

# An interview with Paul Roazen

*In conversation with* LYNN GREENWOOD

“The guy got a bit of a bum rap.” Not the words you might expect from one of the world’s most respected writers on the history of psychoanalysis.... However, these were indeed the words that Paul Roazen used to sum up the fate of Edward Glover, co-founder of the Psychopathic Clinic (now the Portman) and the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency (now the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies at King’s College, London), joint founder of the British Journal of Criminology, co-founder of the British Society of Criminology – and the subject of Roazen’s forthcoming book, *Oedipus in Britain: Edward Glover and the Struggle over Klein*.

I met Roazen during his recent visit to the UK and Ireland, where a whistle-stop tour included lectures at the European Federation for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the Public Sector in Oxford; the Portman Clinic; the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research, and the British Association of Psychotherapists in London and the Irish Forum for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in Dublin. I caught up with him at his hotel on a rainy, blustery day. Sitting in reception cold, wet and windswept, I felt far from a poised interviewer about to meet one of ‘psychohistory’s’ most eminent figures. However, instead of the remote, aloof academic of my imagination, I was greeted by a delightfully warm man, dressed casually and complaining bitterly about the unseasonal English weather. I was delighted when Roazen agreed to my suggestion that we talk over a cup of coffee – doubly so when the concierge directed us to the deserted (and apparently closed) hotel coffee lounge: a walk of even 100 yards in the wind and rain felt too far to contemplate.

Our conversation focused on a train of events whose origins lie in what became known as the ‘Controversial Discussions’ – a somewhat understated name for the dispute that raged among members of the British Psychoanalytic Society (BPS) between 1941 and 1945. Melanie Klein claimed that she had extended the theory of psychoanalysis to encompass work with infants and the treatment of psychosis. Edward Glover was among those who fiercely opposed Klein’s views – and, indeed, Klein herself. However, she was not Glover’s only enemy: Ernest Jones, arguably best-known as Freud’s authorised biographer and then chairman of the BPS, was another. For many years, Glover had been Jones’ ‘second-in-command’; they became bitter enemies.

So what was the ‘bum rap’? Roazen explains: “A large part of the problem was that Glover was the analyst of Melitta Schmideberg – Klein’s daughter. Not only did Melitta have a difficult relationship with her mother but her mother correctly thought that Melitta and Glover were colluding against her. This was a rather messy ‘backdrop’ to the Controversial Discussions – and the personalities involved.”

Glover published a critique of Klein’s ideas some time after the Controversial Discussions. It was omitted from the Controversial Discussions’ bibliography. According to Roazen, this was a defining moment in the history of British psychoanalysis. “Glover resigned from the BPS in 1944 and made the grounds for his resignation – the view that Klein’s theories and, thus, trends within the Society constituted a ‘deviation’ from Freud – very public. Above all, Glover objected to what he saw as the politicisation of training analyses. He then applied to join the Swiss Society. However, Jones fought for five years to prevent him becoming a member. What’s more, at the time of his resignation, Glover had been secretary of the International Psychoanalytic Association. Jones declared that the position is vacant and appoints Anna Freud as Glover’s successor.”

“Jones stepped down as president of the IPA in 1949. Only then was Glover appointed to the Swiss Society. (Originally, before she was given her own training programme within the BPS, Anna Freud had joined Glover in applying for Swiss membership.) As soon as Glover was accepted by the Swiss Society, he became the Chairman of the IPA’s Committee of Research and his standing started to rise again.”

So what was it about Glover that had caught Roazen’s imagination? “I interviewed him in the 1960s and he struck me as unusually amiable. At that time, no one in the USA knew of the differences between the Kleinians and the Freudians – everyone was at Anna Freud’s feet.... I had been talking to Geoffrey Gorer, who was a scholar and friend of George Orwell, the Sitwells and W. H. Auden. He mentioned that Glover had had a bad deal – and, in Gorer’s opinion, mavericks made the best interviewees. I met Glover several times. No one else was talking to him; he wasn’t a figure of great interest – despite his achievements.”

In Roazen’s view, Glover made a political miscalculation: “He was hoist with his own pétard – victimised by his own intolerance.” Roazen believes that Glover challenged Klein’s ideas because he felt



that they ran counter to accepted Freudian thinking – and that the safest way to gain in standing in the British psychoanalytic community was to adhere to the ‘party line’. When Viennese analysts came to London at the start of the Second World War, he thought that he could count on their support by defending conventional Freudian theory. However, many of them left the UK for the States and interest in Kleinian thinking was growing.

Sadly, Roazen was unable to gain any information about Glover from his own papers: they were all destroyed; no one even tried to protect them. Now, Glover is probably best remembered for his work with criminals – primarily through his prominent role as head of the Institute for the Scientific Study and Treatment of Delinquency (ISTD). In 1933, the ISTD launched its ‘Psychopathic Clinic’ – later to become the Portman Clinic.

So, how did Roazen become a global authority on the history of psychoanalysis? He graduated from Harvard in 1958 Magna cum Laude in Government and then spent a year as a graduate student in Political Science at the University of Chicago (where Bruno Bettelheim was a presence). There followed a year at Magdalen College, Oxford, studying Politics. “Do you know?” said Roazen, “When I was at Oxford, the college library didn’t have anything by Freud.” While Magdalen College’s library may have ‘overlooked’ Freud, Roazen benefited from being taught by Isaiah Berlin, one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century. In 1958, Berlin gave his famous inaugural lecture, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’; his notion of ‘positive freedom’ had the implication that psychotherapeutic emancipation could be an invitation to tyranny. Finally, Roazen returned to Harvard (where Erik Erikson was on the staff) for his PhD.

Roazen is fascinated by intellectual history: “There’s so much to talk about in the history of ideas. I was originally interested by the cultural differences between US and UK psychoanalysis. Gradually, that interest

broadened to include Argentina, Japan, Germany, China.... There’s still so much to study. Boris Yeltsin made psychoanalysis part of the university system; yet Russian interest in the area began long before then. In fact, before the First World War, an eighth of the members of the IPA were Russian.... One of Stalin’s sons went to an experimental school that drew on psychoanalytic ideas. By the end of the 1920s, Stalin had closed it down.”

Roazen is full of fascinating anecdotes. Speaking of A. A. Brill, a pre World War I pioneer of US psychoanalysis who predated the arrival of the Europeans, he describes how one patient, Mabel Dodge, could not afford session fees and paid him with original papers by D. H. Lawrence. (Another celebrated novelist, Theodore Dreiser, was an acquaintance of Brill’s.)

A prolific writer, Roazen’s books provide a fascinating insight into the politics of psychoanalysis. Naturally, Freud features large (*Freud. Political and Social Thought; Brother Animal: The Story of Freud and Tausk; Freud and his Followers; Encountering Freud: The Politics and Histories of Psychoanalysis; Meeting Freud’s Family; How Freud Worked: First-Accounts of Patients*). So too do other eminent thinkers in the field: Erikson, Deutsch and Canada’s King. As well as the work on Glover, three forthcoming titles include *Political Theory and the Psychology of the Unconscious: Mill, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Freud, Fromm, Bettelheim and Erikson, The Hystiography of Psychoanalysis and Controversies in Psychoanalysis*.

I wondered which subject Roazen planned to tackle next. “Oh, I’m a bit reluctant to say anything about that,” he replied. “It raises expectations. There’s all sorts of things that I’m looking into, but I’m not sure I want to say what’s next.”

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