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Aims of the Psychoanalytic Process

The theme proposed for this meeting (1), “Aims of the Psychoanalytic Process”, displays a great perspicacity. It allows us from the very beginning to make an essential distinction between the aims one would like to propose from the outside – so to speak – to analysis, and those emerging from the process itself. A distinction nowadays more and more overlooked.

Psychoanalysis, whose results are perpetually challenged, never ceases to compare its effectiveness with that of other techniques – psychological or not; an effectiveness that we might call “conformance to an aim”. In this context, the analyst would be considered a specialist to whom one proposes a specific objective, which is in fact extrinsic to the very process.

Freud described this eventuality apropos of his Case of female homosexuality, where a patient was sent to Freud by her father in the hope of ridding her of her “perversion”. Should the analysis fail to produce the desired result, a rapid marriage would be arranged in order to awaken the natural instincts of the young woman (2). According to Freud:

[certain situations are] to a greater or lesser degree unfavourable for analysis and adds fresh difficulties to the internal ones already present. Situations like that of a prospective house-owner who orders an architect to build him a villa according to his own tastes and requirements, or of a pious donor who commissions an artist to paint a sacred picture in the corner of which is to be a portrait of himself in adoration, are at bottom incompatible with the conditions necessary for psycho-analysis (3).

Freud cites also two eventualities: the husband who sends his irascible wife into analysis with the aim of having his domestic peace restored, or parents who ask that their nervous, recalcitrant child be cured. We are familiar enough with the difficulties encountered in similar cases, where analysis is undertaken upon the initiative of the family or legal authorities, for example, in situations involving children, psychotics, delinquents, etc.

Analysis under these circumstances, when it takes place, produces results which – according to Freud – can go counter to the wishes of those initiating it. The aims intrinsic to that process reside on an entirely different plane from those dictated from the outside to the psychoanalyst.

This is “made-to-order” psychoanalysis. The now practically universal social demand for psychic care is appropriated, on the one hand, by the analyst’s medical colleagues who send the patient to the analyst in the hope of a recovery from that “illness”, and on the other, by the constant interference of the social Health Services. Not satisfied with paying for the treatment, they have the “bad taste” to demand specific, demonstrable results. Here we have the introduction of a permanent presence, a third party to the analysis.

A particularly pernicious form of this “ready-made” psychoanalysis is didactic analysis. Even Anna Freud’s radical criticism has not prevented the analytical institutions from explicitly demanding the creation, through analysis, of a made-to-order personality conforming to their expectations.

In child analysis, the mother often waits in the waiting room, yet a true analysis can only be established when the door – both symbolically and really – is closed. In didactic analysis, the mother-institution remains present, with all her symbolic weight, in the anteroom.

Freud preferred – and we agree – that the subject come “of his own volition”. Ideally, the subject, suffering from an unresolvable conflict, should ask the analyst for “assistance”. One part of him – his Ego – could be thus considered an ally in the process.

This apparent spontaneity by no means signifies that we should comply with the patient’s aims as expressed in his demand, of which we should be wary. The Ego is an agency of disavowal, its autonomy is an illusion, and it quite often simply carries and mirrors these social, heteronomous aims, which remain present albeit internalized. The Ego, although it claims to represent the interests of the whole, is in fact but one party in the conflict.

The symptom on its side – at times in the foreground in the request – should not be taken at face value, since once the process has begun, it fades quickly to the background.

The abolition – or placement in the background – of the conscious aim of presentations, is an integral part of the basic rule, albeit only a partially applicable ideal. But analysis demands of the analyst the same kind of asceticism or distance with regard to any objectives he may foresee – but not that he should be indifferent to suffering. Here we might compare the two similar German words, Indifferenz and Gleichgültigkeit (4). The analyst must gleichmässig gelten lassen all those elements which the analysand proposes. Important among the refusals he must impose on himself is a mistrust towards any possible concrete adaptive aims he might entertain – as well as a mistrust of the idea of healing, relinquishing the idea of “restitutio ad integrum” (restoring things as they were before), and aiming to a new relationship between the forces in presence.

The psychoanalyst is benevolent: he wants the wellbeing of his patient, but without giving to this wellbeing a precise figure, and without deluding himself as to his patient’s rediscovered autonomy. We should not contemplate objectives independently of the process itself. Freud always referred this process to metapsychology. His formulations varied, with the earliest ones, “to render the unconscious conscious”, or even “to eliminate infantile amnesia”, appearing to conserve something of the old illusion of the unconscious as a second Ego to be freed in his turn from a “repressive” Ego.

