

Gold & It's Alloys

The Role of Psychoanalysis in the Age of Psychotherapy

Joann K. Turo

“The large scale application of our therapy will compel us to alloy the pure gold of analysis freely from the copper of direct suggestion... But what form this psychotherapy may take,... it's most effecting and most important ingredients will assuredly remain those borrowed from strict and un-tendentious psychoanalysis.” Freud (1919)

Over the past 50 years, there have been numerous journal references and panel presentations comparing psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy. The current thinking is that the differences between the two forms of therapy are on a continuum and recent research has focused on psychoanalytic process as the distinguishing criterion. A recently overheard discussion between an institute faculty member and a candidate who questioned “What is psychoanalytic process, elicited the answer, “You’ll know it when you see it.” I shall now attempt to answer that candidate’s question with the following construction based on my observations from personal analyses, supervisions, clinical work, and listening to numerous case presentations and analytic process of both candidates and members.

PSYCHOANALYTIC PROCESS

Referencing the *French* model of IPA Report of the Education Committee, (Wilson, 2007), I believe that central to analytic process are the following dynamic functions:

1. Free Association and Reciprocal Association
2. (Re)Construction, Memory & Nachtraeglichkeit
- 3 Introjective Identification
4. Negative Capability or Openness to Uncertainty and Surprise

All four of these components interact a “string quartet” synergy in the way that each instrument can be heard as both a unique voice and part of a harmonious group.

1) The Method of Free Association and the Analyzing Instrument

Freud used an exceptionally powerful and creative metaphor when he compared a telephone to a patient's unconscious transmission of a message to the analyst who receives it by adjusting himself to the transmitting microphone. Otto Isakower, an influential training analyst and faculty member at the New York Psychoanalytic during the 1950's and 60's expanded Freud's metaphor into the "analyzing instrument". Isakower's concept of the "analyzing instrument" (1992) describes a particular state of mind experienced by both analyst and analysand. One of Isakower's students, Zvi Lothane (1992, '93, & '97), has written extensively and eloquently about the analyzing instrument, which he has renamed reciprocal free association, where both analysand and analyst separately construct a process of free speaking and responsive listening in a "clinical duet" that involves varying degrees of regression similar to the kind of ego regression that occurs in artists during moments of creative activity. Lothane (1997) points out that in his work, "Freud was interpersonal from the beginning; he just didn't have a term for it". The present analyzing instrument is regarded as a multi-sensory channel that registers not only as a verbal acoustical system but also detects movement patterns and visual imagery. The analyst listening to the material as she listens to dreams may visualize what is being described as "seeing along" with the analysand. In this method the images are produced by the part of the analyst's unconscious that is identified with the unique conflicts of the patient. The unexpected visual image, which when communicated to the patient, usually reveals new material. . Understanding the meaning of such communications and their role in the process of empathic imaging are now more widely appreciated in contemporary psychoanalysis.

2) (Re)Construction, Memory and the Temporality of the Psychoanalytic Process

Another functional reciprocity in the complexity psychoanalytic process are the concepts of memory and temporality. Freud used the metaphor of archeology for reconstruction. Past and present debates abound as to whether the analytic process develops in the "here and now" of the transference or in the recovery of memories. An example of such a debate occurred

in 2003 in the series of exchanges between Harold Blum (2003) and Peter Fonagy (2003). At the center of their exchange is Fonagy's profound disagreement with Blum about the significance of memory recovery as necessary to therapeutic process. The vehicle for their exchange was Dr. Blum's clinical vignette of a female patient, deeply troubled by her hostility toward her baby, dreamed that her baby had died on her sibling's birthday. According to Blum, as a result his reconstruction of early sibling rivalry and death wishes displaced to the present onto her baby who now represented her brother as well as in the transference, where Blum represented an ambivalently loved mother, the patient resolved her hostility to her baby and to her husband. Fonagy's discussion focused on Blum's reconstruction as collusion with the patient's avoidance of her present depressive anxiety associated with the patient's hatred of her own baby and the roots of her self-hatred. Blum retorted that Fonagy's focus on the non-conscious of procedural memory rather than the dynamic unconscious devalues the influence and significance of the infantile unconscious and reflects the popular ahistorical perspective of contemporary psychoanalysis

What this debate misses in this either-or- binary stance, in antinomy form, about interpretation in the "here and now" of the transference OR in the historical roots of recovered memories and unconscious fantasies IS the genuine dialectics of psychoanalytic temporality. It was Lacan, in 1953, who brought the dialectics of analytic temporality to our attention in his focus on "Nachtraeglichkeit" or in French, "Après Coup" (Thoma & Cheshire, 1991). Psychoanalytic temporality is where the past influences the present in the form of unassimilated deferred action of memory in the repetition of the transference. And the present influences the past in a retroactive revision through interpretations which lead to new meaning within psychoanalytic process. From this perspective, one of the remarkable aspects of transference is that not only is the past active in the present, but the present can modify the past. As an analysand of mine recently expressed it "I feel that I am rewriting my history". Nachtraeglichkeit offers a cyclical view of time and memory which is in contrast to linear time. Past, present, and future

appear in psychic life not primarily as sequential events but as interacting modes of times which determine and shape each other. While all analysts are aware of the bidirectional movement of intrapsychic time and the function of screen memories, I am making the distinction that the unassimilated trauma in the present transference repetition and its interpretation leads to the retroactive revision of the past, and hence to possibilities of new meanings. Retroactive revision and deferred action of memory, the two aspects of “nachtraeglichkeit” usually operate in mutative synergy to overcome this binary dilemma (Turo & Wilson, Berlin IPA presentation, 2007). Nachtraeglichkeit illustrates the paradox of psychoanalytic temporality with the paradox of the transference in the process as both a repetition and a new creation. (Modell, 1990) (Perhaps a more contemporary metaphor to replace the archeological for reconstruction, would be architectural, and for temporality, a musical, as in the sonata form, to capture the back and forth complexity of this process.)

