

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Jessica Benjamin

*Interviewed by Leeat Granek
New York City, NY
July 7, 2006*

When citing this interview, please use the following citation:

Benjamin, J. (2006, July, 7). Interview by L. Granek [Video Recording]. Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History and Online Archive Project. New York, NY.

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JB: Jessica Benjamin, Interview Subject

LG: Leeat Granek, Interviewer

LG: How did you first develop a feminist identity?

JB: Well actually, before I was involved in feminism, I was politically pretty active as a young kid in the Civil Rights movement, I used to go picket Woolworth's when my friends and I would be in New York; you know because the lunch counters were segregated and then, when I went to college, I was involved in SES community organizing, and then the anti-war movement. In my senior year at the University of Wisconsin, the women in the anti-war movement got together and started talking about whether there was something else that we could do since we weren't resisting the draft and most of the people there were extremely afraid of the idea that we actually had something in particular to think about as women.

A few of us started reading *The Second Sex* and became really fired up early on and so basically, we had one of the first women's groups ever. Then I went and studied in Germany where people were even more recalcitrant and more frightened at the idea that we would have some kind of special identity of our own. That changed the question of how I got there, I think it's a logical place to get to when you are dealing with oppression, you start to think about what are the sources of oppression.

I also had very specific interests from the time I was in college. I had a specific interest in psychoanalysis, so my interest in that was early on because I was reading Marcuse and the Frankfurt School. I was very interested in the relationship between psychoanalysis and political and social theory. The whole notion of the critique of patriarchy and the understanding of how oppression works psychologically, how domination works psychologically, was already in my mind at the time that we started this women's group and when we started to read de Beauvoir.

So for me all these things came together and I can actually remember formulating thoughts that I thought were totally outrageous and bizarre in my senior year of college that you can actually see in *The Bonds of Love*. They were just glimmers, they were just you know, hints. I got a whole idea about binary oppositions and how masculinity and femininity were integrated into this system of binary oppositions and so on. It started really early for me. I was you know 20, 21, and when I got there, coming from a radical family background, it was just a logical place for me to go.

LG: Were you involved in any sort of feminist activities?

JB: Oh yeah, I did tons of stuff, I mean, just too numerous to mention.

LG: Are there a few of them that stand out in your mind that are significant?

JB: A lot of what we did early on was really consciousness-raising. I was involved in the movement to legalize abortion and that was a big thing when I was in Germany. When I came back to the States and for a while I lived in New Haven, I was involved with the New Haven Women's Liberation which was an amazing organization, because it was a 'town gown' organization. It had academic women and very non-intellectual women from working-class New Haven. People came up with incredible projects that started, these self help projects, but as we discovered a few years ago when we met again, they really blossomed into real organizations. For instance, the woman who started a credit union there is now someone who has been involved in Wall Street for many years and started an organization in New York to help minority women enter the finance world. So people felt empowered. They started small, they did self-help things and then they became much more active in the professional world and took this sort of motivation to help other people and expand what women were able to do into that world. They did things in the media, they did things in psychology, many things that were impressive, but really it grew out of consciousness-raising. It grew out of the empowerment that people experience not by looking at this as a problem from the outside, but by acknowledging the way that they themselves were personally affected.

Recently when I was asked not too long ago, as I was giving a talk about reconciliation and acknowledgment between Israelis and Palestinians in East Jerusalem, someone asked me how did I see things changing? I said that my experience with the broadest possible change and the deepest change came from the feminist movement - from people doing their own personal consciousness-raising as a group and recognizing the link between their own individual experience and the social experience. I think this was met with skepticism, but actually much more recently, just a couple of weeks ago, I was at a workshop given by Homodobo Zekela, who was in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. She is an African woman who is a psychologist but a woman who is also deeply involved with the traditions of black South Africa and her perspective was exactly that: That in order to create transformation in relationships, social domination and perpetrator/victims, you really have to change the public space to be more intimate. I said to her that I thought this was a really great advance, because in feminism we said that the personal is political, but both the personal and the political were still overshadowed by very moralistic notions of who is the perpetrator and who is the victim. Her work and the reconciliation work is to make this intensely personal experience of what is political and social available to people in order to forgive and reconcile by understanding, not by judging. It's very powerful, amazingly powerful.

