Intersubjectivity, Thirdness, and Mutual Recognition
Jessica Benjamin, Ph.D.
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In this paper I try to expand my previous ideas about mutual recognition, in which each subject feels the other as a like subject with a distinct, separate center of feeling and perception. I have shown how the survival of the other subject is crucial to the coming into being of recognition. I also want to evoke the aspect of intersubjectivity which is most elusive—the reciprocal, mutually influencing quality of interaction between subjects—two way streets. To the degree that we ever manage to grasp two-way directionality, we only do so from the place of the third, another vantage point outside the two. That is, we only do so when we are in the space of thirdness.

The third, a concept enjoying some popularity of late, means a wide variety of things to different thinkers. Some analysts use it to refer to the profession, the community, the theory one works with—anything one holds in mind that creates another point of reference outside the dyad. Precisely because many things may serve as a third, I think not in terms of the things that serve as thirds but the psychic capacity to use them. We might speak of Thirdness as a quality of mental space, of intersubjective relatedness. For it is necessary to distinguish the third from a theory or rules of technique, from superego maxims or ideals that the analyst holds onto with her or his ego, often clutching them as a drowning person a straw. For in the space of thirdness we are not holding on to a third, we are, in Emannuel Ghent's term, surrendering to it.

Using this idea, we might say that the third is that to which we surrender, and thirdness is the mental space that facilitates or

results from surrender. In my thinking, the term surrender also implies the aspect of recognition, of being able to connect to the other's mind while accepting her separateness and difference. This aspect of difference implies we have survived some process in which our subjectivity is "destroyed," negated or modified by the other. It also implies the freedom from any intent to control or coerce. In Ghent's essay, the contrast was between surrender and its ever-ready look alike, submission. The crucial point was that surrender is not To Someone, making the distinction between giving in or over to someone, an idealized person or thing, and letting go into Being With them.

This contrast between submission and surrender corresponds to a division I will elaborate at some length between complementarity and thirdness. By complementary relations I mean those push-me-pull-you, doer-done to dynamics we find in most impasses, which generally appear to us as one-way—-that is, each person feels done to, not part of a co-created reality. Often enough, each feels his perspective on how this is happening is right, or atleast, that the two are irreconcilable: as in, either I'm crazy or you are. If what you say is true, I must be very wrong, shamefully wrong, blind to what everyone else can see.

As psychotherapists, when we are caught in such interactions, we may tell ourselves that something mutual is at work, but actually be full of self-blame. Yet this attribution of responsibility to self truly does not really help to extricate us from the feeling that the other person is controlling us or leaving us no options. Caught, boxed in, unable to think. It is as if the essence of complementary relations—the relation of two-ness--is that submission or resistance to the other's demand appear to be the only choices. The question of how we get out of complementary twoness, which is the formal or structural pattern of all impasses, is where intersubjective theory finds its real challenge.

Coming out of my long preoccupation with recognition, I will be speaking today about our quest for thirdness--for the inbetween or potential space in ourselves and with the patient. I will be working with a distinction that has informed all my work, between mutual recognition and the complementary twoness in which one person is idealized at the expense of the other. Mutual recognition is integral to the space of thirdness. This means that even though we do not surrender *to* someone, the other's recognition does help create the space of thirdness that makes surrender possible. Then again, we might think of surrender as making recognition possible--allowing the outside, different other to come into view as we let go of the preconceived internal other. We are then able to negotiate differences in the space of thirdness.

Initially, the idea of the third passed in to psychoanalysis through Lacan, whose view of intersubjectivity derived from Hegel's theory of recognition and its popularization by the French Hegelian Kojeve. Lacan saw the third as that which keeps the relationship between two persons from collapsing. This collapse can take the form of merger (oneness) that eliminates difference or a twoness that splits the differences--the polarized opposition of the power struggle. Lacan thougt that the interusbjective third was constituted by recognition through speech, which allows difference of viewpoints and interest, which saves us from the kill or be killed powerstruggle. What has always been problematic for me   in Lacan's view is a kind of insistently oedipal way of looking at things that excludes other experience. In the oedipal triangle, the father's "No" is the paradigmatic third, and so the prohibition of incest (castration) the model for thirdness. He equated the distinction between thirdness and twoness with the division between a paternal symbolic or law and a maternal imaginary. The mother-child dyad was caught in the imaginary world of two-ness, which the paternal third (in the mother's mind) opens up into the sane world of symbolic

thirdness. Of course, in some cases we might speak of someone letting go and accepting the full blow of the reality that mother has her own desire and has chosen father, and this might indeed constitute one kind of surrender to the third. But, as I shall try to show, thirdness is instituted not by the father as The Third but develps through experiences in which the mother holds in tension her subjectivity/desire and the needs of the child.

