

# TRUTH

Developmental, Cultural,  
and Clinical Realms

*Edited by*  
**Salman Akhtar**



# Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
About the editor and contributors	xi
Introduction	xix

## Prologue

1. The meaning of “truth” and the truth about “meaning” in psychoanalysis <i>Brett H. Clarke</i>	3
---	---

## Part I: Developmental realm

2. Children and truth <i>Mali Mann</i>	27
3. The search for truth in adolescent rebellion <i>Ann Smolen</i>	41
4. Truth in later life <i>Thomas Wolman</i>	53

**Part II: Cultural realm**

5. “Nothing is truer than truth” and Shakespeare 69  
*Richard M. Waugaman*
6. Explorations into truth, anxiety, and death by Heidegger and Freud 83  
*Michael Shoshani, Batya Shoshani, and Naama Shoshani-Breda*
7. Finding the truth in individual and large-group psychology 113  
*Vamik D. Volkan*

**Part III: Clinical realm**

8. Narrative truth and theoretical truth 129  
*Donald P. Spence*
9. What is true and whose idea was it? 145  
*Thomas H. Ogden*
10. Truth heals, if one can tolerate it 161  
*Cobi Avshalom and Gila Ofer*
11. Seven types of truth and their clinical relevance 173  
*Salman Akhtar*

**Epilogue**

12. Truly, what does all this mean? 197  
*Louis Rothschild*
- References 209
- Index 231

## Acknowledgments

Twelve distinguished colleagues devoted much time and effort to writing original works for inclusion in this book. They responded to my editorial suggestions with the utmost grace. The work of five others, Michael Shoshani, Batya Shoshani and Naama Shoshani-Breda, Donald Spence, and Thomas Ogden, has been reprinted with permission. Andrew Klafter, an outstanding younger colleague of mine, procured one chapter for this book and helped in other subtle and not-so-subtle ways as well. My assistant, Jan Wright, prepared the manuscript of this book with her characteristic diligence and good humor. Kelsey Leon provided some very useful last-minute typing and formatting assistance. Kate Pearce, at Karnac Books, provided excellent and patient editorial guidance. To her, and to all the individuals mentioned here, my sincere thanks indeed.

## About the editor and contributors

**Salman Akhtar**, MD, is professor of psychiatry at Jefferson Medical College and a training and supervising analyst at the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia. He has served on the editorial boards of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. His more than 300 publications include twenty-two books—*Broken Structures* (1992), *Quest for Answers* (1995), *Inner Torment* (1999), *Immigration and Identity* (1999), *New Clinical Realms* (2003), *Objects of Our Desire* (2005), *Regarding Others* (2007), *Turning Points in Dynamic Psychotherapy* (2009), *The Damaged Core* (2009), *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (2009), *Immigration and Acculturation* (2011), *Matters of Life and Death* (2011), *The Book of Emotions* (2012), *Psychoanalytic Listening* (2013), *Good Stuff* (2013), *Sources of Suffering* (2014), *No Holds Barred* (2016), *A Web of Sorrow* (2017), *Mind, Culture and Global Unrest* (2018), *Silent Virtues* (2019), *Tales of Transformation* (2022), and *In Leaps and Bounds* (2022)—as well as forty-three edited or co-edited volumes in psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Dr. Akhtar has delivered many prestigious addresses and lectures including the inaugural address at the first IPA-Asia Congress in Beijing, China (2010). Dr. Akhtar is the recipient of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association's* Best Paper of the Year Award (1995), the Margaret Mahler Literature Prize (1996), the American Society of Psychoanalytic Physicians' Sigmund Freud Award (2000), the American College of Psychoanalysts' Laughlin Award (2003), the American Psychoanalytic Association's Edith Sabshin Award (2000), Columbia University's Robert Liebert Award for Distinguished Contributions to Applied Psychoanalysis (2004), the American Psychiatric Association's Kun Po Soo Award (2004), the Irma Bland Award for being the Outstanding Teacher of Psychiatric Residents in the country (2005), and the Nancy Roeske Award (2012). Most recently, he received the Sigmund Award (2013), which is the most prestigious honor in the field of psychoanalysis.

