

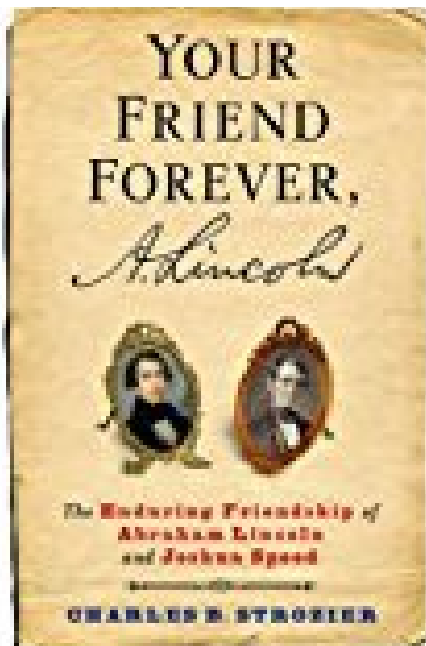
# Psychohistory News

Newsletter of the International Psychohistorical Association

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## Psychohistorian Interviews

by Ken Fuchsman



### Charles B. Strozier

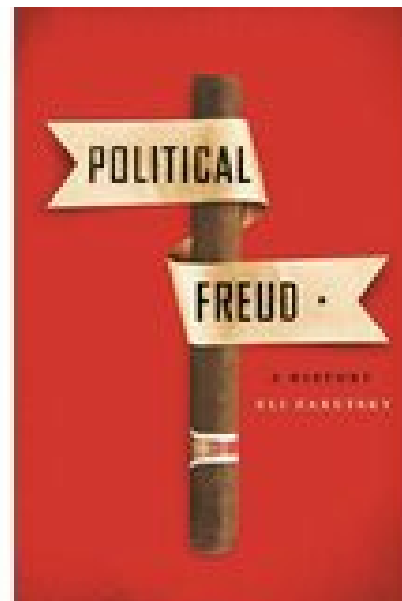
It was 1972. Charles Strozier was 28 years old; he had earned his European history doctorate at the University of Chicago, was about to begin psychoanalytic training, and just started his first

*continued on page two*

### Eli Zaretsky

*Political Freud: A History* (Columbia University Press, 2015) is a collection of essays with a unifying theme. It builds on Eli Zaretsky's previous books, which focus on the interconnections of capitalism, family, and

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## AFFECT, ART, AND PERSONAL HISTORY

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job as a professor at a state university in Springfield, Illinois. That city is most noted as the place where Abraham Lincoln lived from 1837 until he became President. Strozier and the 16th President both moved to Springfield at the age of 28. The young historian soon became fascinated with and immersed in the life of our greatest President.

It was 1982. Dr. Strozier's *Lincoln's Quest for Union* was published. It is the first truly psychohistorical study of Abraham Lincoln. This award winning book helped open up the floodgates, and since then Lincoln studies have frequently focused on his inner life. From this work and others, Strozier has fashioned a distinguished career. He founded and edited *The Psychohistory Review* (1973-1999), has long been a practicing psychoanalyst, has edited or written thirteen books, and is the Founding Director of the Center on Terrorism and Professor of History at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. From time to time, he returns to the Great Emancipator.

Strozier has not been satisfied with the way others have portrayed his account of Lincoln's friendship with Joshua Speed in *Lincoln's Quest for Union*. So after decades, he has returned to this subject. The result is *Your Friend Forever, A. Lincoln: The Enduring Friendship of Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed*, published in 2016 by Columbia University Press, and written by Strozier along with Wayne Soini. This is a significant psychohistorical work deserving of recognition. I contacted Dr. Strozier, emailed him questions, and this article primarily consists of his responses.

First, a little background. Lincoln and Joshua Speed met when the former first moved to Springfield. In Speed's store, Abe asked about buying a bed. The owner offered that Lincoln could sleep in his bed above the store. Single men in this era often shared a bed although they had no sexual relationship. Lincoln stayed with Speed in this manner for three years. Over this time, the two men became great companions and supported each other in good times and bad.

