

Trigant Burrow and the Social World

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Abstract

This paper reviews significant aspects of the work of Trigant Burrow (1875-1950), an early psychoanalyst who, while less well known than many of his contemporaries, was, as a number of commentators have argued, well ahead of his time. This article discusses four areas of his theory: the preconscious, the nest instinct, and the love subject; primary unity, primary intersubjectivity, and the “I” persona; social images, social neurosis, and the social unconscious; and, finally, group, community, and society. The article argues that the study of Burrow’s work is important firstly, in recognising the historical antecedents of what may be viewed as a social turn in both psychoanalysis and psychotherapy; and, secondly, in helping psychoanalytic thinking to be more open to diversity with regard to marginalised theory and people.

Keywords: Trigant Burrow; nest instinct; primary unity; primary intersubjectivity; the “I” persona; social images; social neurosis; social unconscious; group analysis; group therapy; social psychiatry; marginalisation

Introduction

Although many psychoanalysts and psychotherapists have never heard of Trigrant Burrow, he was hugely influential on the early development of psychoanalysis in the United States, publishing 18 papers on the subject between 1911 and 1918, and as a pioneer of group analysis. Although his work anticipated the interpersonal analysis of Harry Stack Sullivan, the social critique of the neo-Freudians, and the radical social critique of the radical and anti-psychiatrists of the 1960s (Neill, 1990), Burrow himself became quite marginalised and marginal. In (re)presenting Burrow's theory, not least in the context of this special issue, we hope to contribute to the rehabilitation of his work and reputation (see, especially Pertegato & Pertegato, 2013a). In doing so, we introduce his work by means of a brief biography.

Trigrant Burrow: A brief biography

Nicholas Trigrant Burrow was born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1875. He studied literature at Fordham University in New York, where he developed a life-long interest in writing plays. Following his graduation in 1895, he went to medical school at the University of Virginia, from which he graduated in 1900. After a year of postgraduate study of biology and a year touring Europe, during which he attended a psychiatric clinic in Vienna, he spent three years studying experimental psychology at John Hopkins' University, Maryland from where he received his doctorate based on his study of attention.

His education at John Hopkins was fortuitous in that it brought together the experimental psychology that was developed in Leipzig under Wilhelm Wundt (the first person to call himself a psychologist); the scientific psychiatry of Bleuler from Zürich, and Freud's psychology from Vienna. James Baldwin, the early experimental psychologist, had just taken

over the experimental psychology department when Burrow arrived; he instilled in his students the fact that humans are fundamentally social beings. These four influences – the experimental, the scientific, the psychoanalytic, and the social – may be found in Burrow's writings, from 1911 until his death in 1950.

A month after moving from John Hopkins' University to New York to undertake his training in psychiatry with Adolf Meyer (a student of Bleuler), Burrow was introduced by Abraham Brill (a psychoanalyst who had had no training or analysis himself), to Freud and Jung, who were travelling together to New York to deliver five lectures. Immediately after this meeting, and with Meyer's encouragement, and despite incurring some financial hardship, Burrow took his family to Zurich to undertake a year-long training and analysis with Jung. He returned to Baltimore as the first US-born person to study psychoanalysis in Europe. In 1911, Burrow joined Ernest Jones and seven others to form the American Psychoanalytic Association (APA). At the time, he was also secretary of the American Psychopathological Association.

The papers Burrow published between 1911 and 1918 – in which he wrote about the physiological unity of infant (foetus) and mother; about preconscious experience (differently from Freud); and about the mother as the infant's love subject (not object) – show his independent thinking and anticipate later work in infant development (by Margaret Mahler and her colleagues, and by Daniel Stern and his colleagues), and self-object theory (as developed by Heinz Kohut).

When Freud and Jung split in 1913, Freud invited Burrow to come to Vienna for analysis. Although Burrow declined this invitation, perhaps for financial reasons, he later offered Freud refuge at his home in Baltimore when the First World War broke out. From their correspondence, both appeared concerned by the rift in the psychoanalytic community created by the split between Freud and Jung (Burrow, 1958). It may have been that Burrow was also concerned about the differences between his own work and that of Freud, and wanted to invite Freud to a more informal setting to explore them.

These differences became more apparent as time passed, especially regarding Burrow's social psychiatry and the form of his interest in and practice of group analysis. Although he was appointed President of the American Psychoanalytic Association in 1925 year, and the publication of a further 13 papers between 1925 and 1928, nine of which was given to the APA, when the APA reorganised itself in 1933, Burrow was expelled (in the form of being asked to resign).