LG: And you see this as...?

JB: I see that as being a, I don't want to say it grew out of feminism, but I think it's interesting that the foremost formulator of this is a woman and that she understands the

need to link up the personal individual experience and the social experience and believes that that link is really what is transformational. I think that's what we learned in the feminist movement.

LG: Ok, I read the interview that you recommended I read, and in it you talk a lot about your identity as a Jewish woman, your identity as a feminist, your identity as a psychoanalyst. How are these connected, or have they, I should ask first, intersected in your work? In your research?

JB: Well this might be too general a question because it's like saying how did who I am make me think what I think [Laughs]. It might be too general, I think maybe what I just told you answers that question.

LG: Ok, ok, so you began your graduate work in sociology and then you...

JB: Not really in sociology but in social theory. I was never really involved in sociology as an empirical practice.

LG: Ok I was under the impression, it was difficult for me to write some of these questions because I didn't have your updated CV, so I got a lot of information from the interview that I read and in it you talk about doing your PhD in sociology and then ...???

JB: Yes, but I'm explaining that when you say sociology it's misleading to some degree because my interest wasn't ever in empirical sociology, it was in social theory, so I'm just explaining that's what I worked on.

LG: Ok.

JB: It's not that you are under a misimpression. Technically, the department I was in was called sociology.

LG: And was the social theory that you were doing related to psychology?

JB: Yeah, sure, oh yes, definitely doing a PhDs in psychology was an option.

LG: So how did that direction, that background, influence your ideas?

JB: My ideas influenced my choosing that field of study, that's what I was trying to explain earlier, my interest was in the understanding of social relations of domination. As I said, reading people like, Marcuse but also de Beauvoir, helped me to formulate my interests when I was already an undergraduate and I had the good luck to be in a place, the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where that kind of thinking and that kind of European theoretical tradition was very available. I went from that to Frankfurt where I studied and had a chance to absorb even more of that tradition. By the time I went for my degree at NYU, I was really working off what I had already learned in the European social theory tradition and as I said, that tradition integrated psychoanalysis into its

perspective. For me those things all went together and I was able to find some people at NYU who were tolerant of that interdisciplinary perspective, which was not the case in most universities. I didn't go into psychology because the work being done in psychology at that time, again except for a very few places, was much to do with behavior and much too influenced by the quantitative positivistic, tradition to be of interest to me. So what I did do was that at the end of my graduate studies, I discovered the work of Dan Stern and I discovered the work of infancy researchers and I moved over into psychology by studying that work and by participating in research with Beatrice Beebe. So, I was able to work into the part of psychology world that was involved in attachment research, just more qualitatively interesting research, but there was certainly quantitative evaluation data, the real basis of the data. And it was qualitative, it was narrative, it was observational.

LG: And do you recall what it was that drew you to do research in social theory?

JB: I told you I was always interested in psychoanalysis, I was always interested in the psychological processes and the individual personal processes by which people participate in social relations. It was very logical for me to go into infancy research, because that's where attachment theory and the idea of the basically social nature of the human being was being anchored. It wasn't really anchored in psychoanalysis well enough at that time, except for a small part of the psychoanalytic world that was devoted to object relations theory which at that time was not so popular. So the place from which the perspective that human beings are fundamentally social emanated was the work of infancy researchers and attachment researchers and so the question of what drew me there, is that I was interested in recognition and the work of Dan Stern was the first work that I saw that specifically focused on the process of recognition, although it turns out that Lewis Sander also contributed a lot. But I hadn't discovered him yet. So it was really through this frame by frame analysis, mother infant interaction research that I could see the fundamental assumptions that I made about how human beings worked. I could see it expressed in action.

