

## **SPIRIT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS: SENSE OF TRUST IN DOUBT**

By Wang Chian

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### **Abstract**

Psychoanalytical spirit, for me, relates to the believe of the ability to conjecture the unknown, which is very critical when our Chinese try to bond our own personal histories and cultural contexts to psychoanalysis. In this paper, I first focus on some phenomena in psychoanalytical or psychodynamic training and practice in China, such as 1) the attempt to map corresponding psychoanalysis theoretic models and concepts by seeking “allele-morphic” concepts, ideas or models, which may take a risk to separate, fragment or even dissociate the meaning from Chinese context; 2) the attempt to attach relativism or pragmatistic hermeneutic meaning by stuffing Chinese materials into the current western theoretical or conceptual analytical frames, which may function only as a way to avoid painful experience being stirred up, may kidnap the dynamic streams to a linear logical line, and may make a pretending coherent discourse or story but obliterating the possibility of openness to the unconsciousness; 3) Being in technique predicament of either overemphasizing techniques or clinging to classic theories, which may bind one to teleology, resulting in goal-directed explanation and may “tighten” the analytic process by hoodwinking the mind into a pseudo sense of sureness or certainty.

Furthermore, I offer my own reflection on the above phenomena according to the following two dimensions: 1) how to understand the relationship between trust and doubt, which is the core of psychoanalytical spirit. I elucidate it as a metaphorical “relaxation” with the transcendental feature, the aim of which is to hold the potential floating ambivalent sense of both trust and doubt before achieving equilibrium; 2) how to understand the “relaxation” of trust and doubt under the platform of diachroneity, which I consider is a very critical part within the psychoanalytical spirit— attaining the coherent sense of meaningfulness. I illustrate it by an anthropologic field research of Prof. Jing Jun, under the len of which I try to show that how one could develop the belief of one’s natural sense as well as the coherent meaningfulness of his or her belief through the process of construction and reconstruction.

## Introduction

What is the spirit of psychoanalysis? K. M. Abenheimer (1955) considered the psychoanalytical spirit did not exist, which only existed as kind of instinct, or as kind of energy only in the sense of the fundamental apperception. Nevertheless, as Freud (1923) mentioned, “id eventually has influence on super-ego by processes that have remained unknown to the ego”. So I guess it is possible for us to explore the psychoanalytical spirit by exploring the repressed drives, the influences of these drives on our believes which related to the super-ego structure, as well as the ego which struggles with the unknown, unsureness or unmanageable sense. Moreover, if taking psychoanalysis as “a *procedure for the investigation of mental processes*”, as Freud (1923) said, we may also consider psychoanalytical spirit related to the believe of the ability to conjecture the unknown, backing on which we may sense and manage the world confidently, and we may bond our own personal histories and Chinese culture contexts to it closely.

So when I try to observe the psychoanalytical spirit within the Chinese context, I think what I need to observe is not only whether it's suitable or not under the Chinese cultural background, but also whether it could be sensed and expressed by Chinese way freely and smoothly. In this paper, I firstly focus on some phenomena in the field of psychoanalytical or psychodynamic training and practice in China. Then I offer my reflections of the metaphorical “relaxation” of trust and doubt, which I consider carry the analytical spirit within its dynamical, transcendental and diachronic features.

## Some Phenomena in the Psychoanalytical or Psychodynamic Training and Practice in China

1) The attempt to map corresponding psychoanalysis theoretic models and concepts by seeking “allelomorphic” concepts, ideas or models, which may take a risk to separate, fragment or even dissociate the meaning from Chinese context. This kind of tension may embody in those people who are eager to swallow some general thoughts or even models, either foreign or domestic, either modern or traditional, as patches to calm down what is stirring up unbearable chaos inside or too difficult to reflect by themselves at that moment. However, when those patches full of theories, models or techniques are not able to cover the holes which outside stresses or inside desires tore on their coherent consciousness, people defect from those immediately, announce those theories, models or techniques do not work or are not suitable in modern China, and then turn to others. While the psychoanalytical work, which influences patients and ourselves not immediately and obviously, but gradually and implicitly, relating to moment position or structure of an particular person.