The latest, and most inspiring, formula is clearly, wo Es war, soll Ich werden [where It was, I have to become], to which the necessary comment follows “that is a cultural effort akin to draining the Zuydersee” (5).

But what is this Id [ça] if it is deeply rooted, as Freud too often believed, in a set of biological forces? What hope could there be of “civilizing” it (Id)? What then is this Ego (Ich)? If it is an agency of repression, disavowal and negation, what chance has it to really appropriate the Id? But conversely, if the Ich of this formula – as Lacan put in a slightly more idealistic form – is not the Ego-instance but the eternal subject of the “philosophy of the subject”, what “work” could it accomplish?

What, in the end, is this civilizing process? The comparison with the draining of the Zuydersee harks back to Freud’s ultimately pessimistic views on the renunciation to the drives.

Anyway, Freud’s comment has the merit of setting out a “duty” inherent to the process itself.

Our thesis is thus a dual one:

- First, the objective of the process has to be conceived starting from an explicitation of what the cure is: under no circumstances should the process be subordinated to an objective imposed from the outside;
- Second, the cure should not have a secondary position, subordinated to metapsychology. We reject a sequence in which the first element would be a supposedly neutral and objective clinical observation, from which a metapsychological theory would be deduced, while the technique would in its turn be a set of precepts to be deduced from the theory.

We believe instead that the cure should precede metapsychology, because the cure (situation-method) is an invention, Freud's invention of something radically new, something which is rooted much earlier, in the very origins of the human being. This invention is certainly not instantaneous, but can be situated historically in the brief period between *Studies on Hysteria* and the analysis of *The Rat Man*. One might say that the successive theories "limped along behind" this clinical practice.

In the same way, any progress of the various theories on the psychic apparatus or on the drives is inevitably motivated by the problems encountered in practice.

Nevertheless, the idea that the theory "limps along behind" is partially false, as the invention of analytical practice in fact parallels the invention of an initial theory: that of seduction. Freud's abandonment of the theory of seduction would impede him from bringing to light the close relationship between the two inventions, leaving open to us the task of placing the origin of the cure in relationship to what lies at the origins of human existence.

We shall therefore reconsider Freud's Theory of Seduction, but taking into consideration some concepts which over the past decades have provided new areas for reflection on the analytical process; we shall attribute due importance to terms such as language, message, translation, symbolization and, ultimately, hermeneutics. We shall demonstrate that they are no less indispensable to describing the genesis of the psychic apparatus and the conflict than to describing the cure.

Let us start this time from the term hermeneutics. It is often used in a wrong way as we think to describe the analytic process (6). Most hermeneutic activities as currently described, refer to secondary situations. Beyond these derivative hermeneutics, we postulate a founding one: the original condition of somebody having to interpret, to give meaning to "what occurs to him". But, what occurs to him is not raw reality, nor is it – as Heidegger would have it – *Dasein* (being-there) or *Geworfenheit* (thrownness). These are messages addressed to the small human being by the adult.

Instead of invoking the so-called hermeneutic activity of the analyst, it must thus be said: the original hermeneutical interpreter is the human being. What he has to translate is messages, the question being: what is happening to me? How can I master it by appropriating it through "translation"?

Here, one might refer to the opening of Freud's *On Infantile Sexual Theories*, in which he cites two important enigmas of the adult world, which the child confronts: the difference between sexes, and the arrival of a new sibling. But there are many other, more original messages, whose vehicle is the breast, or also the earliest bodily care and attentions.

The adult/infant dissymmetry can be explained when introducing the words: "what is happening to me". This dissymmetry conflicts with current ideas on interaction and reciprocity. I do not reject the idea of reciprocity; it is not a question of denying the reciprocal attachment of the small human being and the parent who provides nourishment, care and protection. The messages received by each member of this couple from the other are more or less appropriate: the infant is from the start open to the world, and above all, to the adult world. The first relationship between the little living being and its mother is a relationship in the full sense of the word. A rich relationship, partially programmed genetically, which psychoanalysts – since Freud – have long wrongly reduced to the provision of nourishment, or "self-preservation".

However, dissymmetry is no less essential than reciprocity. According to psychoanalysis, the adult is inhabited by an unconscious Id, which is sexual (or sexual-aggressive) and is made up of presentations and fantasies which infiltrate behavior. But nothing justifies our saying that the nursing baby has, from the beginning, fantasies and an unconscious (nor, incidentally, a Ego).