Burrow's subsequent exclusion from the psychoanalytic community and its history appears deliberate. There is seldom mention of him even amongst those historiographies that refer to a number of Freud's pupils and disciples who broke away to develop their own theories and/or form their own schools, institutes, or approaches (Alfred Adler, Wilhelm Stekel, Carl Jung, Otto Rank, Sándor Ferenczi). Ackerman (1964) suggests that this was because Burrow's ideas were too radical, and too far ahead of his time. Most commentators on Burrow (Ackerman, 1964; Galt, 1984; Pertegato & Pertegato, 2013a) reflect on how he was deliberately marginalized, not only by the psychoanalytic community, but also by others who appear to have used some of his ideas. For example, most texts on group therapy either fail to

mention or minimize the fact that, with Joseph H. Pratt and Paul Schilder, Burrow was an originator of group therapy; and Maclean (1973) makes no mention of Burrow's (1953/1968) earlier description of the "third brain" in humans. Burrow himself accused Sullivan of plagiarising his work – but continued to send him reprints of his papers! Sandner (1998) thinks about this treatment of Burrow as a "amnesia [which may be] understood as a social defense elicited by Burrow's thoughts and analyses of pathological social relationships, which exist throughout society and to which psychoanalysts and group analysts are also subject." (p. 7)

Nevertheless, Burrow was recognised and praised by people such as John Dewey; W. B. Cannon; D. H. Lawrence, with whom Burrow maintained a correspondence); Herbert Read, Kurt Goldstein, Carl Rogers; and Eric Berne, who referred to Burrow as "the first dynamic group psychotherapist" (Berne, 1961/1975, p. 186). However, it is significant that these were outside the psychoanalytic community.

In 1922, Burrow founded the Lifwynn Foundation for Laboratory Research in Analytic and Social Psychiatry (which still exists) and worked as its director until his death in 1950. His work there including investigating the physiological substructures of groups; and measuring the electrical activity of the brain in connection with attention patterns which prefigured biofeedback (Burrow, 1938, 1943; Shiomi, 1969).

Having introduced Trigant Burrow, we now turn to his contribution to four areas of thinking which, we suggest, are important for a contemporary understanding of groups and society,

and a more group-minded approach to the individual and to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy.

The preconscious, the nest instinct, and the love subject

These concepts were first expressed in detail in a paper Burrow read at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the APA in 1917, entitled “The Preconscious or the Nest Instinct” (and later published in 1919).

For Burrow, the preconscious refers to the experience of the infant when it is at one with the mother – from in utero onwards, an experience which remains throughout life. This sense of continuity prefigures Stern’s (1985) unfolding layers and senses of self, which includes “the sense of core self-with-another” (Stern, 1998, p. xxv) As Syz (1961) puts it: “for Burrow the ‘preconscious’ or primary subjective phase – preceding the stage of objectivation, cognition, desire and sexual acquisitiveness – was one of tranquil quiescence, of oneness with the mother.” (p. 284) Burrow (1919) refers to this as the “nest instinct”. There are some synergies between these ideas of Burrow’s and Winnicott’s later observations with regard to mother–infant unity, the importance of holding, the continuing of being (Winnicott, 1960), though the language is different, and there is no evidence that Winnicott read any of Burrow’s work.

Although Burrow’s developmental concept of the preconscious is different from Freud’s concept (which is a phase of psychological function), Burrow himself saw no incompatibility between the two, or Freud’s view of the unconscious; indeed, he argued that his [Burrow’s] preconscious is “a requisite correlate of his [Freud’s] teaching” (Burrow, 1917/2013a, p. 41).

What follows from this for Burrow is that, in the development of consciousness, the mother is not, as Freud and others would have it, the “love *object*” but, rather, the “love *subject*”. What this means is that it makes more sense to regard the separation or individuation process as one where we objectify ourselves and retain a sense of unity, or oneness, or primal consciousness, with the mother. This way of viewing the individuation process has significant implications for our subsequent relationships. As Arden (1995) acknowledges: “He [Burrow] believed that the harmony and connectedness that exist between mother and infant should also exist between the individual and society.” (p. 93)

In Freud’s view, the mother’s breast feels (to the infant) part of the infant, until it is wanted and not there, at which point the infant comes to realise that the breast is separate from itself. Thus the breast – and the mother – become the love object to which the infant longs to return. In this way, any subsequent feelings of an oceanic consciousness are just fragments of an infantile consciousness, a persistence of the neonatal state of the ego. From this perspective, Freud’s Oedipal complex makes some sense, and sex retains a central place in the story of “the fall”. (Karl Jaspers, the psychiatrist and existentialist, brought to psychoanalytic discussions Søren Kierkegaard’s idea that every child’s development replicates the Biblical story of the fall of Adam [Merkur, 2009].) For Freud and his followers, mystical experiences were regressions to wishful fantasies of mother-child fusion, and considered pathological. This had been demonstrated to Freud by Charcot, the French neurologist who held public displays at the Salpêtrière Hospital, at which his star female “hysterics”, under Charcot’s hypnotism, would display the religious ecstasies of the mystic saints (largely, and not insignificantly, to a male audience). It was claimed miraculous cures and faith healing were

due to the hysterical roots of the apparent problem and, thus, suggestion, in some form or another, could result in healing.

Burrow's contention that the mother is the love subject (and not love object') calls for a wholly different understanding of how we develop a sense of an independent mind. Like the Mahayana Buddhists and Taoists, Burrow is saying that, whilst we still have the sense of being one mind, we have objectified ourselves as having individual, separate minds and, in so doing, we discount our ability to recognise our unity. The Mahayanist Buddhists express this well when they say samsara (the cycle of death and rebirth to which life in the material world is bound) is nirvana (a transcendental state).