LG: In your view what is it that makes, you've talked about some of this already, so maybe you want to expand, what is that makes psychoanalysis explicitly feminist? Either in your research or in your work?

JB: I think the word research is an incorrect word for me. I don't do research, right? That's not what I do, but go ahead. So what is that we are trying to understand here?

LG: What is it that you do then?

JB: I think I read, I observe, I wouldn't say I do research. Research means to me that you participate in a structured....

LG: That's not what I mean when I say research... I do history and theory of psychology, I don't do empirical research, but I still consider it research. So please, ok, tell me what it is you write...

JB: I think, I write theory, and my theory is very informed by my clinical practice but I don't see clinical practice as research, clinical practice is practice.

LG: So when you are writing theory or when you are working in the clinic, what is it that makes it explicitly feminist?

JB: Yeah, ok, let me see, explicitly feminist. I'm having trouble knowing how to answer that without giving you like a whole essay on that. I've already written about intersubjectivity and relationships between intersubjectivity and feminism, I've written lots of those and I don't know that I can really repeat them as well as I wrote them. But, I'll try to give you a short version. The short version has to do with the idea that I think I contributed most to, which is the idea that really was first expressed in writing in the form that's close to, how I think about it, by Dorothy Dinnerstein and that it's the central idea of my work. It's what I brought it into the psychoanalytic world, and that's the idea that the mother, the first caregiver of children, is herself a subject, so therefore, the whole psychoanalytic conceptualization of subject and object where the child is in a way the subject, and the mother is the love object, that that idea misses the point that the love object is also another subject and that on the one side we have to understand the mother as a person with her own subjectivity, and on the other side we have to ask what makes it possible for a child to actually perceive another human as an equal-like subject. So I suppose the most deeply feminist part of my project was to show that thinking in terms of subject and object, thinking in terms of the mother in some sense as a function or a caregiver rather than as an equivalent center of human subjectivity distorts our whole theory.

Now this basic position sort of rippled out and I think became broadly accepted so as not to really need restating by me or anyone else. The next most radical thought, I suppose in some ways for psychoanalysis a more central thought, was that the analyst is also a subject and that, therefore, there are two subjects in the room when an analyst and patient are together. It's the interplay of their subjectivities that is going to create a certain kind of relation. Now you could see how having that view is very different if you recognize the subjectivity of women as being equal to that of men, right, that's going to give you a very different take than if you don't, because what constitutes a subjectivity will be seen as very different if your model of subjectivity is still that of the masculine subject. So for instance what did it mean to be the one who knows, well the subject knows, so the analyst was the subject who knew. This was something that Lacan says. Why is this such a problem? Because what kind of knowing was the whole model of Western, social, political and the other pragmatic thought? It was the knowing of objects, it was the knowing of things that you controlled, and that mastered. This was my first interest in critical theory, my critique of mastery, the critique of the domination of things, not just one group of people over another group of people, but really the whole attitude of domination.

So, willy nilly, you might say if the analyst is the subject who knows, and the patient is the object who is known, you don't have an intersubjective theory. If you reverse that and

you become focused on the analyst as the giver of empathy as say self-psychology does, then you also have the reversal whereby the patient is the subject and the analyst is somehow a function, a giver of something, a source, a supplier, a source of goodness. So the patient is in control in the way the child is seen as in control, the male child of course is in control of the mother in conventional theory. Now the giver is an object, or the source of goodness isn't really under control and that's always a real source of frustration for the power organized subject, right? That leads to real dilemmas, if you have a traditional male subject where you can be in control by knowing and possessing the object, but if the object is really an independent source of goodness, you can't really control it fully, then what do you have, you have narcissistic rage, you have no solution.