Experience has proven that, during the adult/child relationship, the earliest sexual fantasies are reactivated in the adult by the appearance of this small being – this other “myself”, like I once was – given over to the most delectable, and perhaps most perverse, of physical care.

The relationship is thus established on two levels: that of reciprocal self-preservation constitutes the basis for communication. That self-preservation is, however, all at once inhabited, fed upon, drained by the one-way communication of the adult toward the child. These “enigmatic messages” directed to the child are intended to be purely self-preserving – “I want to nourish you, care for you, etc.” – but they are “compromised” by interference of sexual fantasies. I nourish you but, unconsciously, I stuff you with nourishment, in the sexual sense of intromission (the Nahrungszufuhr becomes Nahrungseinfuhr – as emerged from a significant Freud’s slip in his Entwurf einer Psychologie) (7).

Confronted with these enigmatic messages, the child is first of all passive: he does not have the appropriate instinctive response. He is in a condition of traumatism that he must attempt to overcome, by becoming active, through comprehending, that is, by translating. We can thus say that the human being is originally in a condition of passivity, in the position of an hermeneutical interpreter. However, this fundamental hermeneutics is not a hermeneutics of the situation, of facticity, but a hermeneutics of the of the message.

I want to stress this radical situation: the human being, from a sexual point of view, from the start focuses on and gravitates around the other: this is what I call a primal Copernicanism.

But, on the other hand, he cannot but try to re-establish a condition of control, or pseudo-control, in which he can consider himself as center and origin: the Ptolomaic movement is no less important than the Copernican departure, against which it constitutes a defense.

Thus, it is in the movement of self-appropriation – which could be assimilated to a translation – that the psychic apparatus is formed. But the essential point is that this translation is by necessity always imperfect and a failure. This is because the child, from the beginning, lacks the means necessary to integrate and connect the sexual elements concealed in the messages of the adult other.

So, the constitution of the psychic apparatus – and first of all the separation between an Id and an Ego – is essentially the result of this process of translation. The Ego integrates that which can be translated in the sexual messages of the other. That which cannot be translated, the translation’s leftover, constitutes the unconscious Id, which escapes binding and becomes henceforth a pole of unbinding.

The primal repression, and subsequently the secondary ones, are the inevitable result of this partial failure of binding.

To the initial formula – wo Es war, soll Ich werden – we might add the following:

The Ego and the Id in question are not two entities of different origin: one allegedly biological, and the other rational or cultural. The Ego and the Id are formed, from the outset, in a single, identical movement. The Ego encompasses that which, starting from the sexual message of the other, can be translated, integrated in a more or less coherent history. The Id is that which remains unamenable to translation. Let us insist on this point: the unconscious Id is not a second Ego, as unitary as the other one. The process of repression, that works in a “highly individual way” (Freud) results in an “agency” which is not comparable to that of the Ego: it is made up of timeless, non-coordinated representations, which are not mutually contradictory and which exert

a quasi mechanical attraction (primary process) on the representations which pass within grasp.

Due to the process of repression, psychic alterity has radically changed its place: in the initial Copernican relationship, the relationship to the other person (der Andere) was in question. Once the psychic system shuts in on itself, with the constitution of the Ego as an agency, the otherness has become internal: the Id has become das Andere, an internal other.

The psychic conflict, once the Ego-Id system has been formed, can be defined along different lines: it is a drive conflict: between the “sexual death drives” (sexuality in its most unbridled form) and “sexual life drives” (oriented by the aim of totality, of the object and of the Ego taken as an object).

It is a conflict between the two agencies, the Ego as center of binding, dominated by Eros, and the Id where the various levels of unbinding are found, up to the sexual death drive, its central abyss. It could be defined, in a more abstract or philosophical aspect, as the struggle between two principles: binding and unbinding. These principles merge partly with the topographic destruction of the agencies, but are also at work in each of them both.

The conflict, whether normal or neurotic, evolves in the Ptolemaic area, that “apparatus of the soul” described by Freud. The binding/unbinding, or Eros/Sexual Death Drive, or even better, Ego/Id opposition, places the Ego in confrontation with a pole of otherness which is henceforth internal. Moreover, unlikely the original condition, the Ego is no longer in the presence of messages “to translate”, but of reified remains (8).

The unconscious fantasies do not appear as “to be translated” (“zu übersetzen”), but as “to be fulfilled”, “to fill” (zu erfüllen). The otherness of the external other manifested itself by the way of communication, through the means of language, even if initially gestural. This otherness of the internal other appears through a substitutive formation, extraneous to all communicative intent.

