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**Lived Complexity as Psychoanalytic Epistemology: Discussion of  
Maxwell S. Sucharov's "Thoughts on Wholeness, Connection,  
and Healing: Moving Toward Complexity in the Analytic Space"**

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I illuminate that in Maxwell S. Sucharov's article, and the phenomenology of complexity that it articulates, the complexity of the person and the person's experience of his complexity constitute inextricably interrelated elements of a larger existential-experiential whole. Accordingly, in his framework complexity must be experienced, felt or "lived" in order to be fully known and, by extension, meaningfully useful. I show that Sucharov's writing exemplifies his thesis of lived complexity in so far as it interweaves—to great rhetorical effect—explanatory complexity theory and its philosophical or transpersonal foundations, on one hand, with evocative and illustrative stories from his own personal life and professional work, on the other hand. Sucharov's article, the product of this weave, emerges as a metalogue that brings the reader's experience of Sucharov's holistic thesis alive on contemporaneously intellectual and emotional (and perhaps spiritual) levels. I offer various expository and critical remarks on Sucharov's thinking. In the end, I contend that Sucharov's phenomenology of complexity entails a method of knowing, or epistemology, that may represent its most important and lasting contribution to psychoanalysis. In it he implores psychoanalysts (and other clinicians) to stay close to their personal experiences of complexity, and thereby to the inherent irreducibility of their own and their patients' subjectivities, so that their thinking and clinical activities are less likely to fall prey to the myriad forms of hurtful reductionism to which we are all vulnerable.

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A human being is a part of the whole, called by us Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security. —Albert Einstein (1950)

If things were simple, word would have gotten around ... —  
Jacques Derrida (1988, p. 119)

A central thesis of complex systems theory, as integrated into contemporary relational psychoanalysis, is that the person and his subjective world take form and transform within complex relational systems. They are inextricably embedded in nonlinear, mutually influencing interactions with others and his world. However, that we human beings and our subjective lives are fruitfully understood in terms of our embeddedness in complex relational systems, or “complexity,” does not mean that we can or wish to reflectively experience this complexity. Broadly speaking, in his article, “Thoughts on Wholeness, Connection, and Healing: Moving Toward Complexity in the Analytic Space,” Maxwell

S. Sucharov elaborates a phenomenology of complexity wherein he sees the experience of complexity not only as a possibility, but also as an expansive developmental achievement, a therapeutic goal, and an ethical aspiration. He examines the content of experienced complexity, and explores how its unexpected entry or “explosion” into awareness can be traumatic. He contends that in such contexts, wherein the traumatized person must protectively retreat into de-complexified states, psychoanalytic restoration of complexity constitutes healing. He elucidates which relational systems facilitate the expansion of experienced complexity and which systems obstruct or constrict it. In his phenomenology's arguably most important contribution, it demonstrates that the analyst's pursuit of complexity—in both his analysand's and his own experience—corrects against reductionism and thereby enriches his psychoanalytic thinking and understanding.

I have structured this discussion around seven sections addressing those aspects of Sucharov's phenomenology of complexity that I find most salient to psychoanalysis. After this introductory section, the second section, “Sucharov's Article as Metalogue,” is a methodological one wherein I highlight that Sucharov's article, taken as a whole, implicitly and nonlinearly embodies the particular, explicit, linear arguments he articulates, and thereby exemplifies complexity *in vivo* for the reader to great rhetorical effect. I then turn to several substantive aspects, beginning with an expository section entitled “A Phenomenology of Complexity Theory,” which highlights how Sucharov equates experienced complexity with what he terms “lived complexity”; later in this same section, I set out several of the subjective contents of complexity that Sucharov elucidates for us. In the next two sections, entitled “Relational Contexts That Facilitate Lived Complexity” and “Relational Contexts That Obstruct Lived Complexity,” respectively, I address the extent to which Sucharov's theory of lived complexity is grounded in an affect theory and, finding that it is, I then discuss the relational contexts that, in Sucharov's view, facilitate experience of complexity, those that obstruct it, and those that, in my view, require additional elaboration. In the next to last section, entitled “Lived Complexity as Growth and Healing,” I engage Sucharov's differentiations between contexts in which experiences of complexity are expansive and even healing, and contexts in which it can be overwhelming and traumatic. I conclude with a section entitled “Lived Complexity as Psychoanalytic Epistemology” in which I contend that Sucharov's article offers psychoanalysis a distinctive, progressive epistemology. I end with this section because, in my view, Sucharov's phenomenology's most incisive and lasting impact on our field may lie in his epistemological conviction—and his writing's first

hand demonstration—that psychoanalytic method and understanding is profoundly expanded and enriched if its practitioners genuinely dwell in complexity.

