

The Jeffrey Masson 2010 Online Interview with DGB

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For those of you who may not know who Dr. Jeffrey Masson is, and/or who have not been following my most recent essays on the subject matter of Freud's post-1896 abandonment of the seduction (childhood sexual assault) theory, I offer you this introduction to him and his work in Psychoanalysis during the 1970s and 80s -- and his banishment from Psychoanalysis in the 1980s because of his very outspoken comments about Freud making a big, morally wrong, mistake in having abandoned the seduction theory in favor of his later Oedipus Theory.

These comments below are taken from the back cover of his very provocative, controversial, and readable book published in 1990, 1991, *Final Analysis*.

"A powerful work, especially important for its warning about the power psychoanalysts can wield over patients". -- Los Angeles Times

Through an astonishingly candid account of his own life as both patient and therapist, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson offers an eloquent if scathing critique of the cult of psychoanalysis. Masson, a one-time member of the Freudian 'inner circle' who rose to the pinnacle of psychoanalytic power, reveals the inner workings of his prestigious and profitable profession as no other analyst could -- or would. In *Final Analysis*-- the first insider expose of psychoanalytic training -- Masson lets the reader through the door of his own analysis and his first sessions with patients of his own, showing how the training process poisons the entire discipline. He also provides penetrating portraits of Anna Freud, Kurt Eissler, and other gurus of psychoanalysis he came to know during his tenure in the profession's inner sanctum as projects director of the Freud Archive. Finally, Masson relates the dramatic tale of his banishment from that same sanctum.

Masson's frankly recounted experiences speak compellingly for themselves, and against the exalted status that psychoanalysis has established for itself.

"A lively, juicy account...A fascinating insider's view". -- Kirkus Reviews

"As provocative as might be expected from so controversial a figure, (this) is a fascinating and very readable book". -- Cleveland Plain Dealer

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson is the author of the highly controversial *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of The Seduction Theory and Against Therapy: Emotional Tyranny and the Myth of Psychological Healing*, among other books. He completed a training program at the Toronto Psychoanalytic Institute from 1970 to 1978 and in 1980 was projects director for the Freud Archive in London. He now lives in Berkeley, California (1991). Updated, Jeffrey Masson now lives in Auckland, New Zealand (2010) and is an animal psychologist who has written numerous books on emotions in animals.

<http://jeffreymasson.com/>

Regarding my email transactions and the short online interview with Dr. Jeffrey Masson below...

I started emailing Dr. Masson sometime last fall (2009) I believe and let him know that I was following up on his work -- but with a more 'integrative' perspective than the position he was advocating which basically aimed to 'bridge the theoretical and therapeutic gap'

between Freud before and after 1897, between Masson and Freud (after 1897), and possibly even between Masson and the current Psychoanalytic regime if there was any room for reconciliation and 'conflict resolution' with the powers that currently be. We both agreed that this last possibility was highly unlikely and neither of us was in any shape, way, or form, expecting this to happen. In the words of Bob Dylan, 'You were right from your side, I was right from mine. We're just one too many mornings and a thousand miles behind'.

Literally, a thousand miles behind as Dr. Masson is now living in New Zealand and doing a wonderful job researching and writing about emotions in animals. He has written numerous books on this subject matter such as 'When Elephants Weep' and 'Dogs Don't Lie About Love'. Visit his website listed above.

Still 'integration' is the name of the game here in Hegel's Hotel, and that is my project here relative to Psychoanalysis -- to integrate ALL 50 years of Freud's writing and theorizing, not just the work he did after 1896. I want to 're-integrate the 'dissociative split' in the psychoanalytic personality that happened in 1896. To me, this year might be called the year of 'The Great Psychoanalytic Repression'.

And I intend to 'undo' this 'repression', this 'dissociative split in Classic Psychoanalytic Theory' that separates -- and alienates -- the work of Freud before and after 1897.

How ironic that Psychoanalysis should 'mimic' the type of 'neurosis' that Freud spent so many years, in painstaking fashion, describing and explaining in his patients!!!

It is on this note, with Dr. Masson's consent, that I introduce you to Dr. Masson today, via a select few email transactions over the past week or so, and 9 selected questions by myself that I asked him in a quick makeshift email interview which we had talked about doing before Christmas (2009).

His answers were 'short but sweet'...

1. What is your final take, good and bad, of Anna Freud? What would you say to her if you were in the room with her right now? Well, I think she was a lovely woman, but very much in the thrall of her great father. Never a good thing! The amazing thing for me is that after our talks, she told somebody (and it was published - I saw it and even referred to it in one of the later editions of *The Assault on Truth*) that sexual abuse was the greatest trauma in the lives of children!

2. What is your final take, good and bad, of Kurt Eissler? What would you say to him if you were in the room with him right now? I "loved" Kurt Eissler. I still think he was a most remarkable man. I have not been able to get hold of his book about the seduction theory. But I would ask him why he was so eager to defend the establishment in public, whereas in private he could say that I was entitled to my opinions. Did he ever encounter patients in his many years of practice, who had, indeed, been abused? If so, why did he never write about it? If not, is that not odd, considering how much abuse there is in the culture? Why was this such a contentious issue for analysts, including him?

3. Did you ever meet Brian Bird to any significant extent? If so, what was your impression of him? I think we only met once, and I was very deeply impressed. A remarkable man, I thought. I know nothing of what happened to him later in life.