The same opposition is found on the defensive level. In both cases, defence aims at binding. But the original binding, in front of the enigmatic, external message, was connections of meaning, a translative binding. Conversely, faced with the unconscious Id, once that is constituted, the Ego utilizes far more “mechanical” defense mechanisms – the same described by Anna Freud. Of course, a translative intent can occasionally subsist in the defense mechanism. We might say that the phobia “translates” a pure drive danger into an exterior and real danger. In fact, rather than translate, phobia transposes an element from one place to another, albeit without the work of integration and without considering a context, conditions of a true translation. This is due to the fact that the repressed Id is not constituted of meaningful sequences, but instead of elements which have escaped the original conferring-of-meaning.

Clearly, the psychic conflict, once constituted, presents very little probability of a real resolution, or even progress. It is dedicated more often than not, even in disguised form, at the constraining of the repetition of the ways of substitute satisfaction and to repetition of defense mechanisms.

If the cure did only set into play the same forces that are spontaneously at work in the human subject, it is not clear what available means were available to the cure for activating any real change. The old translations, life plans, myths and ideologies do heavily weigh on each single existence. What is taken to be a “new translation” is unfortunately very often nothing more than a translation of a translation. E. Kris showed clearly how an entire analysis could take place without the mythical idealization of an individual being placed in the least in doubt (9).

What then is that utopian hope that analysis can do anything other than locally rearrange the forces which were already in play since the initial repressions and constitution of the Ego-Id opposition? By what means could “Ego” become there where “Id” was, if the constitution of the two agencies is complementary, and if the unconscious is what from the start has avoided being “set into myth” by the Ego?

My contention is that the practice initiated by Freud has as its latent meaning and consequently as its aim to put once more into play the original Copernican conflict, that which gave birth to the secondary play of

forces and to the resulting conflict, which later came into play between the Ego and its internal other.

This re-establishment of the original situation becomes possible thanks to two main means: 1) the analytical situation and the resultant transference and 2) analysis as a method of “de-translation”.

As concerns transference, it is not limited to a pure and simple repetition of relationships to one or another infantile object. To that “filled-in transference” – sealed and blocked by precisely what it repeats – we counter re-establishing not the relationship to a particular object, but the relationship to the enigma itself. “Neutrality” should be understood here as the analyst’s capacity to arouse and sustain that condition wherein the other (the analyst) is supposed to possess the subject’s truth. This is a reiteration of the adult/child situation, but with one important difference: the analyst must guard against filling, in his turn, the transference with his own messages compromised by his own unconscious. The so-called counter-transference is the very particular relationship of the analyst with his own unconscious, with his own otherness. Not an integration (impossible and ill-advised) of this otherness in his Ego, but a recognition or acknowledgment which is at once a maintenance of distance, and a respect.

That which I call *transfert en creux* (hollowed-out transference) – a transference not to be filled by any cumbersome and immovable *imago* – is thus a re-establishment of what might be called the “original transference”. If, in fact, transference is characterized by the presence of otherness in the other, the original child/adult situation can perhaps already be called, in this sense, a transference.

What remains to discuss is the analysis. For, if the analytic setting is the space for reactivating the relation to those enigmas coming from the other, this process can only be carried out through a deconstruction, a de-translation of myths and ideologies by which the Ego is constructed to confront these enigmas. This analytical work is bound to the method of free-association, which could also be called free-dissociation.

This work tackles above all self-theorizations of the subject’s Ego. Only through inference the unconscious elements (those not integrated by the Ego) can be recognized. The “constructions in analysis” of which Freud spoke are above all reconstructions of the processes of early repression, that is, of the defensive constructions forged in the past by the subject. These are the stages which must, in their turn, be analyzed if we are to come as close as possible to the original messages.

This progressive “de-translation” is inevitably accompanied by an inverse movement. This is because the Ego, in the Freudian sense of the term, is moved by a “constraint to synthesis”, triggered by the danger of unbinding re-actualized by analysis. This force of synthesis constitutes the reparative tendency characterizing the specifically “psychotherapeutic” movement.

The analyst – except in clinical cases where spontaneous synthesis is obviously insufficient – must not himself propose outlines for retranslation, any more than the classic psychoanalytical schemata. In this sense, psychoanalysis essentially remains an “anti-hermeneutics”, the sole hermeneutical interpreter, who confers meaning to his existence exposed to the other, while remaining always the human individual.

