

## Book Reviews

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***My Life In Theory*, by Leo Rangell, American Psychoanalytic Association, New York, 2004, 328 pp., Price (pending).**

Dr. Leo Rangell, perhaps the pre-eminent living psychoanalyst in the world, has written and presented over 450 articles and 7 books. He has been president of the American Psychoanalytic Association twice, president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, and currently the Honorary President of the IPA since 1997—a post held previously only by Ernest Jones, Heinz Hartman, and Anna Freud. In his latest book (and we hope not his last) he has produced a “tour de force” which may perhaps be considered the most important psychoanalytic book since Fenichel’s two volume set on the *Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* in 1945. Rangell has practiced, lectured, and lead for six decades. He has witnessed the evolution of psychoanalysis through the second half of it’s 100 year history. He has personally known and collaborated with all the great personalities who have crafted the field over the past 50 years.

In this opus, his journey through the field of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory is described in two phases. The first phase encompasses the 30 years in which psychoanalysis reached its ascendancy in the United States, primarily organized around classical ego psychology. The second phase begins in the late 1960’s and encompasses the next 30 years in which the field branched into many directions through many schools to the point of loosing theoretical cohesion.

Rangell postulates through many examples that when individuals and groups worked well socially and politically together then clinical practice and it’s derivate underlying theory progress energetically. But he also describes other experiences in which individuals’ personal dissent from existent practice into new schools; is often built around a charismatic leader. Rangell repeatedly states his respect for authentic, creative, advances in the field, that add to the existing practice and theory.

He nevertheless proposes that change is more often a result of group dynamics that first leads to progression which then, because of politics, lead to digression and the formation of new "Schools" that believe that their theory of mind supersedes all theory that came before. This group process of progression, creativity, exclusion, and digression goes back to the earliest pioneers around Freud including Jung, Adler, Ferenczi, Reich and others. Rangell discusses the division of the original group in L.A. of which he is an active participant into the LAPSI and SCIPIE, as well as the split in England between the Kleinians in the British Psychoanalytic Association and the school (and clinic) around Anna Freud. In the past 30 years he discusses the eventual rejection of the major body of classical theory, painstakingly developed by prior practitioners, by the later theories of Kohut, Gill, Wallerstein, Sandler, and others. Rangell believes that for all their differences they are important, but, still only branches of the same unified theory of psychoanalysis (only Jung and Lacan do Rangell consider non-psychoanalytic).

In this book Rangell reveals considerable previously unknown history with regard to his personal relationships with Greenson, Kohut, and Anna Freud. Kohut especially comes in for detailed attention with the revelation and discussion of never disclosed personal contacts; that are both surprising and unsettling.

Rangell argues, that in his own writing and lectures, he has always sought unification, and that post-modern, anti-authoritarian thinkers have unfairly stereotyped him and classical theory as rigid, cold, and un-inclusive. Rangell notes that from his own observation and personal experience that practitioners of the classical school were as humanistic, and caring of their patients; as any school, who claim different of the past 30 years. He also points out that many of these divergent schools have come and gone while preaching the end of classical theory and that beginning in the mid 1990's there has been a growing movement in America and internationally towards unification.

Rangell describes himself as a "developed Freudian" and eschews categorization by any of the labels of the other 10 or so existent schools. His primary concern is that if psychoanalysis is to develop intelligently and coherently from the observation of clinical data, that it must stop trying to reinvent itself in each new school by allegiance to abstract theories that purports to be an entirely new and complete theory of mind; without connection to the past. The opposition to classical theory or its fundamental parts has led to postmodern debates about: neutrality vs. participation, history vs. present, rational vs. affective, authority vs. inter-subjective, conflict vs. object relations, guilt vs. tragedy, oedipal vs. pre or post oedipal, etc. Rangell believes that all distinctions fall within a unified theory that differentiate and branch out, but

nevertheless, belong to the main body and trunk of the tree first planted by Freud.

This book by Dr. Rangell may be one of the finest contributions to the field that has been written (and that is the opinion of one who is not essentially a practitioner from the classical school). His knowledge of the nuance, differences, and similarities among competing theories of the past 40 years is astonishing. He compares and contrasts the evolution in theory both horizontally and longitudinally. He gives examples of what is thought to be entirely new paradigms in the 1990's and demonstrates their similarity to work of 30 years ago and then again to 30 years earlier. His mastery of all the streams of theory coursing through the field is simply incredible. He fills in lacunae in the history theory that current practitioners may not even know they have. Reading Dr. Rangell is like watching a master artist at work.

There are a few considerations not adequately addressed in this version of the history of the field. Dr. Rangell makes much of the Rapprochement of schools of psychoanalysis in the past decade. But, this may be do more to the needs of survival economically and socially than to a true unification of theory. There are a dwindling number of candidates in training and even fewer patients. Furthermore, because Dr. Rangell was privileged to ascend the ranks of organized psychoanalysis in the 1960's and 70's he was surrounded by like-minded, highly capable, and comfortable analysts. He may not have recognized how vertically narrow, rigid, restrictive so many psychoanalytic organizations and societies had become in the ensuing 25 years. The suppression of creative candidates and the promotion of ungifted conformists; the rejection of unorthodox papers by the major journals (unless penned by an established insider) probably had more to do with dissension within the field. This was not merely a resistance to one's own psychoanalyst, or an oedipal conflict with authority. It was just as much for intellectual and economic survival. Although Rangell does mention these issues in the course of his review they are hardly emphasized; and, he is unconvincing that he did much in his leadership roles to significantly address these issues. Perhaps if he and successive leaders would have challenged the entrenched powers more aggressively, then the past 30 years may possibly may not have become as turbulent as they did.

Dr. Rangell has shown considerable courage in his efforts to incorporate postmodern contributions into a unified theory of psychoanalysis. His many writings attest to his laudable efforts to support inclusion in opposition to sectarianism. Dr. Rangell is convinced that there will eventually arise a unified theory (a hope carried by many). However, no matter how desirable the quest might seem, in the end unification may involve a papering over of an irreconcilable differences in the theory of

mind. There will always remain a fundamental duality between the subjective and the objective. We are simultaneously beings, who are uniquely individual, while being continuously tied to objects, who mirror us. If there is to be a unification it is not as Rangell believes in a single theory of mind, but, more as a rope braided by the intertwining of two separate strands; that together create a stronger clinical load bearing than either line alone.

Nonetheless, Dr. Rangell has produced a book of enormous erudition, born of his 60 years of practice, leadership, and honest commitment to what is best in the field. The history of the second half of the century of psychoanalysis cannot be written without a close reading of this work. This book makes for stimulating reading for any psychoanalyst, or, to whom ever is interested in what psychoanalysis is, or, is not. More importantly, Range's "My Life in Theory" is essential reading for every training analyst who collectively are responsible for the development of the next generation of practitioners.

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