There are important reasons to focus on the relationship of Speed and Lincoln. As Strozier says, "Speed has lingered in the shadows, when in fact he was absolutely

Lincoln's best friend and the only person to whom he fully opened up about his fears and confusions, especially about intimacy. As a result of this surprising side-stepping of Speed, all kinds of barnacled myths have grown up about the making of Lincoln, his identity, his sexuality, the deeper meaning of his marriage to Mary Todd, and much else." A reason for the under appreciation of the significance of this crucial friendship is that "historians and (relatively) informed observers have lacked systematic psychoanalytic knowledge to make sense of the extensive primary source materials."

Strozier shows that both men had similar temperaments, with worry and melancholy being prominent. As Strozier says, "Lincoln was always depressed." At times, this condition became severe and there were at least two times that Lincoln "fell into the dark hole of clinical depression and actively pondered suicide." The first time was in New Salem when Lincoln was 26 and his beloved Ann Rutledge died. Lincoln's buddies "set up a death watch and he told a friend he was afraid to carry a pocket knife." The second time also included involvement with a woman. Lincoln had become engaged to Mary Todd and broke it off in December 1840, at the same time that Speed was moving away from Springfield. "It was the separation from Speed that no one else has noticed, and what I feel was the heart of things, in January 1841 when Lincoln took to his bed, hallucinated, his friends removed his razor, and he went 'crazy as a loon' in the words of his friend, William Butler."

With the devoted assistance of a number of people Lincoln bounced back, but had no contact with Mary Todd. In the meantime, Joshua Speed had returned to the Kentucky plantation of his wealthy family. There Speed also became engaged, but was quite anxious about getting married. He and Lincoln exchanged letters discussing Speed's worries. Lincoln both counseled Speed and in the process worked through his own anxieties. It is this correspondence that was crucial to the development of both men.

As Strozier says, Speed and Lincoln "sought the love of women but seemed terrified by the loss of self in sexuality and intimacy." Lincoln in counseling Speed "wrote an astonishingly revealing group of letters to Speed in which he vicariously identified with Speed's own doubts and confusions about his approaching

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marriage.” It is “in these letters we see Lincoln revealing himself and his fears as he did nowhere else in anything he wrote (that has survived).” After Speed successfully consummated his marriage, he soon wrote to his friend how well things went. Lincoln replied “that he was still shaking ten hours later after the receipt of the letter. That is a long time for a man of 33 years of age. It was also the turning point of Lincoln’s life. Having identified with Speed, and since things went well in the consummation, Lincoln could now cast aside his fears and within months began again to court Mary Todd, whom he had rejected over a year before. They were married the following November.”

Lincoln and Speed were now both married men, pursuing their careers in different states. The friendship endured and each became successful in their occupations, a culmination being Lincoln’s election to the nation’s highest office. As President-elect, Lincoln offered Speed a cabinet position, which was declined. Still, the two met in the White House a number of times. On one of these occasions, the President brought up something that revealed a great deal about himself. He recalled that once he told Speed that he had not done anything to make anyone remember that he had lived.

Lincoln had also said to his law partner in 1851, that it is hard to die and leave one’s country without doing anything that would make it better than if one had never been alive. Lincoln told Speed that in the Emancipation Proclamation he had taken action that made a difference. Strozier says, “It is noteworthy that he added in the same breath that he almost committed suicide back in Springfield when his life seemed worthless. And of course he was right. The Proclamation turned a national war to keep the country together—not really a noble goal—into a war for human freedom.” Lincoln had risen to these heights after going through a psychological hell more than once and was able to work

through some of his own issues together with a fellow worrier in Joshua Speed.