2) The attempt to attach relativism or pragmatistic meaning, under which circumstances it emphasizes action or policy dictated by consideration of the immediate practical

consequences rather than by theory. For instance, the attempt to make the analytic explanations of Chinese stories or cases by stuffing these into the current western theoretical or conceptual frames, such as Oedipus conflict or attachment defect. Chinese materials, in this way, is whittled away into a almost perfect “case” to illustrate the “generalization” or “globalization” that psychoanalytical theories or frames could be. However, the price of it is to pay out Chinese characteristic features, which embodies as specific patterns that one used to organize Chinese stories. While when people are driven by the impulse to give explanations eagerly so as to get a knowable and manageable sense immediately, the above attempt of abating and cutting the “not harmonic tones” out of the existing psychoanalytical theories might only function as a way to avoid painful or fearful experience being stirred up , and might kidnap the dynamic streams to a linear logical line. The pretending coherent discourse or story may obliterate the possibility of openness to the unconsciousness. The reluctance to open the multiple possibilities to manage the multifarious and disorderly materials in a over-determining way, may relate to the fear that the current psychoanalysis frame will emerge crevasse and rupture when meeting the possibility of gestating the diverse meaning .

3) To fall into technique predicament, which is enacted as overemphasizing technique, or being constant of classic theory in China, which may bind one to teleology, resulting in goal-directed explanation to phenomena by the purpose they serve rather than by postulated specific cause. For instance, people sometimes hold the strong expectation of seeking for the suggestions from supervisors by saying or showing something to the patient, instead of using the containing space to reflect and understand more about the patient and his or her counter-transference towards the patient. And sometimes what the supervisor commented were directly and immediately used into the therapeutic work after supervision, which being taking as kind of techniques or even artifices to deal with some difficult moments when the therapist felt having no way to react in front of the patient. If these “tricks” was tested as efficient enough to calm down the unbearable anxiety from the patient’s side, maybe also from the therapist’s side, it might be generalize to all the “similar” situations. In this case, I want to argue that whether we could leave some moment or inner space to hold and taste the anxiety before we take the empirical common explanations of it. Technique, if being used in this way, might occupy and block one’s mind, or to say, might disturb one’s natural, unselfconscious and unconstrained action, and might also disturb the potential process of integration of the true sense into the deeper inner structures. So the more we knuckle under to instrumental technique, the less we are able to keep the analytical space. Instrumental rationalism may “tighten” the analytic process by “pulling the muscles” of theories and techniques when falling to cover the personal historically truth by a “standardizing ” and “depersonalizing” way.

Moreover, we also need avoid over-reflection, or being sticky of classic theory. Under this circumstance, the proceeding of searching for insight is quite compulsive, yet unproductive. As Fonagy et al. (1998) described in the concept of overly-analytical or hyperactive reflective function, “thoughts spins like a car wheel which has lost contact with ground. Because so many of the connections between what is thought about thoughts or feelings and the original thoughts or feelings themselves have been lost, meta-repre-

sentational capacity works overtime but without real impact. These subjects may be actually aware of failing to arrive at meaning. However, they are drawn to this way of talking in the hope of re-engaging their free wheeling thinking with a sense of affective significance.”

Anyhow, the aim of putting forward the above phenomena, is not intended to make discriminations or judgements on some certain patterns showed in the psychoanalytical practice or training in China. However, we may consider the above as kinds of ways which Chinese have tried to reach, struggle and manage psychoanalysis and tried to help their own wishes incubate in the inner structures, through which Chinese may sense their power inside.

### Transcendental and Diachronic “Relaxation” of Trust and Doubt

To reflect on the above, I think we Chinese, when trying to manage psychoanalysis in psychoanalytical or psychodynamic training and practice, firstly need make our collective or individual history “touchable”, by which we may attain a supporting foothold to stand on, to experience and to think back and forward before we attain constructive meaning. I consider it is terribly important in the Chinese context, because we have suffered a lot of collective or individual traumas, such as wars, disasters and separations in our history. So it could be understandable that it would be difficult for our Chinese to touch those experienced personally without the spontaneous avoidance and unescapable disturbance.

