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Freud's Conception Of Neutrality¹

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PERHAPS NO TECHNICAL TERM more aptly distinguishes psychoanalytic technique from other forms of psychotherapy than the word "neutrality." Yet, Freud didn't even introduce the term until 1915—some twenty years after his basic theory and treatment philosophy were established. Since its introduction in the last of Freud's six papers on technique, "Observations on Transference-Love" (1915), the application of neutrality has gradually assumed the defining moment in what we now call "classical" technique.

My purpose in this article is to explore how Freud's conception of neutrality informed his treatment of Ernst Lanzer, more familiarly known as "the Rat Man." The case is prominent for two reasons. First, nowhere is there a clearer depiction of Freud's views on the nature of obsessional neurosis; and of Freud's major case studies, the Rat Man was the only one whom Freud actually treated that was successful (the other two—Dora and the Wolf Man—ended in failure). The fact that the Rat Man's analysis was successful offers a unique opportunity to examine the specific elements that account for the treatment's success and the part that Freud's conception of neutrality contributes to it.

In spite of this singular qualification, a mounting controversy has evolved over the last forty years concerning Freud's technical handling of the treatment, published in 1909. The most frequently invoked criticism about the technique Freud employed with the Rat Man concerns the relative absence of neutrality in his analysis. I believe that these criticisms demonstrate just how far analytic technique has evolved over the course of this century and how dramatically it has diverged from Freud's conception of it. The term "classical technique," as it is conceived today only vaguely depicts Freud's clinical behavior.

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A greater familiarity with the controversy that surrounds this case should serve to illustrate how contemporary psychoanalysts typically employ analytic technique and what, in turn, they conceive psychoanalysis to be. Since I haven't the time to go into the Rat Man's treatment in detail, I shall take a moment to review the salient features of the case, as I see them. **(For a more exhaustive discussion of Freud's analysis of the Rat Man, see Thompson, 1994, pp. 205–240.)**

The Rat Man was in treatment with Freud for a relatively brief time, only eleven months. Yet, when his analysis was terminated, Lanzer was apparently relieved of his most troubling neurotic conflict: the fear that something terrible would happen to the two people whom he loved the most, his father—who, paradoxically, had been dead for several years—and his fiancée, whom he was unable to marry due to his chronic ambivalence. Though Lanzer suffered from a host of fascinating symptoms, it was his most sensational one that subsequently gave rise to his famous nickname. While Lanzer was in the army, he once heard his captain tell a gruesome story about a method of torture that the Turks were said to employ. A prisoner would be stripped from the waist to his feet, laid facedown on the floor, and then a bucket, which contained one or two rats, would be placed against the prisoner's buttocks. The torture was inflicted by the animals boring their way up the prisoner's anus. Lanzer became so rattled while recounting the torture that Freud was obliged to ask him to finish the story.

When he first heard his captain relate this story, Lanzer became obsessed with the notion that the same fate would fall on both his father and his fiancée. His anxieties persisted even after his release from military service. His subsequent analysis centered around his incessant feelings of guilt toward his beloved father and the girlfriend to whom he was betrothed. From a technical standpoint, Freud's handling of the treatment is sketchy at best. But the picture one gathers is of active participation, accompanied by a number of so-called un-analytic interventions, such as gestures of personal interest and concern. For example, Lanzer showed up once looking haggard and tired and, when Freud learned that he hadn't eaten for some time, he offered him something to eat. On other occasions Freud loaned his patient a book, sent him a postcard while on holiday, and even asked to see a picture of his fiancée.

As the treatment unfolded, Lanzer became paranoid and was even convinced that Freud wanted to marry him off to his daughter, Anna. Freud described the Rat Man's thought processes during this phase of the treatment as "delusional." Lanzer became verbally abusive and was so hostile

he was afraid that Freud would terminate the treatment. But Freud remained reassuring, calm, and unflappable. In fact, Freud was later convinced that the emergence of Lanzer's hostility and paranoia had been fortuitous, since it permitted his patient to work through some of the unresolved feelings he never dared acknowledge to his father.