Dr. Akhtar is an internationally sought speaker and teacher, and his books have been translated into many languages, including German, Turkish, and Romanian. His interests are wide and he has served as the film review editor for the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, and is currently serving as the book review editor for the *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*. He has published eight collections of poetry and serves as a scholar-in-residence at the Inter-Act Theatre Company in Philadelphia.

**Cobi Avshalom**, MA, is a clinical psychologist, training psychoanalyst, and past chairman of Tel Aviv Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis (TAICP). He was a teacher in psychoanalytic psychotherapy programs in Bar Ilan University and in Maggid Institute of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He teaches and supervises presently in the core training program and psychotherapy program of TAICP. He has been a follower of a spiritual meditative school for almost fifty years. His papers concern ways of listening and interpreting the analytic encounter (“analytic compass”), and are about psychoanalysis and spirituality. He has presented his thoughts about various aspects of the analyst’s role and being in the analytic process in conferences and seminars in Israel, Eastern Europe, and the United States.

**Brett H. Clarke**, MSW, is an adult training and supervising analyst at the Cincinnati Psychoanalytic Institute, where he also teaches and serves as cochair of the Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Program. He has master’s degrees in social work and English and comparative literature, and credits his literary education with introducing him to the value of listening with imagination, empathy, and critical attention. Previous publications have focused on the central place of metaphor and metaphoric “tension” in both psychoanalytic theory and practice; the philosophy of psychoanalytic knowledge; the troubled epistemology of neuropsychanalysis; and the meaning of “science” in psychoanalysis as this relates to hermeneutic ideas about meaning. He has a private clinical practice in Cincinnati.

**Mali Mann**, PhD, is training and supervising analyst and child analytic supervisor at San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis. She is a cochair of the North American Committee on Child and Adolescent Psychoanalysis/IPA. She is adjunct clinical professor of psychiatry at the Stanford University School of Medicine. After completing her medical school, Dr. Mann finished her neurology internship and psychiatry residency at the University of Kansas Medical Center. She completed her fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Rochester, New York and then did a second fellowship in adolescent medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine. She has published several papers in the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, including “Immigrant Parents and Their Emigrant Adolescents: The Tension of Inner and Outer Worlds,” and “Shame Veiled and Unveiled.” She has written several book chapters and a book review, including “Aggression in Children: Origins, Manifestation, and Management through Play,” and “The Formation and Development of Ethnic Identity.” Dr. Mann has recently edited a book, *Psychoanalytic Aspects of Assisted Reproductive Technology* (2014).

She is a member of the Pegasus Physician writing group at Stanford University. She teaches at the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis and Child Psychotherapy Program. She is a faculty member at China Alliance Psychoanalytic Association, and teaches at the Palo Alto Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Training Program. She supervises residents and child fellows at Stanford University and San Mateo Psychiatry Residency Program. She has a special interest in applied psychoanalysis, maternal development and motherhood, as well as ethics in working with children and parents. Dr. Mann's community service takes her to Mexico as a member of Los Medicos Voladores ("The Flying Doctors") where she visits orphans and assists the orphanage staff in a small village near Ensenada. She maintains a private practice in child, adolescent, and adult psychiatry and psychoanalysis in Palo Alto and San Francisco.

**Gila Ofer, PhD**, is a clinical psychologist, training psychoanalyst, and group analyst. She has a BA in English and French literature, and MA and PhD in clinical psychology. Dr. Ofer is the founder and past president of the Tel-Aviv Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis (TAICP) and a founding member of the Israeli Institute of Group Analysis (IIGA). She serves on the faculty of both these institutes as well as that of the Post-Graduate School for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, Tel-Aviv University. She was also on the faculty of the Chicago Center of Psychoanalysis. Dr. Ofer has been the chair of the group analytic section and board member of the European Federation for Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy, and later a conjoint member of the board as the coordinator of Eastern European countries of the EFPP. She is the editor of the EFPP *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Review* and she is the book review editor of foreign language books in the *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*. She is leading or helping to establish training in group analysis in Istanbul and Bucharest and other Eastern European countries. Dr. Ofer writes on theoretical and clinical topics such as gender and sexuality in psychoanalysis and group analysis; dreams in psychoanalysis and group analysis; the social unconscious; and conducting large groups. She has published her work in leading journals and presented her work and taught in Israel, Europe, and the US. Her edited book, *A Bridge over Troubled Water: Conflicts and Reconciliation in Group and Society*, was published in 2017. Dr. Ofer maintains a private practice in Tel Aviv and has online patients and supervisees from around the world.