### **Sucharov's Article as Metalogue**

On one explicit, linear level, Sucharov contends that the mutual embeddedness of the experiential and explanatory facets of complex systems theory must be elucidated, appreciated, and deeply felt in order for such theory to be of lasting value to clinical psychoanalysis. Contemporaneously, on a structural level, he interconnects personal, affective, explanatory, existential, imaginative, and other elements into an emotional–intellectual unity that embodies and exemplifies his contentions. As such, taken as a whole, his article is an affecting and persuasive *metalogue* wherein conversation between the explicit and implicit, abstractly known and felt-body, and myriad other dualities occur under a single, dialogical roof.

Because the article's metalogue structure operated on me profoundly as a form of communication and persuasion, I have chosen to indicate, from time to time through my discussion, which of Sucharov's arguments were conveyed to me explicitly and linearly and which were conveyed implicitly and nonlinearly. In this regard, I contend, in turn, that each of these forms of communication is embedded in the others in a way that renders the article itself an instantiation of Sucharov's theoretical holism. Just as the person and his experience are embedded in the complex whole, so, too, are the particular elements of Sucharov's meaning, language, and persuasion embedded in the article as an encompassing complex structure. And, just as the complex interconnectedness of the person in his world is fruitfully experienced, so, too, is the interconnectedness of his particular elements of expression in the unity of this article worth seeing. Here, I simply wish to alert the reader to this thread in my discussion.

### **A Phenomenology of Complexity Theory**

Claiming, correctly I believe, that clinical psychoanalysis is a phenomenological enterprise, Sucharov writes the following: “[I]f we are going to keep a complex systems approach to psychoanalysis firmly anchored in the waters of phenomenology, then we need to develop a phenomenology of complexity theory itself” (p. 383). Toward that end, he introduces

the notion of “lived complexity” (p. 387) to denote the experiential form of complexity theory.

Sucharov's elucidation of lived complexity begins not with the paper's literal and linear beginning—namely, the narrative of his visit to Uncle Max's grave—but with its holistic structure of which the literal and linear beginning is but an inextricable part; that is, the psychoanalytic significance with which Sucharov imbues this initial narrative derives—not just phenomenologically and theoretically, but rhetorically—from the narrative's interconnection with other elements of his article, including its epilogue. Now, for me, the structure of Sucharov's idea of lived complexity is fundamentally built on the “the implicit presence of [the] transpersonal” or—in the language of my own intellectual tradition—the existential (p. 392) in his thinking. In short, in my view, an existential theme centrally organizes the holism of Sucharov's perspective and metalogue.

For instance, with respect to the explanatory dimension of “[c]omplexity systems theory,” Sucharov writes that “by virtue of our continuous being in the world, we all stand, at any given moment, at the center of a complex totality of experience that is informed by multiple and interweaving contextual relational systems” (p. 381). Here, I read Sucharov to make an *existential* claim that the human person is inextricably embedded in a complex, encompassing world of interconnectedness (a world of interconnected self, other, world, past, present, future, etc.) in which he is a constitutive experiencing subject.

Then, shifting gears to the lived or experiential dimension of complexity, Sucharov writes that “when we fully embrace complexity and wholeness, we encounter a glimpse of the infinite totality of which we are a part” (p. 393). Implicit in this shift to an experiential focus is Sucharov's contention that the emotional, perceptual, and intellectual experiences entailed in a person moving toward and “embrac[ing]” complexity—like Sucharov's “feelings of wholeness and connectedness” (p. 382)—are *disclosive* of the complex world in which such person, as constitutive subject, exists. By “disclosive” I mean that the person's subjective experiencing is organized by and, in contexts wherein such organizations can be seen or felt, reveals its embeddedness-in-complexity. Thus, when “embraced,” a person's subjective life illuminates his or her personal, existential situatedness within his or her complex world.

