

Second Edition



ROUTLEDGE

An abstract painting with thick, expressive brushstrokes. The top half features swirling bands of green, yellow, and blue. The bottom half is dominated by dark, swirling strokes of grey and blue on a black background.

Structures of Subjectivity

Explorations in Psychoanalytic
Phenomenology and Contextualism

George E. Atwood and Robert D. Stolorow

Structures of Subjectivity

Structures of Subjectivity: Explorations in Psychoanalytic Phenomenology and Contextualism is a revised and expanded second edition of a work first published in 1984, which was the first systematic presentation of the intersubjective viewpoint—what George Atwood and Robert Stolorow called psychoanalytic phenomenology—in psychoanalysis. This edition contains new chapters tracing the further development of their thinking over the ensuing decades and explores the personal origins of their most essential ideas.

In this new edition, Atwood and Stolorow cover the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of psychoanalysis and present a broad approach that they have designated phenomenological contextualism. This approach addresses personal subjective worlds in all their richness and idiosyncrasy and focuses on their relational contexts of origin and therapeutic transformation.

Structures of Subjectivity covers the principles guiding the practice of psychoanalytic therapy from the authors' viewpoints and includes numerous detailed clinical case studies. The book will be essential reading for psychoanalysts, practitioners of psychotherapy, psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, and social workers. It will also be of interest to scholars and students with an interest in psychoanalytic theory and practice, and its philosophical premises.

George E. Atwood is Professor of Clinical Psychology (Emeritus), Rutgers University, USA, and Founding Faculty Member, Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity, New York. He is author of *The Abyss of Madness* (Routledge, 2011), and coauthor of *Psychoanalytic Treatment* (Analytic Press, 1987), *Contexts of Being* (Analytic Press, 1992), *Faces in a Cloud* (Jason Aronson, 1993), and *Working Intersubjectively* (Analytic Press, 1997).

Robert D. Stolorow is a Founding Faculty Member, Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles, and Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity, New York. He is author of *World, Affectivity, Trauma: Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2011) and *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic, and Philosophical Reflections* (Routledge, 2007), and coauthor of five other books with George Atwood.

PSYCHOANALYTIC INQUIRY BOOK SERIES
JOSEPH D. LICHTENBERG
SERIES EDITOR



Like its counterpart, *Psychoanalytic Inquiry: A Topical Journal for Mental Health Professionals*, the Psychoanalytic Inquiry Book Series presents a diversity of subjects within a diversity of approaches to those subjects. Under the editorship of Joseph Lichtenberg, in collaboration with Melvin Bornstein and the editorial board of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, the volumes in this series strike a balance between research, theory, and clinical application. We are honored to have published the works of various innovators in psychoanalysis, such as Frank Lachmann, James Fosshage, Robert Stolorow, Donna Orange, Louis Sander, Léon Wurmser, James Grotstein, Joseph Jones, Doris Brothers, Fredric Busch, and Joseph Lichtenberg, among others.

The series includes books and monographs on mainline psychoanalytic topics, such as sexuality, narcissism, trauma, homosexuality, jealousy, envy, and varied aspects of analytic process and technique. In our efforts to broaden the field of analytic interest, the series has incorporated and embraced innovative discoveries in infant research, self psychology, intersubjectivity, motivational systems, affects as process, responses to cancer, borderline states, contextualism, postmodernism, attachment research and theory, medication, and mentalization. As further investigations in psychoanalysis come to fruition, we seek to present them in readable, easily comprehensible writing.

After 25 years, the core vision of this series remains the investigation, analysis, and discussion of developments on the cutting edge of the psychoanalytic field, inspired by a boundless spirit of inquiry.

PSYCHOANALYTIC INQUIRY BOOK SERIES
JOSEPH D. LICHTENBERG
SERIES EDITOR

Vol. 43

*Structures of Subjectivity:
Explorations in Psychoanalytic Phenomenology
and Contextualism, 2nd Edition*
George E. Atwood &
Robert D. Stolorow

Vol. 42

*Psychoanalytic Complexity: Clinical
Attitudes for Therapeutic Change*
William J. Coburn

Vol. 41

*Metaphor and Fields: Common
Ground, Common Language and the
Future of Psychoanalysis*
S. Montana Katz (ed.)

Vol. 40

*Growth and Turbulence in the
Container/Contained: Bion's
Continuing Legacy*
Howard B. Levine & Lawrence
J. Brown (eds.)

