

GEORG GRODDECK: "THE PINCH OF PEPPER" OF PSYCHOANALYSIS*.



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The life and works of Georg Groddeck are reviewed and placed in historical context as a physician and a pioneer of psychoanalysis, psychosomatic medicine, and an epistolary style of writing. His Das Es concept stimulated Freud to construct his tripartite model of the mind.

Groddeck, however, used Das Es to facilitate receptivity to unconscious communication with his patients. His “maternal turn” transformed his treatment approach from an authoritarian position to a dialectical process. Groddeck was a generative influence on the development of Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Erich Fromm, and Karen Horney. He was also the mid-wife of the late-life burst of creativity of his friend and patient Sándor Ferenczi. Together, Groddeck and Ferenczi provided the impetus for a paradigm shift in psychoanalysis that emphasized the maternal transference, child-like creativity, and a dialogue of the unconscious that foreshadowed contemporary interest in intersubjectivity and field theory. They were progenitors of the relational turn and tradition in psychoanalysis. Growing interest in interpsychic communication and field theory is bringing about a convergence of theorizing among pluralistic psychoanalytic schools that date back to 1923 when Freud appropriated Groddeck’s Das Es and radically altered its meaning and use.

KEY WORDS: Groddeck; psychosomatic; patient as therapist; mutual analysis; child’s attitude; maternal transference

INTRODUCTION

Systematic minds need people like me in order to feel important,
as the pinch of pepper that perfects the dish.

(Groddeck, 1977, p. 64.

In letter from Georg Groddeck to Sigmund Freud,
Baden-Baden, August 6, 1921)

Georg Groddeck (1866–1934) was a physician, psychoanalyst, writer, and social reformer, whose

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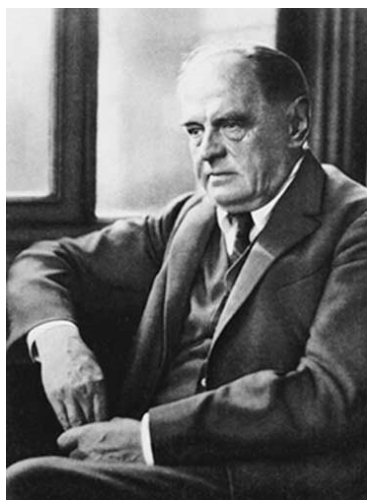
writings influenced Freud and Ferenczi and numerous other analysts, physicians, and poets. Some of the other analysts are Michael Balint, Frances Deri, Felix Deutsch, Erich Fromm, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Karen Horney, Otto Rank, Lou Andreas-Salome and Ernst Simmel. Groddeck has been referred to as the “father of psychosomatic medicine” (see Will, 1984). (However, he himself would likely have disapproved of the term, “psychosomatic,” as he considered the mind and body to be a unit.) Among the poets who were influenced by Groddeck were Auden, Durrell and Spender.

Nevertheless, Groddeck may be less well-known than his influence would justify for several reasons: First, Groddeck’s writing and lectures were often highly provocative. For example, Freud predicted that Groddeck’s *The Book of the It* (1923) would “provoke violent outbursts of insult” (Groddeck, 1977, p. 65). Second, Groddeck was not interested in developing a school of followers. He wrote to Freud, “I have never had disciples, am rather convinced that my talent is essentially one for treating patients” (Groddeck, 1977, p. 78). Finally, Groddeck was not interested in the psychoanalytic movement per se, but only in the clinical application of psychoanalysis. As Glover (1931) put it, “Groddeck would doubtless be the last to claim distinction as a propagandist ...” (p. 104) Freud wrote to Ferenczi: “He (Groddeck) is not the right man for the elaboration of an idea ...” (December 1, 1925, Freud and Ferenczi, 1920–1933, p. 238).

The unifying and consistent theme in Groddeck’s work was his theory of the It (the translation used for Groddeck’s *Das Es* in contradistinction to the Id which was Strachey’s translation of Freud’s use of the same term). Freud was intrigued by Groddeck’s ideas, and his own tripartite structural theory is a synthesis of his thoughts about the ego and superego grafted onto a modified version of Groddeck’s *Das Es*. Freud’s tripartite model may also have been patterned after Heinroth’s (Poster, 1997).

However, the mechanistic emphasis of Freud’s adaptation of Groddeck’s theory ultimately invited the reintroduction of the experiential and intersubjective aspects that were left out by Freud. Consequently, other psychoanalytic theories sprung up to fill the void (e.g. object relations, selfpsychology, interpersonal and relational). Discussions between proponents of these divergent psychoanalytic theories and of the more direct heirs of Freud’s revision of Groddeck’s *Das Es* (i.e., ego-psychology) over many decades were adversarial and unproductive. However, in more recent years there has been a convergence of interest in intersubjective communication and field theory among all branches stemming from that 1923 schism.

LIFE HISTORY



Georg Groddeck in a 1933 photograph by Dr. F. E. Krauss. Photo published with the permission of Dr. Michael Giefer, on behalf of the Georg Groddeck Society.