Furthermore, I hope to reflect the above phenomena according to the following two dimensions: 1) how to understand the relationship between trust and doubt, which I elucidate as a metaphorical dimension of “relaxation” as a representation of the core dimension of psychoanalytical spirit; 2) how to understand the “relaxation” of trust and doubt under the platform of diachroneity, which I consider is also a very critical part within the psychoanalytical spirit—attaining the coherent sense of meaningfulness. I illustrate it by an anthropologic field research of Prof. Jing Jun, under the lens of which I try to show that how the individual historical consciousness develop through the process of construction and reconstruction the sense of historical meaningfulness.

#### 1) The “relaxation” of trust and doubt:

Relaxation (Spaie, L 2000), when applied in physical area, stands quite generally for a release of tension, a return to equilibrium, through the processes by which excited atom nuclear magnetization prepared in a non-equilibrium state return to the equilibrium distribution.

If we relate the above phenomena to our inner sense of trust and doubt, during the course that Chinese try to touch and manage psychoanalysis, some experience are easily to protrude when we are expecting, rejecting or hesitating at certain moment, which implies we are not quite sure whether, as well as to what degree, we may trust our own sense in practice. And perhaps we may also hesitate to leave some space for doubt or for the

possibility to doubt when we sense our sureness. So I consider when we stay with the unknown, we need develop the capacity to contain both the possibility of trust and doubt synchronously.

So at the moment our undescribable, unrecognizable or undistinguishable feeling is provoked, actually what we need to be back on or believe is neither the preconceived ideas we held, nor the capacity we imagine by which we may manage the whole unknown world. However, what we may believe is to develop a sense of sureness for our capacity to stay together with all kinds of the feelings related to trust and doubt. For this kind of capacity, I mean we need develop a sense of trusting ourselves to guess at the moment we are touching something unknown, and need free ourselves to cruise in the potential floating ambivalence of trust and doubt when we are swaying in the “relaxation oscillation” between the poles of trust and doubt, because we believe that no matter how intensive waggle we are experiencing and tolerating at the moment, we still hold the potential to achieve the equilibrium, on which position we are able to believe that even with some sparse meaningful representations we coagulated out of our endless storming unconsciousness, we are able to tolerate and keep this space open, without closing it or fixed ourselves on a certain immovable point on the dynamic dimension of trust and doubt.

In other word, it means when we are involved into the deepest reflections, the sense of doubt could be exiled, while also could cruised at the fringe of our consciousness, which may go through a process of “unity of opposites appealing to all” before our ego is able to achieve a smooth, coherent and planar space of equilibrium little by little, at which position we may sense that our sense of trust and doubt actually are the same, and may share and coexist in the manner that each believes the other pole hold the potential power within it's inner world, which itself need be back and depended on.

Farther, I want to address that the quality of this sense or believe of balancing trust and doubt carries the characteristic transcendental feature. As Immanuel Kant (2002) had mentioned “all knowledge transcendental which is concerned not with objects but with our mode of knowing objects”. For transcendental, I mean it is not based on or is falsifiable by sensuous experience, but is derived from the inner, spiritual or mental essence of the human.

So the transcendental quality of knowing and understanding, is a kind of ability or power for potential trust, by which one is able to sense and trust the world by his own mind. As Ilany Kogan (2008) said, no matter how primary or secondary, the underlying power hidden deeply behind all these ways, was rooted through the process of “keeping the hope or hope of possibility” that we are trying to reach, sense and manage the world by our mind, which could be considered as a meaningful essence beyond all kinds of knowledge or conceptual systems we have established in our mind, for it need not be proved in the reality before we believe it, which in nature is a kind of a hope, possibility, or potential stance that has not fully appeared in our awareness at certain moment.

## 2 ) Diachroneity context of the “relaxation” of trust and doubt:

When we try to describe the dynamic relationship of trust and doubt, moreover, we need to exam it on the platform of diachroneity, so as to develop a personal historical coherent sense of meaningfulness on the above dimension.

I would like to illustrate it by an anthropologic field work by Prof. Jing Jun in Tsing Hua University, to show under the len of personal historical context, how one could develop the belief of one's natural sense as well as the coherent meaningfulness of his or her belief through the process of construction and reconstruction.