Lanzer's memory of the rat torture assumed a decisive role in the treatment. The image of the prisoners' naked buttocks, for example, invoked the memory of a former governess who, when he was five or six years old, had permitted him to gaze on her naked body and even to fondle her. That incident just so happens to have occurred around the time Lanzer was spanked by his father as punishment for having bitten a young friend—the *only* time his father ever resorted to corporal punishment. Ironically, though Freud was aware of the spanking incident, its connection to the rat torture was never actually established in his mind. (Indeed, the exact cause of his patient's neurosis remained a mystery that Freud lamented never having solved.) Yet, his patient was cured without this crucial connection ever having been made. How was that possible? Freud was soon obliged to terminate Lanzer's treatment without having arrived at a solution, due to the remission of his symptoms!

What does this odd resolution to Lanzer's analysis say about the nature of the analytic cure? What accounted for his remarkable recovery, if not the *solution* to what had caused his neurosis in the first place? Is one's understanding of how a person becomes neurotic a component of recovery, or merely a superfluous detail that serves no ostensible purpose except to satisfy the analyst's curiosity? If the solution to one's underlying conflicts isn't decisive, what is? Most of the literature that revolves around Freud's analysis of the Rat Man emphasizes the relative complexity of his symptoms and Freud's brilliant interpretation of their meaning, as though the interpretation of symptomatology is the predominant determinant of a successful resolution to treatment. In fact, one of the most striking features of Lanzer's treatment experience concerns his relationship with Freud, especially his tendency to conceal important details of his history from the analysis. He was so devious about his past that he regularly revised the stories he had told Freud earlier, significantly altering the picture that had been presented. As one revelation after another unfolded, Freud had to abandon his previous assumptions in order to accommodate each successive development.

One of the most frequent objections raised in the literature surrounding this case is the accusation that Freud neglected to analyze Lanzer's

transference, implying that his cure—frequently dismissed as a "transference cure"—was superficial. This accusation is especially ironic because it was to the *resolution of transference* that Freud specifically attributed the success of Lanzer's treatment. This point emerged three years later as a guiding principle in Freud's paper "The Dynamics of Transference" (1912a), where he notes that analytic cures can only be obtained through the transference and not by "intellectual" understanding. In fact, the need to understand everything to the "nth" degree was one of Lanzer's obsessional symptoms. Freud even emphasized that abandoning a predominantly intellectual path was a major shift from the way psychoanalysis had been conceived in its earliest days.

That being said, there is admittedly little evidence that Freud offered more than cursory transference interpretations in his analysis of Lanzer. How did Freud typically handle transference material, if not to analyze or interpret its manifestations to his patients? According to Freud, transference, from a purely technical point of view, is simply "a proper rapport with one's patient," which he says in the fourth of his technical papers, "On Beginning the Treatment" (1913, p. 139). This characterization of transference, however, appears to contradict the one he presented in "The Dynamics of Transference," where he traced it to the unconscious need for love that, when thwarted by reality, is projected onto every person we meet (1912a, p. 100). In that paper, Freud proposed two types of transference, positive and negative. The positive transference was further divided into the erotic and the "unobjectionable" transference (pp. 105–106). Whereas the (unconscious) erotic transference comprises repressed, erotic impulses that serve as resistance to treatment, the (conscious) unobjectionable transference is the principal vehicle for the willingness to comply with the demands of analytic work. This work specifically entails complying with the fundamental rule to free associate, by uttering whatever comes to mind. Hence, patients who comply with the fundamental rule effectively channel their longing for love into a working alliance with the analyst.

Though analysts nowadays characterize the willingness to comply as a component of the "analytic attitude" or the "real (nontransferential) relationship" between patients and their analyst, Freud believed that the capacity to comply is a component of transference phenomena, since it explains why patients are so motivated in the first place. Patients agree to the demands that analytic work entails because, at bottom, they want their analyst to accept them. Becoming a "good patient" is a means of

winning approval and respect. We throw ourselves into the treatment experience for the same reason we pursue any other relationship: to obtain love. It is in this sense that the "unobjectionable" transference may be characterized—as Freud characterizes it—as the *rapport* that patients are able to establish with their analyst.

If this is how Freud conceived the technical handling of transference, then wouldn't the "negative" transference entail a breakdown in that rapport? According to Freud, not necessarily. In Lanzer's case, it was his positive regard for Freud—in other words, his positive transference—that allowed his negative transference feelings to emerge. If not for the implicit sense of safety that he came to feel in the analysis, Lanzer would have simply suppressed his hostility or denied it, as he had done with his father.