In short, the Freudian oedipal notion of the third puts the emphasis on the father as the force of prohibition rather than on the encounter with the mother's subjectivity. I have elsewhere emphasized the intersubjective postulate that the child develops through recognizing the mother's independent aims and subjectivity, stressing the importance of this for gender relations, for acknowledging women as subjects. I have tried to show how the notion of the father as creator of symbolic space denies the recognition and space already present in the maternal dyad. In that notion it is as if the third, the symbolic representation of the father, were the cause rather than the result of symbolic processes, what I am calling thirdness.

In many analytic writings, theory or interpretation is seen as a symbolic father. I have wondered whther Lacanian theory, like Kleinian theory, therefore tends to privilege the analyst's relation to the third as theory -- despite Lacan's warning against seeing the analyst as the one supposed to know. The danger of making theory the third is that surrender to the analytic process can easily elide into submission to the analyst who has the privileged relation to interpretation-—not that there is any style of psychoanalysis that can eradicate this pull toward complementarity.

Let me turn now to the problem of complementarity in the analytic relationship, what Lacan calls the seesaw relation. Here I want to bring in Ogden, who used the idea of the analytic third somewhat differently than I have here. Ogden's view of the third is

of an entity created by the subjectivities of the two participants in the dyad, a kind of co-created subject-object. In my terms, this would be the pattern or a relational dynamic that appears to form outside our conscious will. Ogden shows how this relational third can be experienced either as a vehicle of recognition or something we have to submit to, from which we cannot extricate ourselves. Symington, who first talked about this kind of negative third in the eighties, called it a corporate entity, based on the meeting of analyst and patient's superegos. This subjugating third, as Ogden calls it, takes on a life of its own--it is a negative of the third, like the chase and dodge pattern between mother and infant. We might say that it mimics true thirdness just as persecutory scrutiny mimics true observation and self-reflection. Just as submission, in Ghent's terms, is a look-alike for surrender. The subjugating third controls us, robs us of our subjectivity and eludes our efforts at mental formulating. Rather than creating space as the third does, it sucks it up. With the negative third there is an erasure of the inbetween; an inverse mirror relation, a complementary dyad concealing an unconscious symmetry.

The symmetry is a crucial part of what unites the pair, generating the "takes one to know one" recognition feature of the doer-done to relation (See Newirth on Mate-Blanco).   In effect, it creates its own version of nascent thirdness, of affective matching, as when both partners glare at each other, or interrupt in unison. Here again, the way out of this dynamic may be confused with submission. It may not suffice for the analyst to own responsibility, to shoulder the burden of blame that the patient is desperately trying to eject—-surrender can elide into submission if the analyst does not remain conscious of the two way direction of effects. Nor does steadfast interpretation liberate the analyst, for then he may find himself struggling to gain recognition from the patient to confirm his reality; worse yet, he may end up insisting on

his reality over that of the patient. Frequently, in retrospect, it is possible to see how the analyst's stance carries the aspect that is more shameful-masochistic or guilty-sadistic, the piece that is more violently disowned by the patient.

In such interactions we can see a deeper symmetry, which characterizes power relations: each feels unable to gain the other's recognition, each feels in the other's power. Or, as Davies has powerfully illustrated, each feels the other to be the abuser-seducer, each perceives the other as "doing to me." The analyst's participation, acknowledged or not, is part of a two-person dynamic, in which the analyst allows his personal history to assume a form dictated by the relationship. In acknowledging the necessity of enactment, I would caution that we try not to confuse our collusive participation in the subjugating, negative third with surrender or empathic recognition, disregarding our own warning signs of discomfort until it's too late.

One way we commonly distinguish surrender and recognition from collusive submission is the felt absence of freedom to explore and discuss the meaning of what has just happened. Thirdness is felt as mental space to negotiate meaning. I am free to confer meaning, I respond out of my own sense of agency and authorship, rather than feeling myself merely acted upon, impinged upon, having to react. The experience of surviving breakdown into complementarity, or twoness, and subsequently of communicating and restoring dialogue is crucial to a more advanced form of thirdness, what we might call the symbolic third.