So what is your solution to this dilemma? How are you going to get the subject into the world where there are two subjects and where each person can be an object as well as a subject of desire, where each person has something in effect that the other person wants, namely the ability to bestow recognition to confer beingness through their response, so each person really needs the other. How are you going to move it into that? Well in a sense psychoanalysis is not about our already being there, psychoanalysis is about our trying to find our way there in a human relationship that in some ways resembles or recreates the situation of early parenting, where the child goes through these developmental steps, but in some sense also as an adult relation focused on the specific areas of damage, rather than just the opportunity to create something new.

So given all of that, the question of the entwining of feminism with say intersubjective analysis is almost, it's almost from my point of view, is that feminism is the silent underpinning of the intersubjective point of view even if it's not recognized as such. But it's not necessary from where I sit to actually explicitly argue or bring in, you know, feminist thought to one's day-to-day practice, it's not necessarily going to be the thing that the other person wants to experience right at this moment.

LG: Your ontological view?

JB: Yes, your ontological view. It's part of the air that you are breathing in the room whether or not it's not really in awareness.

LG: Ok, what publication would you say you are most proud of and why?

JB: I don't know, I don't know if I think that way. I mean look, the *Bonds of Love* is a very popular book compared to my other writings because it's more accessible and it's the initial statement of what I had to say and I'm very proud of that, but it's also not my most recent. It's my earliest work in a way and I'm very proud I was able to do that at the time that I did. I think there are a lot of assumptions that are in there that just migrated into the world in such a way that it's very often not cited for the reason that people just take these ideas for granted. And I don't think I was the only one who had some of these ideas, some of these ideas were really just part of the flesh and blood of theoretical feminism at that time and so it's really hard to say whose ideas they were. They are very powerful ideas, as I said, from Dorothy Dinnerstein that went into my work that I

probably didn't even credit enough because when I read her, she just kind of went into my bloodstream. But I really do see her as the foremother of so many important ideas. I'm very grateful to her. I also learned a lot from Nancy Chodorow, I learned a lot from de Beauvoir as I said, so I feel like my work was you know, my own peculiar synthesis of all of that. Plus my reading of Hegel and of Winnicott. So I'm very happy that I was able to bring all of those different things together and I'm still working, so I don't know what I'll be the most proud of.

LG: Ok, I was going to ask you which publication you feel has had the most impact but...

JB: Well I'm sure that's had the most impact, but in the clinical world I think what's having an impact now is the writing I've had on the Third and I think that's having more of an impact at the moment. I'm not sure how much impact my work on gender has had, probably not as much as I'd like it to have had. And the thing that I'm most, shall we say, proud of in terms of gender theory has had very little exposure because my paper was rejected by the International... the American reviewers couldn't understand it. And in that paper, which is also the middle chapter of my book, *Shadow of the Other*, that really encapsulates an idea that I'm very attached to and think is very important. As a feminist revision of Freud, that's the idea of the daughter position, the idea of what Freud describes as the Oedipus complex is actually a way of analyzing how the boy maneuvers in his mind the girl into holding the position of passivity, of being the receptacle or the container, because that position of passivity in relation to the mother is so frightening. It goes back to what I was saying before, the one who has what you need being uncontrollable, that's one of the fundamental ideas I developed early on in my work, that women can't control the object of our desire or our need, that dependency is so frightening.

So the idea that I developed that I'm most proud of, that I think in some ways was unique to me, was the idea that although building on the work of Horney, was the idea that the whole position that Freud constructs for the girl is the kind of daughter position in which the father who in his mind is essentially the mind of the Oedipal boy sees the daughter as the container of all the passivity and receptivity that he would like his mother to have had, but with all the controllability that he would have liked his mother to have and that's how we get those hysterical daughters that Freud describes. So that argument is in my paper *The Riddle of Sex* - that's a piece of my work that hasn't gotten out there in the way that I would have liked. I think it's a problem because I think people read, tend to read your first book, like people tend to read the *Bonds of Love* and they don't tend to read the third book as carefully. My third book has sold about 1/100th of the copies of my first book, but the real theoretical innovation in gender theory is in my third book, in this idea of the daughter position.

