LOVING PSYCHOANALYSIS
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Technique and Theory in the Therapeutic Relationship

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I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE TO THE MANY MENTORS, colleagues, students, supervisors, and supervisees who taught me and stimulated my thinking. It is especially humbling to write about unfamiliar disciplines, and I am deeply grateful to those who generously tried to educate me about their area of expertise. Some assisted me in finding relevant scholarly material; some read my work to ascertain that I was not making fundamental errors in my applications of alien and tantalizing ideas.


In addition, I would like to recognize five others. Without the suggestions, patience, encouragement, and gentle nudging of Jason Aronson, M.D., over many years, I never would have dared to write. Sydney Pulver,
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* * *

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I began my clinical career fascinated by psychoanalytic theory. I wrote my first book in order to teach myself and help others learn what confused me about the variety of theories and why they were thought to be incompatible. From my then-vantage point outside psychoanalysis proper, it certainly seemed as though clinicians seemed to choose a single school. Perhaps this was less the case than I imagined. The thesis of that book was that one did not need to choose one theory over another; theories are “useful servants,” available to serve us as we see fit. That book addressed the question of the fit between patient, analyst or therapist, and theory. This one, in a loose sense, addresses the fit, or match, between analyst and analysand. I have moved in the direction of exploring the analyst’s experience as well as the patient’s, and especially the pressures and desires—and pleasures—inevitable in doing the work of doing psychoanalysis and intensive psychoanalytic psychotherapy. I have come to believe that the proper working attitude of the analyst is not one of neutrality but of loving. This love should expressed through the deepest empathy of which the analyst is capable, through the disciplined use of the art and craft of attention and interpretation, thoughtful abstinence, considered anonymity, and the inevitable self-revelation and occasional self-disclosures each particular patient requires.

As I wrote each of these chapters, I gradually began to discover what I actually thought as a practicing analyst. Each essay functioned in a sense as a dream, something I produced that required interpretation and reflection. I became increasingly aware that I used theory in what sometimes felt to me to be a promiscuous manner. Why could I move so comfortably between
theories that are generally thought to be incompatible? Why did I not feel drawn to be faithful to one theory or school? If pushed, I would have to declare more allegiance to the romantic vision than to the classic and to object relations and relational rather than drive theories; however, I would not wish to try to persuade anyone that any single view approaches anything like absolute correctness. People are neither uncivilized apes requiring determined interpretation and management of their base instincts nor flowers with closed blooms that simply await an analytic sunshine and watering in order to open—they are both. Psychoanalysis is about both/and—not either/or.

I might say, perhaps, that I see psychoanalytic work as embedded within an intersubjective matrix, within which many varieties of theory may be useful. In the final chapter I attempt to offer a sketch of a theory of everything, a grand unifying theory of psychoanalysis, in order to reconcile my own theoretical eclecticism. Other writers have addressed the potential of chaos theory in useful ways; I summarize the ways in which I find this new science clinically helpful, and I then apply it as an approach to metapsychology.

Even as I make a move toward considering psychoanalysis to be, in the end, a science rather than an entirely hermeneutic discipline (or, rather, I envision a way to understand that hermeneutic activity as possessing a scientific character), I continue to believe that there will always seem to be an emergent or synergistic quality to psychoanalysis, a way in which it will and should always seem like alchemy rather than chemistry. We have come to understand a great deal of what makes a baby come into existence. We understand much of the science of the process, the genetics, and so forth. And yet the birth of a child nonetheless seems like a miracle, like magic. There remains a synergistic quality that, I do not believe, will ever be superseded by our knowledge of facts, processes, and mechanics. Likewise with psychoanalysis. No matter how much we may be able to understand the logically accessible, scientific elements in this work, there will always, I believe, remain a large element of art and perhaps alchemy—that, in some cases, psychoanalysis can turn coal into gold, or shit into platinum and diamonds.