In fact, Freud's ability to accept Lanzer's paranoid accusations without alarm permitted his patient the freedom to allow his feelings their say. The freedom to feel hateful when we do, and to express those feelings when we must, gives us the opportunity to become the complicated creatures that we are, warts and all. The capacity to accept a person's behavior, no matter how unsettling it may be, is what Freud meant by "neutrality." Once Lanzer realized that Freud's acceptance of him was unconditional—that he didn't have to be this way or that, just to win his approval—he lost interest in what had caused his conflicts in the first place. It was at this juncture that his symptoms disappeared.

One of the principal lessons Freud had learned from his analysis of Dora some nine years earlier was the degree to which neurotics harbor secrets. (See **Thompson, 1994**, pp. 93–132, for a thorough discussion of Freud's analysis of Dora and its relevance to his developing technique.) Lanzer, in turn, taught him how devious patients may become when endeavoring to keep those secrets to themselves. Lanzer had blatantly concealed and distorted this or that detail from his free associations and misled Freud as a matter of course. When Freud subsequently took stock of how Lanzer had repeatedly misconstrued important details of his past, he formulated the two principal rules for conducting analysis.

First, it is imperative to establish a rule of thumb whereby patients agree to be as truthful as they can by omitting nothing that comes to mind: the "fundamental rule" of analysis. Secondly, analysts, by the same token, should endeavor to take everything they are told with a grain of salt. In other words, analysts should assume that their patients are telling the truth, but reserve judgment about the veracity of what they say. Even

more importantly, analysts shouldn't be so quick to judge whether what their patients tell them is either an encouraging or a disconcerting sign about the outcome of treatment. They just have to wait and see how things turn out in the end. This second rule of thumb became the "rule of neutrality."

Though the free association method was developed earlier in the 1890s as a substitute for hypnosis, it wasn't until 1912, in the second of his technical papers "The Dynamics of Transference" (1912a) —three years after his analysis of the Rat Man—that Freud finally introduced the fundamental rule: the actual *pledge* to be candid with one's therapist. It was Freud's failure to elicit candor from Dora (in 1900), and later, the extraordinary means used by the Rat Man to distort his personal history, that convinced Freud of the efficacy of candor in the analytic process. Though in practice it is virtually impossible to be completely candid with anyone, Freud believed it is crucial, nevertheless, to try one's best to do so. This realization was the culmination of Freud's conception of analytic technique.

Even before the fundamental rule was finally formulated in Freud's mind, Lanzer was able to spontaneously take him into his confidence and unburden himself of his secrets. He was tormented by an oppressive feeling of guilt that, Freud believed, occasioned the deviousness he employed in order to conceal his deepest secret: his hatred for his father. Lanzer's eventual resolution of the contradictory stories about his past was the principal factor, Freud concluded, that accounted for his successful analysis.

Freud's principal goal, from that time forward, was to create optimal conditions for facilitating rapport in the treatment situation. Hence, the patient's capacity for candor serves a dual purpose: (a) the revelation of truths, and (b) the resolution of transference, epitomized by neurotic deception. It was at this juncture—somewhere between 1909 (Freud's analysis of the Rat Man) and 1911 (the first of his technical papers)—that the analyst's behavior shifted from determining causation to instilling rapport. Ironically, some of the devices that Freud employed to help Lanzer increase his capacity for candor have prompted condemnation by some analysts. This is ironic, because those same devices have been condemned as a *breach* of analytic neutrality.

Before the late 1940s, Freud's analysis of the Rat Man was taught in every psychoanalytic institute in the world as the epitome of "classical" analytic technique. Then it gradually drew criticism from a group of New York analysts who had emigrated from Europe during the Second World War. The first to question the effectiveness of the Rat Man's analysis was

probably Ernst Kris who, in 1949, accused Freud of "intellectual indoctrination" and of systematically neglecting the transference (**Kris, 1951**, p. 17). In 1952, Mark Kanzer, another New York analyst, suggested that Freud treated Lanzer "brutally" by insisting that he finish the story of the rat torture, ostensibly against his will (**Kanzer, 1980**, p. 139). He even accuses Freud of incorrect analytic technique for permitting Lanzer to rise from the couch during his sessions.