Groddeck was born in 1866 in Bad Kösen, Germany. He recalled his mother, Caroline, as aloof. Nevertheless, she inculcated in him a love of literature and of writing. Her father, August Koberstein, was

a scholar of German literary history and a teacher of Nietzsche at Schulpforta where Georg Groddeck later went to boarding school.

Groddeck's father, Carl Theodor, was a physician. His graduation thesis, *De Morbo Democratico—Nova Insaniae Forma* (On the Disease of Democracy— A New Form of Insanity) was a satire of democracy (Groddeck, 1850).

Groddeck was the youngest of five children and the one chosen to follow his father into medicine. His sister, Lina, was 15 months older than he and was a sickly child. Her illness gained Lina much attention, and Groddeck learned from an early age about the power of illness.

The family moved to Berlin when a real estate deal that the father went in fell through. He took a job with the new national health program and also did health insurance examinations. His son sometimes accompanied him on examinations of this basically healthy patient population. Young Groddeck felt that he learned a great deal from his father about how to talk with patients. Carl Groddeck suffered a stroke while working in his office with his son nearby. Groddeck was 19 and managed to continue medical school through a state scholarship. His teachers there included the physiologist, Dubois, and the obstetrician, Olshausen. But the major influence on Groddeck, after his father and before Freud, was Ernst Schweningen with whom he worked as an assistant in Berlin in 1890–91 and 1896–97. Ernst

Schweningen was a charismatic and autocratic physician, who treated Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany, for obesity. In his treatment method, Schweningen emphasized diet, hydrotherapy and massage. In 1897 Groddeck's sister Lina opened a 15-room guest-house in Baden-Baden. Groddeck began treating patients, often referrals by Schweningen. By 1900 the guest-house in the villa Marienhöhe had become a Sanatorium (or, as Groddeck sometimes called it, a Satanarium), where Groddeck continued to practice until the end of his life.

Groddeck's mother died when he was 23. He married Else von der Goltz, a divorcee with two children, in 1896. They had a daughter, Barbara. Groddeck's marriage failed, and by 1914 he had separated from his wife and also had lost the last of his four siblings. He became increasingly absorbed in writing. In the years before 1914, Groddeck wrote several novels, poems, literary critiques, essays, and a popular book about health and illness influenced by Schweningen's philosophy entitled *Nasamecu* (*natura sanat, medicus curat*—nature heals, the physician treats).

Polzer (1991) attributed the racist comments, scattered in *Nasamecu*, to an "infection" contracted from the cultural milieu. Giefer (2014) also commented on Groddeck's racist comments. Perhaps the numerous losses mentioned above that Groddeck suffered during this period in his life created a vulnerability that made him susceptible to what Polzer (1991) calls his cultural "infection." Groddeck himself gained some insight about his early racist comments and later wrote in one of his autobiographical writings:

What is left is only my play-acting and practicing the racial contempt that I have been talking myself into for many years in spoken and written form. In fact, I have never had the opportunity to meet people of other races, except for the Jews of whom an increasing number come to see me and who have shown me how unworthy it is to judge other people and to be prejudiced. (Groddeck, 2013, p. 38)

Groddeck used a wide range of literary formats including an epistolary style that anticipated the writing of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) that has been noted to have had direct influence on the study of dialogic theory and intersubjective processes and on therapeutic action in psychoanalysis (Shotter and Billig, 1998; Priel, 1999; Pollard, 2008; Leiman, 2011; Saporta, 2013). Groddeck also became active in the community in Baden-Baden. He founded a society for debating and another for constructing buildings. He helped to organize a consumers' cooperative with its own grocery store. He gave regular talks at the cooperative (Groddeck, 1977, p. 3).

When the First World War began, Groddeck was put in charge of a Red Cross hospital in Baden-Baden. An Army investigating committee ordered several men discharged from the hospital and back to combat.

Groddeck protested angrily to his commanding general about the interference with the medical treatment of his soldier-patients. He was relieved of his post.

In 1923 Groddeck married Emmy von Voigt, a Swedish former patient and assistant in his sanitarium. This marriage was happier than the first, and his new wife assisted him in translations of his own and Freud's works.

In 1934, shortly before his death, Groddeck was visited by his friend and student, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann (she dedicated her 1950 book, *Principles of Intensive Psychotherapy*, to Groddeck, along with Freud, Goldstein, and Sullivan). At the time, Groddeck was trying to arrange a meeting with Hitler to convince him to change his destructive policies.

He was also talking about having a cure for cancer. Based upon these behaviors, Fromm-Reichmann believed that Groddeck had become psychotic. This assessment sounds strangely like Jones' comments (Jones, 1957) about Ferenczi's last days. If Fromm-Reichmann's observations were descriptively accurate, perhaps they were also narrowly focused.