Vol. 39

*Nothing Good Is Allowed to Stand:
An Integrative View of the
Negative Therapeutic Reaction*
Léon Wurmser & Heidrun
Jarass (eds.)

Vol. 38

*Self Experiences in Group, Revisited:
Affective Attachments, Intersubjective
Regulations, and Human Understanding*
Irene Harwood, Walter Stone,
& Malcolm Pines (eds.)

Vol. 37

The Abyss of Madness
George E. Atwood

Vol. 36

*Manual of Panic Focused Psychodynamic
Psychotherapy – eXtended Range*
Fredric N. Busch, Barbara L. Milrod,
Meriamne B. Singer, & Andrew C. Aronson

Vol. 35

*World, Affectivity, Trauma:
Heidegger and Post-Cartesian
Psychoanalysis*
Robert D. Stolorow

Vol. 34

*Change in Psychoanalysis:
An Analyst's Reflections on the Therapeutic
Relationship*
Chris Jaenicke

Vol. 33

*Psychoanalysis and Motivational Systems:
A New Look*
Joseph D. Lichtenberg, Frank M.
Lachmann, & James L. Fosshage

Vol. 32

*Persons in Context:
The Challenge of Individuality
in Theory and Practice*
Roger Frie & William J. Coburn (eds.)

Vol. 31

*Toward an Emancipatory Psychoanalysis:
Brandchaft's Intersubjective Vision*
Bernard Brandchaft, Shelley Doctors,
& Dorienne Sorter

Vol. 30

*From Psychoanalytic Narrative to Empirical
Single Case Research: Implications for
Psychoanalytic Practice*
Horst Kächele, Joseph Schachter,
Helmut Thomä & the Ulm Psychoanalytic
Process Research Study Group

PSYCHOANALYTIC INQUIRY BOOK SERIES
JOSEPH D. LICHTENBERG
SERIES EDITOR

- Vol. 29
*Mentalization:
Theoretical Considerations, Research Findings,
and Clinical Implications*
Fredric N. Busch (ed.)
- Vol. 28
*Transforming Narcissism:
Reflections on Empathy, Humor, and
Expectations*
Frank M. Lachmann
- Vol. 27
*Toward a Psychology of Uncertainty:
Trauma-Centered Psychoanalysis*
Doris Brothers
- Vol. 26
*Living Systems, Evolving Consciousness,
and the Emerging Person:
A Selection of Papers from the Life
Work of Louis Sander*
Gherardo Amadei & Ilaria Bianchi (eds.)
- Vol. 25
*Sensuality and Sexuality
across the Divide of Shame*
Joseph D. Lichtenberg
- Vol. 24
*Jealousy and Envy:
New Views about Two Powerful Feelings*
Léon Wurmser & Heidrun Jarass (eds.)
- Vol. 23
*Trauma and Human Existence:
Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic,
and Philosophical Reflections*
Robert D. Stolorow
- Vol. 22
*Psychotherapy and Medication:
The Challenge of Integration*
Fredric N. Busch & Larry S. Sandberg
- Vol. 21
Attachment and Sexuality
Diana Diamond, Sidney J. Blatt,
& Joseph D. Lichtenberg (eds.)
- Vol. 20
*Craft and Spirit:
A Guide to Exploratory Psychotherapies*
Joseph D. Lichtenberg
- Vol. 19
*A Spirit of Inquiry:
Communication in Psychoanalysis*
Joseph D. Lichtenberg,
Frank M. Lachmann, & James L.
Fosshage
- Vol. 18
*Kohut, Loewald, and the Postmoderns:
A Comparative Study of Self and
Relationship*
Judith Guss Teicholz
- Vol. 17
*Working Intersubjectively:
Contextualism in Psychoanalytic
Practice*
Donna M. Orange, George E. Atwood,
& Robert D. Stolorow
- Vol. 16
*The Clinical Exchange:
Techniques Derived from Self
and Motivational Systems*
Joseph D. Lichtenberg, Frank M.
Lachmann, & James L. Fosshage
- Vol. 14
*Affects as Process:
An Inquiry into the Centrality
of Affect in Psychological Life*
Joseph M. Jones

PSYCHOANALYTIC INQUIRY BOOK SERIES
JOSEPH D. LICHTENBERG
SERIES EDITOR

Vol. 13

*Self and Motivational Systems:
Toward a Theory of Psychoanalytic Technique*
Joseph D. Lichtenberg, Frank M.
Lachmann, & James L. Fosshage

Vol. 12

*Contexts of Being:
The Intersubjective Foundations
of Psychological Life*
Robert D. Stolorow & George E. Atwood

Vol. 10

Psychoanalysis and Motivation
Joseph D. Lichtenberg

Vol. 8

*Psychoanalytic Treatment:
An Intersubjective Approach*
Robert D. Stolorow, Bernard Brandchaft,
& George E. Atwood

Vol. 2

Psychoanalysis and Infant Research
Joseph D. Lichtenberg

OUT OF PRINT TITLES IN THE PI SERIES

Vol. 15

*Understanding Therapeutic Action:
Psychodynamic Concepts of Cure*
Lawrence E. Lifson (ed.)

