



The Essential Loewald: Collected Papers and Monographs

Hans W. Loewald, Norman Quist

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From the Introduction:

This is a story of love and betrayal. As a young man, Loewald was en route to becoming a philosopher. He had fallen in love with philosophy and, given what we know about transference, there is reason to suspect that the erotic attachment had spread itself out onto his teacher. Heidegger's embrace of Nazism was not simply a personal betrayal--however awful that is--it was the upending of a way of life. For Loewald, there had to be something wrong with philosophy itself if the greatest practitioner of the age could succumb to such hateful distortions.

All of Loewald's work can be seen as a thinking-through of one idea: namely, that the human psyche is itself a psychological achievement. The infant does not enter the world a complete psychological entity; she emerges rather out of a less differentiated field, the infant-mother matrix. By now this is a familiar idea. Perhaps it is too familiar, for it is so easy for us to live amongst clichés that we do not recognize as such. We think we understand something because we have heard the phrase so often. One of the values of Loewald's work is that it makes familiar experience unfamiliar again--and thus allows us to approach it afresh. It also shows us how one insight can give birth to a world.

Loewald is a quintessential psychoanalytic thinker; he not only thinks about psychoanalysis, he thinks psychoanalytically. Ironically, this has both puzzled and irritated other psychoanalysts, who have accused him of "hiding" his true position or of "standing Freud on his head." Nothing could be further from the truth. Because, for Loewald, Freud is a living presence, that must mean that there are tensions in his thought, unresolved conflicts, defensive turnings-away. It is precisely these conflicts that are the psychoanalytic stuff of life, and one should expect them to emerge in the realm of thought as much as in dreams, bodily symptoms, and acting-out. The proper psychoanalytic response, then, is to work through those conflicts.

I am convinced that Loewald will increasingly be recognized as one of the handful of significant psychoanalytic thinkers after Freud.

-- Jonathan Lear, The Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago and the Western New England Institute for Psychoanalysis, New Haven, Connecticut

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