutionalization of psychoanalytic knowledge have been repeatedly broached, for example, by Balint and Winnicott. tion of non-analytic regulations. To what extent does academia -- which shares with the training institutions a relatively slavish respect for hierarchy, dogmatism, and reverence for figureheads -- participate in this repression? And, if it does, is it not time to recognize that the biggest threat to the future of psychoanalysis might, in fact, reside in the unanalyzed acting out of its self-proclaimed followers? (A point that makes the complete absence of clinical experience in many academic theoreticians even more problematic.)

Let us note that part of what characterizes the impossible professions is that they are founded on a recognition of the necessity of dissent. Without an inherent tension, analysis, government, and pedagogy fail to thrive, fail to sustain the kind of frisson upon which they depend for their continued renewal. Without a transference-induced tension, analysis fails; without debate, liberal government becomes a farce; and without intellectual debate and disagreement, pedagogy devolves into indoctrination. We could, in other words, say that the impossible professions are those that are founded on a certain inherent rupture and thus gloss Freud's statement concerning their "impossibility" as the diagnosis of those fields whose ends cannot be conceived of as the eradication of opposition, as the erasure of friction. When the institution ceases to act as a support of a system of knowledge, and becomes instead an end in itself (in the same way that the fetishist takes his fetish), it takes itself for a truth -- indeed, *the* truth -- and demands recognition as such.

Now, it is this insistence on the truth of the institution that I fear has contributed to the continual ruptures that have been the bane of psychoanalysis since Freud's death and the "truth" of the institution has, for many psychoanalysts, taken precedence over its founding "impossible knowledge."

Susan Varney is a graduate student in literature at SUNY Buffalo whose dissertation is on sexual difference and the liberal state. She is the founding editor of Umbra: A Journal of the Unconscious and has an article, "Sexing Community, Timing Justice," forthcoming in Clinical Studies. ❑

Biography and the Use of Psychoanalysis

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As a biographer, I have resisted applying