Groddeck saw death as "the fulfillment of a wish ... an active attempt to secure conditions for happiness which are to be gained in no other way" (Groddeck, 1951, p. 225). He died in June 1934 in Switzerland at the clinic of Dr. Medard Boss, later a pioneer of Daseinsanalysis (1963). Boss reported to Stanley Keleman:

I was a young man when Groddeck, a much older man, came to the sanitarium... He said that his id knew how to die. He was there with his dying. He said that the dying person has no fear if there is someone with him... I was taken into his dying. I was touched by his presence... Dying is a mystery, a mystery about people who come into existence and are then called back I asked Groddeck how he was affected by this. He said that dying was its own way of being present. I learned a lesson from this experience. I learned that information and training is not a substitute for the simple act of being present as a bodied person with someone else. (Keleman, 1974)

DAS ES

In his practice Groddeck became increasingly impressed with the importance of both symbols and the doctor-patient relationship. He discovered that he could not only relieve patients' symptoms but also cause them to remit by listening to them and helping them to overcome resistances to repressed material. For instance, Groddeck successfully helped a female patient pass kidney stones through the use of hydration and mechanical pressure.

However, after she explored with Groddeck some underlying psychological issues, she stopped forming the stones! (Groddeck, 1929a, p. 181). Groddeck developed a theory to account for these phenomena which he maintained for the rest of his life.

Groddeck's theory was based upon the writings of Nietzsche and Goethe (Schacht, 1977, p. 11) and was grounded in his clinical work. Nietzsche, in turn, was influenced by Schopenhauer and Goethe by Spinoza. Groddeck's Das Es, while influenced by each of the above, was both a synthesis of their ideas and an original concept that was always intended by Groddeck as a clinical guide and aide.

Groddeck wrote in 1909, "There is no such thing as an I, it is a lie, a misrepresentation to say: I think, I live. It should be: it thinks, it lives. It, that is the great mystery of the world. There is no I." Groddeck believed that "everything human is dependent on this infinitely mysterious entity, and I also persist in maintaining that nobody can fathom the depths of the It" (Groddeck, 1977, p. 254).

He combined his insights into the visual and the symbolic with a philosophy which he derived from Goethe:

He (Goethe) showed science a new way, the way to see the part in the whole, to conceive of the apparent whole as a symbol of the universe, to see symbolically the whole world in a flower, an animal, a pebble, the human eye, the sun; to recreate from this flower, to renew, to explore the world of objects not analytically, but taking it in as a whole. (Groddeck, 1977, p. 252; originally in Groddeck, 1909, p. 8)

To emphasize the essential unknowable quality of this “I/non-I” interaction, Groddeck called it Das Es or the It:

the most indefinite term available without either emotional or intellectual associations. The It-hypothesis I regard not as a truth—for what do any of us know about absolute truth?—but as a useful tool in work and in life; it has stood the test of years of medical work and experiment... (quoted in Durrell, 1948, p. 385)

Among such experiments was the simple but profound observation that “in at least 95 percent of the diseases that are healed, the treatment has nothing at all to do with the recovery ... It makes little difference to most illnesses under what name they are diagnosed” (Groddeck, 1950). Groddeck considered that diagnosis and medical treatment were important in about five percent of cases. Even in this group he often supplemented standard medical treatment with what Freud termed psychoanalysis in order to “stir the man’s It in its deepest depths into healing activity” (Groddeck, 1929b, p. 180).

Disease was seen by Groddeck as only one of many expressions of the It, “a form of self-expression” (Durrell, 1948, p. 387). “In other words, sickness, every sickness, whether it be called organic or ‘nervous,’ and death, too, are just as purposeful as playing piano, striking a match, or crossing one’s legs” (Groddeck, 1923, p. 117). Groddeck was initially resistant to reading Freud; but, when he did so, he welcomed Freud’s technique as a useful adjunct or lens with which to see and then speak to the It. Groddeck had discovered the power of transference and resistance independently of Freud. He conceived of these phenomena in the terms of his It hypothesis:

The It transfers feelings both of friendship and of enmity on to the doctor, and thereby helps or obstructs his efforts. Since life is made up, more or less, of these transferences the doctor must select certain of them, if he is not to be overwhelmed by the flood of phenomena, and use these in dealing with the resistance. (Groddeck, 1929b, p. 104)

Groddeck described the relationship of Freud’s theory to his own as follows:

It and unconscious are two totally different concepts—the unconscious is a part of the psyche, the psyche a part of the It. Thus, psychoanalysis is not identical with an examination of the It. The It is man himself in all his vital manifestations; and, as such, it is neither freely accessible to psychoanalysis nor to any other method of examination. Yet, there are ways which lead us very close to the It; and, the best of these, the closest approach to the target, is psychoanalysis. (quoted in Schacht, 1977, Introduction, p. 16)

Using his It concept as a guide, Groddeck began treating his patient Miss G. in 1909. He wrote:

And now I was confronted with the strange fact that I was not treating the patient, but that the patient was treating me; or, to translate it into my own language, the It of this fellow-being tried so to transform my It, did in fact so transform it, that it came to be useful for its purpose. (Groddeck, 1923, p. 223)

This insight about what Ferenczi (1915, p. 109) called a “dialogue of the unconscious” radically transformed Groddeck’s treatment stance. Rather than prescribing with authority, he began to listen without knowing. This “maternal turn” (Hristeva and Poster, 2013) and consequent receptivity and dialogic interaction was arguably as revolutionary as Freud’s insight into dreams about which Freud famously wrote, “Insight such as this falls to one’s lot but once in a lifetime” (Freud, 1900, p. xx).