That a person's subjectivity is existentially disclosive is asserted and illustrated from Sucharov's first words. Again, Sucharov's article literally begins with his visit to the Bretteville Sur Laise Canadian

War Cemetery in Normandy, France—a visit saturated with existentially poignant affects. He recounts that “[t]he sobbing seemed uncontrollable” during his own grief-soaked “transformational moment” on May 8, 2007 when he stood before his Uncle Max's grave (p. 380). In an instant, a “triad of [dissociative] silences” (p. 381) yielded to articulation. Formerly unnamable emotions became namable; personal and collective feelings that had long been unspeakable became speakable. Suddenly, layers of complexity-drenched personal, familial, and communal grief and horror filled him.

The article's thesis is grounded in the existential (and transpersonal) idea that the individual person—in the previous instance, Sucharov—is embedded in a complex whole of interconnectedness with others (who are themselves, in turn, interconnected with one another, like heroically deceased Uncle Max, young cousin Max, Rudolph, Rudolph's late German war-baby mother, Miroslav, etc.), and in his world (e.g., post-Holocaust Canadian Jewish community, and postwar and posttraumatized Germany). Further, it is grounded in the idea that such person can “live” this complex embeddedness, in significant part, by embracing or owning those of his subjective experiences that disclose it, like feelings, perceptions, and understandings of existential wholeness, connectedness, grief, and horror, among others.

An important part of Sucharov's article is responsive to this implicit question: What does it look and feel like to “embrace” and “live in” complexity? What is the “qualitative shift in our experiential world” (p. 382) that results from this embrace? In response, Sucharov describes experiential features related to, but distinct from, wholeness and connectedness, grief and horror. They include the following:

*A sense of situatedness* within a complex existential (or transpersonal) context: Once his grief and horror became namable, Sucharov felt “situated ... more widely and deeply in [his] life” (p. 381).

*A sense of realness* to persons and events: Uncle Max was a “real” person buried in a “real” grave who died a “real” death in a “real” war (p. 381). Living in complexity breeds a sense of realness that transforms flat, abstract, and inorganic experience into affect that is multidimensional, tangible, and alive.

*A feeling of mineness* to complex situatedness: The war became “my” war, the family loss “my” loss, the Holocaust “my” tragedy, the suffering of innocent Germans “my” suffering (p. 381). Here, Sucharov's particular

situatedness, whether as individual or as part of the human collectivity, and the experiences that disclosed it, become owned by, and distinctive to, him.

Significant “moments” (p. 381) and other *experiences of temporality* that disclose a world in which past, present, and future are complexly and indissolubly interconnected: Sucharov's seemingly singular “transformational moment” in 2007, his present treatment relationship with Rudolph, as well as his “daily work” (p. 395) are constituted, in part, by the 62 years of time since his Uncle Max's death and since Rudolph's mother smelled odors of burning human flesh. Upon Sucharov's avowal to Miroslav that he had “forgotten how to be a psychiatrist” (p. 386), they were both subjectively “transported . . . with the expedience of Harry Potter's Portkey into the lived and troubled world of a 7-year-old Polish child of the early postwar years” (p. 387). Similarly, Sucharov's inquiry into Marilyn's bodily experience—namely, whether she “wet her pants” (p. 389)—opened a temporally complexifying door into both her painful memory of past sexual violations and her more affectively lively embodiment in the present.

*Feelings of “anxiety and disorientation”* that disclose the “unknowability” (p. 383) of the complex whole in which one is embedded.

Sucharov means his present exploration of the experiential content of lived complexity to be a beginning. Accordingly, he encourages readers to contribute to, and further expand, the elucidations he has begun to make. Accepting his invitation, I would, as a start, propose integrating the following closely related ideas recently seen in the intersubjective systems theory literature (e.g., see **Stolorow and Atwood, 1992**; **Stolorow, 2010**, 2011; **Maduro, in press**). If a person's embeddedness in his complex world is characterized not only by epistemological finitude (unknowability), and the anxiety and disorientation that disclose it (p.), but also by temporal and agentic finitude, then one can anticipate additional emotional features of lived complexity. These features might include existential anxiety and grief, disclosive of the person's embeddedness in temporally finite relationships with others, and existential humility, disclosive of his limited agency over such relationships and his world.