One of the unique aspects of the Rat Man case concerns the discovery, after Freud's death, of surviving process notes, which he customarily destroyed after a case was published. Strachey included them in an appendix to the *Standard Edition* in 1955 (**Freud, 1909**, pp. 251–318). They raise a host of fascinating questions. How faithful is Freud's published report to the notes that he never intended for publication? What do they contain that was omitted from the official report? It was in one of these notes, for example, that Freud revealed he had fed Lanzer when he was hungry, had sent his patient a postcard during a break in the treatment, and on another occasion had loaned Lanzer a book. None of these interventions was specifically mentioned in Freud's published report.

Seizing on the revelations that were included in those notes, Robert Langs (**1980**) labeled Freud's clinical behavior as a "deviation" from strict analytic neutrality (pp. 215–216). When contrasting Freud's analytic technique with contemporary standards, Langs argues that Freud repeatedly violated the "analytic frame." According to Langs,

There are inherently sound safeguards in the specific tenets which constitute today's ground rules and boundaries—the frame—of the psychoanalytic relationship and situation. The sensitivity of the Rat Man to alterations in this frame, which to some extent was not that of Freud at the time, appears to support such a thesis. (p. 223)

In other words, Freud's efforts to encourage candor and rapport are violations of what Langs understands by the term "neutrality." Any such violation impinges on the analytic "frame," a concept that Freud, incidentally, never used. Another example of violating the frame was Freud's gesture of feeding the Rat Man a meal—a practice that, according to Jones, was not uncommon. But Langs claims that

The feeding provided obvious transference gratification and was the basis for a sector of misalliance which disturbed the Rat Man to some extent, although he participated in and accepted gratification from it. (p. 227)

Langs echoes the sentiments of an increasing number of analysts who insist that almost any gesture of kindness or sympathy "endangers" the analytic frame by unnecessarily "gratifying" one's patient. He even suggests that, "The feeding, as this material indicates, was seen in part as a dangerous homosexual seduction and attack, to which the Rat Man reacted with great mistrust and rage" (p. 227). Langs is referring to the emergence of the Rat Man's paranoid ideation and hostility toward Freud, which, because they vaguely coincided with the meal incident, he attributes to Freud's having given him something to eat. Freud, Langs argues, then compounded his "mistake" by giving Lanzer a book to read, another act, according to Langs, of "homosexual seduction," because "In his fantasies, the Rat Man felt that Freud was behaving like a prostitute—or using his patient as one—and was attempting to seduce him" (p. 228).

In a more recent study of the Rat Man, Patrick Mahony concurred that Freud's behavior was "un-analytic" by current standards. He says:

The very absence of detailed transference interpretations, both as to what Freud specifically represented and as to what was the Rat Man's immediate reaction, fuels the doubt that Freud persistently focused on clarification and dissolution of the transference neurosis. (1986, p. 89)

In basic agreement with the arguments expressed by Kris, Kanzer, and Langs, Mahony believes that Freud's analysis of the Rat Man gives us a "picture of Freud as frequently intrusive, reassuring, and seemingly more drawn to genetic interpretations and to reconstruction of past events than to the current interplay in the clinical situation" (p. 90). Mahony suggests that Freud "talked too much" and was "aggressively" helpful. He also objects to Freud having asked the Rat Man to produce a photograph of his fiancée in order to help overcome his reluctance to talk about her. Mahony sees this request as "a direct, intrusive demand" that elicited a "violent" reaction (p. 115). He concludes, "like the ejaculation, Freud's intimate postcard was felt to be premature," because he had signed the card "cordially" (p. 118)!

These criticisms of Freud's behavior suggest a conception of analytic technique that is opposed to any intervention by analysts that even vaguely resembles an *ordinary relationship* between two people engaged in the mutual expression of sympathetic concern. Indeed, such expressions are systematically construed as "violent" rather than helpful. Mahony concludes that Freud committed a number of blunders that aggravated

the Rat Man's condition. Virtually all of Freud's acts of encouragement and kindness are perceived by Mahony as signs of "overinvolvement" and countertransference "intrusiveness." Even though Freud did not subsequently recant any of those gestures and continued to employ them in his clinical practice (see below, pp. 39–41), Mahony sees them as perfect examples of "un-analytic" conduct, constituting a breach in neutrality. In fact, these examples are offered as proof of a "failed" technique.