Vol. 11

Cancer Stories: Creativity and Self-Repair
Esther Dreifuss-Kattan

Vol. 9

*Female Homosexuality: Choice
without Volition*
Elaine V. Siegel

Vol. 7

*The Borderline Patient:
Emerging Concepts in Diagnosis,
Psychodynamics, and Treatment, Vol. 2*
James S. Grotstein, Marion F. Solomon,
& Joan A. Lang (eds.)

Vol. 6

*The Borderline Patient:
Emerging Concepts in Diagnosis,
Psychodynamics, and Treatment, Vol. 1*
James S. Grotstein, Marion F. Solomon,
& Joan A. Lang (eds.)

Vol. 5

*Toward a Comprehensive Model for
Schizophrenic Disorders: Psychoanalytic
Essays in Memory of Ping-Nie Pao*
David B. Feinsilver

Vol. 4

*Structures of Subjectivity:
Explorations in Psychoanalytic
Phenomenology*
George E. Atwood & Robert D. Stolorow

Vol. 3

Empathy, Volumes I and II
Joseph D. Lichtenberg, Melvin Bornstein,
& Donald Silver (eds.)

Vol. 1

Reflections on Self Psychology
Joseph D. Lichtenberg &
Samuel Kaplan (eds.)

This page intentionally left blank

Structures of Subjectivity

Explorations in Psychoanalytic
Phenomenology and Contextualism
Second Edition

George E. Atwood and
Robert D. Stolorow

Second edition published 2014
by Routledge
27 Church Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 2FA

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2014 George E. Atwood and Robert D. Stolorow

The right of George E. Atwood and Robert D. Stolorow to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

First published by Routledge 1984

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Atwood, George E.

Structures of subjectivity: explorations in psychoanalytic phenomenology and contextualism/George E. Atwood and Robert D. Stolorow.—Second edition.

pages cm

1. Psychoanalysis. 2. Phenomenological psychology. 3. Existential psychology. 4. Subjectivity. I. Stolorow, Robert D. II. Title.

BF173.A75 2014

150.19'5—dc23

2013048841

ISBN: 978-0-415-71389-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-71388-7 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-77068-0 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman and Gill Sans
by Florence Production Limited, Stoodleigh, Devon, UK

To Ben, Christopher, Emily, Lisa, Rebecca,
and Stephanie, and to the memory of
Bernard Brandchaft

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

<i>Preface to the Second Edition</i>	xiii
<i>Preface to the First Edition</i>	xv
PART I	I
1 Philosophical Context and Basic Concepts	3
2 Intersubjectivity: I. The Therapeutic Situation	34
3 Intersubjectivity: II. Development and Pathogenesis	52
4 Pathways of Concretization	67
5 Concluding Remarks	91
PART 2	93
6 Legacies of the Golden Age: A Memoir of a Collaboration	95
7 The Demons of Phenomenological Contextualism: A Conversation	113
8 The Tragic and the Metaphysical in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis	129
9 Conclusions	141
<i>References</i>	144
<i>Author Index</i>	153
<i>Subject Index</i>	155

This page intentionally left blank

Preface to the Second Edition

The first edition of this book was published in 1984, and in the ensuing 30 years there have been several important developments in our thinking. First, our understanding of the relationship between philosophy and psychoanalysis has changed and grown more complex: whereas originally we thought of philosophical study as something separate and distinct from psychoanalytic theorizing, we now see these areas of inquiry as profoundly intertwined. Second, we have progressively moved away from the reifying, experience-distant language of psychoanalytic metapsychology and toward a more consistently phenomenological vocabulary that remains near to the flow of subjective life. For example, we no longer speak of “objects,” or “object relations”; and we have moved away as well from the substantializing language of Kohutian self psychology. And third, the clinical domain to which our thinking is applied has undergone an expansion, now encompassing the extreme range of psychological disorder—the so-called psychoses—and also includes an intensive focus on the experience of severe emotional trauma, in both its individual and collective or societal forms.

