

Goldilocks and the perils of defining

We (Sripada and Spira, 12/26/17) recently defined psychoanalysis and stated:

Any line of treatment, theory, or science which recognizes the facts of unconscious, transference, or resistance, and takes them as the starting point of its work, regardless of its results, is psychoanalysis (Sripada 2015, p.399).

Freidman (12/31/17, Heart of the debate) is understandably concerned about the historic association of the terms unconscious, transference and resistance with Freudian orthodoxy. He is wary that the definition may unwittingly restrict psychoanalysis to transferences and resistances pertaining to instinct and the ego. He asks whether the definition restricts the scope of psychoanalysis to classical one-person transferences and therefore excludes the basic two person dyadic intersubjective perspective of the analytic relationship.

Freidman says--If Sripada and Spira in their language and terminology mean to convey that each analysis must demonstrate the importance of the relationship [not transference relationship alone] between the patient and analyst I would wholeheartedly agree.

In Friedman's most thoughtful assessment of our memo, he demonstrates the perils of defining. Although I previously responded to him, I feel a further response is warranted. So, I offer my further thoughts concerning defining. From their lived in experience, all analysts know the basic terms of the analytic discourse. To succinctly describe their common understanding, any definition of psychoanalysis must struggle between parsimony and overelaboration. As Goldilocks would put it: What is the bowl that is just right for psychoanalysis? That may be too much to ask. Let us try again. What is the least unacceptable bowl of psychoanalysis that many psychoanalysts will accept? Trusting and getting to yes is our problem.

A little about my history and background. From the 1980s onwards three people influenced me greatly: Gill (with whom I met, weekly for about 10 years, to discuss psychoanalysis), Rangell (with whom I corresponded for about 10 years) and Goldberg (who was my supervisor for about 7 years). Gill's psychoanalysis was oriented by the centrality of transference, constructivism and broadly, a relational perspective; Rangell's was an Oedipal Psychoanalysis dominated by *castration* and compromise of integrity; and Goldberg's self-psychology underscored the ways in which we are dwelling in the prison house of psychoanalysis and how to break out.

Each of them were fully aware of the writings of the other two. Baring a few exceptions, they thoroughly disagreed with the theories of the other two. They corresponded with each other but their exchanges solidified their differences. All the three of them were razor sharp and sliced off ideas of any one with whom they disagreed. I agreed (partly) with all of them, or at least tried to understand where they were coming from.

Gill, Rangell and Goldberg were not only gifted theoreticians, they displayed great clinical skills. Their mutually contradictory theories worked, clinically, for each of them respectively. Once I presented a case to Goldberg in supervision. John (name disguised) was a horny young man with many anxieties. I started my supervisory session with Goldberg.

Sripada: John came in to our session and the first thing he said to me was-You are looking good.

Before I could say anything else, assuming the voice of John, Goldberg spoke: I had sex with Julia (girlfriend, name changed).

Sripada (jaw hanging, at Goldberg's improbable prediction): Then, John said-*I had sex with Julia.*

It is not news that a horny guy has nothing else on his mind and feels good after sex. It is Goldberg's prediction of the exact words, the patient was going to use, that was astounding.

Sripada continued: I am stunned. How did you go from-- you are looking good, and get to -I had sex with Julia.

Goldberg replied: He said you were looking good. (It means) He felt he was looking good. He felt good. He feels good after he screws. (He laughed and said) So, if you are looking good, he screwed.

I told Goldberg: You are like a shooting star, I don't care so much for your theory, but teach me how to predict.

Goldberg said something smart-alecky like: I just told you, it's in front of you.

(The descriptions above are stilted because I think the list serve does not accept quotation marks.)

There were numerous examples of such unique predictions.

Since Goldberg, I find that a good test for the analysts understanding of the patient, is not an explanatory idea, but a silent analyst's prediction of the patient's words and sentences, before the patient utters them.

Gill, Rangell and Goldberg, all listened attentively and arrived at conclusions that seemed uncanny and beyond theory. It was that magical understanding, beyond the algorithms of theoretical logic, that made them who they were.