According to these criticisms, Freud failed to understand the nature of neutrality or didn't take it very seriously. Though he didn't introduce the term until 1915—the only time, apparently, that he ever actually invoked it—the basic idea of it was introduced just three years earlier in his third technical paper, "Recommendations of Physicians Practicing Psycho-analysis" (1912b). There he described the unusual mental attitude that analysts are expected to adopt as a complement to the patient's free associations. This paper is unique in the corpus of Freud's work, because it provides the most painstaking depiction he ever offered on the state of mind every analyst is advised to adopt. The entirety of the paper is devoted to the variety of elements entailed in fostering an attitude that, like certain forms of meditation, requires analysts to empty their minds of any impediments that interfere with their ability to be *present* throughout the analytic session. These recommendations comprise the most explicit statement Freud ever made on *classical* analytic technique.

This was the paper in which Freud compared the analyst's demeanor to that of the surgeon, not, as popularly reported, in order to turn a cold heart to one's patients, but because preoccupations about the unforeseeable outcome of treatment serve to distract analysts from absorbing the entirety of what is happening in the here-and-now of the treatment situation. This was why Freud objected to the practice of taking notes and even of selecting material for case reports, because any ulterior purpose analysts have in mind will only deter them from permitting their patients, rather than themselves, to guide the analytic process. In any case, Freud believed that taking notes is a waste of time, because "the things that one hears are for the most part things whose meaning is only recognized later on" (1912b, p. 112). In effect, the analyst should be content to "simply listen, and not bother about whether he is keeping anything in mind" (p. 112).

Freud was so committed to this point of view he even suggested that selecting a case for future publication would inadvertently excite those

therapeutic and professional ambitions that ultimately poison the analytic process (a lesson he probably learned from his failed analysis of Dora). It was in the context of this particular recommendation that Freud offered his most eloquent depiction of analytic neutrality, when he said that the most successful analytic cases are those in which the analyst proceeds "without any purpose in view, allows oneself to be taken by surprise by any new turn in them, and always meets them with an open mind, free from any presuppositions" (1912b, p. 114).

This was the attitude Freud subsequently termed "neutrality" three years later, in his paper on transference-love (1915). In that paper, Freud introduced the term in the context of erotic transference, arguing that analysts should neither *encourage nor discourage* their patients to fall in love with them, regardless of whether they believed such a development was ultimately helpful or harmful for the analysis. In other words, analysts were encouraged to accept whatever feelings their patients happen to express, whether love, hatred, spite, jealousy, or whatever, and to permit those feelings their say. He also warned analysts against pretending to feel affection for their patients when they don't, and to hold their affection in check when they do. Since the fundamental rule is intended to facilitate candor, Freud believed that the gravest error analysts could make was to inhibit a patient's efforts at self-disclosure. The employment of neutrality was intended to further that process.

We don't know exactly how Freud conceived his notion of neutrality nor why its essential elements finally occurred to him when they did, but he probably owed a debt of gratitude to the Greek Skeptics by way of Michel de Montaigne, the sixteenth-century essayist with whom Freud was intimately familiar. The Skeptics opposed dogmatism of every persuasion (Annas & Barnes, 1994) and advocated the use of *epoché*, the deliberate withholding of assent or dissent: the suspension of judgement. This entailed a capacity for detachment that included, but wasn't limited to, the practice of "aphasia," remaining silent when one is tempted to offer an opinion. The Skeptics believed we can never know for certain what the truth may be at a given time. Therefore, we can't know with any confidence if a course that someone is taking—for example, one's patient—will culminate in success or failure. That doesn't mean we don't entertain opinions or that we should necessarily conceal the opinions that we have. In a similar vein, Freud encouraged analysts to reserve judgment and to allow knowledge to unfold, over time. This wouldn't make much sense if we didn't believe that some form of knowledge does

unfold eventually, even if we can never be sure that the knowledge uncovered is necessarily "correct." This is because psychoanalytic knowledge, unlike science, doesn't aim at *precision*. Its sole purpose is to effect change, and no one can ever be certain whether the change that is effected ultimately serves a desirable end.