In my chapter on the story of Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle, I use the Pygmalion myth and its modern incarnation as a parable for the psychoanalytic situation and the creativity that underlies and animates its every aspect. I explore both the joyful and the conflictual elements in creativity for both analyst and analysand, focusing on the potential coercive elements as well as on the loss involved in relinquishing any homeostatic constellation—even in order to attain a more satisfying or ostensibly higher level of functioning. This is the first of my three comments on the question of the
match in which I explore, in the story’s parable, the ways in which analysts and patients choose each other.

It is difficult to imagine that any patient seeking analysis does not have, on some level, in some form, a fantasy, wishful or fearful, of being made or remade by her analyst. In this chapter I address the power, if unconscious, in the analysand’s choice of analyst as well as what I believe to be a common fantasy of creation held by analysts. Creation, from the patient’s perspective, suggests birth or perhaps rebirth, since psychoanalysis does not work with tabula rasa patients, but with complexly formed individuals. From the perspective of the analyst, the activity of creation brings to mind artistic effort as well as parenthood, childbirth, and fertilization. This is a mode of activity and power in contrast to the experience of being created, a passive and (at least consciously) powerless position. I use in this chapter one of our modern versions of the ancient myth of Pygmalion—that of Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle. The myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, his fair lady, has received little attention in the psychoanalytic literature, perhaps because the sadism of Henry Higgins has overshadowed the benevolent side to his fantasy and actions. The Pygmalion character, in fact, can be understood to reside psychologically in between Narcissus and Oedipus. I offer the Pygmalion story as a powerful and cautionary parable for psychoanalysts—it is vital that we be aware of our desires to create and their inherent dangers.

Creative aggression in the analyst and the patient’s wish to be changed become the red thread leading into the next chapter. I explore here the ways in which psychoanalytic creativity and growth for both analyst and analysand inevitably involve both courage and masochism. This chapter introduces the subject of courage into the psychoanalytic discourse about masochism and also demonstrates that ordinary ethical and axiological concerns can and should be included in our psychoanalytic language and practice. At each stage of an analysis, it may be helpful to consider whether the patient believes that taking a step deeper into the analytic relationship is both courageous and masochistic. This can open the door to exploration of conscious beliefs and how they are related to unconscious fantasies and assumptions. Considering the possibility that even a sadomasochistic enactment may simultaneously represent a courageous attempt to rework conflict or trauma can enrich the way we listen to both manifest and latent material. The title and illustrative metaphor come from the 1939 film, Bringing Up Baby, which involves the loss and recapture of Baby, a tame leopard. In true Hollywood madcap mode, Katherine Hepburn mistakes a dangerous circus leopard for Baby. Full of distress, hope, the wish to be
changed, and the wish to remain the same, patients may have little aware-
ness of the leopards they are dragging when they first seek help from us. Do we not help our patients confront, cage, and tame the unruly things they discover? I am repeatedly impressed by the way in which almost every patient entering psychoanalysis and psychotherapy experiences a similar predicament; and by how the issue reemerges at points when new areas of pain or conflict become apparent. And the courage-masochism experience is taking place not solely in our patients. Unlike the hapless Cary Grant, who was swept into Katherine Hepburn’s sphere, we analysts know full well that we are going to be encountering untamed leopards of one sort or another. If analysis works, patients and analysts will always be getting into more than they originally bargained for. The psychoanalytic situation inevitably must evoke both courage and masochism in us as well.