Sucharov's elucidations of lived complexity, as well as those contributed by his readers, like mine earlier, lead to explanatory questions of how such experiences are relationally facilitated or, in the alternative, obstructed. It is to such questions, and Sucharov's implicit and explicit responses, that I now turn.

## Relational Contexts That Facilitate Lived Complexity

Exemplifying his holistic perspective, Sucharov means his “expression ‘moving toward complexity’ [and lived complexity] to denote *both* [italics added] a dynamic relational process (itself complex) by which we deepen our awareness of complexity, as well as a description of this qualitative shift in our experiential world” (p. 382). By unifying these meanings under one expression, Sucharov “purposive[ly] ... [aims to] bring forth a more dynamic and fluid relationship between the abstract discourse of complex systems theory and its lived form” (p. 382). Implicitly, he also integrates his idea of lived complexity with psychoanalysis’ relational understanding that all experiences, including those disclosive of complexity, are constituted and organized by the complex, yet particular, relational contexts—past, present, and anticipated future—in which they are felt or not felt, as the case may be. In accord with this central theme, for Sucharov complexity as phenomenology and complexity as explanatory theory—the *experience* of complexity and the *complexity* of experiencing—are ultimately, inextricably interconnected. They form an irreducible unity.

Consistent with this theme, Sucharov implicitly poses several key questions: first, what relational contexts facilitate a person moving toward and living in complexity? More specifically, what forms of therapeutic process or interaction facilitate movement toward lived complexity in the analytic space?

Before addressing Sucharov's responses to this initial question, I note that the full extent to which his perspective is built on an affect theory is not clear. On his article's more explicit, linear level, Sucharov's language does not clearly privilege the analyst's integration of affects (e.g., those disclosive of his complex embeddedness) as central. I believe Sucharov writes quite deliberately in this regard. He speaks more broadly in terms of embracing, staying in, and experiencing complexity. At times, he alludes to developmental expansion more in terms of contemplative and spiritual advances than affective ones (not that these are mutually exclusive).

Yet, on the structural level of the article's interconnected personal and clinical narratives, case discussions, theorizing, and imaginings, I read Sucharov's article as pervaded by an affect theory wherein “moving toward” and “living in” complexity presuppose the person integrating and dwelling in a wide range of affects disclosive of complexity. Particularly as a contribution to psychoanalysis, Sucharov's article is, thus, a commentary

on the therapeutic challenge of analysand and analyst integrating into their respective experiential lives, and thus owning, the affects disclosive of their complex world-embeddedness.

While on the subject of affect ownership, and before returning to the explanatory concerns central to this section, I wish to highlight an enormously important phenomenological consequence of integrating the affects of complexity into one's subjective world (i.e., of living complexity): As a result of such emotional integration or ownership, formerly discrete regions of the person's experiential world, like those of “self,” “other,” and “world,” will yield to more holistic feelings of self-in-complex-interconnectedness-with-other-and-world or, more succinctly, self-in-context. By extension, for example, as the traditional phenomenology of distinct selfhood—emanating from the Cartesian notion of individual, isolated minds—accommodates to Sucharov's emerging psychoanalysis of lived complexity, it will be compelled in the direction of experiences and understandings of personal distinctiveness wherein the person's individuality derives from embeddedness-in-other and in-world, rather than from radical (and illusory) separation from them (see also, **Frie and Coburn, 2010; Maduro, 2013**).

Now, returning to the question of facilitative contexts, I might refine and reformulate the explanatory question before us as follows: What forms of emotional interaction within the “analytic space” facilitate the analysand's integration of his experiences of complexity into his sense of self-in-context?

In response, Sucharov indicates that “moving toward complexity” as relational process entails “genuine dialogue, presence, unconditional meeting, connectedness, empathic contact, [and] selfobject relatedness ...” (p. 385). Reading Sucharov's language for its affective heart, his terminology refers to analytic processes that entail humble emotional presence and openness to, as well as attuned tracking, holding, and understanding of, the analysand's affective experiences of complexity.