Out of his emotional crises, Abraham Lincoln became one of the most distinctive figures in American history. In his first Lincoln book, Strozier says the 16th President is America’s greatest hero. In response to a query, Strozier has recently added, “We admire Lincoln for good reasons. He possessed all the qualities one most hopes for in a leader, especially his profundity, authenticity, and genuine honesty. He was also shrewd and able to lead us through our greatest crisis and make us a better people, moving ever so slowly toward a complex and heterogeneous society.”

There is more. Lincoln’s depression “was not unrelated to his profundity. It is hard to imagine someone able to probe beneath the surface of things not subject to some depression. In that, he is the quintessential example of profundity in our political history.” What Strozier has explored in his latest book is a crucial turning point in Lincoln’s life that sets the stage for future remarkable developments. How any of us, including prominent people, become who we are and in the long and winding road of life find a pathway to achievement is an important story. It is valuable to see one step of how this happened for Lincoln. For all the many biographies of Lincoln, Charles Strozier has illuminated an under-explored stage in Lincoln’s development. Given his psychoanalytic expertise, Strozier’s high quality psychohistorical work helps illuminate important emotional events that other biographers and historians have left in the shadows.

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**ZARETSKY** *continued from page one*

personal life, the social and cultural history of psychoanalysis, and America's need for a political left. *Secrets of the Soul*, his 2004 history of psychoanalysis, has drawn high praise from such prominent writers as Judith Butler, Peter Gay, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Paul Robinson, and Robert Wallerstein. This current volume does not resemble similar works on politics and psychoanalysis that cover Freud's social and political thought or the politics of radical Freudian analysts.

Freud's ideas are important because, according to Zaretsky, until the 1970s, psychoanalysis can be understood as "the *spirit* of twentieth-century culture." "Freudian thought was integral to many if not all of the great progressive currents of the twentieth century," Zaretsky writes. In his book, Zaretsky traces these political and intellectual currents.

The book opens with a chapter on Freud's impact on twentieth century America and closes with one on Freud in the 21st century. It includes chapters on psychoanalysis and capitalism, the blues, the racial unconscious and collective memory, Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, the ego at war, 1960s radicalism, and the return to "social reality." Zaretsky covers a lot of ground. I emailed him questions, which he graciously answered. What follows is how he responded to my queries, with a few citations from his books.

He says his use of political Freud is focused on twentieth century political intellectuals and radicals, primarily on the left, and describes how they used ideas derived from Freud's works. Zaretsky elucidates this through three examples: (1) criticism of the consumer culture society by the German Frankfurt School and American radicals (2) use of Freud's notion of a father complex and group psychology to understand such political phenomenon as totalitarianism and racist lynchings, and (3) the way that New Left and radical feminists in the 1960s and 1970s became outwardly anti-Freudian as they simultaneously internalized Freud's viewpoints.

Political Freudianism helped illuminate the emergence in the 1920s of the capitalist consumer culture with its ethic of self-gratification, escape from guilt, and personal self-revelation and honesty. This new way of life supplanted the earlier Protestant capitalist ethic of ascetic self-discipline. Zaretsky notes how the political

Freudianism of the New Left and feminism contributed to this new consumer stage in capitalism. These radicals claimed what had been considered intra-psychoic was actually external and favored the idea of the self over that of the ego. Those who justify capitalism call what transpires among consumers "rational choice." Zaretsky says, "The New Left and feminist struggles with psychoanalysis helped give rational choice or productive power a libidinal, especially narcissistic basis. They assisted in the process by which the unconscious lost its character as a critical concept and was leashed instead to the mobilization of quasi-rational, but truly deeply irrational market forces."

Along with describing its role in the history of consumer capitalism, Zaretsky explores the role of political Freudianism in understanding racism. Those of African descent lived through the barbarism of slavery, oppression, and trauma. The collective memory of African-Americans, Zaretsky says, has a sadness and depth exemplified by the blues and its offshoots. For African-American intellectuals, psychoanalysis helped them get beyond the blues in the sense that Freudianism spoke to the resistances involved in retrieving a traumatic past. Political Freudians like Richard Wright and Frantz Fanon used Freud to identify the harm done by the violence African-Americans endured, and to explore the links between racism and fascism.