RELATIONSHIP WITH FREUD

Freud's correspondence with Groddeck covered a period of 17 years. It was marked by mutual warmth and candor. If not as emotional as Freud's correspondences with Ferenczi, Silberstein, and Fliess (Haynal, 1991), it was like Freud's correspondence with Pfister, more mutual. Indeed, Freud wrote to Pfister (March 20, 1921) about Groddeck, "I am not usually so taken in by anybody" (Meng and Freud, 1963, p. 82).

Groddeck first wrote to Freud in May 27, 1917. He apologized for his earlier resistance to reading his work and shared his It hypothesis and views about the treatment of organic illness through medical and psychological means (Groddeck, 1977, pp. 31–35). Freud responded on June 5th:

I have not had a letter for a long time which so pleased, interested, and stimulated me as to make me drop the politeness due to a stranger and adopt analytical frankness in my answer to it...I have to assert that you are a splendid analyst who has understood forever the essential aspects of the matter. The discovery that transference and resistance are the most important aspects of treatment turns a person irretrievably into a member of the wild army...I would like to hold out both my hands to receive you as a colleague (Groddeck, 1977, p. 36)

Freud immediately recognized Groddeck's creativity and thought that he had "the same point of view" as Ferenczi (quoted in Poster, 2009, p. 199). Later, in his obituary for Groddeck, Erich Fromm would also connect him with Ferenczi:

[Neither was an] intellectual. In contrast to most other analysts who are mostly concerned with the manipulation of theories, Groddeck and Ferenczi were human beings who empathized with the person they wanted to understand and, I would say, who felt in themselves what the so-called patient was telling them; they were persons of great humanity and for them the patient was not an object but a partner. (quoted in Funk, 2000, p. 64)

Groddeck began explaining his ideas about the It to Freud in his very first letter. He described the It as "a force which lives us" stating further that "it was and is the basis of my activity." In a letter dated April 17, 1921 Freud sent Groddeck a drawing of his own tripartite structural model which was an adaptation and modification of Groddeck's Das Es. In the same letter Freud told Groddeck, by way of explanation for his narrowing of Groddeck's concept of the It,

I have a special talent for being satisfied with the fragmentary...The categories and hierarchies observed by us only apply to relatively superficial layers, and not to the depth for which your 'It' is the right name. (April 17, 1921, Groddeck, 1977, p. 58)

The drawing from Freud's letter to Groddeck was further modified and eventually published in Freud's *The Ego and the Id* in 1923. Freud soon became well-familiar with Groddeck's interest in treating organic illnesses with both medical and psychoanalytic treatment. He wrote as early as November 6, 1917 to Ferenczi that his own painful swelling of the palate was both augmented and regressed by his level of cigar smoking and his mood "a la Groddeck." These had both changed "(when) a patient brought to me 50 cigars, I lit one, became cheerful and the gum irritation rapidly abated. Totally Groddeck" (Freud and Ferenczi, 1914–1919, p. 245). Groddeck sent Freud excerpts from his *The Book of the It* (1923) which was written in the form of letters to a lady-friend. He used this epistolary format because it allowed "all kinds of changes" (Groddeck, 1977, p. 69). Groddeck signed the letters, from Patrick Troll. The name combined Groddeck's childhood nickname of Patrick with that of one of the trolls from the *Rondeschloss* of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, one of Groddeck's favorite "textbooks" of psychoanalysis. Groddeck (November 20, 1920, Groddeck, 1977,

p. 55) introduced The Book of the It to Freud as his “sea monster.” Freud found The Book of the It “really charming,” but he liked Groddeck’s novel which was written in 1921 even better. To Freud it seemed “to resemble that model of all humorous novels, Don Quixote” (February 8, 1930, Groddeck, 1977, p. 46). (The novel, Groddeck, 1921, was named by Rank as The Seeker of the Soul). It was published with Freud’s assistance in his Verlag.

After Groddeck read Freud’s The Ego and the Id, he was hurt and angry about Freud’s appropriation and modification of his It concept. He wrote his wife that The Ego and the Id was written “to appropriate secretly loans made by Stekel and me ... He (Freud) disregards the constructive aspect of my It, presumably to smuggle it in next time” (Groddeck, 1977, p. 13). Groddeck wrote to Freud that he was the “godfather” of the term and concept of Das Es. Freud eventually admitted to Groddeck that he had “borrowed” his term. Groddeck felt, however, that Freud had “turned it into something different from what I meant ... for the purposes of his profession as a specialist of mental illness” (Groddeck, 1977, p. 15).