LG: You mentioned some of your mentors. Would you like to talk a little bit about your relationships with those women? Or was it just through their writing that you were being mentored? Were you mentored by women?

JB: By other women? No. No, I don't think so. I'm a bit of mentor-less person. I think that the most influential person in my way of being an analyst and my intellectual life as related to psychoanalysis was Emmanuel Gent who was my first analyst. He was certainly a very generous man who had a very positive relation to the daughters independence of mind. So he was very supportive of all the work that I did and he was a very wise man and a very spiritually evolved person who was quite interested in more hermetic ideas, but he was also the person who introduced me to Winnicott. His idea of surrender was very important for me and actually my ideas about sadomasochism drew heavily on what he taught me.

LG: Are you a mentor for other analysts?

JB: Well I have students, I have supervisees, I guess so. I hope so.

LG: Do you have a teaching philosophy?

JB: No not really, I mean I guess so, implicitly. My teaching philosophy is that, here I'm quoting Sullivan 'we are all more simply human than otherwise'. My teaching philosophy is that unless we are tremendously honest about our own way of being, we can't understand, we can't create a safe enough environment to understand what is going on between analyst and patient. My focus is on the interpersonal safety of the supervisory relationship or the teaching relationship, so that we can have a level of candidness and awareness of our own areas of pain and disassociation and how our own pain and disassociation are part of our work. So that's maybe my teaching philosophy. When I supervise, for instance, when I consult with people, I tend to look for the area where, I look for the point in the session where the therapist or the analyst disassociates and that's usually the nub of the case.

LG: Where they...?

JB: When we look at the point where the therapist or the analyst disassociates, that is usually the nub of the case. For instance the analyst is going for something like, they are having a sense of impatience which is really a disassociation from something really much more horrible feeling that the patient is having and both people are conspiring to avoid, that would be an example.

LG: Ok and you would do that in a supervisory...?

JB: That's how I approach the supervisory relationship, by assuming that the real key to where the problem lies is where we have the problem, its not going to be always where the patient's problem is.

LG: I'm just going to ask a few more questions, I want to be respectful of your time. What would you like to see happening in the field of psychoanalysis in terms of the research, or, I'm sorry, the writing, that you do.

JB: Oh it's ok, you can say research! Well what I've written about most recently and as I said this is sort of my most important clinical work to date, I'd like to see the psychoanalytic world have some of the level of personal honesty and vulnerability that you see in some of the more un-theoretical modalities. Psychoanalysis is very intellectual, some of the less intellectual or anti- intellectual therapy modalities are much more experience-based. But even things like group analysis which is more practiced in Europe and Israel, and I've seen some of it, involves a level of personal vulnerability in the interactions that a lot of people can really talk about what they are experiencing and not just what they are thinking. So the split between thinking and feeling and thinking and practice is much more pronounced in those ways of working and as we try to work more on intersubjectivity and to use ourselves and use what we are experiencing in our session to communicate about that expectation. Our field should be changing so that people are able, not in a mushy way, but in a really thoughtful and disciplined way, nonetheless in a very personal and emotional way, to share experiences that are more vulnerable for us and feel safe in doing that and not feel that other people are going to jump down your throat and say obvious things that anyone with half a brain can think of but really aren't so germane except to show that your clever.

So if people much more respectfully allow the emergence of personal vulnerability and this goes back to what I was saying about Homodobo Zekela -- because she has a philosophy about making public spaces intimate, that if people were able to do that, if we were able to create a much safer public space in the psychoanalytic world, I think it would be energizing. I think it would allow younger people to come in and be more active, it's not about giving up our intellectual discipline, but in some ways subordinating the critical faculty to a larger goal. And what's the larger goal? The larger goal is to create an intersubjective space that fosters emergence, that fosters being unexpected, that allows the new, or the surprising to come forth. How does that happen? Not by everyone sitting there with their critical categories, you know, not jumping on what the last person says, although I don't want to diminish the value of being able to think critically. I think one of the reasons people are so afraid of thinking critically is because it's so split off from the emotional function.