**Thomas Ogden, MD**, is a graduate of Amherst College, the Yale School of Medicine, and the Psychiatric Residency at the Yale School of Medicine. He completed his analytic training at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute and is currently a personal and supervising analyst of the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California. He has also served as an associate psychiatrist at the Tavistock Clinic, London. He has published twelve books on psychoanalytic theory and practice, including *Coming to Life in the Consulting Room*; *Reclaiming Unlived Life*; *Creative Readings: Essays on Seminal Analytic Works*; *The Analyst's Ear and the Critic's Eye: Rethinking Psychoanalysis and Literature* (coauthored with Benjamin Ogden); *Rediscovering Psychoanalysis*; and *This Art of Psychoanalysis: Dreaming Undreamt Dreams and Interrupted*

*Cries*. In addition, he has published three novels: *The Parts Left Out*, *The Hands of Gravity and Chance*, and *This Will Do*. His work has been published in more than twenty languages. Dr. Ogden has served on the editorial boards of a number of psychoanalytic journals including the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*; *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*; *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*; and *Gender and Sexuality*. He teaches, practices, and supervises psychoanalysis in San Francisco, where he also teaches creative writing. He was awarded the 2004 *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* Award for the “Most Important Paper of the Year”; the 2010 Haskell Norman Prize, an international award for “Outstanding Achievement in Psychoanalysis”; and the 2012 Sigourney Award, an international award for “Significant Contributions to the Field of Psychoanalysis.”

**Louis Rothschild**, PhD, is a clinical psychologist in Lutherville, Maryland. He took his PhD at the New School for Social Research where he published on the relationship between essentialist beliefs and prejudice in regard to several social categories. He then completed a fellowship at Brown University School of Medicine where he focused on the relationship between personality and chronic depression. Specializing in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, Dr. Rothschild also provides supervision, writes, and occasionally reviews manuscripts. His publications have ranged from quantitative to qualitative, social-cognitive to psychoanalysis, and clinical to philosophical. He is presently writing a book to be published by Phoenix Publishing House entitled *Rapprochement between Fathers and Sons: Breakdowns, Reunions, Potentialities*, and coediting a volume entitled *Childhood Precarities: Non-Normative Narratives of Marginalization*, with Lexington Books. He is a past president of the Rhode Island local chapter of the Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology: Division 39 of the American Psychological Association. Outside of his professional life, he has a fondness for tennis, triathlon, and chasing a rather elusive sourdough starter in the kitchen.

**Batya Shoshani**, PhD, a Fulbright scholar, is a training and supervising psychoanalyst and a professor of clinical social work at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (retired), with vast experience in teaching and supervision in social work, psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis. She is a founding member and the past chair of the training committee at the Tel Aviv Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis. She has been a senior consultant for public services dealing with children, adolescents, battered women, and delinquent youth. She is interested in interdisciplinary studies in psychoanalysis, weaving clinical knowledge with philosophy, literature, and art. Most recently, she has coauthored (with her husband, Michael Shoshani) a book on the technical challenges posed by cases of pathologic narcissism and sexual perversion under the title, *Timeless Grandiosity and Eroticised Contempt* (2021). Batya lives and practices in Tel Aviv, Israel.

**Michael Shoshani**, PsyD, MBA, a Fulbright scholar, is a senior clinical psychologist and a training and supervising psychoanalyst. He is the founding chair and a faculty member of the



Tel Aviv Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis. He is a faculty member and supervisor of the New York University Postdoc Program for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy, and an active member of the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA) and the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). For three decades, he has treated patients, taught students, and supervised clinicians. He has lectured for many years at Tel Aviv University and Bar Ilan University in postgraduate programs of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, and has run workshops for many groups of professionals in Israel, the USA, Turkey, and Romania. His main interest is in clinical theories relating to the therapy and analysis of narcissistic and perverse character pathology, as well as in interdisciplinary studies in psychoanalysis, weaving clinical knowledge with philosophy, literature, and art. He is the author of the book, *Dare to Be Human: A Psychoanalytic Journey* (2009) which intimately described seven years of an analysis while emphasizing the relationship between the analyst and the analysand. More recently, he has published (with his wife, Batya Shoshani) a book on the technical challenges posed by cases of pathologic narcissism and sexual perversion under the title, *Timeless Grandiosity and Eroticised Contempt* (2021). Michael lives and practices in Tel Aviv, Israel.