Groddeck wrote to Freud about his feelings about the publication of The Ego and the Id both directly and through the use of an extended metaphor. Groddeck compared himself to a plough and Freud to a farmer:

I may be wrong, but I believe that I know the effect you have on the soil, e.g. on your pupils, better than the farmer. For him a crop failure in this or that spot is not so important. The present-day generation of your disciples is of importance only to us, not to you ... In other words, the plough considers the farmer a little obstinate. But then it only has the brains of a plough. (Groddeck, 1977, p. 80)

Freud and Groddeck had further candid exchanges. Freud interpreted Groddeck’s “father transference” (Christmas 1922, Groddeck, 1977, p. 75) to which Groddeck replied, “I am aware of my own complexes, but I cannot so far prevent myself from getting on better with my mother rather than the father.

This may improve when my homosexuality is more liberated” (May 27, 1923, Groddeck, 1977, p. 80). Freud referred to Groddeck’s “panpsychism” and “mysticism.” (February 12, 1922, Groddeck, 1977, p. 72) Groddeck shared his sensitivity “to praise or criticism” and his

curious overestimation of the subjective and the contradictory ... I cannot see the demarcation between objects, only their fusion. This is a fault, but it is also a big advantage. Systematic minds need people like me in order to feel important, as the pinch of pepper that perfects the dish. (August 6, 1921, Groddeck, 1977, p. 64)

Freud wrote,

You know I like originality even if it is linked with a little obstinacy... Everything from you is interesting to me, even if I may not follow you in detail. I do not, of course, recognize my civilized, bourgeois, demystified Id in your It. Yet you know that mine is derived from yours. (April 26, 1925, Groddeck, 1977, pp. 92–93)

On the occasion of Groddeck’s 60th birthday, Freud, with tongue no doubt planted firmly in cancerous jaw, sent the following message on October 13, 1926: “My Ego and my Id congratulate your It on its fait accompli, hoping that I may please its inscrutable decree to allow itself a long, happy lease of life” (Groddeck, 1977, p. 95).

RELATIONSHIP WITH FERENCZI

Groddeck became both friend and physician to Ferenczi in the way in which Ferenczi longed for Freud to be. Between 1921 and 1932 Ferenczi visited Groddeck nine times in Baden-Baden. His interest in activity, relaxation, and mutual analysis all were influenced by his association with Groddeck. In his paper, “Principles of Relaxation and Neocarthisis”, Ferenczi (1930) wrote,

I was undoubtedly influenced by what I saw of the work of Georg Groddeck, the courageous champion of the psychoanalysis of organic diseases, when I consulted him about an organic illness. I felt that he was right in trying to encourage his patients to a childlike naiveté, and I saw the success thus achieved. (pp. 122–123)

Concurrently, in the last years of their lives, the writings of both Ferenczi and Groddeck revealed an interest in similar themes (e.g. various forms of regression and the return to the womb). Ferenczi’s concepts of regression in *Thalassa* (1924) are very similar to those outlined by Groddeck in 1933, in his “Love and Death, Death and Transfiguration” (Groddeck, 1951). They foretell, in a way reminiscent of the *It* at work, the deaths of each of these creative spirits within a short time of their writing (Ferenczi died in May 1933 and Groddeck in June 1934).

Similarly, a few short years later, the publication of Freud’s “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” (1937) marks his own (or his *It*’s?) response to his friend, Ferenczi (Grossman and Grossman, 1965) and perhaps to his other friend, Groddeck. With regard to the latter, Friedman (1992, p. 22) commented that with this penultimate publication Freud “seems to be asking himself why he ever thought of *Man* as anything more than an *id* with eyeballs ... Freud does not conceal that his original reason for separating a realistic structure from the *id* had turned out to be less justified than he had thought.”

Ferenczi had spoken with his stepdaughter about consulting with Groddeck during his own terminal illness. However, travel was already restricted for Jews in Germany. After Ferenczi died, Andreas-Salome wrote to Ferenczi’s widow that “Groddeck would have saved him.” It took Groddeck a long time to respond. Typically, he said, “The form in which Sandor, whose genius and bravery I have always admired, was finally delivered of the pains of a super human struggle is quite beside the point ... I could not help Sandor” (quoted in Grossman and Grossman, 1965, p. 194; also see: Fortune, 2002b, p. 113).

GRODDECK’S CONTRIBUTIONS

Groddeck had many original ideas related to his clinical practice. But he had no interest in formulating a theory or having disciples or a school. His ideas greatly impacted the psychoanalytic pioneers cited above. Through them and as modified by them, Groddeck’s ideas likely influenced later theorists. However, such influence is hard to prove and, in any event, should not be confused with or detract from the originality of later theorists; Groddeck demonstrated the successful application of psychoanalysis in medicine, literature, and philosophy. He was guided by a humanist philosophy based upon careful clinical observation. The constant centerboard of Groddeck’s creative work was his *It* theory. Groddeck’s concept of the *It* is a sophisticated synthesis of free will and determinism. He stated, “Everyone who considers the matter for a moment knows that there is no such thing as free will among human beings, but also that it is beyond our power not to believe in it” (Groddeck, 1951, p. 35).