In Burrow's work, we can see developed ideas about ourselves (ontology), as well as an understanding that our preoccupation with these ideas is keeping us from being ourselves (alienation). According to Watts (1972), when Bodhidharma, who brought Mahayana to China, was asked who he was, he said, "I don't know" (reported in Watts, 1972, p. 209). As Burrow saw it, a collective or "phylogenetic" disorder exists in humans, and "individual discord is but the symptom of a social discord" (1926a, p. 87). As Arden (1995) puts it, in a rare acknowledgement of Burrow's influence on psychoanalysis, "he diverged from psychoanalytic thinking because of his emphasis on the social nature of symptoms. He had an idea which seems fairly ordinary now, but was unacceptable at the time – that it is society that is sick and not the individual." (p. 93) Thus the various psychoses, depressions, obsessions, etc., with which psychiatry deals (as well as crime and conflict) are simply variations, in a more intensified form, of a common, underlying, nearly species-wide disorder. There is a physiological harmony and feeling continuity we have with the mother-

organism and/or the world, which has been interfered with in most cultures by the process of cognitive objectification, which leads us to become divided within ourselves. It is difficult not to recognise this primary “feeling-continuity” as anything other than what is called whanaungatanga by New Zealand Māori, ubuntu in Zulu, hunhu in Shona, or shimcheong in Korean, and, according to Sigauke (2016), it is central to “Southern theory” (Connell, 2008).

Primary unity, primary intersubjectivity, and the “I” persona

Burrow’s concepts of the preconscious, the nest instinct, and the love subject describe an ontological view that humans have a primary unity, and, therefore, a primary intersubjectivity between ourselves and the world. This biological and social reality sets the scene for the infant’s mental life and their primary matrix of consciousness. In this preconscious mode, Burrow (1913/2013b) argues:

the psychic organism is at one with its surrounding medium. Here, consciousness is in a state of perfect poise – of stable equilibrium. Here, at its biological source within the maternal envelope, this organic consciousness is so harmoniously adapted to its environment as to constitute a perfect continuum with it. (p. 8)

Illustrative connection

In this sense, Burrow can also be seen as a forerunner of organismic psychology, a tradition of holistic psychological theories which stressed the organisation, unity, and integration of human beings; was influential from the mid-1920s to the mid-1950s; and which influenced the development of Gestalt therapy and, to some extent, client- or person-centred therapy. This is represented in the work of Kantor (1924), Goldstein (1935/1995), and Tolman and

Brunswik (1935), contemporaries of Burrow, but whose work he does not reference, nor they him; slightly later, and after Burrow's major work on primary unity, Wheeler (1940), Murphy (1947), and Werner (1948); and, more recently, Brown (1990), and Tudor and Worrall (2006). When Nick (the first author) introduced me (Keith, the second author) to the work of Trigant Burrow, I felt an immediate connection with both his ideas and his language. As a student and proponent of humanistic psychology and psychotherapy, I knew about Rank's influence on Rogers, primarily through Jessie Taft – see Taft (1933), Ellingham (2011), Tudor and Worrall (2006), and Tudor, (2022) – and the organismic tradition represented by the authors cited above, but I hadn't known of Burrow's pioneering work which, in effect, laid the groundwork for the subsequent elaboration of the organism, primary unity, intersubjectivity and relationality.

Some philosophers have, in their own way, proposed the existence of a primary unity or intersubjectivity between humans, and between humans and the world, namely, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1996), Wittgenstein (1958), Heidegger (1962), Bakhtin (1986), Levinas (1981/1998), and Shotter (2016). For Heidegger (1962) the car feels like part of me (“I feel ‘my’ wheels on the road”), until something goes wrong, and then a gap is created. Central to Wittgenstein's philosophy is that we don't infer someone is in pain; we see it immediately. This is seldom a guess or conjecture (Overgaard, 2007). Merleau-Ponty (1945/1996) describes a living direct resonance of bodily behaviour that we have from birth, which he calls our “primary intersubjectivity”. This phenomena of “we”ness is largely unrecognised in European culture and psychology (’though see Künkel, 1984; Tudor, 2016), but is central to many indigenous cultures.

Shotter (2016) notes that when a conversation takes on a “life of its own”, it’s all primary intersubjectivity. Wittgenstein (1958) explains this experience thus: “(I)t is correct to say ‘I know what you are thinking’, and wrong to say ‘I know what I am thinking’. (A whole cloud of philosophy condensed into a drop of grammar)” (p. 222e). This is because when I have given myself to the conversation, I am not looking at myself, and so have no idea what I am thinking, but, hopefully, am showing you what I’m thinking by how I talk and what I say. Burrow (1953/1968) gives an ethical slant on this primary intersubjectivity (that could be straight from Levinas, 1998), when he (Burrow) states:

there exists in the child an inherent, instinctual, biologically healthy feeling for what is right in the sense of man’s unity and coordination as a common species. It is as innate to a child as is his sense of physical equilibrium or his visual response to a moving object. (pp. 36-37).

Burrow describes this primary intersubjectivity as the “within out” way of functioning, as distinct from looking in the rear-view mirror to see what we are doing, which represents a “without in” way of functioning. Today, the new cognitive paradigm of enactivism is tracing these circuits around which our attention flows when engaged in within out ways of functioning (Drury & Tudor, 2022) Again, Burrow can be seen as a forerunner to this way of thinking.