4. If you had the whole 1980s to play over again, would you have played it out differently? If so, how? I suspect I would. I would have written a much more scholarly book, that is, I would not have allowed my editor to take out so many of my footnotes and text. I handed in a manuscript of some 1,000 pages. She reduced it. I also would have made it VERY clear that I was only speculating as to why Freud gave up his theory of seduction. I would also have given each and every passage in the later Freud where the terms occur to show how he dealt with it later on. So many analysts believe, falsely I think, that Freud stayed with sexual trauma. He did not, especially if the woman said it was her father. That was unthinkable, literally, to the later Freud!

5. What was the primary motivating reason for your switchover to the study of animal psychology and particularly the study of animal emotions?

Well, I was a pariah in psychoanalysis and had to find something else to do. I had always been fascinated by animals, and by emotions, so it made sense to investigate the emotions of animals.

6. Do you see any 'allusions to immediacy' in your own life, relative to the titles of at least two of your books on animal emotions: specifically, 'Dogs Never Lie About Love'; and 'When Elephants Weep'? I am sorry, I do not know the terms allusions to immediacy. If you mean personal experiences, then yes, I had always lived with dogs and adored them (still do - my new book is called *The Dog Who Couldn't Stop Loving*).

7. You will forgive me for not yet having read any of your animal psychology books -- I will find and read at least some of them -- but I see from your website that your book 'The Pig Who Sang to The Moon' turned you into a vegan and became a subject for another one of your books: *The Face On Your Plate*. Can you briefly explain what happened in this regard? Once I saw that farm animals had similar emotions to dogs (and us!), I could no longer justify imposing suffering on them for my taste buds, milk, chocolate, butter, eggs. The gulf between what happened to them to provide this and the pleasure it gave me, was simply too great.

8. What is new on your list of books to come? I see again from your website that you are writing a book on 'the psychology of apex predators' (humans, orcas, wolves, bears, and the big cats). I saw a tv program the other day on how New Zealand orcas specialize in killing and eating stingrays. Any brief comments here and perhaps most significantly on the similarities and differences between human and animal predators? What does 'apex' mean in this context? I am attaching what I have written about this.

9. Any commendations and/or criticisms regarding my work in *Hegel's Hotel*? Maybe I am being too bold here -- I expect you will be truthful. Have I influenced your thinking at all? I see you have an interest in the 'Us and Them' phenomenon which has been a central 'dialectic' focal point of writing for me in *Hegel's Hotel*; and also, we at least used to share a common interest in the topic of 'counter-phobias' (if Janet Malcolm's quote here is right) which remains a central focal point of my Psychoanalytic investigations. Well, I have only read your work sporadically and not in depth. I can sense your sincerity, and I respect your attempt to fuse both trauma and the later Freud. It is not easy, and you are making a concerted attempt. Analysts would do well to pay attention to your work, but of course, they won't, because you are not part of the establishment. That is a pity. Final DGB comments: Jeff, I have the utmost respect for your work and your character. I know that we disagree on the 'integration' issue -- you skeptical that it will work, and me confident that I can make it work. But regardless, your work on *The Seduction Theory* has been a source of great inspiration to me, impassioned me to follow up on your work wherever it may take me, and to do the best job I possibly can to make sure that your exhausting work in Psychoanalysis has not been in vain, and that you take your rightful, respectful place in the history and ongoing evolution of Psychoanalysis.

It has been the greatest pleasure meeting you and I hope that we can maintain some degree of ongoing contact with each other.

Sincerely,
David Gordon Bain

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Recent Email Transactions To and From Jeffrey Masson Regarding My Most Recent Essays.

Sunday, March 14th, 2010

(Dave),

I read what you wrote, and I appreciate the generous comments about me. It was very kind. Like you, I do not expect any reconciliation. And the truth is, I really have lost interest in psychoanalysis. Perhaps if they had responded as you have, or as you wish they had, it would be different. Surely Freud has written some wonderful papers, has had some amazing insights, has given us valuable material to think about. But I do believe he missed out on something terribly important. Now, as to why he did so, I can not pretend to know. My hunch, my theory, my belief, is that it was due to a lack of moral courage. But I could easily be wrong. You might be right: he may have been headed

in that direction in any case. We will probably never know. But he did abandon what was an important and courageous theory, and the result is that women and children were disbelieved and suffered as a consequence. I am amazed, like you, that not a single analyst has been able to acknowledge this! I just can't really get my mind around this. So I have to wish them godspeed and be on my way. Same with you. I appreciate what you do, but I am concerned now with other things and cannot give much more attention to this matter. Sorry. You are doing a fine job on your own!

Best, Jeff Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, Ph.D.P.O.Box 25930, St. Heliers, Auckland 1740 New Zealand www.jeffreymasson.com

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Wednesday, March 17th, 2010.

OK, I read your latest. I think you got Malcolm right, and you are correct in the way you dismantle her "arguments" (they are somewhat less than that). Juliet Mitchell, by the way, is a psychoanalyst! So I agree with all you have to say that is historical. Where I disagree is in your passion for synthesis. I just don't think a little of this and a little of that will do it, certainly not for me. But then, this is no longer my world. Jeff Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, Ph.D.P.O.Box 25930, St. Heliers, Auckland 1740 New Zealand www.jeffreymasson.com

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Wednesday, March 17th, 2010

Thanks for the feedback again Jeff, I am going to clean up the interview and release it tomorrow. As far as the 'synthesis', I know we still disagree there...But it will take me a while to develop the whole synthesis and I will make sure that it isn't 'ragged'...Whatever doesn't properly 'fit' won't be in the final synthesis...And it is still very much evolving although much of it is mainly worked out in my head.

I will email you when the interview here is finished and/or you can just check the website again about this time tomorrow evening or sooner...

Best wishes, dave

dgb, David Gordon Bain

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