With the publication in 1923 of Freud’s *The Ego and the Id*, Groddeck’s *The Book of the It* and Ferenczi and Rank’s *The Development of Psychoanalysis*, a theoretical schism was created (Bókay, 1998; Hoffer, 2008; Poster, 2009; Rudnytsky, 2011). Since Freud revised and narrowed the scope of Groddeck’s *It*, later psychoanalytic theories were generated to fill the experiential void.

Consequently, psychoanalytic theory became more fragmented and debate more polarized. Decades of political rivalry between the extenders of what became widely known as one- and two-person psychologies ensued. However, it is dubious that anyone ever admitted to having a one-person psychology. However,

more recent interest among all schools in intersubjective communication and field theory has brought them closer together and closer to how Groddeck used Das Es in his clinical work which was as a way to sit with patients and to communicate at an unconscious level, something now described as intersubjective (Bolognini, 2004; Diamond, 2014) or intersubjective (Thompson, 2005). Such intersubjective communication was first described by Ferenczi as “dialogues of the unconscious” (Ferenczi, 1915, p. 109). It is further elaborated in Reik’s *Listening with the Third Ear* (1948) and in contemporary vincula (Pichon-Riviere, 1979) and field theory (Baranger and Baranger, 2008).

Stern (2015) dates the origin of interpersonal psychoanalysis from the work of Sullivan and Fromm and reviewed the history of exclusion of its proponents from mainstream psychoanalysis. Yet Stern himself makes only brief mention of Ferenczi and none of Groddeck. Many interpersonal and relational psychoanalysts were analyzed in an intergenerational family tree (Falzeder, 1998) that goes back to Ferenczi (through Clara Thompson who was analyzed by Ferenczi and who also briefly analyzed Sullivan). Fortune

(2002a, p. 92) wrote, “without Groddeck, there may have been no later Ferenczi to raise challenges to Freud and to push forward the frontiers of psychoanalysis”. Fromm actually met Horney in Baden-Baden while both were visiting Groddeck. And Ferenczi, Fromm, Horney, Thompson, Rank, and Sullivan all worked in New York City, later the center of cultural, existential, interpersonal and relational psychoanalysis.

Thus, the link from Groddeck, Ferenczi, and Rank to the extenders of self-described two-person psychologies was transferred across generations of couches and was largely “unformulated” (Stern, 1983), or even unknown and, therefore, uncredited. Its rediscovery, therefore, also offers the hope of further dialogue between rival psychoanalytic schools as otherwise proposed by Stern (2015) between those trained in interpersonal and classical traditions.

Self-analysis began with Freud and was a frequent subject of Groddeck’s work and writing (Groddeck, 1977, p. 70). For instance, he was continually drawn to the pursuit of the original, creative, and intuitive approach. In his self-analysis, Groddeck understood this proclivity to be a reaction to the demands for exactness of some of his teachers in medical school. It also echoed his mother’s valuing of literary pursuits over the technical knowledge of his father’s medical profession. Groddeck cured himself of numerous physical ailments including nephritis and goiter through self-analysis. His neck size increased from 39 to 45 centimeters with the goiter before he analyzed his repressed wish/fear of oral fertilization (Groddeck, 1977).

Groddeck was very open and often humorous in sharing self-analytic material: e.g. “I am treating a lady suffering from arthritis deformans of both knee joints and from habitual patella luxation ... The main result so far is that I fell off my bike on my way to visit the patient and smashed my right knee. That brought me back to self-analysis and with striking success” (Groddeck, 1977, p. 67). This sounds similar to the “somatic correspondence” that Silverman has written about, albeit in the reverse direction from that which he described (Silverman, 1991, 1992).

Groddeck paid close attention to countertransference as a constructive concept. This anticipated the work of Heimann (1950) and Racker (1957). Holmes (2014) showed that Ferenczi, and Freud too, paid closer attention to the countertransference than is generally appreciated, but Holmes failed to mention Groddeck who corresponded with both of them about such matters. Searles (1979, p. 446) credited Groddeck with being the first to describe the patient as therapist to his analyst. Groddeck and Ferenczi experimented with mutual analysis (Poster, 2009, p. 199; Hristeva and Poster, 2013, pp. 249–250; Haynal, 2014, p. 323). Ferenczi pursued this courageous but demanding experiment further with his patient Elizabeth Severn (Fortune, 2002b) whom Freud called “the evil genius” (Jones, 1957, p. 407).

Groddeck was extremely well versed in literature and was a talented writer. *The Book of the It* is one example of Groddeck’s writing talent. It remains one of the most readable expositions of psychoanalytic concepts, even in what is purported to be a terrible translation. Freud recognized this:

“Your style is enchanting, your speech like music (April 17, 1921, Groddeck, 1977, p. 58) I like the little book very much. I consider it a matter of merit to put people’s noses up against the fundamentals of analysis from which they constantly try to withdraw” (March 25, 1923, Groddeck, 1977, p. 77).

