Introduction: Taking on anxiety

Jeffrey S. Librett

Although they were written prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, a historical crisis doubtless entailing significant anxiety, all of the contributions to this first Special Issue of *Metalepsis* were composed within the historical moment of global "contagion," in the broad sense of a "contagion of the global" (a notion I develop in the "Editorial Afterword" to this Special Issue). They bear witness to an awareness that cultural values and information from divergent locations are interpenetrating and spreading across the earth to an unheard-of degree, beyond any controllable limits, such that identities are virtually dissolving or fragmenting in a sometimes anxious-making way. This situation requires that we come to terms with anxieties about identity-dissolution or identity-fragility without reacting against them in an attempt to "fix" identity, e.g. by building walls against the foreign, which are always erected in vain and with destructive results. Such a requirement of assuming anxiety, acknowledging it and taking it upon ourselves--a political-historical exigency--implies the necessity of a psychoanalytic ethics of anxiety. Each of the essays in this volume speaks in its own way of this necessity, as I indicate in the summaries that follow.

Main Articles—from Freud to Klein to Jung to Lacan to Heidegger and beyond

Donald L. Carveth opens the volume with a selective critical overview of the theories of anxiety in psychoanalysis--placing a particular emphasis on Freud and Melanie Klein (with briefer discussions of Karl Abraham, D.W. Winnicott, and Jacques Lacan along the way)--and existentialism. While recalling the main outlines of these theories, Carveth emphasizes a number of points that ultimately indicate an ethical dimension, to which the assumption of one's own anxiety may lead. He stresses first that Freud glimpses primarily the loss of something good as the possible object of anxious anticipation, whereas Abraham and Klein add to this picture the possibility of an anxiety that anticipates a persecutory attack. Further, as Carveth explains, Klein develops--under the heading of depressive (or reparatory) anxiety, which supercedes persecutory

anxiety, and which is associated with reparatory guilt--a sense of "conscience" that goes beyond the merely punitive pseudo-conscience of the superego, a sense Freud was likewise not quite able to envision or articulate. For Carveth, the potential destinies of reparatory anxiety and guilt turn out to have ethico-political consequences. Gesturing toward a critique of the neoliberalism that is consonant with the "culture of narcissism" (a notion Christopher Lasch formulated in 1979), Carveth adds the observation that the "flight from guilt" (as from constraint or any sense of obligation to the others) that is characteristic of this culture of narcissism--in which the ego worries instead about shame--has been present not only in the society at large but in certain of the manifestations of psychoanalysis. Yet Carveth notes also, in what he takes to be a positive development, that psychoanalysis seems to have been rediscovering an interest in guilt in recent decades.

Beyond the limits of psychoanalytic discourse per se, Carveth summarizes also the existentialist discourse on anxiety, with reference to Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Erich Fromm. He suggests that the avoidance of existential anxiety—where such anxiety is understood as a reckoning with freedom and responsibility--is at the root of much neurotic anxiety. The avoidance of freedom leads to repression, because repression is tantamount to a false attempt to “free” oneself from one's impulses, rather than an attempt to deal with them, to take them on as one's own, and as addressed by one’s freedom to one’s freedom. He concludes thus that psychoanalysis still has largely before itself the task of incorporating into itself the insights of the existentialist traditions. The existentialist dimension returns explicitly in the articles by Warnek and Stolorow.

In "Anxiety: Klein's 'deeper' layers," R.D. Hinshelwood presents a synoptic view of Klein's anxiety theory, especially its divergence from Freud's theory, and more specifically its implications for the structure of the therapeutic relationship and process. He explains the fundamental principles of the play therapy technique, clarifies Klein's divergence from Anna Freud on the question of interpretation, and describes the subsequent application of the play therapy technique to the logic of the analytic process with adult patients. Here, he emphasizes that Klein's focus on anxiety rather than drives/instincts was crucial to this work from the beginning, and more specifically he

unfolds the sense in which Klein focuses on the phantasy as a narrative of relations with objects, in place of drives per se. On the other hand, Hinshelwood usefully recalls that Freud was also interested in object relations and empathic events, thereby placing in question the all-too-common caricature of Freud as a one-sided "drive theorist."