Hitler's Nazism was also an expression of racism, which had an unconscious dimension. To Zaretsky, Freud's 1939 *Moses and Monotheism* was in part a confrontation with the anti-enlightenment threats Western civilization was confronting. He says, "it is one of the most important books we have about the general civilizational crisis that World War Two embodied." Freud's work appeared at "a time when many wondered whether the spiritual and intellectual gains of the West--freedom, individual liberty, republican government and the like--could survive the rise of Nazism." An earlier challenge to civilization was the "shell shock crisis during World War One," out of which Freud developed his theory of the ego. As Zaretsky says in *Secrets of the Soul*, "shell shock" led to Freud questioning his older theory and making a "thoroughgoing reformulation." The role of trauma and repetition contributed to the idea of the death instinct and to "the revised or structural theory" of id, ego and superego.

With the political upheavals of the late 1930s, Freud again returned to civilization and its discontents. To

Zaretsky, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud developed a theory to show that progress was connected to conceptual advances that heightened self-respect, but Freud also showed how difficult it was to sustain those advances. Progress produced guilt and ambivalence, and then the rejection of the advance. *Moses and Monotheism* then “provides a new way of understanding the role of regression in history, and the problems of survival.” One form of regression is racism. Zaretsky says in his book on Moses that Freud seeks “to understand anti-Semitism,” not only in the past, but in modernity. To the Nazis, the Jews were world enemies, and Zaretsky says this late work of Freud suggests how this could come about. “*Moses and Monotheism* rests on the idea of regression, which interrupts and reverses historical flows.” Freud shows, Zaretsky writes, how difficult it is to preserve “spiritual and intellectual gains when they were translated into mass forms.” The soon to come Nazi horrors were virulent forms of regression. Zaretsky thinks that Freud’s late work can help in comprehending the Holocaust.

It is clear in these essays that Zaretsky sees Freud as important in comprehending challenges we face. For “humanity,” Zaretsky states, needs “to understand intra-psychic life in its autonomy, as part of a general theory of society and history.” Psychoanalysis is indispensable in this effort. Freud’s thought focuses on some of the basics of the human condition. Zaretsky writes, “The fundamental idea that underlies psychoanalysis is the prolonged nature of human infancy, the interpersonal forms of dependency that infancy entails, and the persistence of those forms throughout the life cycle.” Freud also made an advance in seeing that children are raised in a father headed family. This is an advance in that there is a “recognition of the father’s role in reproduction.” Viewed anthropologically, the pair bond--the sexual division of labor--brings out “the link between the emotional and cognitive knowledge that the sexes have of one another and [its contribution to]spiritual progress in general.” Dual parenting is a way of dealing with children’s dependency and vulnerability. Within the family, as in general, Freud shows the role of “the unconscious, repression, regression, and the ego” in the individual and in group psychology. Freud also develops a conception of an ego, which can be linked to the ideas of Descartes and Kant--an ego that is autonomous, bounded, and rational. Zaretsky thinks these ideas of Freud help our self-understanding and can illuminate political life.

Newer developments within psychoanalysis focus on object relationships, language, and being recognized. Zaretsky sees them as both an advance and a loss. There is a way to rebound. He writes, “we still need the concept of an ego that cannot be reduced to the self and that has the capacities of reality-testing, language and rational thought, especially self-observation, that Freud ascribed to it.”

Contemporary trends within psychoanalysis, when combined with other factors such as the way feminism re-shaped Freud, have helped undermine political Freudianism. Feminists were succeeded by Freud bashers and neuroscientists who sought to discredit psychoanalysis. With the devaluing of Freudian concepts, the idea of human depth fell by the wayside. Zaretsky finds this to be unfortunate as psychoanalysis is a uniquely valuable tool for understanding and social progress. The parts of political Freudianism that were discredited or destroyed, such as the aforementioned notions of the unconscious, repression, regression, and the ego, are necessary if we are to understand both the positive and destructive developments in capitalism, social, familial, and personal life. We also need these ideas of political Freud “if we are to move forward.”

