

Prehending Cathexis: Freud Is/Not Your Daddy, or  
Helping Relationality Go Social

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Popular media depictions of mental health service (*Scorpion, Lie to Me, Frasier, Arrested Development*) often portray psychoanalytic professionals as unempathetic, narcissistic, and comically out of touch with human feelings, while emotional labor is performed by intuitive nurturers who take on (often maternal) roles without training or remuneration. The implication is a forced choice—a cold analytic Papa versus a warm feminine feeling—that is also accompanied by a deep mistrust of classical theories of psychoanalysis. Unfortunately, a similar kind of forced choice and mistrust might be indicated within the field of affect studies at large.

It is now commonplace to introduce affect theory as a diffuse but split field of inquiry: on the one hand, the causal nexus of prepersonal touching/acting and on the other hand, emotional intensities that produce social and political worlds. Touching versus touchy-feeling; what might be explorable as the difference between the relational and the social. This paper seeks to address this possible split by drawing attention to affective resources within the field of psychoanalysis. For example, *cathexis* is a quantity of affective charge drawn out as a vector from one body to another; a theory of pre-cognitive causality understood sometimes as quantity and sometimes as a specific quality that produces both the affections of bodies and structures of mind. The consulting room itself is a milieu of affective transformation toward integrated body/mind. Transference and counter-transference are pre-social forms of empathic contagion, an affective

extensivity between analyst and client that comprises the basic unit of psychoanalytic knowledge and insight. Through such a prosthetic extensivity, pre-cognitive relationality transforms into empathic sociality. Working up a dialogue between Brian Massumi, Stephen Shaviro and Freud, this paper seeks to defuse the daddy issues that contemporary media culture and theories of mediation seem to demonstrate in relation to psychoanalytic theory, in order to mutually resource intra- and interdisciplinary social/relational situations.