3) Introjective Identification in the Process

Again, reciprocal activity is noted in the process of transference interpretations and therapeutic action. In this process, the patient begins to understand aspects of her distorted reality by the analyst’s chiseling away of the transference distortions. Freud expressed this process, using a phrase from Leonardo da Vinci, *per via levare* as in sculpting, not *per via di porre* as in painting. In sculpting, the figure to be created appears by taking away from the material whereas in painting, by adding to the canvas. According to Hans Loewald, in his seminal 1960 paper, the patient, by revealing himself to the analyst, provides a rudiment of an image which the analyst has to focus in his mind and INTERNALIZE for safe keeping for the patient to whom the image is lost. The analyst must be able to regress within himself at a level of organization to which the patient is stuck. Psychoanalytic interpretations establish and make bridges between two minds linked to gain or regain meaning a result of this reciprocal activity. In this process of introjective identification, the analyst envisions and

holds for the patient the context that makes this linking possible (p.382) And through the interpretation of transference distortions, the analyst increasingly becomes available as a “new” object. It is important to note that the object is “not new as in the sense of not previously met, but the newness consists in the patient’s rediscovery of the early paths of development of object relations leading to new ways of relating and of being oneself.” (Loewald, p. 229).

4) Negative Capability or Tolerance for Uncertainty and Surprise

_____ Negative Capability, a concept Bion borrowed from the poet John Keats, means the analyst’s capacity to tolerate doubt or uncertainty. Bion saw the analyst’s mental life as central importance to the psychoanalytic process, and negative capability refers to the “powers of a flexible mind and a certain way of approaching the complexities of life” The psychoanalytic process comes to life when this negative capability opens up space for the unpredictable complexities of desire.(Kaplan 2006) With this analytic capability, the analyst places herself in the counter-transference position of not-knowing in order to listen to and to be surprised by the unknown. What is important for analytic process is that this negative capability, or listening position, can counteract the common tendency toward prematurely made or overzealous (re)constructions or transference interpretations, which seems to help to contain the analyst’s anxiety about uncertainty and binds the creative energy by the analyst’s premature intrusion into the clinical process which can only inhibit the free association of the patient.

Summary and Implications for Psychoanalytic Education:

To come full circle Freud’s metallurgical metaphor, we are currently in a cultural reality where the role of psychoanalysis is often confused with its alloys of different psychoanalytically expressive psychotherapies. As the metallurgist knows, many alloys of gold are stronger than gold itself. Freud used the metallurgical metaphor to compare the process of psychoanalysis to chemical analysis, and we can only assume he was aware of the compound, ferrous sulfide, or iron pyrite, better known as “fool’s gold.”

Thus, while other forms of therapy may at different times manifest some of the criteria of psychoanalytic process and may be more successful than psychoanalysis for particular patients, it is the synergy of these criteria I have described that more often than not distinguishes psychoanalysis from the other therapies. The fetishistic concern about frequency and the use of couch fall aside when this psychoanalytic process is evident. Increased frequency and the use of the couch for inducing reverie usually but not necessarily enhances the process. The study of psychoanalytic process needs to be a central topic in psychoanalytic education as does the study of psychotherapy theory and practice and research. As a result, candidates will learn how to benefit the patient as to which modality of treatment is appropriate. In conclusion, another motivation for this “Lacanian-like -15-minute presentation of a “gold standard” is to convey my conviction of the importance of deep immersion in the psychoanalytic process through personal analysis and supervisions in order for candidates to be optimally prepared for the practice of psychotherapy and/or psychoanalysis. As in the profession of art where classical drawing is recommended as part of an artist’s training, the parallel would apply for the candidates in the mental health professions in the art of clinical practice within the science of psychoanalysis.

REFERENCES

- Balter, L., Lothane, Z., & Spencer, J.H. (1980). On the analyzing instrument. *Psychoanalytic Quart.* 49: 474 – 504.
- Blum, H. (2003). Psychoanalytic controversies: Repression, transference and reconstruction. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 497 – 513

- Freud, S. (1919). Lines of advance in the path of psychoanalysis. *Standard Edition*, 17: 157-184.
- Isakower, O. (1992). Preliminary Report on the Analyzing Instrument. *Psychoanal. Forum*, 16: 164-199
- Isakower, O. (1992). The analyzing instrument: Further thoughts. *J. Clin. Psychoanal.*, 1: 200-203.
- Kaplan, L.J. (2006). *Cultures of Fetishism*. New York, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.
- Loeward, H.W. (1960). 'Therapeutic action of psychoanalysis' in *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (1980) New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Loeward, H.W. (1977). 'Reflections on the analytic process' in *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (1980) New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Lothane, Z. (1994). The analyzing instrument and reciprocal free association. *J. Clin. Psychoanal.* 3: 63-86
- Lothane, Z. (1997). Freud and the interpersonal. *Internat. Forum of psychoanal.* 6: 175-184.
- Modell, A.H. (1990). *Other Times, Other Realities Toward a Theory of Psychoanalytic Treatment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- N. (1991). Freud's *Nachtraeglichkeit* and Strachey's "deferred action": Trauma, constructions and direction of causality. *Internat. Rev. Psychoanal.* 18; 407 - 427.
- Turo, J.K. & Wilson, L.J. (2007). Preliminary Report on Freudian Temporality: Deferred action of *Internat. Congress in Berlin*. Unpublished paper presented at the International Congress in Berlin.
- Wilson, A. (2007). Education Committee of IPA Report. *Bulletin of Assoc. Psychoanal. Medicine.* 41: 56 – 68.