The chapters making up [Part 1](#) of the present book are drawn from the first edition, and the changes that are introduced in them are primarily matters of terminological correction and clarification. The chapters making up [Part 2](#), in contrast, are new, and reflect the developments that have taken place in our thinking since *Structures of Subjectivity* first appeared. A theme running through much of our work in recent years has involved a turning back on the assumptions of our intersubjective approach itself, and a search for the personal as well as intellectual sources of our evolving ideas. [Chapter 6](#) is a memoir of our collaboration over four decades, beginning in the early 1970s at Rutgers University and continuing down to the present day. [Chapter 7](#), presented in the form of a dialogue between us, traces the impact on our theories of our respective childhood histories and explores the meanings our shared adventure in psychoanalysis have had for us. [Chapter 8](#) addresses the metaphysical impulse and its origin in the evasion of human finitude, and shows how psychoanalytic metapsychology may be understood as a form of metaphysics. We also trace how the longing for absolute

metaphysical foundations plays a role in all psychoanalytic theorizing, including our own, and point toward a future for our field of ever-deepening self-awareness.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 were originally published as journal articles: *The Humanistic Psychologist* (2013, 41: 285–300) and *The Psychoanalytic Review* (2012, 99: 267–286 and 2013, 100: 405–421). We thank the editors and publishers of these journals for giving us permission to include this material in our book. Lastly, we are deeply grateful to Elizabeth Atwood and Julia Schwartz for their unfailing loving support, and to Kate Hawes of Routledge for her great enthusiasm for this project right from its beginning.

George E. Atwood
Robert D. Stolorow

Preface to the First Edition

This book is the product of a ten-year collaboration, bringing together several lines of interest, including the psychology of knowledge and the subjective origins of psychological theory (Stolorow & Atwood, 1979), the desire to reframe psychoanalysis as pure psychology (Klein, 1976; Kohut, 1977), and an abiding commitment to understanding the invariant structures of experience that organize personal, subjective worlds. From the confluence of these interests crystallized a vision of a psychoanalytic phenomenology devoted to the illumination of meanings in personal experience and conduct. The chapters that follow can be seen as a progress report on our ongoing efforts to actualize this vision of a psychoanalytic science of human subjectivity.

One of us (G.E.A.) wishes to acknowledge the profound influence of the teachings of Silvan Tomkins. The other (R.D.S.) acknowledges the deep impact of the inspirational work of the late Heinz Kohut. Bernard Brandchaft, in addition to coauthoring [Chapter 3](#), contributed importantly to the evolution of the ideas in [Chapter 2](#). Certain of the ideas in the section on therapeutic action in [Chapter 2](#) were originally formulated with the collaboration of John Munder Ross. We wish to thank Frank Lachmann for providing us with clinical illustrations and for his stimulating discussions of our work, and Beatrice Beebe for helping to guide us through the literature on infant observation and for her valuable suggestions regarding [Chapter 3](#). Among the many students and colleagues who have helped us to sharpen our ideas, we wish to give special mention to Elizabeth Atwood, Barbara Blum, Michael Gara, Arnold Goldberg, Chris Jaenicke, Claudia Kohner, Peter Lessem, Dorthy Levinson, Etienne Perold, Kathie Ramsland, Emanuel Shapiro, Thomas Smith, Dede Socarides, Marian Tolpin, Ernest Wolf.

Some of the material in this book was originally published in the following books and journals: *Faces in a Cloud*, R. Stolorow and G. Atwood (N.Y.: Jason Aronson, 1979); *Psychoanalysis of Developmental Arrests*, R. Stolorow and F. Lachmann (N.Y.: International Universities Press, 1980); *The Future of Psychoanalysis*, ed. A. Goldberg (N.Y.: International Universities Press, 1983, pp. 3–16); *The International Review of Psycho-Analysis* (1978, 5:

247–256 and 313–320); *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* (1979, 60: 39–45); *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* (1980, 3: 267–290); *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* (1981, 45: 20–28 and 1983, 47: 117–128); *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (1981, 17: 197–208); *The Annual of Psychoanalysis* (1982, 10: 205–220); and *The Psychoanalytic Review* (1983, 70: 143–162). We thank the editors and publishers of these books and journals for giving us permission to include this material in our book.

And finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Lawrence Erlbaum and Joseph Lichtenberg for their support of this project.

George E. Atwood
Robert D. Stolorow

Part I