One of the important questions I am addressing here is: how do we think about the way human beings actually develop this symbolic third. The deeper problem with the oedipal view, especially Lacan's equation of the maternal dyad with imaginary twoness, is that it misses the early origins of the third. The thirdness of speech is an antidote to murder, to kill or be killed, to your reality v. my reality, but his notion of speech misses the first part of the

conversation, the part baby watchers have made an indelible part of our thinking. In my view of thirdness, recognition is more than verbal speech, it begins with the early non-verbal experience of sharing a pattern, a dance, with another person. I would therefore define a nascent third—as distinct from the one in the mother's mind--present in the earliest exchange of gestures between mother and child, in the relationship that has been called oneness. I consider this early exchange to be a form of thirdness, and the principle of affective resonance that underlies it, "the one in the third."

Sander, the psychoanalytic infancy researcher, calls this rhythmicity, which he considers one of the two fundamental principles of all human interaction (the other is specificity). Rhythmicity is a fundamental form of the third and rhythmic experiences help constitute the capacity for thirdness. What we are describing is the principle underlying the creation of shared patterns, which constitutes the basis for coherence in interaction between persons as between the internal parts of the organism. Rhythym itself might constitute the primal experience of patterning, as we see in focusing on the breath.

Sander's most important early study focused on the complex interpersonal rhythym of the feeding interaction, revealing a primordial form of thirdness. He showed how neonates fed on demand adapted rapidly, within two weeeks, to feeding in the day and sleeping at night, while those fed on a regular 4-hour schedule did not adapt. This finding brilliantly illustrates how, when the significant other is recognizing and attuned, when she surrenders to the rhythm of the baby, a co-created rhythym begins to evolve. The basis for this accommodation is probably the in-built tendency to respond symmetrically, to match and mirror. Thus, as the caregiver accommodates, so does the baby. The dyad starts to cohere into a pattern. Once such a coherent dyadic system gets going, it seems to move naturally in the direction of orienting to a deeper "law" of

reality, in this case, the law of night and day. This rhythmic third in the relational pattern is distinct from the third in the mother's mind. The latter becomes important because while the mother identifies with baby's need, what is called oneness, all goes well. But what happens when twoness arises in the form of her deeply felt need for sleep, just when baby wants to be fed? Many a mother has come to understand infanticide in this kill or be killed moment. Now enters the need for a third to transcend twoness, not merely by submission and self-abnegation, the illusion that she and the baby are one. Ideally, she is able to respond to the baby's call as surrender to necessity rather than submission to a tyrannical demand. A correlate of this necessity is the knowledge that infant distress is natural and ephemeral, so that she is aable to bear and soothe her child's distress without dissolving into anxious oneness with it. Such knowledge, like the representation of necessity in her mind, functions as a regulating third, what we could call the "third in the one."

It has to be a third in the one because it could degenerate into mere duty if there were not the identifactory oneness of feeling her child's urgency and relief, pleasure and joy in connection. Let me give an example. It is written by a father, which does make a point, but more important to me personally, it was written by Steve Mitchell whose death was a great loss. Steve underscored the distinction between submission to duty and surrender to the third, what I am calling the third-in-the-one. "When my older daughter was about two or so, I remember my excitement at the prospect of taking walks with her, given her new ambulatory skills and her intense intereset in being outdoors. However, I soon found these walk agonizingly slow. My idea of a walk entailed brisk movement along a road or path. Her idea was quite different. The implications of this difference hit me one day when we encountered a fallen tree on the side of the road …the rest of the "walk" was spent exploring the fungal and insect

life on, under and around the tree. I remember my sudden realization
that these walks would be no fun for me, merely a parental duty, if I
held on to my idea of walks. As I was able to give that up and
surrender to my daugahter's rhythm and focus, a different type of
experience opened up to me…If I had simply restrained myself out of
duty, I would have experienced the walk as a compliance. But I was
able to become my daughater's version of a good companion and to find
in that another way for me to be that took on great personal meaning
for me."

Mitchell asks how we distinguish inauthentic submission to
another's demand from authentic change. This is in a way asking how
we distinguish twoness from thirdness. To me it seems clear that in
this case the internal parental third, reflection on what will create
connection in this relationship, allows surrender and transformation.
This intention to connect and resulting self-observation form a
version of what I would call the moral third, the conection to a
larger principle of necessity, rightness, goodness. The parent
accepts the necessity of asymmetry, accommodating to the other as a
way of generating thirdness and is transformed by the experience of
opening to mutual pleasure. This, of course, is what therapists DO in
a hundred different ways, every day.