However, Gill, Rangell and Goldberg each separated their own thinking from the thinking of the other two. What I mean is they had clearly articulated inclusion and exclusion criteria. Each felt that they were right and the other two were barking up the wrong tree. For me, psychoanalysis was a combination of all their ideas (Transference-relational, classical-Oedipal, and self). Psychoanalysis had to include all these ideas, but the ideas came wrapped in the brilliance of each of them respectively.

If any definition of psychoanalysis, discounted the contributions of any of them, we all would that much the poorer. So, the unconscious, transference and resistance, in our definition, are not restricted to instinct or ego, they may flow into any selected contemporary or future unnamed theoretical orientation. Unconscious, transference and resistance are broad inclusive notions. A hundred years from now, when we are all quiet (Mr. or Mrs. Methuselah, I mean all candidates included, your day is coming, too), we will be fortunate if some brand of

psychoanalysis survives. In the meantime, although individual psychoanalysts do and should select and subscribe specific theories, psychoanalysis, as a general proposition, should nurture all the prevailing forms. We do not know which one will survive, and so we don't know which is the winner. Therefore, this definition does give preference to any particular theoretical framework.

The terms of this definition are inclusive is intended to be compatible with instinctual, Id-ego-superego, Oedipal, PreOedipal, relational, personal (single, dyadic-two personal and multi-personal), selfal (relating to the self), inter-subjectival, developmental, hermeneutical, neuropsychanalytical (pertaining to neuropsychanalysis) and other theoretical orientations. The first word in our definition *any* and the clause *regardless of result* explicitly indicate flexibility and inclusiveness.

Each analyst has the freedom to choose the orientation that best fits his and his patient's personality. Thus, transference may be central or peripheral; here and now or (displaced to) there and then, single or two person based, etc. That is for each analyst to select and employ. In this age of seeking freedom, dictating how the other should think and what the other should do, is counterproductive. However, nothing prevents any analyst from extolling his or her particular view. Analytic allegiances and loyalties do result in disputes, splits, factions and antagonisms. That is part of the hustle and bustle of the marketplace, but let us not pseudospeciate other analysts.

Erickson (1977, pg. 61) described "pseudospeciation" by which a single species is split into false species. We are all analysts and the work each of us does is psychoanalysis.

Furthermore, this definition is for the individual practitioner in his or her clinical work. There is no mechanism for some outside influence to introduce a traditional instinct/ego slant into the terms transference. That's come through hero worship. Let us be wary of excessive charismatic idealization. In such a brief definition, it is not possible for dyadic intersubjectivity to be explicitly and exclusively described. There is a delicate Goldilocks balance that allows many ideas and illusions to collocate and live in civic mutual co-existence.

We are all psychoanalytic pilgrims traversing the semi-arid desert circumstances of current psychoanalysis. The incessant hot sun is beating down on man or beast. A definition of psychoanalysis is like a copse of shady palm trees beneath which is a stone slab, with well by the oasis. The slab that may serve as a couch or a chair. Each person has to draw water from the well to quench his thirst for psychoanalytic knowledge. When an individual analyst is at work, there is no one else serving instinct, ego or Oedipus, intersubjective, neuron cola. If you know how to make a drink, make it yourself. If you look carefully, there is a slate and many colored chalks, nearby. If you wish, you can write a story or draw a picture. Etched on the stone slab are some markings; most are hard to decipher. However, one clear message reads, half a loaf for everybody. You are welcome to enjoy the cool air.

Postscript:

Yes, Freudman. Our language and terminology means to convey that each analysis must demonstrate the importance of the two person intersubjective relationship between the patient and analyst, if that is what the analyst chooses.

Erickson, H. Erik (1977), *Toys and Reasons*. W.W. Norton Inc. New York

Sripada, B. (2015). Essential Psychoanalysis: Toward a Re-Appraisal of the Relationship between Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychotherapy, *Psychodynamic Psychiatry* 43, No. 3, 396-422. doi: 10.1521/pdps.2015.43.3.396.

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