As illustrated in the case of Miroslav, Sucharov suggests that the analyst's tolerance of vulnerabilities involved in “having completely lost [his] bearings” (p. 388) is often a starting point in facilitating lived complexity. This may be so because such *affect tolerance* is apt to demonstrate the analyst's willingness not to know, and to hold his thinking and seeing lightly (**Orange, 1995**), in the face of complexity, particularly the complexity of the uniquely situated analysand who longs to be known and understood, yet not reduced to diagnoses and explanatory simplifications. Thus,

epistemological humility and restraint are added to the list of contextual features that facilitate lived complexity.

Also in his work with Miroslav, Sucharov shows that “a powerful facilitator of staying in a state of lived complexity, with the attendant uncertainties and unknowabilities, is to embrace that state *playfully* [italics added]” (p. 388). Moreover, when such a “playful spirit of engagement” becomes natural in the analytic interaction, it can serve to “deepen a shared sense of connection and safety” (p. 388). The importance of this function of play is, therefore, heightened given that “[m]oving toward complexity in the analytic field is more likely to occur within a trusting and secure sense of connectedness” (p. 388).

Further, Sucharov contends that our *bodies* [italics added] are “gateway[s] to the complex” and “vital conduits to lived complexity” (p. 388). Because a sense of “the complex totality of our immediate situatedness ... is often felt in our bodies” (p. 388), writes Sucharov, “*inquiry* [italics added] into the embodied dimension of the [analysand's] narrative” (p. 390) is a crucial facilitator of lived complexity. As vividly illustrated in the case of Marilyn, inquiry into, and understanding of, embodiment are among the central contextual features of lived complexity in Sucharov's framework.

According to Sucharov, lived complexity entails the person's “experiential *willingness* [italics added] to stay in complexity, to feel and embrace the irreducible complex totality of our interconnectedness ...” (p. 383). Acute vulnerability is implicit in this willingness and agency. In the analytic space, this vulnerability-soaked willingness, and its inherent context sensitivity, calls on the analyst to jump ahead of the analysand and invite him into complexity; to help him hold his affective reactions. In fact, in Sucharov's view, analytic leadership toward experiential complexification may (at least in appropriate treatment contexts) rise to the level of ethical duty. In these ways, the effort and action of “moving toward” is “hopefully shared” (p. 385) within, and thereby facilitated by, the analytic field.

Of course, the contexts in which a person moves into complexity are many and may not always involve agency. In contexts of trauma, for example, a sense of complexity arguably moves upon the person completely against, and beyond, his will. In fact, in such contexts the person's confidence in his agency (defensively naïve, or not) may be among the central casualties of the trauma insofar as it involves the person's encounter with his thrownness (see **Maduro, 2013**). In contexts like that of Sucharov's visit to his Uncle Max's grave, one has the sense of a mix

of agency and powerlessness: It seems like Sucharov intended to move toward complexity, but that, to some significant extent, it may have been an array of inconspicuous and interpenetrating factors outside his control that moved him into complexity there and then, albeit in a livable, versus traumatic, fashion.

The existential (and transpersonal) attitudes that pervade Sucharov's perspective and article are features of analytic fields that facilitate lived complexity. The therapeutic value of these attitudes is nowhere more evident than in Sucharov's account of how "Miroslav and I formed a dual identity, where the analyst–client dyad coexisted and interweaved with two 7-year-old playmates 'playing in the rubble', where the traumatic remnants of the previous generation become the playthings of the next" (p. 388). It was through Sucharov's alertness to the interconnectedness between the "special meaning" of play to Miroslav and him—namely, playing in the rubble—as micro-enactments of their respective postwar lives and to their kinship in personal, yet collective, trauma that reflection within the analytic space became complexified.

In this regard, implicit in Sucharov's framework is a two-fold challenge for the analyst as facilitator of complexity. He is first challenged to see and articulate the complex ways that universal structures of world-embedded human being (e.g., personal, communal, and temporal interconnectedness) organize the individual person's life and subjective experience. Second, but contemporaneously, he is challenged to see how the individual's particular life-situation, especially the unique relational systems that organize it (e.g., Miroslav and Sucharov's transference–countertransference system), co-determines whether and how the universal structures are known and felt. In this two-fold way, the analyst's existential (and transpersonal) attitudes are additional contextual features that facilitate lived complexity in Sucharov's framework (see also, Maduro, 2011).