It would be simple (and not untrue) to say that the space of
thirdness opens up through surrender, acceptance of Being, stopping
to watch the fungus grow. But to distinguish this from submission, we
have to consider a common confusion between surrender and an ideal of
"pure empathy," merger or oneness which can tend toward
inauthenticity and the denial of self. How do we distinguish
compliance or submission from acceptance of difference, recognition
of the other's separate subjectivity? Some of our traditional
theorizing misses this difference, as does the term oneness. In a
critique of object relations theory, of Balint's idea of primary
love, Lacan said that if the intersubjective third were not there

from the beginning, if the mother-baby couple were simply oneness--
then mother could nurse unstintingly in total identification with
baby, but then there would be nothing to stop her, when she was
starving, from doing as the Aborigines do, turning the tables and
eating the baby. Thus I have been trying to show how the parental
experience of "oneness" should include the third in the one,the
parental ability to contain and suspend her or his immediate need
without denying the difference. Thus Slochower argues, we must
consciously bear the knowledge of pain in giving over to the patient
who cannot bear our subjectivity.

        In infancy research, as Fonagy et al have emphasized, we see
how the mother who is able to demonstrate empathy with the baby's
negative emotion yet shows by a marker (eg exaggeration) that this is
not her *own* fear or pain or distress is far better able to soothe her
baby. Gergely proposes that mothers are driven to saliently mark
their affect-mirroring displays to differentiate them from realistic
emotional expressions. Whereas a genuine expression of anxiety or
distress on the mother's part would be alarming, this facial
mirroring communicates, "I understand and recognize you." Such
behavior is, I would argue, proto-symbolic, already indicating the
difference between the representation and the thing itself. It is
inherently reflexive, expressing the mother's knowledge of
difference, and like the representation of necessity in her mind, it
suggest the presence of a regulating third in the one. This
knowledge, like the ability to project the child's future
development, which Loewald cites as a parental function in his paper
on therapeutic action, helps create the symbolic space of thirdness.
The mother's ability to maintain both attunement and awareness of the
fact that this distress will pass establishes a tension between
oneness and the observing function of the third, what I am calling
the third in the one.

By the same token, the analyst can only soothe the patient by maintaining that position. And if she does not eventually convey the third in the one to the patient, the patient will feel that because of what the analyst has given her, the analyst owns her. In ther words, the patient will feel she must suppress her differences, spare the analyst, participate in a pseudo-mutality.

Alternatively, the analyst, like a mother, may feel that her separate aims, her being a person with her own needs, will kill the patient. She cannot distinguish between when she is holding the frame in a way that is conducive to the patient's growth and when she is being hurtful to the patient; when is she stressing the patient beyond what he can bear? How can she bear in mind the patient's need to safely depend on her and yet extricate herself from feeling she must choose between his needs or her own? Such a conflict may occur when an anxious patient calls on the weekend, or when the analyst goes away. A brief example. A patient, a man in his forties, grew up as his mother's favorite, the clear oedipal victor, and the one to fulfill her expectations. He marries a woman who turns out to be a terrific mother, but refuses to have sex with him. He forms a very passionate and amorous attachment to a woman at work, and while considering leaving his wife, takes his own apartment. But his wife demands he swear on the bible that won't contact the lover for 6 weeks while he is considering, otherwise she will never take him back. The patient has submitted, but is confused, in effect, about whether this is a real third. He feels bound to his promise, but he feels terribly coerced and terrified the girlfriend won't wait for him. He says he feels suicidal. At this juncture his therapist is gripped with urgency as well, feeling she must protect and save her patient, but she is about to leave for a long-planned week's vacation. She fears her leaving might kill the patient. Separation will kill. She feels divided: coerced, but bound to her patient, deeply concerned and afraid to leave, but aware she is caught in an

enactment. She can't get to that feeling of the mother who knows her baby's distress will pass. She wants to be the good mother, available and healing, but then she will comply with the notion that the patient cannot stand alone. She will be coerced by him as he is by the wife. The patient and his wife alternate as the mother who devours. Neither of them can distinguish between a promise freely given in accordance with an agreed upon principle—eg we need to give our marriage a chance—and a promise extracted, give in to me or else. In consultation, the therapist realizes she must bear her guilt for wanting to be separate and have her own life as the patient must bear his. She can no longer distinguished between her commitment to the patient and the feeling that her patient is extracting something, demanding her life. In the thirdness of communicating with a trusted supervisor, the therapist regains equilibrium. Among other things, the supervisor suggests she talk to the patient about how growing up means bearing guilt, which is indeed hard, and his belief that leaving is tantamount to killing, but staying means letting himself be killed. (I made this same statement to a patient in a similar situation). The therapist also decides to talk to the patient about how she has to bear the guilt of leaving him. This dispels the sense of do or die urgency, the intense twoness in which someone must do wrong, hurt, destroy the other. (PS—two years later he is finally able to recognize that it was he who was still clinging to his wife, that he must face his girl friends's anger etc.)