Of course, we are not always in a state – or process – of organic unity and primary intersubjectivity. Gregory Bateson (1972) took up Aldous Huxley’s assertion that the central problem for humanity is to recover our grace as an animal (Huxley, 1962). In a letter written

to a student in 1932, Burrow picks up on a parallel first noticed by the anatomist G. E. Coghill's (1929) in his work on the evolution of movement patterns. Burrow reports that Coghill had noticed that the Mexican Salamander (axolotl), have forelimbs, which,

let us say – take on at times a quite independent, reflex action. These localized and independent departures in function assume ... a quite hoity-toity air. They even assume an “antagonistic” manner of behavior toward the primary total action of the organism.... [T]hese arbitrary and partial activities remain quite “discrete” ... They do not assume any total or integrated or centred principle of individuality or identity.... As long as they do not get organized, do not form a union, as it were, they cannot threaten the vested capital, so to speak, of the central salamander principality. (Burrow, 1958, p. 252)

These part-actions are also short-lasting. However, for humans, this is what Burrow (and Coghill) saw was happening: a part function had taken over, and hence our loss of grace or organism-as-a-whole functioning.

This loss of grace or elegance of movement is brought about because our attention as human beings has become divided against ourselves. This is something that Burrow (1958) was discussing with D. H. Lawrence and with John Dewey, and that Frederick Alexander was referring to in his work (e.g., Alexander, 1941/2000). We have a part that has taken over, evaluating the symbolic value to us of everything we encounter, a part that is looking from without in rather than from within out, as other living things do (Burrow, 1953/1968). This is the “‘I’ persona”, the human axolotl forelimb, so to speak, that has become “independent” and taken charge of our total being. Merleau-Ponty refers to the mediation of our interactions

though symbols or our intellect as “secondary intersubjectivity” (Daly, 2014). Nietzsche (1887/1967) notes that, just as there is no flash apart from the lightening, so there is no “I” apart from the walking or thinking. The noun-verb (subject-predicate) structure of English grammar (and other languages) creates these Cartesian ghosts or fictions. Nonetheless, we have made this fictional “I” real; we have created and maintain a number of neuromuscular tensions, or attention circuits with which we identify. This divided state of attention has become the “normal” everyday mind or, as experienced by most people. More recently, in his excellent book on the divided brain, *The Master and his Emissary*, McGilchrist (2009) argues that the left hemisphere (the Emissary) has taken over the right hemisphere (the Master’s house) which deals with emotional and (holistic) organismic functioning. In his book, McGilchrist moves from the micro, in his analysis of the different functions of the two hemispheres of the brain, to the macro, in his analysis of the impact of this on our understanding of the world. In doing so, he offers both the biological and social context to what others explore with regard to the significance of right-brain to right-brain relational processes in psychotherapy (notably Schore, 2014, 2019).

Like the other writers (philosophers, psychologists, and novelists) before and around him, Burrow had seen that when we lose touch with or ignore this primary intersubjectivity and connectedness, our risk of conflict and disharmony is high: we become *too* individuated. He first wrote this as a book entitled *Our Common Consciousness*, which he never published a such, but subsequently re-wrote it and published it in 1927 as *The Social Basis of Consciousness*, and sent to Freud. Freud (1915/1918) had claimed, in relation to war, that it was “a mystery why the individual members of nations should disdain, hate, and abhor each other at all, ... I do not know why this is” (p. 38) Burrow was offering him an understanding

of why war or conflict is almost inevitable, given this common social neurosis. Freud replied, thanking Burrow, but noting “I am sorry to say that its first chapter already presented great difficulties for my comprehension” (quoted in Campos Avillar, 2016, p. 50).

Although Burrow’s ideas did not sit well with Freud, he was influencing lesser known psychologists of the time, such as Gardner Murphy, Franz Alexander, and Nathan Ackerman. He continued exploring in a variety of ways how our “social instinct” to attune to each other (and the world), is being overshadowed as we develop secondary intersubjectivity. To those sceptical of the notion that a potentially universal social neurosis plagues humanity, to which we are largely oblivious, Burrow noted that malaria is “normal” to many indigenous people in the tropics people who, “without exception, regarded the incidence of intermittent chills and fever as a condition natural to their kind as a tribe or group” (Burrow, 1953/1968, p. 27). In a similar vein, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2000) uses the term “misrecognition” for our current collective condition, rather than “false consciousness”, which is a Marxist term for a state of mind induced by the ruling class. However, here we are talking about a failure to recognise that we are primarily relationally responsive to each other. Bourdieu was discussing this in terms of Foucault’s (1977) account of the “fabrication” of the self, especially in industrial cultures over the past 1,000 years. Although Burrow’s focus on this situation being the inevitable cost of being “enveloped in a compact mesh of conditioning stimulus” (1953/1968, p. 273), and Foucault’s focus was on how selves were fabricated for the purpose of governance of the population (Rabinow & Rose, 2006), the two are not incompatible. Today, this misrecognition on the people in the West- and, we would suggest, the global North – has been popularised by Henrich’s (2020) *The Weirdest People in the World*.