LG:... and disembodied.

JB: Yeah right, the incarnate world. So I think that if we stop overcoming that split by making a safer, an interpersonal safety, in the psychoanalytic world, we'll actually generate a lot more positive feeling and energy in psychoanalysis. And that includes of course, what I said in my own work, acknowledgment of the ways in which we aren't, we don't understand the other, we do say things that come from the critical brain because we are perhaps less able to contain and hold more painful feelings and acknowledging that's who we are as human beings and that's what we are going to do a lot of the time. It makes it easier for us to go on and to repair the ruptures that inevitably come into being. So it's the repair of those kinds of ruptures that would be sped up and facilitated by our much more opening acknowledgment of our vulnerability and our difficulty with vulnerability. So that's what I would most like to see happening.

LG: What advice would you give a feminist woman working in the field of psychoanalysis now?

JB: Well I guess this goes all the way back to my first answer and what I just said which is if the feminist movement really worked through people understanding our own vulnerable human subjectivity then part of what we have to bring in as feminists is that understanding that feminism empowers women. It makes them feel like they can be agents, but part of their agency can consist in the fact that they don't need to repudiate their identification with those who suffer, with those who have been victimized, they can feel that identification in a powerful way without it meaning that they reduce themselves to helplessness. So in the feminist model if you have people going around the room speaking about things that they suffered, the purpose of that ideally is not to create a victim identity, the purpose of that ideally is to feel that there are others who have gone through the same thing and it's not so shameful and necessarily disempowering to speak the truth about your suffering. That actually speaking the truth about your suffering can be a source of true moral and ethical power and that's the link I was trying to make between the Truth and Reconciliation process and the feminist process. That the idea of speaking truth to power is not just an idea of saying, you up there who run things, you've done this bad thing, and you've done this bad thing, that's in a way a very external position that keeps you in the victim place. You think that you're not in a victim place because you are expressing your outrage and saying 'see how bad you are' but actually you are in a victim place, and you're in a much less victimized place if you are able to say, you up there in power, you see the pain that you are causing us the people, you see our pain, well if you don't see our pain, let us tell you about our pain, we are going to speak to you about our pain and in speaking about our pain we are going to recover our dignity and we are hopefully going to cause you to overcome your disassociation and be aware of what you're doing, what the real meaning of what you've done is.

So that idea of speaking of truth presumes that the other, no matter how powerful, has some human part that is able to respond to our pain and that our pain is not shameful. So I think that there many ways in which that is the feminist position.

[Video Tape 1 Ends]

JB:.... Way of understanding resistance to domination, let's say and the psychological work that we've done in the psychotherapy/psychoanalytic world is immensely helpful, in getting us through the ins and outs of this more general position that I've just expressed. It's one thing to talk about moving beyond victimhood; it's another thing to be aware of all the subtle ways that we keep moving back into positions of helplessness. That knowledge that we've acquired over our many decades of practice is quite useful, but where I think feminism comes in is that I think feminism broke down that subject/object relation where some people were the helpers and the givers and the providers of care and other people were the needy, suffering, abject masses out there who we had to help or save. I think we broke that down. I think we said we have to save ourselves and I think every relationship in which a person says, I'm saving myself by saving you and I'm saving you by saving myself, every time that you are able to make that work, it's not so

easy all the time, but every time you are able to make that work, you are creating strengths in both people and you are sort of opening up new possibilities.