A crucial therapeutic process that facilitates moving toward, and living in, complexity in the analytic space is the analyst's skilled resistance analysis. Sucharov does not explicitly elucidate this facilitative contextual feature: As alluded to earlier, the "transformational" potential of a given existential and experiential "moment" will be determined, in part, by "the person's unique relational systems," especially including those often pre-reflectively unconscious emotional convictions or "ordering principles, forged within the crucible of the child-caregiver system ... that ... organize the [person's] experience of affect ..." (**Orange, Atwood, and Stolorow, 1997**, p. 80).

Those convictions that organize a person's existential vulnerability, terror, grief, or powerlessness to mean that he is inherently inadequate, mentally unstable, or injurious to others, for example, will render those affects—and by extension the person's willingness to embrace the complexity they disclose—dangerous, if not unbearable (see e.g., Stolorow, 2007; Maduro, 2008). In turn, they will elicit the analysand's resistance to genuine (vs. accommodative) participation in treatment aimed at owning complexity and dwelling in the affectivity that discloses it.

Inquiry into, and illumination of, these often painful, frightening, and highly personal convictions, i.e., resistance analysis, will help loosen their meaning-making and danger-producing grip on the person's experiences of his complex world-embeddedness. Through this analytic activity the person will acquire reflective awareness of his resistive organizing processes, as well as an emotional home (with his analyst) to feel, know, and dwell in the affects disclosive of his world-embeddedness that these relationally acquired organizations can otherwise render intolerably conflictual. The same analytic process would assist the analyst in considering the potentially frightening meanings his “losing his way,” “playfulness,” “inquiry into body,” or other perhaps typically facilitative clinical activities may have for his analysand.

My impression is that Sucharov neglects expounding resistance analysis as one of the crucial, and quintessentially psychoanalytic, features of the “relational process[es]” that facilitate living in complexity. While acknowledging that Sucharov cannot do everything in a single article, given the crucial role of resistance analysis in therapeutic action and efficacy, I wish he had spoken in more detail—for example, in the case vignettes—about how analysts might investigate and illuminate the uniquely personal experiences of danger that are likely to attend their analysands' particular encounters with complexity. A final note on this subject: such so-called resistive ordering principles, and their roots in developmental trauma, are themselves indicia of the person's world-embeddeness in so far as they are the legacies and manifestations of the complex interconnectedness of the person and his caregiving surround from traumatic-developmental past to and through the transference-saturated present.

Having discussed Sucharov's responses to the first implicit explanatory question, namely, what relational contexts facilitate lived complexity, I turn now to his consideration of a second, and related, explanatory

question. In it, Sucharov implicitly explores those relational contexts, or contextual features, that obstruct moving toward, and living in, complexity.

### **Relational Contexts That Obstruct Lived Complexity**

Sucharov's second, implicitly posed, explanatory question might be formulated as follows: What forms of emotional interaction within the “analytic space” obstruct the analysand's integration of experiences of complexity into his sense of self-in-context? Sucharov's response is grounded in the understanding, discussed earlier, that moving toward and living in complexity require “relational supports” that render the affects of complexity bearable and livable. As such, the contexts that obstruct lived complexity are those that undermine these relational supports, or expose them as inadequate.

One category of context that would undermine lived complexity would presumably involve the myriad forms of caregiver absence, or rejecting presence, that are antithetical to the facilitative “relational supports” described in the previous section. These impoverished or undermining contexts might be viewed as entailing *not-good-enough* analytic relating in respect of analysands' experiences of complexity.

Another category of obstructing contexts is that of devastating trauma. According to Sucharov, in contexts of such trauma, relational supports are shattered by “the brutal explosion of complexity into an unprepared experiential world” (p. 385). Some such explosions are no doubt inherently unbearable, at least initially. However, as conveyed throughout his metalogue, Sucharov views discrete and initially overwhelming trauma as constitutively embedded in the systems of relational support, or inadequate support, that co-determine whether they can eventually be borne and lived, or not. In this way, trauma is viewed multidimensionally as personally overwhelming, yet perhaps even more centrally as overwhelming the relational systems in which the personal-overwhelm is experienced.