Zaretsky has traced the rise of the consumer culture within capitalism, the darker forces within civilization, and how variations on political Freudianism responded to them. These movements and developments are central for understanding the world in which we live, and how political Freudians can struggle to find a better path for our species. With the devaluation of Freud and psychoanalysis that became an intellectual fad in the 1980s, we have lost something central to our self-understanding and our ability to act rationally. For Zaretsky, it is not too late to revive interest in Freud and to revitalize the American left. *Political Freud* aims at helping us understand the dramatic changes in the last two centuries and the role of radical and intellectual thought in this process. The book is a resource for understanding what went wrong and how to create a better future.

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# Introducing *J.A.S.P.E.R.*

Burton N. Seidler, Ph.D., Founder and Editor-in-Chief

Grace E. Jackson, M.D., Co-Editor

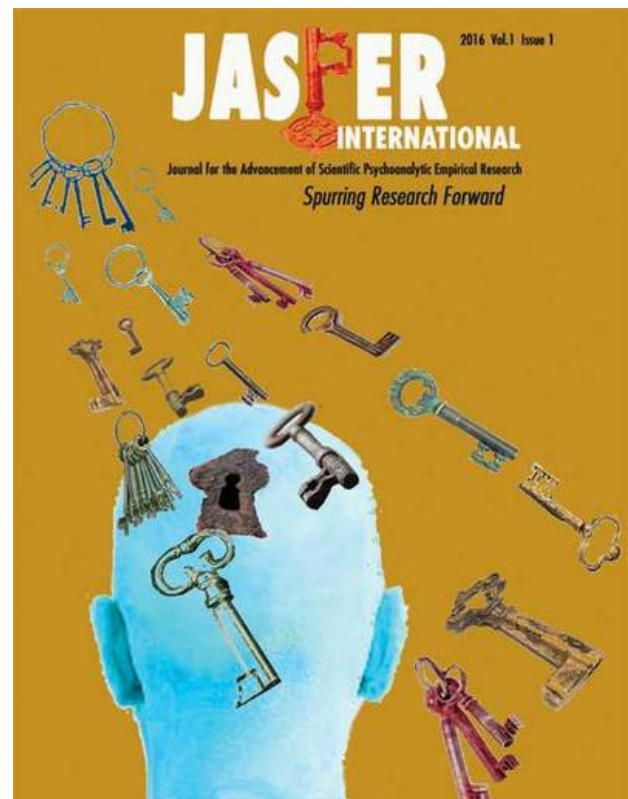
*J.A.S.P.E.R.* stands for the International Journal for the Advancement of Scientific Psychoanalytic Empirical Research. It is a start-up journal that intends to attract quality empirical research on psychoanalytic matters. These will include, but are not limited to studies of violence, which are especially vital these days, investigations of prejudice, analyses of early childhood attachment patterns and subsequent attitudes and behavior, the nature of torture and torturers, as well as basic research regarding the efficacy of psychodynamic therapy.

Authors will be strongly encouraged to submit work that considers psychohistorical factors, cultural contexts, and longitudinal observations, as well as tests of a host of theoretical psychoanalytic assumptions. The term “empirical,” which has incorrectly come to solely represent quantitative measurements, will be defined and understood in the true sense of the word, coming from the Greek “*empeirikos*,” as standing for that which is “*based upon, concerned with, or verifiable by careful observations, rather than mere references to abstract conceptualizations or the use of logic alone.*”

This has become an increasingly evidence-based society. And, despite the fact that some might believe that psychoanalysis cannot be studied empirically, nothing is further from the truth. There is an abundance of good investigations. Unfortunately, they are spread out over a wide array of journals making them difficult to find. *J.A.S.P.E.R.* will be one roof under which such studies will be housed. It will be a central gathering place both for the skeptics, as well as the adherents of truthful information and solid, quality research.