So by saying in having compassion for you I'm really helping myself, and I'm helping my own attitude of compassion towards myself, rather than saying in having compassion for you, I'm the good guy who is the giver. That's a very important distinction that I think feminism could help us with. Feminism was about that. Now sometimes feminism wasn't about that, it was about - let's all be omnipotent mothers and talk about how much power we have because we are the ones who give – and that can become very problematic. Nietzsche of course shows how much will to power there could be in goodness and in Christianity, in moral rectitude and that's always been the dark side of feminism. The dark side of feminism is the side that wants to be good and wants to be powerful by doing good or being good, either by being good as the victim who is facing the bad ones who oppress us or being good by being the all-giving mothers, and that's the dark side of feminism. Victimhood or omnipotent motherhood, these are dark sides. So one thing a feminist psychology person could do is get real clear on our dark side. And that's where you know the split between thinking and feeling is important to 'lift up' as the Germans would say to transcend, because if we don't transcend that, we can go into that unthinking place and before we know it, all of those tricky things like trying to be powerful by being good can sneak back in. The critique of the will to power and other gifts that we have from misogynist people like Nietzsche, should not be dismissed [Laughs].

LG: I'm aware of the time, I'm going to skip all the other questions and just ask you if there is anything else that I haven't had a chance to ask you about or mentioned that you feel is important for me to know about yourself, about your career, about psychoanalysis, about theory that you do, the work that you do?

JB: Well if there is something else that you really want to ask you should do it. But here's what I'll say about me. I feel that the reason that I became a psychoanalyst is because I was looking for personal healing and integration. But specifically in terms of being an intellectual, being a caregiver, being a clinician, being a political activist, the parts that aren't just about my own personal healing, but also extend to working and doing for others, being with others, that for me, I'm looking all the time to find a way to be more integrated and to have what I say and what I do go together. That sort of goes together with my idea of the moral third. That I'm looking for a way to actually practice what I preach and preach what I practice. So when I look at my practice and see that there are lots of things that I'm not able to do - and this certainly happened when I was in training - I just saw that there were all these ways of being that I couldn't live up to and then I had to ask myself, well what's with these ideals? What about all these ideals of neutrality? How come I'm not living up to them?

So that's one side of the picture, and the other side of the picture is what about, so one side is, so let me try to bring these ideals back down into reality. Let me go down into the microbial level and see where an ideal can actually fit and make sense and where it's just an abstraction that is persecuting us and I really have been very active in trying to

dissolve persecutory ideals. But the other side of it is that I do want to be able to practice some of what I preach, so how am I going to be able to do that? How am I really going to be personally integrated with what I believe is right or true? And what I'm working on, what I consider to be the biggest obstacle to doing what is right and true, is that we don't really deeply enough believe that it is right and true. Deep in our hearts we don't believe we are going to overcome, deep in our hearts we have fear, we don't know how to overcome that fear, because we don't have enough faith in the power of what human beings can do together to overcome the fear. We still don't have enough faith in that. It's a tremendously different project to strengthen our faith by actually acting on behalf of that faith as if it were true. So when we go back to the golden rule, do unto others, well we don't do it. Because we don't really believe that it will work, for a variety of reasons that as psychoanalysts we understand, but let's go beyond that just for a moment. The problem is not only that I can say 'Oh I don't do that because this happened to me and I had this trauma and I have this conflict.' It's also that we're not trying to create a public collective mentality that says it's really the case we should do unto others as we have others do unto us. It's no joke, you actually do feel better when you act that way, you actually like yourself better, you actually believe more in love if you are a loving person, so there is some way we haven't quite gotten this on board. I feel, in our world and I would like to see it, as a world as a whole I mean, God knows, but I mean even within our own little world.

LG: Can some of those things be found in religion?