Hinshelwood goes on then to explain the difference between persecutory and depressive anxiety, thus providing a link back to Carveth's article. In particular, Hinshelwood focuses on persecutory anxiety in the paranoid-schizoid position, and discusses the manner in which the theorization of this earliest anxiety led to the container-contained theory of analytic technique, as a passing back and forth of anxiety between the analysand and the analyst, whereby the analyst works to put into new words and new meanings the inexpressible anxiety of the analysand, then gives the analysand space to process, accept, reject, and reshape what she has received from the analyst, who will receive this reshaped anxiety in her turn. The ethics of the analytic process is marked, in this back and forth, by a decided dialogicity.

In "The Dialogue with the Unconscious in Working with Anxiety," John Beebe illuminates the phenomenon of anxiety in the psychoanalytic dialogue from a number of angles made by possible by the Jungian tradition. He discusses and illustrates, with respect to anxiety, the notion of the inclusion of the unconscious as a "third perspective" that mediates, and intervenes in, the conscious dialogue between the psyche of the patient and the psyche of the analyst. Beebe shows how the unconscious sheds useful light on anxiety in two different ways. First, he considers dreams, and shows through examples that they can either push us to recognize an anxiety hitherto insufficiently perceived, or help us move beyond an anxiety whose usefulness has already been exhausted. Second, he considers the practices of divination as reconceived by C. G. Jung, in this case through the consultation of the *I-Ching*, as ways of making conscious what was previously unconscious, and so inviting into the space of the dyad the "third perspective," that of the (collective) unconscious. In each case, the dismissal or refusal of an anxiety that is related to the subject's aggressivity is overcome by the assumption, the taking-on and processing, of that anxiety.

Juliet Flower MacCannell works as a cultural critic in the tradition of the Lacanian "return to Freud," and here, in "Anxiety--Genuine or Spurious," she argues

primarily in terms of Freud's texts combined with cultural, sociological and ethical perspectives. This combination enables her to approach Freudian anxiety-theory from a new angle to shed light on societal aspects of our current "age of anxiety." She argues for a novel interpretation of Freud's second theory of anxiety, according to which Freud would be essentially claiming that anxiety involves "a post-Oedipal return of Oedipus," manifesting a rivalry with the father on the far end of the loss of the Oedipal mother. This could be seen as one way of interpreting the interpenetration of attachment (or connection) and separation (or castration) that characterizes anxiety in Freud's later theory. MacCannell further argues that this structure of anxiety is strikingly in evidence in our *own* epoch, especially in young adults who are having troubling "launching," and in their parents, who tend to try half unwittingly to keep their children close when it would be more useful to let them go. Finally, she traces this most recent situation back to the Cold War expansion of the suburbs in America, attended by a fantasy of self-enclosed protection from the evil, urban world outside. Such a withdrawal is consistent, we might note, with Carveth's notion of the refusal of "guilt" in the post-War period, since "guilt" is a modality of "debt" (the two words being, of course, the same in Freud's—and also Nietzsche's--language of German: "Schuld"), and self-isolation avoids debt. By withdrawing from the world at large, one avoids not just any connection with, but more specifically any indebtedness to, and any ethical obligations towards, the others, or at least so one might imagine. Instead, MacCannell's implicit suggestion is that the recognition of the anxiety that sometimes leads to self-isolation of the ego is a necessary prelude to the openness to the others, and to the exercise of freedom in relation to those others, both of which are entailed by the individual's partial responsibility *nolens volens* for the collective human destiny. The psychoanalytic process would, then, presumably move in that direction.

Peter Warnek is a philosopher whose work moves between ancient Greek philosophy and the continental philosophy of the last two centuries, especially the phenomenological-existential tradition from Kierkegaard through Nietzsche to Heidegger and beyond. In "Responding for Anxiety Itself," he performs a close philosophical and textual reading of the first of Freud's two "Introductory Lectures" on anxiety, titled simply "Anxiety" (1917). The generative framework of this reading is

Warnek's larger, sustained philosophical research project on the notion of *responsibility* beyond moral conscience per se. (This project would align to some degree with the desiderata Carveth articulates concerning both the necessity of an ethics beyond the superego and the necessity of absorbing the implications of existentialism into a more rigorous form of psychoanalysis.) Both drawing on, and trying to go beyond, the works of Martin Heidegger on the one hand and their critical reception in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas on the other hand, Warnek is working to articulate the sense in which human beings are *originarily affected* by a specific sort of *responsibility*. Hence, "affect"—that by which we are affected and by which we affect ourselves, and this affection itself--is thought of here as intertwined with responsibility. And in this intertwinement, the "affect" of "anxiety" is considered to play a privileged role. Accordingly, in this essay, Warnek works to expose the manner in which the concepts of "affect" and "responsibility" are at work in Freud's examination of anxiety as an originary affect, crucial to the human experience, that powerfully calls upon us to respond both to ourselves and to our world.