So we need the third in the one, that is oneness is dangerous without the third. But—and I want to emphasize that the other side of this tension is just as important, the side missed by oedipal theory--we also need the one in the third—the nascent or primordial experience of thirdness that has been called oneness, union, resonance. As infancy research has illustrated, mutual play fosters the evolution of a more symmetrical, two-way exchange. This equality and symmetry are essential to counteract the loss of agency and

submission that otherwise inhere in experiences with an idealized other. Analysis of face-to-face play shows how inadequate is the model in which one partner reacts to the other, as in, one active the other passive, one leading the other following. Researchers like Beebe describe how adult and infant align with a third, a co-created rhythm that is not reducible to action-reaction. Action-reaction is complementary twoness, the one-way direction, reflecting the absence of rhythym. By contrast, the rhythmic symmetry of thirdness reflects a shared subjective phenomenon, in which the reciprocity of two active partners in two-way interaction is visible.

In attuned play, the rhythmicity of the interaction requires and creates the recognition of patterns. The experience of thirdness is akin to following a shared theme in musical improvisation. The third which both partners follow is a rhythmic structure or pattern that both simultaneously create and surrender to. Such cocreation is like transitional experience in having the paradoxical quality of being invented and discovered. To the question, "Who created this rhythm, you or I?" the paradoxical answer, both and neither. It is impossible and unnecessary to say who has created the pattern because, unlike in verbal speech, in music and dance we can receive and transmit information at the same time. As in the establishment of a feeding rhythm, the adult's accommodation allows the system to achieve something like a rhythm of its own that has a quality of lawfulness, attunement to some deeper structure—-"the groove.".

Aron and I have talked about the need for a deep identificatory one in the third as a prerequisite for developing the positive aspects of the observing third. Without the nascent kind of thirdness, the more elaborate forms of self-observation based on triangular relations, those usually identified with the oedipal, become mere simulacrum of the third. Let me give an example of how the two structures—the one in the third and third in the one—can cooperate. In this case, a student in a group is reporting a very

long treatment in which she feel confined, paralyzed, afraid to move
because whatever she says might destabilize the patient, cause her to
feel attacked and withdraw for days. Any observation, that is,
introduction of thirdness, would be persecutory. But this has been
going on for so long, the therapist obviously feels it is time to try
for a positive destabilization of the situation. We explore how she
is locked in a doer-done to relation in which she feels the patient
will cause her to be "bad" that is hurtful, but of course the patient
herself is terrified of being "bad" and that is what she is most
afraid the therapist will say about her—eg, you are bad, hurtful by
calling me on the weekend, by not letting me speak about what's going
on, controlling e. How can the therapist get out of this bind?

     I become, temporarily, the third in the one, that is, I
introduce another possibility in her mind that breaks up the clinch
by observing the following: you are both dancing around each other
trying not to be the bad one, you are afraid to be a killer, and
she's afraid to be one, so you both end up feeling killed off,
attacked or deadened, by the other. You need to speak to her about
the killer in the room. But, I was not only creating a space of
observing thirdness, I was also showing the therapist her oneness,
her symmetry and identification with the patient—a negative one to be
sure, but still one in which each was mirroring the other and
identifying with her actions without realizing it. Another student
objected, But maybe it's too soon for this patient. Now here comes
the One in the Third, also, at first, from me, my identification in
our parallel process. The therapist, who's been with this patient for
over 10 years, shakes her head as I say cheerfully, No, I don't think
so, T would never have brought this patient to me if she weren't
ready because she knows I'm a killer, she knows I'm ruthless, she's
knows I'm gonna tell her to kill that patient! And so on." The group
laughing, breaks up. Next time Therapist C tells us, when she left
the group she was skipping down the street chanting to herself in

delight, "I'm a killer, I'm a killer." She took this to the patient in the following way—the next time the patient said something negative about how she was behaving, she said "You're not a killer," and the patient got a big smile on her face.

