

Kleinian flavored ego-psychology, psychoanalysis cannot afford to disregard the body of all that it knows for the convenience or popularity of a view or because of the difficulty the analyst faces with a new group of patients. Psychoanalysis still has to deal with all of the person, the nurturing of that person, as well as the confronting and interpreting of what that person is, says, does, and feels. It is in this sense then, that I have tried here to provide a further context to Gargiulo's refreshing views and to hope that this additional context will elaborate his commentary dialectically.

In October, upon my return from London, I was privileged to attend an interdisciplinary symposium at the University of Chicago. It was on Narrative, The Illusion of Sequence. Great thinkers from philosophy: Derrida, Ricoeur; Anthropologists: Victor Turner, Barbara Meyerhoff; Psychoanalysts: Merton Gill, Roy Schafer; Literary Critics: Frank Kemode, Robert Scholes; Historians: Hayden White; Linguists, poets, aestheticians: Barbara H. Smith. Nelson Goodman, and many, many others delivered papers or joined an enlightened discussion on how people in different disciplines, each with its own discursive style and language, think and speak about telling a story or a history. First, that psychoanalysis was represented there, and that the psychoanalysts representing the field were so well recieved, and that there could be such a lively discussion with erudite people in other professions, particularly the academic fields represented, was a heartening fact. It calls for attention from all of us: that there is an explosion of new ideas in the world which psychoanalysts can both contribute to and learn from. I concur with many of our speakers this year at NPAP, Alan Roland, Elizabeth Thorne, Esther Menaker, and many others, that psychoanalysts would do well to become a part of that world, to contribute to it, and to borrow from it to enlarge our view and our competence. Undoubtedly, there is much yet to learn.



PERSPECTIVES ON TECHNIQUE*

Routine Issues, Part I

by Gerald J. Gargiulo

Although scientific researchers from outside the field of psychoanalysis frequently question the degree of discipline and empirical verifiability of our findings, there is, for the careful practioners in the field, a degree of concern for the smallest detail which matches in intent, if not in content, the concerns of other disciplines. Although the content, on first reflection, may seem almost trivial, it is rather important for analysts to think about what we may call routine issues. I have in mind such considerations as whether and when one calls a patient by his/her first name; how should one handle paying for missed sessions; and if it is advisable to answer the phone during a particular session. It is in the handling of such everyday issues that we frequently convey, not only to our patients but also to ourselves, what our understanding is of the role and function of psychoanalysis.

Recently a supervisee brought up the issue of charging for missed sessions. He spoke about his reluctance to do so with a particular analysand although in a class he had had, where the case was presented, it was agreed upon that he should tell the patient that he was responsible for paying for missed sessions. The analysand is a young medical resident doing his internship in surgery. The medical student has been coming to psychoanalytic treatment for about a year, on a three-time-a-week basis and seems to have a good working alliance and commitment to treatment. The student analyst pointed out that recently the patient's schedule had changed and he is presently in the cardiac unit where he may be forced, perhaps frequently, to miss a session. The student analyst also noted that his patient was on duty a good hundred or so hours a week which made any kind of make-up session unlikely. Furthermore, the patient's finances were very strained since he was not only living on a very modest budget, but was just coming out of the expenses of a recent divorce. The student analyst said, rather forcefully as he was relating these facts, that he felt that charging for the sessions would be punitive and unnecessary and he did not want to possibly wreck a working alliance by enforcing something he did not even believe in.

It seemed to me that there were (and are) good arguments on both sides of this issue of paying for missed sessions. What was most important, however, was for the analyst to make a therapeutic intervention which he felt made some sense, given his stage of development, rather than indulge in an obligatory conformity on one side; or, an unproductive defiance of the "rules" on the other. I said to him that what was ultimately at issue was not the paying or not paying, but an analytic focusing between him and the patient on the issue. Namely, that a negotiated mutual agreement which took serious account of why analysts usually charge for missed sessions seemed to be what was called for. In this regard I mentioned some considerations for the analyst to think about: one was that by simply without discussion not charging the patient, the analyst might make it more difficult for the patient to express any feelings of anger. In addition, there was the danger that the patient perpetuate or develop a preconscious expectation that he can make contractual arrangements but, if reality presents difficulties, he is free of his obligations. Furthermore, I mentioned that for most analysts, their practices were the source of economic livelihood and that we should be able to speak candidly about our need for income without feeling that such discussion compromises our professional commitment. Finally, I reiterated that if the analyst did not discuss this issue with his patient and come to some conscious agreement, there would be the danger of something happening between them which was covert or latent in its possible meanings and that such a procedure could easily set up a counter-therapeutic tone.

These issues could be resolved for the most part, it seemed to me, if the analyst kept them in mind while asking his patient his thoughts and feeling about his obligations as well as his (the patient's) understanding of the analyst's position. A resolution could come out of such a discussion rather than be imposed from some technical ideological fiat about charging for missed sessions.

When I have spoken in past columns about the need to know technique and know it well and then forget it, it was precisely because there is always the danger in learned technique of imposing it from the outside and that, in structuring the psychoanalytic process too formally, we unwittingly aid the patient in hiding parts of himself. The emotional tone of the interaction between patient and analyst which makes the analytic process possible is set when the analyst listens to the patient - listens with an informed mind, but with a minimum of technical or theoretical ideological presumptions. In this case, I believe, there is no unequivocal answer as to whether the patient should pay for missed sessions or not, nor for that matter any final answer. If, for example, six months or so further into treatment it became clear that whatever agreement was reached was being used to undo the analytic relationship or the analytic work, then the issue would simply have to be opened again and discussed anew. There is no beginning or end of analysis; everything is open to discussion all the time; it is like the timelessness of the unconscious or a garment without seam. We work repeatedly in treatment, frequently over the same territory, and of course the task never ends. When the analyst becomes quite secondary to the analytic process, then the formal analysis is over.

Postscript . . . the student informed me that after discussing these issues with his patient, the patient suggested the following formula as a possible resolution respecting both their positions. He said that he would pay for a minimum of ten sessions a month whether or not he could make them and that if, in a given month, he could make his usual twelve sessions then of course he would pay for these as well. The student analyst felt that the discussion of the issue had been more than worthwhile for him and his patient, and he mentioned that he had accepted the patient's proposal.

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