The point of departure for Warnek's reading of this text is the tension he notes between Freud's claim that "anxiety itself" is universally self-evident, because we all share the experience of anxiety, on the one hand, and Freud's attempt to describe and indeed explain it, on the other hand. The painstaking exploration of this tension enables Warnek to lay bare a number of the principal assumptions and rhetorical strategies of Freud's text, with a view to grasping more precisely just what Freud is saying (and not saying) about anxiety here.

In particular Warnek pursues Freud's argument against the misunderstanding of anxiety as a sensation (which would imply simplicity and immediacy), rather than as an affective process that is complex, self-conscious, and extended in a self-anticipating manner over time. In this affective process, the subject becomes aware of "becoming anxious" as something that befalls him or her, i.e. as something that affects him or her. And indeed, Warnek reads Freud as suggesting that anxiety is not just any affect but one that exposes "us to the actuality of our own situation" and "calls us to respond to it." In this sense, it is, even in Freud (and not just in the existentialists), a privileged affect: it

calls us back to ourselves, prompting us to question and to seek ourselves and our experience.

Among other insights, this discussion leads Warnek to the paradoxical discovery in Freud of a certain impossibility of making anxiety fully present to ourselves, an impossibility that is implied by the fact that anxiety evokes first and foremost a kind of ethical response rather than theoretical knowledge. Precisely because we are "affected" by the "affection" that is anxiety, we can never really master it, but remain to some degree in a passive and belated relation to it. This passive aspect, which paradoxically does not exclude a certain active involvement, implies nonetheless that anxiety to some degree escapes us, that it is never fully present to us, that we cannot force it to stand still. In this sense, too, we cannot be "introduced" to it. Playing on the two meanings of "vorstellen" in German, one might say, in the spirit of Warnek's reflections, that anxiety cannot be "introduced to us" (*uns nicht vorgestellt werden kann*), because we cannot have a reliable representation of it (*keine Vorstellung davon haben können*).

Robert D. Stolorow, whose work combines relational analytic traditions with phenomenological and existential ones, introduces here a distinction between "existential anxiety" as understood by Martin Heidegger, on the one hand, and what Stolorow calls "apocalyptic anxiety," on the other hand. For Stolorow, "apocalyptic anxiety" concerns the prospect of the disappearance of human civilization, the curtailment of human history, and the effacement of its meaning (and so of all meaning as such). Arguing that the avoidance of such anxiety plays an important part in the denial of humanly caused climate change and in the evasion of responsibility to work to reverse its course, Stolorow proposes an engaged relational analytic approach to help people tolerate their "apocalyptic anxiety." The aim is to assist analysands in assuming their responsibility for the human as such, and for its possible futurity. Here, too, we encounter the proposal of a certain psychoanalytic ethics of anxiety, as we have seen suggested in several of the previous essays, beyond and across other differences between divergent psychoanalytic schools of thought and practice.

Review Essays—Clinical, philosophical, and literary perspectives

Randi Gross Nathenson reviews Marcus West's book, *Into the Darkest Places: Early Relational Trauma and Borderline States of Mind*. Nathenson shows how West integrates Jungian, Freudian, attachment-theoretical, and relational perspectives in order to theorize, and concretize clinically, what is at stake in the treatment of "borderline" states whose background is severe early relational trauma. This perspective complements the one suggested by Donald Carveth, who reminded us that not all anxiety is based on empirical trauma. Here, the anxiety that is in fact based on empirical trauma stands in the center of the clinical discussion. In her reading, which brings to bear her own clinical experience, Nathenson stresses the importance, for the treatment of "borderline" states, of the analyst's capacity and willingness to sit with the anxiety inherent in complex trauma, rather than to push it away (and the patient with it) through pathologizing generalizations that often in fact mask judgements of value. And she praises West for managing this task admirably.