Typically, observing thirds that lack the music of the One in the Third cannot create enough symmetry or equality to prevent idealization from deteriorating into submission to a person or ideal. Then such submission can be countered by defiance and self-destructive acts. Analysts in the past were particularly prone to conflating compliant submission, on the patient's part, with self-observation. One of the most common difficulties in all psychotherapy is that the patient feels "done to" by the therapist's observation or interpretation: such interventions trigger self blame and shame, which used to be called by the misnomer "resistance." In other words, without the compassionate acceptance of What IS—a compassionate acceptance the patient may have seldom experienced and never have internalized—as opposed to What Ought to be, observation becomes judgment. Analysts, of course, turn this same beam of critical scrutiny on themselves, and what should be a self-reflexive function turns into the self-flagellating "bad-analyst" feeling. They fantasize, in effect, being shamed and blame in front of their colleagues; the community and its ideals become persecutory rather than supportive.

Likewise, in the triangular situation, unless there is already space in the dyad, the third person who enters becomes a persecutory invader rather than an instigator of symbolic functioning. By the way, it's also important that the third other whom we both love and share (a point I will come to later) even if we sometimes compete for her/him can be a basis of identification rather than "there's only room for one sheriff in this town." The observer becomes a tormentor. For the symbolic third to be a true third requires the earlier

reciprocal patterning based on rhythmicity, the connection based on affect resonance.

To sum up: The nascent pre-symbolic thirdness, which I also think of as the energetic or primordial third, lays down the foundation for the later interpersonal symbolic thirdness, the dimension of recognizing meaning and negotiating differences through speech. Without the nascent third, dialogue becomes a mere simulacrum of thirdness. Likewise, the energetic, rhythmic aspect of the nascent third informs the moral third, it is the music of universal laws and meaning. Over and over, most recently in Islamic fundamentalism, we see how readily ideas of a universal creative principle degenerate into ideals of obedience to a punitive omniscient power. By contrast, I have been trying to show how the moral third, the "law" of respect for difference is based on a deep structure of accomodation to otherness.

I use the word primordial to describe the "one in the third" because this law or deep structure seems inherent in the process of sharing signals, in all communication. This might be thought of as a transcendental or transpersonal force for, as Sander points out, studies show that by the end of the evening, all the fireflies are flashing in unison. It seems clear that energy is created through such shared signalling or patterning, through attunement or recognition. It does not, therefore, seem too farfetched to say that recognition of and through the third is an energetic principle. And that the economy of this energy is laid down in organic imperatives we (or atleast I) have yet to understand. I am not sure where this idea of energy leads, but I do think we can observe that human beings feel a deep pull to get such energy, if not through thirdness, then by substitutes, simulations of surrender in submission, addiction or destructiveness combined with self-immolation.

These substitutes come into play in the analytic situation when recognition founders, in the twoness of breakdown, where we confront

continually the losing and finding the space of thirdness. And we have to keep reminding ourselves that this breakdown and repair is part of a larger process, an effect of the relational imperative to participate in a two-way interaction. A central tenet of relational theory has been to insist that this involvement in the interaction is one that we cannot avoid, that we have to become, as Mitchell said, part of the problem and not just the solution. In this sense, the analyst's surrender means a deep acceptance of the necessity of becoming involved in enactment. This acceptance becomes the basis for a new version of thirdness, one in which analysts honestly confront the feelings of shame, inadequacy and guilt that such impasses arouse. Until the relational turn, it seems, many analysts were content to think of interpretation as the primary means of instituting the symbolic third. The solution was the analyst holding onto the third, the theory that the analyst relates to when thinking, and thereby formulating and interpreting. But, this holding on, for instance to interpretation, too often subverts the thirdness it aims to preserve. To call for the patient's help and collaboration in figuring out what is going on may open up the space of thirdness more successfully than putting forward one's own interpretation of what has just gone wrong. The latter will appear to be a defensive insistence on one's own thinking as the necessary version of reality.

Contemporary Kleinians have given some thought to this problem in how the patient perceives the analyst's relation to the third. Britton, in his theorizing of the third, explained that the patient has difficulty tolerating the third as an observational stance taken by the analyst because theory represents the father in the analyst's mind. The father, with whom the analyst is mentally conversing, actually having intercourse, intrudes on an already shakey mother-child dyad. The patient, indeed, yells at him "Stop that fucking thinking." I'm not so sure about equating the father with theory, as I said earlier, but I take his point that because of the lack of a

good maternal container, the analyst's relation to an internal other feels like a threat to the patient's connection. Also, I think the other with whom the analyst may be conversing is frequently another part of the patient—the part that collaborates and thinks with the analyst—which is experienced by the betrayed, abandoned child as a sell-out collaborator, a "good-girl or good-boy" false self.