We can observe the development of pseudo-identity or what Burrow called the “I” persona in the infant, when our symbol system first begins to “revert upon its inventor” (Burrow, 1953/1968, p. 295). This is the time when we learn to be a “good child”, and, therefore to be “right” or “wrong”. We inhibit our behaviour not because we see the other was hurt by what we did (a primary intersubjective response), but because we want parental approval for being good (or in some cases or situations, parental attention for being bad). We now start to relate to the world no longer as a whole organism, but with a substantive “I” monitoring ourselves (Burrow, 1930). One may recognise Foucault’s (1977) panopticism at work here, (for an application of which to professional regulation, see Drury, 2017/2020).

Illustrative example #1

So, the parent is puzzled when the infant comes back from “time out” and hits their Grandma again. The child is learning that it has the power to hurt, but the parent just sees good or bad, right or wrong. If trusted, and Grandma shows she’s hurt, the infant will stop hitting her; not because it’s right or wrong, but because the infant recognises grandma’s pain in themselves (our primary intersubjectivity). It is in scenes such as these, where we respond to the parental judgment rather than the world itself, that we develop our “I” persona (a Cartesian ego). As Burrow (1953/1968) puts it: “The sense of right imparted by the adult generation definitely distorts the child’s innate capacity for organismic coordination with his fellows.” (p. 37)

With the development of the “I” persona we are now living in a world of “private advantage, of socially sanctioned personal gain” (Burrow, 1953/1968, p. 37): “watching the faces of his elders, he must sense their tone of voice in order to determine what is the ‘right’ as contrasted

with the ‘wrong’ response, and such divisiveness within ourselves “must lead finally to armed conflict” (p. 39). Although there is no evidence that he studied Burrow’s, we might say that Foucault’s contribution to this perspective is that he showed that this individuation process has been immensely intensified under neoliberalism (Read, 2009).

Social images, social neurosis, and the social unconscious

In his paper “Social images versus reality”, Burrow (1924) postulated that social images are the raw material of prejudice and conflict which is expressed at the individual, interpersonal and social level. In two subsequent papers, he formulated the concept of social neurosis which he viewed as an illness unconsciously shared between the individual and society (Burrow, 1926a); and questioned so-called “normality” (Burrow, 1926b). As with the ideas discussed in the previous section – primary unity, primary intersubjectivity, and the “I” persona – these ideas have their origin in the preconscious, the nest instinct, and the love subject: “With the social mind, the important image is the immediate community about it. The community occupies the central position within the social unconscious that the mother image occupies within the social unconscious.” (Burrow, 1924, p. 234) Recent analytic scholarship seems to echo and expand on Burrow’s ideas about the links between perception (inner and outer) and socially-mediated representations, shared ideas and ideologies.

Guralnik and Simeon (2010) utilize the concept of interpellation to capture the various ways perception of self, other, and world are mediated by ideology. The state or social system, through culture and ideology, are lodged deep within the fabric of individual/group thinking and subjectivity. More recently, Dajani (2017, 2020) argues that cultural systems structure the ego’s unconscious nuclei, shaping perception and directing behaviour from within in ways that are recognized by the group and society from without. Deep within our individuality lies

the collectives in which we are embedded and the systems of meaning-making that organize them. Dajani suggest we expand our notion of dependence and subjectivity to include links with the large groups (community) and the systems of meaning-making they generate and use for basic cohesion and co-ordinated functioning..

As language develops and with it the “I-persona”, the infant may start positioning themselves in the most advantageous position with regards to the social values of their milieu, especially if that milieu is competitive and values secondary intersubjectivity. As Foucault’s work shows, this can intensify. Burrow discusses this kind of intensification by referring to Raskolnikov’s prophetic dream in Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866/2001). In this dream, a plague had come to Europe, in which the microbes attacked the intelligence and will in a way where the sufferers considered their mad decisions and scientific conclusions as infallible – each thinking that they alone held the truth – and were now killing each other. Even when they formed armies to do this, the soldiers would turn on each other, too. Such a state of “war of every man against every man” is, of course, known to us as Hobbes’ vision of how it is in the state of nature (1651/1996). Hobbes, and numerous prominent thinkers between him and Freud, believed that humans were, by nature, “dissociated” from each other and in need of an artificial, symbolic agreement, a contract, and/or a strong leader/authority to hold us together. Both Rousseau and Locke put forward theories about a social contract, suggesting that we as individuals have consented, either explicitly or implicitly, to surrender some of our freedoms to the authority of the state in exchange for, as Foucault (2007), puts it, a “society of security” (p. 11). However, as both Burrow’s and Foucault’s (2003) analyses show, such social contracts are the very things keeping our social neurosis alive, for they are

premised upon the assumption of us being separate, and repress our innate sense of “we-ness” and sociality.

