Bringing Psychoanalysis to Life:
A User-Friendly Approach to Integrating Competing Theories
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At the request of my colleagues at the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California (PINC), this is a summary of a day-long seminar presented to the Oklahoma Society for Psychoanalytic Studies, a local chapter of APA's Division 39. The seminar took place in November 2008 at St Anthony's Medical Center in Oklahoma City and was attended by members of the local PINC community as well as those from the small but enthusiastic local group of psychoanalytically oriented therapists.

The purpose of the workshop was to explore a wide range of competing theoretical positions within the current geography of psychoanalytic pluralism, with the goal of encouraging development of an analytic identity based on selective integration of theory rather than eclecticism or theoretical orthodoxy. An essential assumption of this approach is that ideas from various theories can be integrated without the necessity of embracing the entire theory from which they are drawn. This was discussed as a process of 'bringing psychoanalysis to life' by gradually 'making it your own.'

In the morning portion of the program, I described my own process in doing so, and put forward a pluralistic model of theory and technique, which, under the influence of Bion's epistemological perspective, resonates with the American relational sensibility as a framework from within which to speak with our patients about 1) what we think is happening in their minds, 2) what we think is happening in the co-created intersubjective mind between us, and 3) what we think is happening in our minds as we attempt to be their analyst. To make use of various theoretical lenses to best 'perceive' the complex registers of clinical phenomena which arise, we explored a variety of key concepts

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borrowed from the idioms of Freud, Klein, Bion, Winnicott, Fairbairn, Matte-Blanco, Sullivan, and the existentialist analysts which have been 'pressure-tested' in clinical practice and proven useful. Detailed clinical vignettes were then presented to illustrate this integrated model in action, as well as to illustrate subtle variations in the therapist's emotional position and 'technique' from the registers of paternal and maternal function. The morning ended with a lively discussion and exchange with the audience which demonstrated their interest, enthusiasm, and ability to think critically about the material presented.

The afternoon program extended the themes of theoretical integration and personal ownership of analysis. Just as each of us as analysts must gradually create a personal and unique version of 'bringing psychoanalysis to life by making it our own', each of us as human subjects and analysands has to gradually making our lives 'our own' by coming to terms with all that comes our way (O). Conceptualized as the process of mourning omnipotent desire, the challenging part of this process involves acceptance of all that we have not chosen, would not have chosen, and do not want. This includes aspects of both internal reality (desires, drives, conflicts etc.) and external reality (limitation, misfortune, culture, trauma etc.). Such acceptance occurs along a continuum with resignation at one end, and graceful acceptance with equanimity at the other. To consider the course of traversing this continuum throughout the lifespan, and to discuss its conscious and unconscious correlates, I presented a paper (in process) entitled: *Subjectifying O: The Existential Deep Structure of Psychoanalysis*. The afternoon program then ended with a discussion period spearheaded by Carol Mason-Straughan who had prepared a list of extremely thoughtful, evocative and challenging questions for consideration.