Daniel Anderson examines Robert Tyminski's book *Male Alienation at the Crossroads of Identity, Culture and Cyberspace*, a timely text engaging from a clinical perspective current "challenges addressing young men and the psychotherapists that treat them: changing concepts of masculinity, gender, race, sexual orientation, immigration status and the siren song of virtual reality of social media and games." A Jungian analyst, Tyminski addresses these challenges, and their attendant anxieties, in terms of current research, foregrounding in addition to analytical psychology the frameworks of developmental psychology and object-relations psychoanalysis. Above and beyond the application of these theoretical and empirical research bases to the socio-psychological phenomena that involve current conceptions and images of masculinity, Anderson highlights the clinical acumen of Tyminski, especially as concerns the work he does with his patient's metaphors, his sensitivity to the question of meaning, and the richness of his case studies. Anderson questions, however, the adequacy of Tyminski's theoretical determination of "alienation," and he wonders whether more could be done in this arena to understand how the very nature of the "self" has been changed by the development of virtual reality in the digital worlds, and how such change affects masculinity and gender more broadly today. The question of the ethical dimension of the subject's relation to the

social sphere is implicitly raised by Anderson's explicit pondering of alienation and virtualization.

Daniel Wilson reviews two recent books on Jacques Lacan's theory of anxiety, principally as presented in Lacan's *Anxiety* Seminar, *L'angoisse* in the original French, which can also be translated with the broader term, "anguish." While the books take different approaches to Lacan's theory of anxiety, they both suffer, according to Wilson, from similar limitations. Both seem to shy away, he suggests, from the recognition that psychoanalytic experience begins with the inauguration of transference as an encounter with castration, as a certain loss of connection with the Other, a movement from alienation in the Other to separation from the Other. (Note that MacCannell was also discussing this question of castration, as what follows upon the Oedipus.) In *Lacanian Antiphilosophy and the Problem of Anxiety*, Brian Robertson conflates fetishism with desire, from Wilson's perspective, and thus robs himself of the chance to see how anxiety leads beyond fantasy. Similarly, in *Anxiety between Desire and the Body*, Bogdan Wolf remains this side of the Lacanian "traversal of the fantasy" in that he conceives of jouissance as coinciding with the end of male orgasm, considered as an experience of castration. Wilson points out that, in contrast to such a conception, Lacan explicitly separates jouissance from orgasm, and situates the former beyond the pleasure principle, whereas the latter remains squarely within the field of pleasure. Finally, Wilson argues that the confusion on this point has consequences for Wolf's problematic construal of desire and of the "object a, cause of desire," whose status as a "real" that is nonetheless precisely missing from reality (as defined by the symbolic-imaginary spheres) Wolf doesn't quite grasp. Ultimately, for Wilson, these technical theoretical questions concern the ethical implications of analysis, and of the traversal of anxiety, which should lead, for Lacan, beyond the censoring of the feminine in both men and women.

We include next three reviews that deal with approaches to anxiety from the fields of philosophy and literature. Our attention to these perspectives is particularly appropriate to the journal *Metalepsis* because of the journal's *interdisciplinary* commitment. Clearly, as several of the main articles in this number already suggested, anxiety is a psychoanalytic topic that cannot ultimately be responsibly or seriously approached without some attention to the disciplines and discourses outside of

psychoanalysis in which it has played, and still plays, a major role, especially philosophy, literature, and the arts. Indeed, anxiety has played a crucial role in the continental (European) philosophical tradition since the early 19th century,. The presence of anxiety as a prominent theme in modern philosophy begins with Friedrich Schelling (in his works *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* and *Ages of the World* [1809]), but it gains prominence and titular explicitness first in the middle nineteenth century with Søren Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844). Subsequently, and often with reference to Kierkegaard, it maintains its importance in twentieth century phenomenological and existential thought from Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) through Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943), extending further from there through existential psychoanalysis in books like Rollo May's *The Meaning of Anxiety* (1950), and extending indirectly into post-structuralism especially through Heidegger's influence. Outside of philosophy, the theme of anxiety is a modern one that figures prominently in *poetry* (e.g. in W. H Auden's book-length poem *The Age of Anxiety*, from 1948), *fiction* (implicitly at least in many writers from the Romanticism of E.T.A. Hoffmann to the Modernism of Franz Kafka, Virginia Woolf, Maurice Blanchot, and so on), the *visual arts,* and the *performing arts*, not to mention *film* and *digital media* production. It has also recently attracted the attention of *social historians* such as Allan V. Horwitz, whose *Anxiety: a Short History* (2013) provides valuable perspectives. Psychoanalysis does well to attend to these other discourses (and they to it). Hence, our inclusion of them in this journal.