More importantly, in order to practice *epoché* —or neutrality—effectively, analysts need to genuinely harbor no opinion. If, in fact, they have opinions but conceal them, they risk becoming devious in a manner that Freud thought would violate the spirit of openness that neutrality is supposed to foster. He believed that it is better to have things out in the open and deal with the consequences than to systematically conceal the beliefs we entertain from our patients. The purpose of the fundamental rule is for *both* parties to put their cards on the table and to play their respective hands as candidly as they can. Hence, the goal of neutrality is to foster a mental attitude in which analysts reserve making judgments prematurely. This isn't furthered by biting one's tongue but by resisting the temptation to devise an answer for everything that unfolds in the treatment. The reason this requires so much discipline is because analytic patients demand answers and assume that their analysts have them. The only defense analysts have against providing answers to their patients is to genuinely have no idea what the answer is.

One of the implications of Freud's conception of neutrality is that it can't be reduced to aphasia alone: the employment of silence. There are times when (the analyst's) silence would have the opposite effect of what neutrality intended. Remember that the purpose of neutrality is to help patients express themselves more candidly. Self-revelation epitomizes the analytic process. Taking an interest in a patient's most intimate affairs, as Freud did with the Rat Man, doesn't violate neutrality but complements it. The real danger to the analytic process, Freud believed, doesn't lie in analysts making their views known, but in pretending to entertain views they don't have. Why was Freud so concerned about the analyst's capacity for duplicity?

Freud discovered that some analysts, in their zeal to make the treatment follow a more predictable course, resorted to techniques he considered unanalytic because they were dishonest. Some analysts were uncomfortable with their patients' seductive demands, while others actually urged their patients to fall in love with them. Some even encouraged their patients to believe that if they "behaved" one way or the other, they would eventually be rewarded with their analyst's love, knowing that

such a reward was impossible. It was in this context that Freud condemned the use of trickery as a tool of analytic treatment and introduced neutrality to foil these tendencies. In Freud's words,

My objection to this expedient [i.e., the use of trickery] is that psychoanalytic treatment is founded on truthfulness. In this fact lies a great part of its educative effect and its ethical value. ... Since we demand strict truthfulness from our patients, we jeopardize our whole authority if we let ourselves be caught out by them in a departure from the truth. (1915, p. 164)

Returning to his treatment of the Rat Man, Freud gave a perfect example of the employment of neutrality six years before he formally introduced this term. It occurred when Lanzer displaced his latent hostility onto Freud and was afraid that his treatment would be terminated because of it. Some analysts in that situation might have "interpreted" the negative transference in order to ease the intensity of the situation. By suggesting that such feelings don't, in fact, pertain to them personally, those analysts hope to nullify their patient's aggression. Freud, however, said nothing. He said nothing to *encourage* the emergence of such feelings before they arose—by being unnecessarily aloof or provocative, for example—nor, once they emerged, did he do anything to *discourage* them. He employed neutrality by remaining tolerant of his patient's feelings, by not jumping to conclusions about what they meant, and by responding sympathetically to this vexing development. This was what Freud believed finally gave the Rat Man the freedom to come to terms with those feelings and get past them.

That being said, Freud didn't apply neutrality to every component of treatment. Its application was necessarily narrow. Ironically, the imposition of the fundamental rule is itself a breach of analytic neutrality, as are many of the values that promote analytic aims, such as facing reality and reduction of suffering. This was why Freud argued that analysts must be able to switch back and forth from a neutral stance to an ordinary, "non-analytic" one, depending on the situation (1912b, p. 114).

One of the factors that needlessly compounds the inherent ambiguity of this concept even more is the tendency to confuse neutrality with abstinence: refusing to comply with the patient's demand for love. Some of the critics we reviewed make this common mistake. They construe Freud's overt friendliness as a violation of neutrality, when, in fact, he was simply permitting his affection for the Rat Man freer reign. This isn't

just a problem in semantics. What is at stake is not whether the analysts cited should have invoked abstinence instead of neutrality, as though once their oversight is noted, their comments about Freud's technique are essentially correct. Even when employing abstinence, Freud was relatively moderate by today's standards. In practice, he frequently offered spontaneous gestures of support and encouragement, unless he had reason not to. Part of the inherent confusion about these two terms and the concepts they signify stems from the fact that Freud introduced them in the same paper only a few sentences apart (1915, pp. 164–165). In neither case did he offer a specific definition, a typical omission in Freud's style of writing, since he preferred to let the context in which terms appear to determine their meaning. When definitions were offered three years earlier (1912b), the terms to fit them hadn't even been introduced. The entire 1915 paper on transference-love is devoted to the two concepts and how they interrelate, but *without explicitly saying so*. Freud's preoccupation with abstinence probably plays the greater role in that paper, but his thoughts about neutrality play an equally vital part in the discussion. The terms, however, articulate two distinctive, though related, technical rules.