**Naama Shoshani-Breda**, MA, obtained her degree *magna cum laude* in philosophy and digital culture at Tel Aviv University. She is currently in the process of developing her PhD proposal in philosophy. Naama has a deep understanding in continental philosophy and her interdisciplinary approach allows her to weave different areas of knowledge in her innovative work.

**Ann Smolen**, PhD, is a supervising and training analyst in child, adolescent, and adult psychoanalysis at the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia. Dr. Smolen graduated *summa cum laude* from Bryn Mawr College and received her master's degree in social work from Bryn Mawr College School of Social Work and Social Research. She received her doctorate in philosophy from the Clinical Social Work Institute in Washington, DC. Her first profession was as a member of the New York City Ballet. Dr. Smolen has won several national awards for her clinical work, and has presented her clinical work both nationally and internationally. Dr. Smolen has published several articles including "Boys Only! No Mothers Allowed," published in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and translated into three languages. Dr. Smolen is the author of *Mothering Without a Home: Representations of Attachment Behaviors in Homeless Mothers and Children* (Aronson, 2013). She maintains a private practice in child, adolescent, and adult psychotherapy and psychoanalysis in Ardmore, PA.

**Donald Spence**, PhD, was an eminent North American psychoanalyst who earned a place of distinction in the profession's published canon with his 1982 book, *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth*. A challenge to the limitations of recall and reconstruction, the book's message carried enormous technical significance for clinical psychoanalysis. Donald Spence obtained his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1949 and his PhD in clinical psychology from Columbia University in 1955. He graduated from the New York Psychoanalytic Institute

in 1966 and held the rank of professor of psychiatry at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Besides his highly acclaimed monograph mentioned above, he authored more than one hundred articles and book reviews and two other books. He spent the years of his retirement in Princeton, NJ, and was active with Habitat for Humanity, Pro Musica, Old Guard, and Community Without Walls. Dr. Spence died in 2007.

**Vamık D. Volkan**, MD, is an emeritus professor of psychiatry at the University of Virginia; an emeritus training and supervising analyst at the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis; and an emeritus Senior Erik Erikson Scholar at the Erikson Institute of the Austen Riggs Center. He is the emeritus president of the International Dialogue Initiative and a former president of the Turkish-American Neuropsychiatric Society, the International Society of Political Psychology, the Virginia Psychoanalytic Society, and the American College of Psychoanalysts. Dr. Volkan was a member of the International Negotiation Network under the directorship of former President Jimmy Carter, an inaugural Yitzhak Rabin Fellow, Rabin Center for Israeli Studies, Tel Aviv, Israel; a visiting professor of psychiatry at four universities in Turkey, a visiting professor of psychoanalysis at East-European Institute of Psychoanalysis, Saint Petersburg, Russia; a visiting professor of law, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts; a Fulbright/Sigmund Freud Foundation visiting scholar of psychoanalysis in Vienna, Austria; a visiting professor of political science at the University of Vienna; and a visiting professor at El Bosque University, Bogota, Colombia. He was also a board member of the Freud Foundation in Vienna and a member of the Working Group on Terror and Terrorism, International Psychoanalytical Association. Dr. Volkan is the author, coauthor, editor, or coeditor of sixty psychoanalytic and psychopolitical books. His book, *Large-Group Psychology: Racism, Societal Divisions, Narcissistic Leaders and Who We Are Now* (2020), received the Gradiva 2021 Best Book Award. He has written hundreds of published papers and book chapters. He is a recipient of the Nevitt Sanford, Elise Hayman, Bryce Boyer, Hans Strupp, Sigmund Freud (given by the city of Vienna), and Mary Sigourney awards and the Margaret Mahler Literature Prize. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times; letters of support were sent from twenty-seven countries.