We should note that Burrow’s use of the word “social” was not the customary one, as understand either in scientific or lay terms. As Pertegato and Pertegato (2013b) put it, in their introductory essay to their collection of Burrow’s work, for Burrow, the “social” refers to “interiorised relational modes, that is, values, modes of thinking, of feeling and of acting induced by environment contexts – familial, cultural, social, and institutional – considered “normal”, but that do not reflect the true reality of individual and community” (p. lxx)

Henrich (2016) coined the term “collective brain” to account for our success as a species. Notwithstanding the mereological fallacy (of reducing the mind to the brain) in this term, and our preference for the “collective mind”, we find his thesis compelling. He argues that it is not superior intelligence that has allowed humans to spread to (nearly) every corner of the globe, but our cultural knowledge, in the form of ingenious technologies, cultured languages, and institutions that fit with each other and the ecology. When we have lost touch with this common know-how (e.g., explorers getting lost, or epidemics killing off large proportions of a population and leaving no transmitters of this knowledge), humans have not fared so well. Although humans are not entirely superior – Henrich cites experiments that show chimpanzees having superior cognitive skills in some domains – where humans have the edge over other primates is in social learning: we are particularly sensitive to others, and adept at learning by mimicry from each other. This, for Burrow, is our “social instinct”. As we see it, the social/political work ahead consists of identifying the “misrecognitions” (in Bourdieu’s sense) that are responsible for our ecological crisis.

Not only that, but Burrow's understanding of the social world, in terms of images and neurosis is uncannily relevant to contemporary society and the challenges posed by the coronavirus and government responses to it.

Illustrative example #2

Most governments in the world have, on the basis of the social contract they have with their citizens, taken measures to restrict freedoms (principally, of movement and assembly), in order to protect people's health and maintain a secure society. However, in doing so, some of the strategies adopted – the privileging of certain science, information, and treatments; the adoption of vaccine targets, and mandates; and the imposition of further restrictions for the unvaccinated – have created divisions between people. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the language has shifted from the unifying image of “the team of five million” to the divisive image of the 90% vaccinated (which was originally established as a public health target) who are now considered to be compromised by the 10% who are not vaccinated. (At the date of submission, these figures were 95% and 5%, respectively.) The divisions and polarisations between people can be seen in the (social) images presented about people who, for various – and differing – reasons, have views opinions about the current pandemic and responses to it that are different to the majority, images which, literally and visually, form the raw material of prejudice and conflict. Burrow's approach offers a more unifying perspective whereby (in this case), the 10% - or 5% - could be seen and understood as still part of and contributing to the whole team and society as they have been, for instance, in Japan.

This brings us to Burrow's approach to normality. As he puts it: "It is my unhesitating position that the prime requisite for clear, free, untrammelled work in the analysis of human personality is the unqualified rejection of the unconscious compromise embodied in the social reaction of normality." (Burrow, 1926b, p. 221). In other words, the patient or client's "abnormality" is not and should not be seen as an individual pathology, but, rather, as a pathology in society – which is an example of what Bourdieu refers to as "misrecognition". This has huge implications for how we understand pathology (and, therefore diagnosis and treatment); the patient/client; and the role of the psychoanalyst/psychotherapist, especially for those groups that have been pathologised and marginalised by psychoanalysis and psychotherapy (for a history of which, see Schwartz, 1999). Thus, we join the call for the de-psychiatricization of society (von Peter et al., 2021).

Burrow (1926b) is clear about what this means for the healer/analyst/therapist:

Repudiating the attitude of the healer whose criterion is the restoration of his patient to a condition of normality, the medical analyst who is not himself capitulating to the concession of the social unconscious will take his stand against any recourse that is based on a programme of compromise and habituation. He will see what is often considered as normality is merely unconsciousness on a co-operative basis and he will not be deceived by its insidious effects. (p. 221)

This is a useful basis on which to analyse some of the conservative and even reactionary history of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy (see Cocks, 1997; Schwartz, 1999); as well as more contemporary debates about registration of title and the regulation of the profession (see

Tudor, 2017/2020; Younger, 2017/2020). It also has relevance to psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic practice in the current global context, for instance, with regard to therapists who are using and being asked and/or instructed to use therapy to encourage their patients or clients to get vaccinated. As Pines (2013) puts it: “Burrow’s challenge was that the psychoanalytic community shared in a social cover-up; the fact that we all disguise is that neurosis is social and that a social neurosis can only be met through a social analysis.” (p. xxi)

Burrow arrived at a similar position as Foucault did with regard to liberation. Foucault spent the last couple of years of his life exploring the genealogy of the Greek concept of *parrhēsia* (truth-telling and free-spokenness), and the idea that “one could not be impure, immoral, and know the truth” (Foucault, 1984, p. 372). Both Burrow and Foucault understood that one’s primary intersubjectivity needed to be cultivated or deepened, so that one could “enjoy” a total, or what Burrow sometimes called an “orthotonic” pattern of responding (Burrow, 1953/1968, p. 275). Whereas Foucault (2001) stresses *parrhēsia* as the outcome of liberation, Burrow stresses the loss of prejudice, which is a result of the partitive responding of the “I” persona). Like the Mahayana Buddhists, Burrow claimed that we “may do so only as a species or phylum”, and that any individual who made the return “would be straightaway reconditioned environmentally, inter-relationally” (Burrow, 1953/1968, p. 273). As we shall see, this led Burrow into a life-long experiment that gave birth to group therapy.

From psychoanalysis to group therapy

Following his analysis with Jung (1909-1910), and his return to the John Hopkins Medical School, Burrow practiced psychoanalysis for some ten years before concluding that “the

basic occasion of the failure of analysis [is] our exclusive emphasis on the personal to the utter neglect of inherent social factors.” (Burrow, 1958, p. 52) In 1918 Burrow was challenged by Clarence Shields, one of his analysands regarding the discrepancy between Burrow’s theoretical statements and his attitude as a psychoanalyst, and the inherently authoritarian role of the analyst. This came as something of a shock to Burrow who came to realise that "in individual application, analytical attitude and authoritarian attitude cannot be separated." As a result, Burrow experimented with mutual analysis, that is, reversing the role of analyst/therapist and analysand/patient/client with Shields.