Let us take up once more Freud’s expression “wo Es war, soll Ich werden”, but with the following modifications:

The Ego is not a definitive agency. It is constructed against a fundamental otherness by means of translation and identifications. Neither is the Id an original agency, but rather the remains of a process which has let fall out the non-translated.

Consequently, the “werden soll” constituting the purpose of analysis is not the conquest of an antediluvian Id by an autonomous Ego. It is an attempt to set again to work the original process, where the other to “conquer” was not the unconscious, internal other, but the external other, the source of enigmatic messages, an other who was, in the past, the origin of a veritable “drive to translate” (*Trieb zur Übersetzung*, a term invented by the German romantics).

As we already affirmed before, if the cure were to activate only those forces already present in the mental apparatus, it would not very likely produce results any better than those of spontaneous psychic conflict. However, the new motivating force generated by the transference and the relationship to the enigma, is precisely that renewed “drive to translate”.

Ultimately, the aim of the process resembles a new translation which attempts to “re-appropriate”, in a new form, some heretofore excluded elements. But the aims of the analysand and the analyst differ. The former, submitted to the traumatism of the cure, unceasingly works towards the most rapid healing of the wound. The analyst, instead, cannot and must not second these repeated attempts at binding. He is above all the artisan of the unbinding, and he must always send the analysand back onto the path of analysis.

It cannot be concealed that the aim thus defined – setting off of the original process – finally assumes a “Ptolemaic” aspect. Because, as comprehensive as it may be, the new unity of the Ego closes in inevitably on a new version of the Id as internal other.

Should we consider the final aim as corresponding to a Ptolemaic and ultimately narcissistic closing in, in relationship to which the cure itself constitutes but one fecund albeit transitory episode?

Experience has shown, however, that it is not always thus. The dimension of transference appeared to us as a “hollowed-out transference”, that is, a reiteration of the relationship to the other as the messenger of enigmas. In some cases, this opening, or wound, of the transference can in its turn be transferred outside the cure, in a relationship based on addressing the other and of vulnerability inspired by the other, which is the specific feature of all creators, even the most modest ones.

1) The continuation of analysis as self-analysis has often been recommended, notably for professional analysts. What I just said here can be considered a very particular modality of this prolongation, since it is a matter of keeping open the wound made by the other. If Ferenczi reproached Freud for not having immunized him against new traumatic experiences, it is because he failed to see all the richness of the “new” coming from the other.

2) Towards the end of an analysis, that transference of the transference must be perceived – and accepted – by the analyst. He should mistrust “lateral transference” but he should accept that the Copernician relationship could be carried on outside the analytic setting.

3) The message of the “creator”, albeit modest, is defined by the fact that it is not addressed to a single person upon whom a certain “effect” must be produced. This addressing is potentially infinite and open to the enigmatic reception of an audience “scattered in the future” (Mallarmé).

4) In the end, the entire notion of sublimation should be reconsidered. From the usual point of view, in Freud as in Melanie Klein, sublimation remains a secondary construction, mainly Ptolemaic, designed to doom the alienness of the relation to the other. Here, an old notion such as “inspiration” could be turned to good account, as corresponding to a sort of presentiment of the Copernician character of all cultural creations. The practice established by Freud brought us something new, not in the concept of sublimation, but in sublimation itself, by introducing in it his “Copernician revolution”.

Notes:

1 – A lecture given on Nov. 22, 1997, at the Deutsch Psychoanalytische Vereinigung, in Wiesbaden.

2 – GW, XII, p. 274; SE, 18, p.150. Once more, when Freud employs the word Instinkt rather than Trieb, it is to characterize – even mock – a common concept of “natural” sexuality.

3 – GW, p. 275.

4 – In German, there are two words: Indifferenz (indifference), has a fairly negative connotation; while Gleich-gültigkeit (“give the same value to”) is more positive.

5 – GW, XV, p. 86.

6 – Jean Laplanche, “La psychanalyse comme anti-herméneutique” in *Revue des Sciences Humaines*, 1995, 240, pp. 13-24.

7 – In GW, Nachtragsband, p. 410. And Jean Laplanche, *La révolution copernicienne inachevée* (Paris: Aubier, 1992), p. XXVII, note 52.

8 – That which Freud called Sachvorstellungen, and which I interpret as: not Vorstellungen einer Sache (representations of a thing), but Vorstellungen als Sachen (representations as things).

9 – Ernst Kris, “The Personal Myth. A Problem in Psychoanalytic Technique” (1956) in *Problems of Memory*.