**Richard Waugaman**, MD, is a training and supervising analyst, emeritus, at the Washington Psychoanalytic Institute. He is clinical professor of psychiatry and faculty expert on Shakespeare for media contacts at Georgetown University. He has written more than one hundred publications; fifty of them are on Shakespeare and on the psychology of pseudonymity. Since 2004, he has done archival research at the Folger Shakespeare Library. There he discovered one of the largest previously unknown literary sources for Shakespeare's works, in Edward de Vere's copy of Sternhold and Hopkins's *Whole Book of Psalms*. De Vere's annotations showed his unusual interest in some of these psalms, which are echoed repeatedly in Shakespeare's plays

and poems. This discovery has unlocked new levels of meaning in Shakespeare's works and has helped validate Freud's theory that Edward de Vere wrote the works of "Shakespeare."

**Thomas Wolman, MD**, was born and raised in New York City. He attended Johns Hopkins University and the Pennsylvania State University Medical College. Subsequently he trained at the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia, where he now teaches in both the psychoanalytic and psychotherapy training programs. Currently he holds the title of clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He has written on Winnicott, Mahler, Kohut, and Lacan, as well as on contemporary film and literary themes. He has recently published a collection of his essays on film under the title of *The Erotic Screen* (2020).

# Introduction

This book is not about *the* truth. It is about truth, in all its majestic and defiled forms, in a physical and psychical sense, in prose and poetry, in history and law, in politics and philosophy, and in various phases of the human life span. As would be clear from even a cursory glance at its table of contents, not to say upon reading it, the topic it seeks to address is of great interest to large numbers of disciplines in humanities and equally fascinating to mental health clinicians. In psychoanalysis, an early preoccupation was the unearthing of childhood trauma as the etiological agent of adult psychopathology. This led to a great interest in the individual's "historical truth"; concepts such as the genetic perspective of metapsychology, reconstruction, genetic interpretation, and childhood origins of transference were all products of such conceptual zeal.

Subsequent shifts in theory challenged these assumptions. The foundations of ontogenetic certainty were shaken up by the emergent notions of "genetic fallacy" (Hartmann, 1939), "personal myth" (E. Kris, 1956a), "narrative truth" (Spence, 1982b), and the advent of intersubjective and relational perspectives in psychoanalysis (Benjamin, 2004; Mitchell, 1988; Ogden, 1994). Working in unison with the postmodern exaltation of relativism vis-à-vis "facts," these concepts threw the baby of "one person psychology" out with the bathwater of inordinately certain reconstructions of the analysand's past.

The book in your hands elucidates this and other such conundrums with eloquence and nuance. Variables of ego development, sociopolitical imperatives, and clinical praxis help organize its wide-ranging contents into a harmonious gestalt which might or might not capture the truth in this realm but certainly comes quite close to it.

# Prologue

## CHAPTER ONE

# The meaning of “truth” and the truth about “meaning” in psychoanalysis

*Brett H. Clarke*

Psychoanalysis is by disposition perpetually in crisis. In fact, by now “crisis” should probably be considered a definitional characteristic of psychoanalysis. And one cannot understand the nature of its central and ongoing meta-theoretical predicament without first appreciating the essential, constitutive tension at the heart of the psychoanalytic theory of the mind. Using the vocabulary of one version (Ricoeur, 1970), it would be the tension between a language of force and energy, on the one hand, and a language of reasons, intentions, and meanings, on the other. This fundamental tension has brought with it epistemological corollaries and controversies. For over one hundred years many analysts have referred to psychoanalysis as a “science,” though the impressive bulk of analytic ideas, both theoretical and clinical, have emerged from groups of clinicians thinking critically about their experiences with patients over time, talking together, and writing about it. In fact, the question about “science” has proven to be a rather poor way of framing the more pertinent question of rigor. People often use the word “science” when what they really mean to convey is a concern for rigor. So in approaching the question of truth in psychoanalysis, we inevitably will also be asking what constitutes an appropriate kind of rigor in the formulation of psychoanalytic “knowledge,” or how it is that we come to know what we think we know.

For those who regard the term “science” as the necessary title for any form of inquiry that claims to be rigorous, this has led to 1) a broadening of the modern definition of science (a reversion to the age-old notion of science as virtually any discipline or body of knowledge) so that psychoanalysis can fit inside, or 2) a perceived need to narrow the scope of psychoanalysis to fit into an idea of science that depends on systematic testing and empirical measurement, or 3) an effort to combine (into a single entity) epistemological frameworks that are potentially wildly disparate. But there has been an often-overlooked benefit to this vagueness