This is why the practice of abstinence is sometimes contrary to the rule of neutrality, and vice versa. Since the essence of neutrality is rooted in openness, this is often construed by the patient as a demonstration of the analyst's love. In the transference, this is taken personally as though intended for that patient alone. On the other hand, when analysts withhold sympathy for fear of encouraging erotic fantasies, they risk inhibiting the positive transference and their patients' capacity for candor. This was why Freud concluded that analysts must exercise a considerable degree of tact in their interpretation of analytic rules and their application. Those who are unable to do so tend to go from one extreme to the other, instead of opting for a middle course.

Needless to say, the employment of neutrality and abstinence alike requires considerable discipline. Yet, Freud also believed that analysts need to be flexible with both rules and not carry them to extremes. In 1919 he returned to the rule of abstinence and expanded his notion of it to include *actively* forbidding patients from extracurricular forms of enjoyment during the treatment (1919, pp. 162–164). This was intended to serve as an incentive for patients to carry the analysis through to a successful resolution. But even then, Freud advocated the relaxation of abstinence when indicated, particularly with certain obsessional patients with

whom the more "passive" form of abstinence is seldom effective (p. 166). This recommendation was probably rooted in Freud's successful treatment of the Rat Man, with whom he modified the rule of abstinence accordingly. Just as neutrality should be moderated and not carried to extremes, Freud's employment of abstinence was similarly modified when appropriate.

On the other hand, the rule of neutrality, unlike abstinence, does not require that analysts remain opaque like a mirror in order to counter their patient's narcissism. This rule is specifically concerned with the analyst's capacity to remain open to the patient's experience in all its variety and device. In his neutrality, the analyst doesn't contrive to feel what he doesn't nor to impose or conceal what he does. Unlike abstinence, where analysts are required to hold their feelings in check, neutrality is intended to serve as a foil against becoming manipulative, clever, coercive, deceptive, therapeutically ambitious, and controlling. Were analysts to engage in neutrality full-bore—an impossibility—they would be reduced to no ostensible clinical role and appear extraordinarily permissive. Patients would interpret their inactivity as a form of agreement when it suits their purpose and the analysis would lose its tension. This is why the exercise of neutrality, like abstinence, should be invoked selectively. In fact, it is regularly breached whenever analysts offer interpretations. As far as Freud's analysis of the Rat Man is concerned, it would appear that his clinical conduct—despite the criticisms noted—was faithful to the rule of neutrality as Freud conceived it.

This was why Sam Lipton (1977) was puzzled that so many analysts accuse Freud of violating the tenets of classical technique in his treatment of the Rat Man. yet, those same analysts also insist that Freud subsequently altered his technique and eventually adopted what is now characterized as the "classically neutral" analytic stance. There is virtually no evidence to support this claim. Freud's treatment of the Rat Man is typical of how he analyzed patients throughout the remaining thirty years of his life.

Lipton, however, argues that analytic technique changed dramatically after Freud's death. These changes reveal revisions in the employment of analytic neutrality that, in turn, inspired the criticisms of Freud we noted earlier. Yet, these innovations are characterized as "classical" technique, implying that they were introduced by Freud. Lipton suggests that this newer technique should be called "modern," since it differs from Freud's and is really an innovation of Freud's technique that presumes to be an

improvement of it. Lipton defends the technique Freud employed with the Rat Man only because the analysis was successful, not because it was Freud who performed the treatment. When reviewing the evolution of analytic technique since the 1950s, Lipton concludes that the absence of spontaneous, supportive gestures apparently characterizes this newer technique in its entirety.

Freud felt free to feed his patients if he liked, or send them postcards, or loan them books because he didn't believe that these gestures compromised the narrower, technical considerations. Adverse reactions, if they occurred, could always be analyzed later. In other words, Freud acknowledged the existence of a real relationship with his patients, distinct from transference and countertransference considerations. He didn't believe that spontaneous expressions of interest were either harmful or countertransference. He thought they were helpful because they showed he was a real person whose behavior doesn't necessarily conform to what people automatically assume.