At *J.A.S.P.E.R.*, we recognize that one field of study cannot have all the answers. Accordingly, we welcome interdisciplinary research and have reached

out to people from fields as diverse as law, literature, physics, and the social sciences. In so doing, we wish to establish a broad base from which knowledge can be freely and mutually exchanged. When quality research is published, it benefits everyone.



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## AFFECT, ART AND PERSONAL HISTORY

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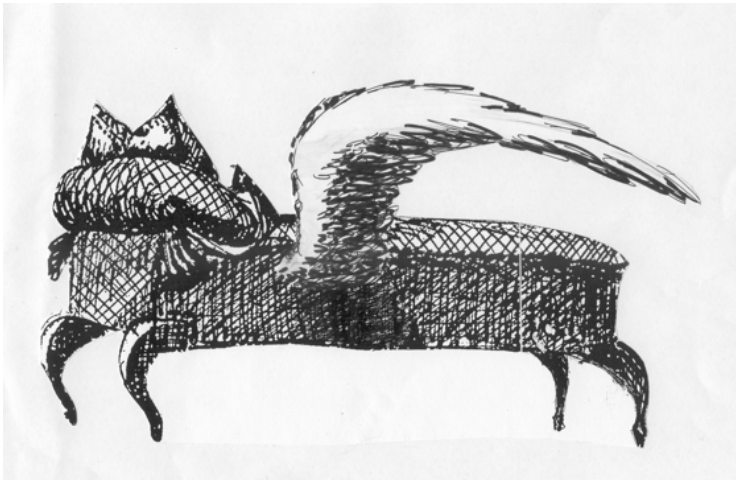
started out with; see Fig. 2). It was only after I used the logo several times that I realized that the logo could be read as an image and a somewhat ambiguous rendition of an eye (Fig. 3), or as a profile (Fig 4). Either interpretation fit my self-image, and I liked the ambiguity.

In general ambiguity attracts me, from iridescent colors to the music of Bach, which can be read both as a mathematical-logical construct but also as an emotional contemplation. Ambiguity allowed me to resolve a conflict: the fear of losing my ground (connection with my mother) and the fear of being trapped. Seeing glimpses of an alternate reality allowed me to experience surprise in a pleasurable context instead of my usual startle/fear.

When I decided to establish a website, initially I wanted to use the initials logo, but could not come up with a rendition that satisfied me. I think that the logo did not allow me to convey enough affect, which I had become more comfortable with in the meantime. The common practice of including photos of providers in promotion did not sit well with me. I wanted to use my logo instead, but felt I needed something more substantial than my “seeing eye.” I had already used an animated analytic couch in illustrations. Perceiving inanimate objects as animated was an old defense to loneliness. While my mother was preoccupied with her depression, I imagined that the houses we lived in were big maternal beasts that took care of us. Additionally, growing up I often felt that my parents and other grown-ups saw us as not fully human but more animal-like, and the awkwardness of the couch fit my self-image.

The Pegasus wings quickly followed, again from over-determination. First, during sunsets I would imagine myself as a bird in the sky and try to pick my favorite color, from the red around the sinking sun, over the pale greens in the middle, into the inky blue of the approaching night. This phantasy allowed me to symbolically visit emotional territory without fear of being overwhelmed (the sun was going down) and

the seamless blending of the colors of the sky provided a soothing model of emotional transition. Second, I loved Paul Flora’s cartoons of poets with a matching Pegasus; my mother wrote poetry (doggerel, often funny) so that the phantasy of having a Pegasus of my own allowed me to identify with her in a playful way (we ended up corresponding in doggerel for a while). Third, I experienced my analysis as a liberating event and the wings provided an apt symbol.