     This relates to a further problem with the neo-Kleinian idea of the third, however, that I want to add here. By seeing the third primarily in terms of the internal observing third in the analyst's mind, the real intersubjective third is missed. I can best illustrate this with a case of Britton's colleague, Feldman, described in which the patient, spoke of an incident he had often brought up from childhood when he brought his mother a tub of ice cream for her birthday, choosing his favorite kind. "When he offered it to her, she said she supposed he expected her to give him some of it. He saw it as an examples of the way she never wholeheartedly welcomed what he did for her and always distrusted his motives." Feldman does not ask the patient how or what *he* has done that might have caused him to repeat this story; rather he observes that the patient needs to emphasize how hurtful the episode was. I would assume, the patient is telling Feldman he is missing something about how the patient is hurt. In any case, the patient does not feel understood, because his communication that the analyst is missing something is not received. Rather, the analyst assumes he does understand. The patient withdraws, indeed feeling hurt and angry. Feldman proposes that what the patient could not tolerate was that the mother had her own independent observation, she was able to have space to "think about him in her own way" because she was relating to an internal third. Likewise, he, Feldman, had his own way of thinking and observing, and this is what disturbed the patient. The patient has "sometimes been able to acknowledge he hates being aware that I am thinking for myself." The patient insists Feldman is behaving

like mother, and Feldman states that the analyst may resist such pressure and become involved in an impasse. This is a perfect illustration of the difficulty of interpretation Steve Mitchell's showed us: the analyst makes an interpretation about the way in which the patient transforms every interaction into a battle, and the patient experiences [this] as a power operation. My point here is simple. The ice cream represents the intersubjective third, the thing the patient wishes now, as he did then, to share. The mother-analyst is unable to see the ice cream as a sharable entity—in her world, it is either *for* her child or *for* herself. It is not a gift if it is shared, only if it is relinquished. How might that have affected her envy and sense of depletion each time she gave to the patient? How much could she have enjoyed sharing with her child? In a world without shared thirds, without a space of collaboration and sharing, everything is mine or yours, including the perception of reality. If the analyst has to protect the internal, observing third, this already signifies a breakdown, atleast temporarily, in the system of collaborative understanding and attunement. The task of the analyst is to help the patient create a system of sharing, of mutuality, in which now you have a bite, now I have one, as when you eat a cracker with your toddler. The toddler may have to insist at time on "all mine" but the delight of letting Mommy take a bite, or pretend to, as well as of playfully pulling the cracker a way, is often an even greater draw. The patient is trying to tell Feldman that in their co-created system the third is a negative one, there is no intersubjective thirdness in which they can eat and taste and spit out together. In such a system, based, I would add, on specificity, a secure attachment is created and presumed, in which I learn to give up having you be "all mine" in exchange for having a specific, matching relationship to you, and to our shared third.

     To return now to Britton. In our discussion of Britton, Aron and I also pointed out that Britton's description of how he worked

with the patient shows a modulating of responses, an attunement that accords with the notion of creating a nascent thirdness. In an earlier paper on containment, Britton shows beautifully how the patient needs to feel she has a safe shelter in the analyst's mind in order to be able to work mentally in the face of her experiences of pain and damage. How is that safety created? Where Britton sees the analyst having recourse to an internal observing third, we see him, in effect, creating the third in the one: he replicates the accommodating asymmetry of the mother with her baby, so that the patient can find herself reflected in his mind, experiencing the oneness in the third.

In these cases, where the presence of an observing third is felt to be intolerable or persecutory, as Britton later remarked ("On Psychoanalysis" Psybc.com), it feels as though there is room for only one psychic reality. If we assume the two-way direction of effects, we see the symmetry wherein both partners communicate the impossibility of acknowledging the other's reality without abandoning their own. The analyst can also be overwhelmed by how destructive the patient's image of her is to her own sense of self. For instance, when the patient's reality is "You are toxic and have made me ill, mad, and unable to function" the analyst finds it nearly impossible to take that in without losing her own reality. I have suggested that the analyst's feeling of being invaded by the other's malignant emotional reality might mirror the patient's early experiences of having his own feelings denied and supplanted by the parent's reality. In this case, attunement to the patient now feels like submission to extortion, and it is partly through this involuntary response on the analyst's side to the patient's dissociated self experience that trauma is re-enacted—what Russell called "the crunch," typified by the feeling "Am I crazy or is it you?"