Lipton suggests that Freud's critics see the psychoanalytic relationship less in terms of a collaboration than as a treatment approach that is dictated, unilaterally, by the analyst. Those analysts seem particularly concerned with avoiding errors, as though that factor alone determines the outcome of treatment. According to Lipton,

The meticulous avoidance of [the analyst's] interventions lends to modern technique a prospective or prophylactic approach rather than a retrospective one. (p. 262)

Freud's so-called gratifying behavior with Lanzer could only be perceived as gratifying from the perspective of modern technique, not from Freud's. Accordingly, a remarkable difference in emphasis has evolved between Freud's conception of technique and the one shared by most contemporary analysts. Whereas Freud was principally concerned with fostering a positive transference, i.e., increasing rapport, Freud's critics believe that the principal precondition for conducting analysis hinges on the analyst's ability to foster an experience of deprivation.

Lipton wasn't alone in proposing that Freud's technique isn't "classical" by today's standards. Those analysts who suggest that Freud modified his technique as he got older, in conformity to what is currently depicted as the "classical" style, need only read the accounts of those patients whom Freud treated during the last decade of his life. Many of those patients — such

as Wortis (1954), Doolittle (1956), and Blanton (1971) —have commented on Freud's unreservedly spontaneous style in their treatment experiences with him. In a recent study, Andre Haynal (1989) concurs with Lipton that, "Freud's activity was never restricted to interpretation [and] that he also formed a 'personal non-technical relationship' with his patients" (p. 7). He refers to several of Freud's former patients—many of whom subsequently became psychoanalysts—who commended Freud on *his* capacity for candor. For example, Jeanne Lampl-de Groot, according to Haynal, "feels she was greatly influenced as an analyst by Freud's 'carefully selected alternation of "strict neutrality" and human relatedness'" (p. 8). And Medard Boss, one of the first existential analysts, according to Haynal, "notes with astonishment, 'During the entire time I was privileged to be in analysis with him, he acted quite differently to what one would have expected ... from his views on the analyst as a mirror'" (p. 12).

Kardner, another psychoanalyst who was a patient of Freud's, was also struck by his unconventional behavior. According to Haynal,

Kardner says that Freud sometimes mentioned personal matters to people in analysis with him: family preoccupations, the death of his daughter Sophie, Anna's analysis, [and] her hesitancy to get engaged. (p. 12)

Haynal concludes that, "Altogether, [Freud's] remarks suggest an atmosphere where occasionally the direct expression of the analyst's feelings can be made without undue concern about a 'neutral' analyst" (p. 9). This assessment is also confirmed by Heinrich Racker, who observed that Freud "actively participated in each event of the session, giving full expression to his interest" (Racker, 1968, pp. 34–35). In fact, Racker suggests,

Those who link the concept of a "classical technique" with a predominance of the monologue on the part of the patient and with few and generally short interpretations on the part of the analyst, will have to conclude, as I have said, that in this aspect Freud was not a "classical" analyst. (p. 35)

In light of the current emphasis on reducing the entirety of psychoanalytic treatment to the analysis of transference phenomena, Haynal concludes that Freud's analytic technique was "contrary to the rule that transference should be consistently interpreted" (p. 10). And while Merton Gill (1982) is critical of Freud's tendency to neglect the analysis of transference,

he nevertheless agrees that "the effort to subsume the entire relationship under technique has undesirable consequences for the therapy situation [because] it robs the personal relationship of the spontaneity it must have to be genuine" (p. 104). He agrees with Lipton that

a major trend in current practice is to expunge the personal relationship instead of recognizing it as part of the inevitably existing actuality of the analytic situation. ... What has not been perceived is where the real problem lies, that is, the error of subsuming the entire relationship under technique and failing to analyze the effects of the actual situation in the transference. (p. 141)

In conclusion, many analysts today who practice what Lipton characterizes as "modern" technique believe that the "actual" relationship between analysts and patients is harmful. The comments by Kanzer, Langs, and Mahony suggest they believe that the ordinary expression of interest and concern is inherently "intrusive" and "dangerous" and that analysts who employ such behavior are "subjecting" their patients to it. In short, they believe that the analytic relationship should be a *haven* from interpersonal relatedness instead of an opportunity where such relatedness is permitted—and even encouraged—to flourish.

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