Here, I wish to note one critical point with respect to Sucharov's trauma language. In one instance, he refers to “trauma, especially the prolonged and horrific, [as] a *malignant* [italics added] relational process that shatters the relational supports that sustain complexity” (p. 385). I have some trouble with viewing trauma as “malignant” in light of the

fact that “explosion[s] of complexity,” as well as unprepared, inadequately supportive, or shattered relational systems, seem to me inherent features of the human world: the finite, if often painful, world in which we are embedded. Ascribing malignancy to trauma is, to my ear, ascribing malignancy to world-embedded human being. At the least, this characterization is overbroad.

In the following section, I briefly note Sucharov's developmental perspective on moving toward, and living in, complexity. I then discuss his conviction that emotional trauma results in the traumatized person's reactive flights into experiential reductions, the therapy for which is emotional re-complexification.

### **Lived Complexity as Growth and Healing**

For Sucharov, “moving toward complexity in the analytic space” is a general developmental achievement and therapeutic goal. As briefly set forth earlier in the sections entitled “A Phenomenology of Complexity Theory” and “Relational Contexts That Facilitate Lived Complexity,” he outlines for us aspects of the expansive, if painful, experiential contents that characterize lived complexity, as well as the relational and analytic contexts that facilitate their integration into awareness, or ownership. These expansive emotional contents, and the relational and analytic contexts that facilitate them, are constitutive of the person's or analysand's horizon-expanding developmental growth, whether within or outside the analytic space.

Sucharov shows, however, that moving toward, achieving, or restoring experiences of complexity in the analytic space is particularly mutative in contexts of trauma wherein existential complexity has thrust itself upon a person's world, shattering the “certainties” central to his “psychological survival” (p. 385). This particular mutative value arises because “survivors of trauma are moved to restore shattered certainties ... by massively reducing the complexity of their personal worlds, a reduction mediated by dissociative processes (**Brothers, 2008**)” (p. 385).

According to Sucharov, in such contexts of trauma, therapeutic movement “toward complexity is a ‘leading edge’ process that fights against [such] powerful currents of complexity reduction ...” (p. 385). It is a relational process that presents an alternative to the traumatized person's reactive flights into self-restorative decomplexification. This process cultivates a safe relational holding environment within the analytic space

for the analysand to once again entertain and eventually “live in” the affectivity of a re-complexified subjective world. Or, in the context of repetition of previous traumas, the analysand might—supported as he would be by such an analytic space—resist or limit his “slipping back into the comforting simplification of reducti[on]” (p. 386). In Sucharov's framework, the traumatized person's flight into reduction, thus, meets with the analyst's therapeutic “fight” against “reductionism” (p. 385), in part, by the analyst's holding of his analysand's reactive affectivity.

In situations of trauma, Sucharov characterizes moving toward complexity not simply as developmental or therapeutic growth, but as “healing” (p. 385). As such, healing entails reintegrating, re-identifying with, and experientially dwelling in complexity. It is antithetical to getting past, distancing oneself from, or otherwise evading it. Healing entails the person finding the relational conditions under which the affects of complexity can be safely embraced again and reintegrated into his emotional life.

I echo a previous critique. In his discussion of lived complexity as healing, Sucharov pays much more attention to facilitative analytic activities (the developmental dimension of the transference) than he does to analytic engagement with the complicating presence of analysands' preexisting, highly personal, and often frightening emotional convictions (the resistive dimension of the transference). An analysand's experiences of “brutal explosion[s] of complexity” (p. 385)—like existential terror, grief, horror, and powerlessness—will be radically resisted if he feels they expose not only his vulnerable embeddedness in the world (as if such exposure is not challenging enough), but also, for example, his personal failure or destructiveness. Consideration of these and other resistances, and their developmental contexts, would presumably influence the analyst's treatment of traumatized analysands who display unwillingness, antipathy, or seemingly cowardly evasion in the face of the analyst's steps toward “healing” re-complexification. If there is an ethical basis to fight for complexity, there is also certainly an ethical imperative to consider the potentially traumatizing meanings and impact that such a fight might have for the particular analysand, lest an analytic treatment based in Sucharov's framework inadvertently and ironically become its own form of retraumatization.