Writing this article surprised me, because I had not realized how thoroughly my graphics reflected my basic psychological themes.

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# Affect, Art and Personal History

by Dorothea Leicher

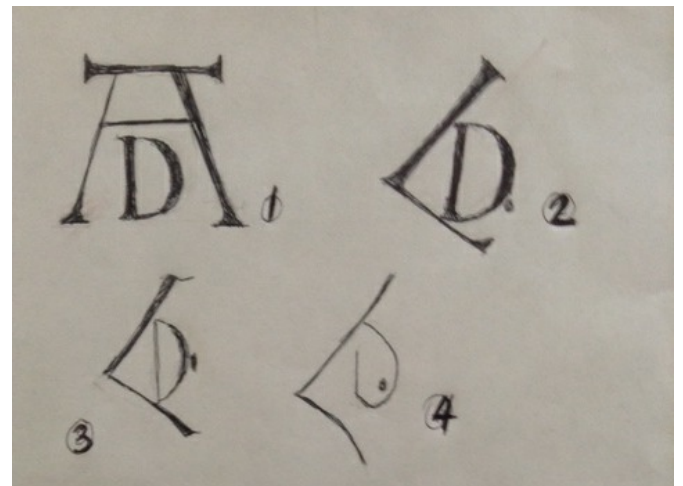
This article presents some reflections on my presentation on affect at the 2016 IPA conference. Neurological findings have confirmed the close connection of emotional and motion centers in the brain. Even language starts with motion (gesture, pointing). I developed the hunch that aesthetics is related to affect and describes the latent energy in a system/organism. Since I have always liked to draw, I started to wonder what I might be able to learn from my own work, and I will focus on two logos I developed.

Let me give a short description of my family, because it impacted my art. I was born as a fraternal twin in 1952 in a small town in Germany. My parents were not aware they would have twins until our birth. There was some evidence of emotional lability/mental illness in both sides of the family and my parents had both been traumatized during WWII. Very early on my parents assigned us to our respective “clans;” my sister was supposed to be like my mother, I like my father (although I think we were more of a mix). It led us to see each other as opposites. My father was very withdrawn and little involved with us. My mother was anxious, depressed and over-controlling although she had times when she could relax and display her humor and charm.

Since I was somewhat more aggressive initially than my sister, my mother became afraid that I might get out of control and squelched my expression of emotions, especially anger. I am told that as a toddler I would stand and stare at her, while my sister tried to engage her. I believe the early motor inhibition somewhat delayed my language development. Both my sister and I were interested in art, but went our separate ways: I drew, mostly in pencil, and with the aim of realistic representation, with very little use of color, whereas my sister had a good sense of color but was not interested in representation. I believe that this was partly a reflection of the different affect patterns we were being entrained in, but also a defense against my mother’s attempts to have us compete.

My drawing was my therapy in multiple ways: The struggle for “realistic” representation both symbolized my obsession with emotional control (concern with containing mass and weight) but also reassurance – although I seemed to be emotionally “wrong” most of the time, if others recognized what I was drawing, it was proof that my reality was not as alien as it seemed. Additionally, it was one of the few areas where I was out of my mother’s hair and she left me alone so that I was able to find some self-expression.

As I became more assertive and expressive verbally in my analysis, my urge to draw decreased. I illustrated the newsletter of my analytic institute for a while and experienced that as play, similarly to finding a harmony to a melody (the articles). I do not really consider myself an artist, because I am not interested in technique, just in the expression of an affect. As a consequence, I would lose interest in my drawings pretty much as soon as I was done with them and did not sign them.



After I was told to sign my drawings, I started to develop a logo. I admired Albrecht Dürer and liked his logo (see Fig. 1). I tried to come up with a similar constellation of my initials but could not find a constellation that struck me as balanced until I tilted the L so that the D could somewhat nestle in (again my eternal quest to overcome the loneliness I had

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