JB: Yeah sure, I'm very influenced by religion. I think that you know psychoanalysis is an extension of religious impulse in human beings in many ways and that it is a secular religion. That's how it was used and that's how it was developed and some people have been very aware of that. But there are religions that are basically about, I mean there are religious attitudes that are about trying to separate out the good from the bad and there are religious attitudes that are about trying to integrate. What I'm saying is that in many ways, psychoanalysis came out of rationalist, enlightened tradition that for good reasons accepted that there would always be this gulf between the idea and the reality, the thought and the deed and at the same time psychoanalysis was about overcoming the gulf between the thought and deed in the sense that yes, we accept many unconscious thoughts and try to make a space for them, that will be apart from the deed. But we also thought that doing this and becoming more conscious would make our deeds different. So the question is what do we need to become conscious of to make our deeds different? Traditional psychoanalysis thought we needed to become conscious of all the dark parts of ourselves so that we won't act them out. It was much less focused on the idea that we need to become conscious of the deeply loving, positive, empathic, giving parts of our nature so that we would act them out. Well that's an imbalance, and I'm not trying to repudiate the old part of psychoanalysis that said you know 'let's get down in there with the dark side part of our nature and be aware of it', but what's the point of doing that if we are not also aware that we are also scared by the positive, loving, light side of our nature, people aren't just scared of the dark, they are also scared of the light.

LG: I think that ties in well with what you said about earlier about personal vulnerability and tolerance for being loving and positive and the light....

JB: Immense tolerance of vulnerability, you are right. So we should be working on that and I'm trying to work - and I'm not saying that I will succeed - but I'm aware that it's a project that I'd like to devote myself to.

LG: One more question if I may. This is a question that I've asked everyone that I've interviewed, a sort of contemporary woman dilemma- how do you balance your personal life with your professional life?

JB: Well it depends on what phase of your personal life you are in. For instance when I had little kids, it was one kind of thing and it was really about time. Now it's also about what I was just saying to you, how do I create a more integrated way of bringing my personal self into my work that allows me to use the wisdom and the energy of being old, because I don't have the energy of being young. When it was more about the energies of being young and balancing that, I think that you know it was about motherhood and it was about the fact that I didn't feel as guilty as some people about working when I had little kids. My mother worked and that was something that I appreciated about my mother although she was also neglectful and I tried to, you know, overcome that. But I valued the fact that she was a model for me. I saw her as a competent person in the world. I remember asking my younger son about how he felt. I was working at some point, did he wish, we were talking about these mothers that stayed at home all the time, I said did he wish I was there, would he like me to be like that? And he said something like, 'no mom! Of course not, I wouldn't want you to be here like bored all day while I'm at school. I'm glad you have something good to do'. I mean he was pretty young when he said this. And I thought, what was the point of that? The point was that he was seeing me as someone he could identify with, he wasn't speaking from the position of 'yes, I need you to be there for me because otherwise I'm anxious'. He was speaking from the position of you're a human subject who I identify with and if I put myself in your shoes, I wouldn't want you to be like that. So he had the identification equality thing down. Which also led him to be able to challenge my authority all the time when he wanted to.

But it's kind of like from my point of view, one of those most interesting things about balancing being a mother and doing all the work that I did was that I thought I was giving my kids an opportunity to learn that they could give as well as take, that they could give recognition as well as receive it. I think that sometimes they are the ones who really know me best and know what's good about me and actually even though they don't know all the ins and outs of the work that I do, they kind of appreciate what I do. Obviously when you are a psychoanalyst, your work really informs how you are as a person in intimate relations so there's that. But they actually appreciate the fact that I struggle to do certain kinds of work in the world that, I do healing work in the world and when I wrote this letter about my experiences in Gaza last year and sent it around to people I know, my older son read it and he told me how inspired he was and that it made him feel more dedicated to healing the world in his own way, through music, that's his way, not my way.

So I really feel as though we should always know that if we are acting with integrity, we can struggle to bring these things together, then all of our personal loving relations will be informed by what we do and all of what we do can be informed by our personal love. By our struggle to overcome our difficulties in our personal life and work in life. So even when our personal relations have a great deal of pain and struggle in them, that's not a bad thing. We're lucky in this field, but I think in a certain way, everywhere, you plow that baggage into your work, you plow your knowledge and suffering and difficulties into your work. So I think being aware of that is the best way to make your personal world more political and for it to come together.

LG: Thank you so much.

JB: It was a pleasure.

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