SUPPLEMENT TO SYLLABUS FOR OYP CLASS, March 17, 2025

Paternal Eros:

The place of fathers in psychoanalysis

The place of fathers in our psyches

To the participants and faculty of the Western PA Community One-Year Program,

Designing a class can be a real challenge. This one is proving to be so. Planning begins with a preliminary set of ideas and hopes, which are then potentially embalmed in the APA required syllabus. Once engaging with the ideas, however, things change. I've realized that the assigned reading by Michael Diamond, "The missing father function in psychoanalytic theory and technique," may be heavy going for many in the class. So, I want to encourage you to set it aside if you find yourself wanting the throw the paper, your tablet, or computer against the wall. Of course, you are welcome to persist, but I have decided to offer a couple other papers to supplement this one.

It is my intention for the evening to bring the erotic functions of the therapeutic relationship into the foreground while addressing the specifics of paternal eros in human development. In so doing, I am aware that we may be wading into the current waters of gender politics. Let's take that risk and wade together.

The paper I've now told you to skip if you wish includes one important proviso that I want to quite here and ask that we keep this in mind:

> It is increasingly evident, particularly given the changes in present-day parental arrangements, that the paternal third is *not* necessarily the male-sexed father and that triangularity in no way depends on the gendered presence of a father. Indeed, females, including the mother herself, often carry the paternal function. Diamond, 2017, p. 866.

In my own life, one of my most powerful experiences of paternal eros was through a woman named Rose.

So, I am hoping we can take up the questions of maternal and paternal (words that for the moment have long histories and meanings, even as they confine our thinking) without getting lost in the weeds of gender politics (politics that we do need to take very seriously).

These readings will focus predominantly on fathers and sons. Michael Diamond has spent 40 years addressing the lack of systematic theoretical or clinical attention to fatherhood, writing primarily about fathers and sons. As you read, please let your minds, hearts, and therapeutic experiences also drift to fathers and daughters. Sebastian Thrul is a young Swiss psychiatrist and newly minted psychoanalyst whom I've had the pleasure of getting to know in recent years. He writes in a personal voice uncharacteristic of his culture.

I hope we will have a rich and provocative evening together on the 17th.

Bill

Diamond, M.J. (1998). Fathers with sons: Psychoanalytic perspectives on "Good Enough" fathering throughout the life cycle. *Gender & Psychoanalysis: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 3*, 243-299.

Thrul, S. (2023). The young man and the sea: Reflections on male infantile development, fatherhood and psychoanalytic training. *British Journal of Psychotherapy, 39*, 380-392.