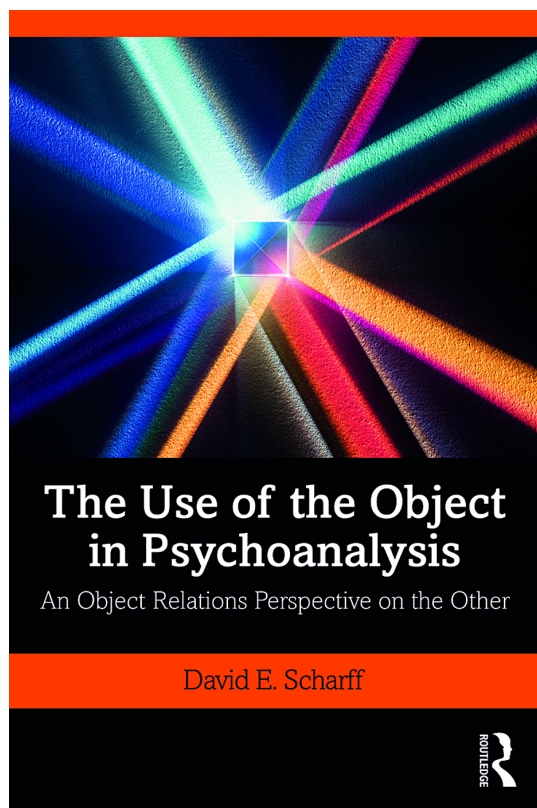


Scharff, David E. (editor): The Use of the Object in Psychoanalysis

von Salis Thomas

Figure 1: Book cover



London and New York: Routledge; 2020

1st edition

146 pages

Price: £23.99

ISBN: 978-0-36-718916-7

This book by the Scharffs and their colleagues, some of whom are members of their training institute, has not very many pages, but presents a great deal of material and prompts readers to ask themselves anew the question of the “object” of psychoanalysis. For in technical jargon, “object” usually refers to a person who is “invested”, with libido, aggression, hatred, interest, and from whom one can separate or even distinguish oneself more or less well. With the translation “object” one can point out that the “object” can be not only a more or less animated body,

but also a goal and a task. The focus of the interest of the authors is the object relations theory of the English (Winnicott, Fairbairn, Klein) and Argentinean schools (Pichon-Rivière, Bléger, Berenstein). In Spanish, the word “vinculo” is used to describe the complex relationships that form the object of psychoanalytic individual, couple, family and group therapy. In English, the word “bond” or “bonding” is used to refer to “attachment”, in German it is “Bindung”, but this is misleading, as in modern usage it refers to the theory of bonding inspired by ethology. This theory has given rise to a new psychopathological description of personality and behaviour, such as “safe”, “insecure-avoiding”, “insecure-ambivalent”, “insecure-interwoven” and “insecure-disorganised” attachment. This has become quite popular, but encourages some arbitrariness in theoretical orientation.

The book, edited by David Scharff, contains a lot of theory, but also many case histories illustrating the concepts. As is so often the case in psychoanalytical literature, the case histories can be read independently of the theoretical concepts they are supposed to explain, and they prove to be quite instructive. In this book, the case histories are often elaborated in great detail (are they based, at least in part, on sound or video recordings?), which gives a good insight into the authors’ techniques. Among them is a very detailed child analysis in a 4 hour per week setting.

Jill and David Scharff frame the other works with their contributions. By including the article by Tubert-Oklander, David Scharff demonstrates his appreciation of the Argentinean school and the operative group concepts. This article offers an approach via the history of thought to understanding the object relations theory, starting with Freud’s understanding of science and then going on to focus on Winnicott. He adds to Winnicott’s “contradictions” those of the many analysts who struggle to overcome the transference due to their respective psychoanalytical educations. He aims at a new paradigm (“paradigm of human life”) in which psychoanalysis should not be left out, but which includes natural science, human science, art, religion, politics and society. Tubert-Oklander does not go as far as the operative concepts of the group would do in formulating the new paradigm. He remains a group analyst with a wide-ranging philosophical education, thus cushioning the more radical critique of society expressed by the adherents to Pichon-Rivière’s and Bauleo’s “operative concepts”.

This book is recommended for anybody interested in psychoanalytic theory and practice including applications in

diverse fields of behavioral sciences, medicine, sociology and the humanities.