In an essay on power relations in psychoanalysis, Haley (1958) describes it as a game of “one-upmanship”. He argues that the patient has been using their symptoms to get “one up” on others in life, but, by accepting the symptoms, the analyst remains one up on the patient. The only way the patient can get one up is to drop the symptoms, but the astute analyst sees this coming and discharges the patient just as they do this, thus remaining one up on the patient! However, when Burrow and Shields swapped roles, Burrow (1927) found that Shields “had merely shifted to the authoritarian vantage ground I had myself relinquished” (p. xvi). Thus began an experimental study into the deconstruction of psychoanalytic authority: a reciprocal effort by both to recognise and explore the attitude of authoritarianism and autocracy both had.

Although this was a radical experiment, Burrow may have heard about this from Jung who, in 1908, had engaged in mutual analysis with Otto Gross in the earliest recorded reference to this form of therapy (Heuer, 2011; McGuire, 1974). From this point on, as Pertegato and Pertegato (2013b) put it: “Burrow wholly dedicated himself to experimentation with the

social principles, already included is his psychoanalytic formulations, through group research” (p. xxxvii).

By 1923, this study had expanded to include a group of students. However, both Burrow (1927) and Shields (1937) reported that this was very difficult as relationships in the group became very tense and the impulse to abandon the study and flee was almost overpowering. In the same year that Burrow was president of the APA (1925), he took their findings to the International Psychoanalytic Congress in Bad Homberg, hoping that this shift to group analysis would impress Freud. (Unfortunately, Freud was ill, and didn’t attend the conference.) After returning to the United States, Burrow and his group rented a house in Baltimore, where six of the students began living. Others came to meals there three times a day. The group included businessmen, nurses, and physicians. In 1927 Burrow closed his psychoanalytic practice, gave Adolf Meyer his resignation letter from the university (as requested), and became the scientific director of the Lifwynn Foundation, the name they gave their research group institution. One of the group took the position of housekeeper (which they maintained for 27 years); the Foundation moved to New York, and later Westport, Connecticut (Galt, 1995), closing in 1995.

Essentially, Burrow’s research and that of the Foundation shifted from the application of psychoanalytic principles *in* the group to a group analysis *of* the group and, further, of the individual and groups *in* the social world and, finally, to the social analysis *of* the social world. As with other aspects of his theory, which he saw as logical developments of Freud’s psychoanalysis, Burrow regarded group analysis as a methodological development of psychoanalysis, and a method by which the particular meaning of certain contents which are

defended against on the social level can be made conscious and worked through (Sandner, 1998).

As Pertegato (2014) notes, Burrow's central thesis was now "the fallacy of the individualistic approach in psychiatry and psychoanalysis" (p. 321). However, challenging this fallacy, and shifting from seeing the individual as an individual to seeing them as part of a larger social organism requires a change in the therapist's cognition – and skill. In this more social model of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy our primary intersubjectivity and relational responsiveness to each other is central. As we become less ego-centric and more cotentive, a term Burrow coined to describe a pattern of more instinctive orthotonic responses, we give up our authoritarian position in the therapeutic relationship, and no longer attempt to manipulate our client into change. We let go of the medical model, adopt a growth model, and become more responsive to our clients (Drury, 2017; von Peter et al., 2021). We see this today in Seikkula's (2011) *Open Dialogue*, a most successful approach to psychosis, which Seikkula himself says he feels "uneasy to name as a therapeutic *method*" (p. 191). This more relational approach is also supported by common factors research which demonstrates that relational factors, which are common to all therapies are more important than any specific and individualistic model of therapy (Wampold, 2015).

For Burrow and his colleagues, there was, beyond therapy, the larger question of what a community might look like in which members would live in cotention with each other. As Burrow (1958) himself observes: "A leader as a central image of private authority has to be eliminated and our common problem met by us in common if we are to break through the bonds of a socially enveloping neurosis." (p. 197) Thus, the Lifwynn Group also studied the

process of decision-making in their community, with special attention to somatic responses. Significantly, the by-laws of the Lifwynn Foundation called for cooperation and consensus with shared responsibility (Galt, 1995) – and implied parrhēsia. In this respect, D. H. Lawrence (1927) wrote of Burrow: “Dr Burrow is that rare thing among psychiatrists, a humanly honest man..... [S]ubjective honesty, which means that a man is honest about his own inward experiences, is perhaps the rarest thing, especially among professionals.” (p. 314) Lawrence went on to say the cure for the species-wide social neurosis Burrow describes “would consist in bringing about a state of honesty and a certain trust among a group of people, or many people – if possible, all the people of the world.” (p. 317)