Rudnytsky (2002, p. 163), a Professor of English, described *The Book of the It* as “arguably the greatest masterpiece of psychoanalytic literature.” He further described *The Book of the It* as a “book of the future” and *The Ego and the Id* as a “book of the past” (p. 143). As mentioned above, the epistolary writing style used by Groddeck was further elaborated by Bakhtin and has direct application to dialogical theory and psychoanalysis (Saporta, 2013), specifically for understanding intersubjectivity (Thompson, 2005) and therapeutic inter-action (Ehrenberg, 1992). Rudnytsky (2002, p. 192) wrote, “The paradigm shift initiated by Groddeck and Ferenczi has less to do with their reorientation from the father to the mother, or from castration to separation on the plane of theory than with their espousal of a dialectical rather than a dogmatic conception of therapy.”

Groddeck and Ferenczi analyzed each other and were largely unacknowledged founders of the relational movement in psychoanalysis. Rudnytsky described them as “the two most important precursors of contemporary psychoanalysis” (Rudnytsky, 2011, p. 335). While Rudnytsky (2002) named Ferenczi as the “progenitor of relational psychoanalysis” (p. 143), Fromm reminds us that “the development of Ferenczi can only be understood in light of Groddeck’s influence” (Fromm, 1935, p. 386). And Rudnytsky (2002, p. 143) argues “it is time, therefore, that his (Groddeck’s) eminence as a progenitor of the relational tradition be given its due.”

Groddeck’s “maternal turn” (Hristeva and Poster, 2013) and *It* theory enabled him to radically alter his treatment approach in a manner that anticipated contemporary pluralistic “convergence in theorizing” (Diamond, 2014, p. 526) about intersubjective communication and use of mind. In *The Book of the It*, Groddeck wrote (1923, pp. 262–263):

Certain slumbering mother-virtues were awakened in me by the patient, and these directed my procedure...And now I was confronted by the strange fact that I was not treating the patient, but that the patient was treating me; or to translate it into my own language, the *It* of this fellow-human being tried to so transform my *It*, did in fact so transform it, that it came to be useful for its purpose...Even to get to this amount of insight was difficult, for you will understand that it absolutely reversed my position in regard to a patient. It was no longer important to give him instructions, to prescribe for him what I considered right, but to change in such a way that he could use me.

The *It* theory provided an alternative to the split between mind and matter derived from Descartes. It encompassed many complementary dualisms as units: health and illness, mental and physical, male and female, life and death. The most imaginative ideas were grounded in clinical observation. Groddeck’s theory formed the basis of future work in the field of mind/body relationships. This area has been further expanded by the work of Felix Deutsch, Jelliffe, Balint, Alexander, Engel and others (Brown, 2000; also see: Silver, 2007).

Groddeck’s intuition and observation about the inseparable unity of mind and body has been confirmed. A review of the subject (Goodman, 1991), now called organic unity theory, went as far back as Spinoza but omitted Groddeck’s significant contribution. Such indissociable unity also became the basis of the Paris Psychosomatic School (Aisenstein, 2006). Gottlieb (2003) traced two threads of psychosomatic medicine over the past century.

One derives from the work of Freud and Groddeck and involves symbolism, fantasy and meaning. The other derives from Janet, extends through the French school, and involves trauma and dissociation.

Groddeck extended the use of psychoanalytic concepts to include organic illness: He came to understand disease as “no longer anything abnormal but something conditioned by the nature of this one man who is ill and wishes to be treated by me ... There is no essential difference between sick and healthy, it depends on the choice of every doctor, and every sick man, what he will call diseased. That is for the doctor a necessary view. Otherwise he gets lost in the impassable tracks of the desire to heal ...” (Groddeck, 1923, p. 191).

Groddeck believed that “illness has a purpose; it has to resolve the conflict, to repress, it, or to prevent

what is already repressed from entering consciousness ...” (Groddeck, 1921, pp. 116–117). In June 1917 Groddeck had written to Freud: “...I work on the hypothesis that the It makes people ill, because it is pursuing some purpose which it finds useful” (Groddeck, 1977, p. 40). This understanding presaged the work of Parsons (1951) on the social construction of disease.

Groddeck (1977, pp. 158–171) was fascinated by the ubiquity of the symbol and with its unconscious meaning. Along with this fascination, Groddeck, like Freud, became interested in the phenomenon of vision.

In fact, vision was the topic of his very first and last presentations. The visual image became for him (1977, pp. 172–196) like the Rosetta stone for the understanding of mind/body relationships. Groddeck’s conception was that of a visual image comprised of an external (virtual) and an internal (psychic) component. Inman (1921), an analysand of Ferenczi who accompanied him to Baden-Baden, wrote about the implications of this work for the field of ophthalmology. Arlow (1969) further elaborated the dual visual image concept. He called the internal image the unconscious fantasy, and he used a model of a picture screen with movie projectors on either side. Such simple and elegant ideas have since been amplified into more complex and dynamic models of brain function such as those of Pribram et al. (1974) and Edelman (1992). The latter’s self/non-self interactive “model of primary consciousness” (p. 120) is reminiscent of Groddeck’s I/non-I interaction mentioned above.