In accord with Sucharov's thesis, I contend that the analyst's capacity to live in complexity will deepen his investigation, perception, and understanding of the universal, as well as the highly personal and multidimensional, meanings and transferences that organize the analytic relationship—that is, the analyst's capacity to move toward and live in

complexity will enrich his psychoanalytic method and knowledge and thereby enable him to even more effectively inquire into and make sense of his analysand's, and his own, complex emotional experiencing. In the next and final section I discuss the implications Sucharov's framework has for psychoanalytic epistemology.

### **Lived Complexity as Psychoanalytic Epistemology**

Sucharov takes critical aim at the emotionally and epistemologically fracturing, decomplexifying, and disconnecting nature of human knowledge—what, in the analytic space, appears to be psychoanalytic explanation. He then offers “conceptual metaphors” and “remind[ers]” (pp. 391–392) to help us “mitigate” the “violating nature of [such] knowledge” (p. 392).

“By virtue of our situatedness inside the universe,” writes Sucharov, “observation and knowledge can only be obtained by severing some of the connections, thereby fracturing the whole (Sucharov, 1994)” (pp. 390–391). He deems “the explanatory version of a given [psychoanalytic] theory” (p. 391), like complexity theory, just such a form of inherently reductive “knowledge” that necessarily “fractures and violates the very wholeness we are trying to understand ... [and] pulls us away from complexity” (p. 391).

In my view, Sucharov decontextualizes human knowledge from the people who aspire to know in decomplexifying, non-dialogical, absolutist ways. Examples of such people in the field of psychoanalysis include traumatically overwhelmed clinicians who see transference–countertransference fields in the self-protective imagery of interactions between isolated minds (Stolorow and Atwood, 1992). And then, constrained to find answers to his own decontextualization, Sucharov diminishes his own epistemological contribution by casting it as a merely mitigating check on the otherwise universally “violating nature of knowledge” (p. 392). I think Sucharov overstates his case against knowledge and understates the value of his epistemology: Human and psychoanalytic knowing need not “of necessity” (p. 391) manifest as fracturing, violative, and grandiose; moreover, Sucharov's elucidation of lived complexity is not merely a mitigating reminder but, rather, the beginnings of an invaluable epistemological perspective. In fact, Sucharov's metalogue is first-hand evidence in support of both these contentions.

Here is how: Again, on the explicit, linear level of the article, Sucharov arguably departs from his own thesis by ascribing a universal,

defensive grandiosity to human knowledge and explanation. In my view, the types of knowledge he objects to are instead products of particular persons' context-sensitive flights from their epistemological finitude and vulnerability. Coexisting with this explicit and linear decontextualization, however, is the article's metalogue as encompassing structure in which Sucharov presents to us a complexified, dialogical approach to psychoanalytic knowing. Specifically, in this epistemology he includes illumination of affects and perceptions—like depressive avowal of not-knowing, and having lost one's bearings—that disclose the finitude of personal knowing. And in respect of epistemological method, he guides the analyst in how to investigate, illuminate, and facilitate integration of these and other affects of complexity into his analysands' (and his own) worlds of experience, for example by facilitating reconnection with one's body as gateway to complexity. He also illuminates the mutual and reciprocal embeddedness of explanatory knowledge, on the one hand, and play, body, and unique life experience with others, on the other hand, conveying along the way that all these forms and resources of knowledge can be accessed through the types of self-in-context reflection, and attention to embodiment and relational process, which he advocates.

In the end, Sucharov shows that knowing complexity is living complexity. In this marvelous article, Sucharov illuminates the experiential contents of lived complexity, and the analytic contexts that facilitate, or alternatively obstruct, it. In addition, he demonstrates persuasively the developmental and therapeutic value, as well as challenges, of analyses that move toward complexity, perhaps especially in contexts of trauma. As a psychoanalytic epistemology, he structures his framework to protect against the inclination to feel and know our world-embedded human being in self-alienating and reductive terms. This structure, and its self-correcting function, is displayed in vivo in the metalogue by which he articulates it. In the end, through his unifying use of personal, clinical, therapeutic, and existential materials, and by way of linear, structural, explicit, and implicit expressions, Sucharov corrects an instance of his own flight from finitude and proves that psychoanalytic knowledge can maintain its humble, perspectival, and dialogical integrity so long as the analysts pursuing such knowledge absorb his expansive holistic convictions.

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