As P. Steven Sangren (1998) reviewed Prof. Jing Jun 's work in, *The Temple of Memories: History, Power and Morality in a Chinese Village*, described the convergence of circumstances leading to the rebuilding of a local Confucius temple in the village of Da Chuan in the northwestern province of Gan Su is one of the best local ethnographies to date on post-reform China. Da Chuan is dominated by people surnamed Kong who claim descent from Confucius (Kong Zi), and, prior to the Communist revolution, its Confucius temple was the center of an ancestral cult that encompassed some 20,000 people from Da Chuan and 22 surrounding villages. Proceeding from what he terms "the theoretical perspective of social memory", the author documents Da Chuan's recent history with a view to showing how memory is deployed in the present toward reconstituting social relations.

We may focus on the highly innovative aspect in the process of restoration of social memory in this work, which showed how a deeply coherent sense of historical consciousness and meaningfulness developed. According to Prof. Jing Jun's view point (1996), neither truthful history nor the reconstruction that may be considered as a reductive to utilitarianism terms of one's present usages is important. However, a thoroughgoing understanding of what happened must be taken into account that in what way we use personal history and our habitual believes to link to it. That is to say, in what way our constructions or reconstructions are rooted in the individual believes on the historical truth is further important, because the sequential traditional style or pattern itself could be considered as a kind of inner container through the personal history. As P. Steven Sangren (1998) said, "so long as culture is not conceived to be a reified, transcendental, symbolic system, but instead as a set of ongoing, self-transforming practices and accommodations to changing circumstances." And I'd glad to add that underneath this ongoing, self-transforming adaptive process, we can develop the person belief of the natural and habitual sense we ourselves held consistently, as well as the coherent meaningfulness we attached to this sense of belief.

To summary, the meaningful sense is not related to the concrete historical materials or kind of "nature" which could be found through master narrative or autobiographical memory, but is related to the containing function which the historical and humanistic personal mode carries behind what we construct or reconstruct. So if we put it into our clinical context, we may say the capacity of construction or reconstruction is not carried by the interpretations, the techniques of giving interpretations, or whether these interpretative models have been proved or not, but is carried by the individual historical coherent sense which contains the above. The core theme of this sense behind the stories, cases or even legends, is the glorious narcissistic sense of coherence of one's experiences, imaginations, phantasies or desires beyond the coherence of the realistic history.

We may take the progressive rock of Tang Dynasty Band as another example. Tang Dynasty Band is considered as the icon of Chinese hard rock music. The process of their music developed a way to hearken back to the glorious era of Tang Dynasty. The fragmental memories of Tang Dynasty was put into the process of immersing oneself in the

profound reflection mentally while at the same time in the relaxation to the broaden space of “self exile”, which expresses as indulging oneself in whatever color, mode and solo of their music—whether consecutive or alternate, whether harmonious or miscellaneous . The band no longer cares elements, but the dynamic process, through which to seek coherent meaningfulness by keeping the glorious sense of Tang Dynasty.

In a word, we may take the “diachronic” visual view when observing Chinese realities and our inner worlds. Under the len of personal historical context, within the container of individual historical consciousness and coherence, we may develop one’s natural sense of coherent meaningfulness through the process of construction and reconstruction.

## Conclusion

In summary, what I represent here is some segmentary understandings and reflections on the dynamic “relaxation” of trust and doubt, basing on the transcendental feature and the diachronic context. I consider the potential floating sense related to this “relaxation” is the core dimension of psychoanalytical spirit , which we Chinese also need develop on the way of psychoanalytical or psychodynamic training and practice.

In V&A Museum in London, history could be “touched” by some of the exhibits. I hope what I represent here guide you to touch our Chinese ways to manage psychoanalysis.

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## Wang Qian: Spirit of Psychoanalysis

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Wang Qian

Dr. IPA candidate, IPSO representative in China

Beijing Anding Hospital, Capital Medical University

Beijing, 100088

China

E-mail: wangqian1313246@hotmail.com

Phone: 0086-010-58303222

Fax: 0086-010-58303222