Groddeck tended also to idealize the childlike state of mind. He believed that children had a clarity and freshness of thought that was unclouded by the stupidity called wisdom of adulthood. Groddeck felt that “the child stands-or can stand-in an objective relation to itself. It sees its own being as a self and not as an ‘I.’” For example, Groddeck wrote that Peer Gynt could “give up his ego and take the child’s attitude to the self, making himself a part of the great whole, the universal” (Groddeck, 1950, p 174).

The child’s attitude was what Groddeck strove to achieve as he believed it to be the most clear-sighted. Indeed, as previously stated, he adopted the name Troll as his pen-name for his “letters to a lady-friend” which comprised *The Book of the It*. Groddeck wrote about the trolls of Ibsen, like the dwarfs of *Snow White* and the “Soulseeker” (Thomas Weltlein) of his own novel (Groddeck, 1921), as symbols of and storytellers for unconscious processes. Certainly, he was correct in identifying their timeless appeal. In contemporary American society, the universal appeal of trolls and other childlike characters has translated into huge commercial success. Groddeck’s respect for the child’s experience showed a prescience for future areas of research. Among these are the study and observation of normal early development and of childhood trauma. Groddeck’s ideas in the latter area supported and influenced Ferenczi’s landmark work, “Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child” (1932).

Groddeck’s interest in childhood play and toys and masks also anticipated Winnicott’s work and description of transitional objects and space (Winnicott, 1953). Rudnytsky (2002, p. 188) even cites a letter from Groddeck to Ferenczi on November 12, 1921 where Groddeck asks, “Why should the mother transference—or that to playmates, or to the milk bottle, or to rhythm, or to the rattle—be any less useful?” Groddeck wrote (1977, p. 27) about the importance of play: “It is quite unimportant what we play with as long as we play, and people who cannot play, who long for unobtainable playthings instead of making a living doll from a handkerchief, are rather stupid.”

Where Freud emphasized the Oedipal conflict, Groddeck was especially interested in pre-Oedipal relationships and development (Hristeva and Poster, 2013). Groddeck was most interested in the early maternal transference, as were Ferenczi and Rank (1923). Groddeck recognized that the glorification of women by men also might conceal a secret dread. Concerning this concept, Horney (1926) wrote, “I well remember how surprised I was myself the first time I heard the above ideas asserted by a man (Groddeck)” (Horney, 1967, p. 136). Before publishing her landmark paper “The Flight from Womanhood” in 1926, Horney wrote to Groddeck, “I discuss issues which you were the first one to raise” (quoted by Quinn, 1988, p. 220). These issues tactfully challenged Freud’s phallogocentric ideas.

Groddeck wrote about literature, art and religion both in his published works and in his correspondences. Like his friend, Salome (1892), he wrote an interpretation of the female characters in Ibsen’s plays. He “discerned the strong element of irony that modern critics have since discovered in the play *Rosmersholm*”

(Mandel in Salome, 1985, p. 21; Rudnytsky, 2013) and about which he disagreed with Freud and his “assistant,” Sachs (Groddeck, 1977, p. 44).

Groddeck described the symbolic meaning of fairy tales as if he were deciphering a code; and, in doing so, he anticipated the work of Bettelheim (1977). Still and overall, Groddeck’s primary interest and need was to be a clinician. As Durrell (1948) wrote, “One has the feeling in reading him (Groddeck) that however fantastic a proposition may seem it has come out of the work shop and not out of an ideological hot house” (p. 401). Groddeck emphasized the art of medicine. He saw the doctor as a catalyst to the natural healing processes. His advice for treatment was: “Put off action as long as you can, and watch for signs of the patient’s It. Sooner or later, it will probably whisper to you advice you can pass on to the patient” (Groddeck, 1929a, p. 89; also quoted in Grotjahn, 1995, p. 314). The word “probably” is operative here and indicative of Groddeck’s candor and humility. For example, Groddeck stated, “The physician’s chief danger is Hubris ... It is only he who keeps always in mind the insufficiency of his knowledge who is truly a man of science” (Groddeck, 1929a, p. 24).

Groddeck’s sanitarium was a model for those established by Simmel and Fromm-Reichmann, utilizing what today is called “psychoanalytically-informed hospital treatment” (Fromm-Reichmann, 1950; Gabbard, 1988). Referring to his sanitarium, Groddeck wrote at age 64, on May 8, 1930, what may be used as an epitaph of the man:

I run a sanitarium which is visited by people who do not find help in other places... The only achievement I can claim for myself with some justification is the introduction of a knowledge of the unconscious into the treatment of all patients... In the treatment I rely on my head and on my hands and on the view that every patient has his or her own illness, and that the person who wants to help them has to practice the saying: *nil humanum a me alienum esse puto* (I believe that nothing human is alien to me)... I may perhaps be allowed to say that I have not forgotten during my life as a doctor that man’s true profession is to become a ‘*mensch*’. (Groddeck, 1977, p. 1)

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