Shannon Hayes summarizes the contributions to an important recent essay collection, *Unconsciousness Between Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Dorothée Legrand and Dylan Trigg. The theme of anxiety plays a role in phenomenological-existential philosophy equal in importance to the role it plays in psychoanalysis, and in anxiety such philosophy encounters a dimension of mood over which the conscious mind no longer has sway. As Hayes describes, the volume edited by Legrand and Trigg collects essays that explore the ways in which phenomenology, a philosophical movement initially centered on the description of the experience of *consciousness*, finds itself called upon--by virtue of both its subject matter and its commitment to methodological rigor--to confront the question of the modalities of

appearance of what remains *unconscious* within--and at the same time on the outside of--consciousness itself. That is, the unconscious defines the limit or border of phenomenology, where its subject matter overlaps with that of psychoanalysis. The essays Hayes discusses trace this (perhaps anxious) confrontation of phenomenology with its limit in the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Levinas.

Next, two reviews remind us of the importance of literary and philosophical modernism for psychoanalysis and, in turn, of psychoanalysis for modernist texts. As the reviewers suggest, a grasp of this importance can usefully inform not just descriptions of the past of psychoanalysis but also all projects to chart its future.

Fernanda Negrete reviews Evelyne Grossman's book, *The Anguish of Thought*, a book that is translated from the French original, and that discusses anguish in the work of French modernists and poststructuralists in literature and philosophy: Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Lacan, Samuel Beckett, Michel Foucault, and Maurice Blanchot. In her readings, as Negrete shows, Grossman explores the intimate relationships between anguish (as “l’angoisse”)—which contains anxiety (“l’anxiété”) but goes beyond it--and sustained theoretical reflection. As diverse experiences that share with each other a dimension of dissociation, the fragmentation of the ego, and the encounter with what Negrete calls here "a decompletion of language," psychoanalysis and the writing (and reading) of modernism come together in the anxieties and anguish of radical heteronomy. The description of these shared conditions helps us situate psychoanalysis in its modernist and postmodernist context, in which aesthetic and conceptual work in language entails an ethics of the confrontation with anguish.

Bryan Counter’s review narrows the focus to the presence of psychoanalysis in the works of Maurice Blanchot, a very important French modernist writer of fiction and literary-theoretical and philosophical essays, who was profoundly attuned to the phenomenon of dread in works from Kierkegaard to Heidegger and beyond, and who exercised a strong influence on the subsequent, post-structuralist generation. On the one hand, Counter's review of Joseph Kuzma's recent book on *Maurice Blanchot and Psychoanalysis* shows us how deeply Blanchot valued the insights of psychoanalysis--especially those concerning the dispersal of the speaking subject's identity. On the other

hand, the review also shows us how skeptical Blanchot was of claims to the unity of psychoanalysis as an empirical science and of the attempts to institutionalize it as a clinical discipline. In sum, Counter presents the manner in which Kuzma's work reveals the usefulness of both Blanchot's appreciation of, and his critical reflections upon, psychoanalysis for contemporary attempts to advance critical self-reflection in our field, and to envision what it ought to become.

Taken together, the articles and review essays in this inaugural Special Issue of *Metalepsis* provide an advanced introduction to the theme of anxiety in some of the main articulations of the history of psychoanalysis and contemporaneous existentialism in the twentieth century. They also point us to the principal stakes of the clinical theory and treatment of anxiety, and of its political, social, environmental, gender-political, and cultural contexts today, across various schools and sub-discourses within today's psychoanalysis. The orientation they share in common toward a certain welcoming of anxiety, an attentiveness to it, rather than its defensive dismissal or premature suppression as mere symptom or mistake (a kind of denial sometimes promoted by clinical therapeutics), can no doubt serve us--at once as provocation, reminder, and inspiration--in our future work.

jlibrett@uoregon.edu