The analyst caught in the crunch feels unable to respond authentically, and against her own will she, unconsciously or consciously, feels compelled to defend herself against the patient's reality. A fractional refusal to accommodate, a painful silence--the analyst's responses subtly or frankly convey her withdrawal from the rhythm of mutual emotional exchange, she ceases to participate in the nascent thirdness. This response is registered, in turn, by the patient, who feels, the analyst has chosen her own sanity over mine, she would rather I feel crazy than she be the one who is in the wrong. This deterioration of the interaction cannot yet be represented or contained in dialogue. The symbolic third—interpretation—simply appears as the analyst's effort to be the sane one and so talking about it doesn't seem to help. As Bromberg has pointed out, the effort to represent verbally what is going on, to engage the symbolic, can further the analyst's dissociative avoidance of the abyss the patient is threatened by. It seems to amplify the patient's shame at being desperate and the guilt over raging at the analyst.

Britton has described the restoration of thirdness in terms of the analyst's recovery of self-observation such that "we stop doing something that we are probably not aware of doing in our interaction with the patient." The analyst has to change, as Slavin and Kriegman have put it. I suspect that what we stop doing is related to this emotional withdrawal in the effort to protect our reality. In the effort to protect ourselves, we are becoming less authentic, not more. There are two sides to this process. On the one hand, we may need to surrender rather than submit, that is, we let go of our determination to make our reality operative; in effect, we accept loss, failure, our own fragility. We tell ourselves, whatever we have done that has gotten us into the position of being in the wrong is not so horribly shameful that we can't own it. It is not submission because in freeing ourselves from this shame, we stop feeling

persecuted and tormented by the patient's accusation. The patient's suffering can be acknowledged without our stepping into the position of "badness" and thus losing our perspective entirely.

In this sense, we have compassion for ourselves as well as for the patient. It may help to think of what is required as the third in the one—not only the simple affective resonance of the nascent third that is developmentally prior, but also the mother's third in the one where she contains catastrophic feelings because she knows they are not all there is. The moral third, the analytic position of compassionate witnessing, can only be reached through this experience of bearing pain and shame. Again, it is a compassion based on the strength of our acceptance of frailty, which is what we can offer our patients.

That is why, I have been reaching for a notion of thirdness that goes beyond the various formulations about the the mother's internal conversation with the father, the analyst's marriage to theory. Rather, I'm reaching for something Eigen has called the area of faith, which seems apposite to how we get ourselves back to the primordial third in order to realign with the symbolic aspects that previous analysts were more comfortable with. Somewhere, this primordial thirdness joins up with moral thirdness—witnessing, attuning to and recognizing psychic pain--which is directly related to faith. I have been proposing that we have to restore the primordial, affectively resonant third in order for the symbolic third to be a vehicle for insight rather than persecution and simultaneously preserve the element of thirdness in identification. I would sum it up by saying that we are looking for a way to balance the one in the third and the third in the one. Or, that our goal is to survive drowning in the transference without imagining that it is possible to walk on water.

I have no recipe for how to do this but I think we not only stop doing something; we also must reach down into our subjectivity,

to balance the third and the one in accord with our own sense of personal truth. Symington describes the creation of thirdness as the analyst's act of freedom in breaking out of a shared resistance, which he describes as a kind of persecutory third. He talks about the shared resistance based on a lock-in of the destructive attitudes and constraints of each person's superego. Like the Stern group's idea of the Now Moment, Symington's description supports my view that thirdness is created through primary affectively resonant communication and in some sense precedes the discursive thirdness in which symbolic and universal/moral thirds predominate.

He calls the move out of the resistant entity a moment of ego-to-ego connection (perhaps more accurately, self to self) based on the analyst's contacting as deeply as possible the truth of his own feelings. The patient needs to hear from the analyst his subjective experience, needs to know that the analyst's statements are not based on internalized thirds, superego contents, such as analytic dictums. Mitchell's way of describing this was that the analyst must stop aiming for some generic, uncontaminated solution and recognize that only a custom-fitted solution, precisely because it is non-generic, specific, will work. As Virginia Goldner has described our moments of breaking impasse, "in these singular, pivotal moments, it is not the analyss disclosures or bursts of aggression per se that are transformational. It is the *transparency of [the analyst's] working process* and what it reveals about him –his genuine struggle between the necessity for analytic discipline and need for authenticity. Many of the, by now numerous, descriptions of breaking out of impasses, including the one I gave above, involve the analyst speaking in this way.