Illustrative example #4

One of the authors of this paper (Nick) was led by an understanding of Burrow’s work to encourage relational responsibility in the community through his clinical practice. For example, in family therapy sessions, he would ask children as young as six or seven, what they would do if, when they were walking home from school one day on their own, they encountered a three-year old child who had fallen off their tricycle, and was lying on the road bleeding. Often the situation would have the added complication of the children’s own needs being high: you want to go the toilet urgently; you want watch your favourite program on TV; your favourite aunt is visiting today. Despite all these distractions, Nick did not find one child who failed to recognise their relational responsibilities in the situation he posed. The ensuing conversation usually extended over several sessions as all the members of the family explored their relational responsibilities and primary intersubjectivity: “How do people in your family acknowledge that Dad is a bit frazzled?”, “Can you tell your best friend is a bit down from 50 metres away by the way she moves across the playground at school?” Many of the parents

of these families subsequently reported that, unlike many of their peers, they experienced no difficulties, no oppositional behaviour from their children when they passed through the teenage years. Nick has also had the opportunity to work with some individuals and their families where psychosis has been present. More recently, Nick is encouraging police to take a more relational responsibility approach to policing, though this work is still in its infancy.

Both Burrow and Lawrence (and others) were in agreement that sex would no longer be the neurotic problem at the heart of the community, where Freud had positioned it (Ackerman, 1964; Burrow, 1958). They saw that obsessive libidinal strivings are a product or intrusion of the “I” persona, an objectification of sex to which we have become over-attached. In Burrow’s words, the grasp reflex has been perverted into a grab reflex (1953/1968). Rather, Burrow viewed ecstatic union occurring in all sorts of activities, a view that prefigured Brown’s (1985) thesis that genital sexuality is itself a repression, and a world without repression would transform our erogeneity to a whole body communion with the world, a return, as it were, to what Freud (1916/1973) had disparagingly referred to as “polymorphous perversity”.

In this move from group to community, Burrow experimented with and consolidated his emphasis on social analysis. This was – and is – challenging to the psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic establishment, not least because it requires a more social focus both in and beyond the clinic; and because, in his critique of the fallacy of individualism, Burrow is, in effect, inditing the “psy” disciplines for being part of problem in maintaining social neurosis. These disciplines maintain this is by privileging the individual and pathologising the group. Examples of the former include the exclusive focus on drive(s), object relations, ego, and self

as ways of understanding the individual; and the dislocation of the individual from their environment, especially in Western thinking. Examples of the latter include the assumption that the default setting for the treatment of the client/patient is individual therapy/analysis; and the (over)concern about “group think” (a term coined by William Whyte Jnr. in 1952). Psychotherapy and psychoanalysis would look quite different if the root metaphor for the person was the organism (see, for instance, Tudor & Worrall, 2006), the default setting for therapy was group therapy (see Tudor, 1999), and therapists challenged “individual think”. This is the reason why mental health services in many countries are in such a mess (Drury, 2014; von Peter et al, 2021).

Of course, there is a wider, intellectual context to this personal tension or paradox in the human condition of being unique and individual and fundamentally – and constitutionally – social. The resolution of this requires both the psychological and the sociological, which, in our particular field of enquiry, is represented by the meeting of Freud and Marx, not least in the work of Alfred Adler, Wilhelm Reich, Eric Fromm, Harry Stack Sullivan, Karen Horney, Herbert Marcuse, Juliet Mitchell, and others. However, just as “Marxist social theory ... neglect[s] ... the subjective factor in social phenomena” (Rickert, 1986, p. 352), so, too, Freud’s individual psychoanalysis neglects the social factor in psychological phenomena, and there is more work to be done in developing a psychosocial – and sociopsychological – analysis. Whilst these figures and writers may be better known to the readers of this journal for their various contributions to such an analysis, we think that Burrow deserves a place alongside them for his work on this.

Summary

In 1925, D. H. Lawrence wrote to Burrow, saying that “I am in entire sympathy with your ideas of social images.” The following year, he wrote to Burrow thanking him for his paper “Psychoanalysis in theory and life”, commenting that “It is true, the essential self is so simple – and nobody lets it be, But I wonder if you ever get anyone to listen to you.” (quoted in Huxley, 1932, p. 634) Lawrence’s words summarise two problems with Burrow and his work.

Firstly, Burrow’s ontology – that human beings are relational, interconnected, and, therefore, intersubjective – while simple is perhaps too straightforward for a discipline and profession that favours complexity. Also, it may appear somewhat out of place in the Western (and Northern) intellectual tradition, in which the sense of unity and resonance with each other and/as nature is marginalised. Nevertheless, in the literature on feminist therapy, critical race theory, ecotherapy, and indigenous therapy, we see mainly connections with Burrow’s work.

Secondly, and despite his extensive research and publications, and (we think) the accessibility of his writing, Burrow was, in effect, ostracised from psychoanalysis because of his emphasis on the social (images, neurosis, unconscious, etc.) and the social world. He demonstrate this through the development of group analysis and physiological awareness, long before the development of humanistic psychology, biofeedback, T-groups, therapeutic communities, and the communal living experiments of the 1960s; and, we suggest, that the new paradigm of enactivism, which has emerged this century, is the latest development to give expression to Burrow’s central ideas (see Drury & Tudor, 2022). Such thinking is providing clearer steps to an ecology of mind – and a mind that is, fundamentally ecological and, therefore, social.

As Ackerman (1964) notes, Trigant Burrow was “far in advance of his time” (p. vii). Perhaps now, his time has come.

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