

Intersubjectivity

From the introduction to *The intersubjective perspective*, edited by R D Stolorow, G E Atwood and B Brandchaft, Jason Aronson, 1994, (pp x,xi)

“[I]ntersubjectivity theory is both experience-near and relational; its central constructs seek to conceptualise the organization of personal experience and its vicissitudes within an ongoing intersubjective system. It differs from other psychoanalytic theories in that it does not posit particular psychological contents (the Oedipus complex, the paranoid and depressive positions, separation-individuation conflicts, idealizing and mirroring longings, and so on) that are presumed to be universally salient in personality development and in pathogenesis. Instead, it is a process theory offering broad methodological and epistemological principles for investigating and comprehending the intersubjective contexts in which psychological phenomena arise. With regard to psychological development, for example, we (Stolorow and Atwood 1992) have proposed that the ‘organization of the child’s experience must be seen as a property of the *child-caregiver system of mutual regulation*’ (p.23) and that it is the ‘recurring patterns of intersubjective transaction within the development system [that] result in the establishment of invariant principles that unconsciously organize the child’s subsequent experiences’ (p.24). The concept of intersubjectively derived unconscious organizing principles is our alternative to the notion of unconscious instinctual fantasy. It is these unconscious ordering principles, forged within the child-caregiver system, that form the basic building blocks of personality development and that constitute the quintessential focus of psychoanalytic investigation and interpretation. Like Stern (1985), we eschew assumptions about universally occurring developmental phases dominated by biologically preordained themes or crises.”

References:

- Stern, D. (1985) *The interpersonal world of the infant*. New York: Basic Books.
Stolorow, R., and Atwood, G. (1992) *Contexts of being: The intersubjective foundations of psychological life*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.