In my chapter on self-disclosure and self-revelation, I continue exploring the role of the analyst. I focus here on what sort of honesty the analytic relationship requires. How do we reconcile the ethical need to be absolutely honest with patients with the equally important need not to re-
veal or disclose everything a patient withhes to know about us? We analysts work in such conditions of anonymity that there is a pressure we all feel to be known for who we really are. The construct of the analytic persona may help organize how we make distinctions about which disclosures and revelations are appropriate and useful, especially in the face of interpersonal and relational theories that promote the use of these techniques. I propose that psychoanalytic honesty is not an all-or-nothing thing—that there are different levels of communication, and that one can withhold all or part of the “truth” while simultaneously remaining honest in one’s communications. The persona of the analyst is a part or potential part of the analyst that is disclosed or revealed to the patient; it does not have to represent the entire truth of the analyst’s being, although it must represent something that the analyst is able to assume, if only in fantasy, as part of his or her self. I believe that many analysts already have an unarticulated working concept of the analytic persona that describes the self we step out of at the close of each session; this working concept also guides us as we determine appropriate boundaries. Psychoanalysts have long known that patients perceive us in a manner that is determined by their own character and neuroses. What has been focused on much less is the way in which the analyst—with honesty, integrity, and in a style consistent with his or her own character and neuroses—appropriately structures and manipulates the data about him- or herself to which the patient has access.
In the final three chapters, I explore aspects of psychoanalysis that contribute to its *je ne sais quoi*—the unknown magical center, the sine qua non, the unnamable. In “Beauty Treatment,” I expand on the theme of my awe and respect for the psychoanalytic process. I have come to think of psychoanalysis as a thing of beauty, approaching magic or alchemy in the way it can result in growth and transformation from a simple combination of two people talking in a room. What these people need to do is follow a set of guidelines for their conversations, with one of the two being responsible for both maintaining the integrity of those rules and determining when the rules would best be ignored or observed in a flexible and creative manner. Psychoanalysts enjoy doing analysis above and beyond its usefulness to patients; one reason for this lies in the aesthetic pleasure the analyst may derive from the analytic process. I discuss this aesthetic pleasure from the standpoint of meaning-making, communication, love, and professional craft. Patients may themselves seek in analysis a certain kind of beauty that is normally a byproduct of good enough empathy and communication. Using Kleinian theory, I examine the ways in which destructiveness and aggression may be understood in relationship to an aesthetic of psychoanalysis. I further propose that the aesthetic and ethical principles of psychoanalysis are indissolubly linked.

In “To Have and to Hold,” I reconsider familiar concepts (such as internalization, object representation, and object constancy) in light of the notion of having in order to facilitate creative thinking about how patients are or are not capable of experiencing analysts—and how analysts allow them to do so. The meaning of Other-having is examined from both a theoretical and a subjective point of view. I suggest that the sense of having an Other results from positive real experiences, and that the ability to have an Other is the sine qua non, the building block, of all mental functions that require empathy. We do not know exactly why good parenting works, although we have some good guesses. We do not know exactly why bad parenting is disastrous, although, again, we have some good guesses. Our guesses are most accurate, I think, at the extremes. It seems pretty clear that the match between parents and child is central to the working or not working of the process; likewise, it is also pretty clear that the match between analyst and patient is crucial.

As I described above, in my final chapter on chaos theory and the fractal structure of psychoanalysis, I propose a unified view of both clinical phenomena and theoretical schools in psychoanalysis. My point of departure is the aesthetic element in the psychoanalytic relationship, which I described
earlier. I suggest in my conclusion that this aesthetic may also reflect a
deep scientific and mathematic quality. I place the psychoanalytic rela-
tionship in the context of pattern-seeking and pattern formation that are
ubiquitous in nature. Touching on the theories of Gödel and Heisenberg,
I question the current pressure within the psychoanalytic field to present
our field as equivalent to the “hard” sciences. My argument is that we
do not need numbers, even though they might well be there underlying
everything we do. Mathematicians and scientists, though, find beauty in
their discoveries—and it is my hope that this book will encourage psycho-
analysts and psychotherapists to rediscover the beauty and essential loving
nature of our profession.
On the Mirror Stage with
Henry and Eliza
Or, Play-ing with Pygmalion in Five Acts

Cast of Characters
Eliza Doolittle
Henry Higgins
Colonel Pickering
Mrs. Pearce
Alfred Doolittle
Mrs. Higgins
Freddy
Sigmund Freud
D. W. Winnicott
Heinz Kohut
Jacques Lacan

Produced and Directed by
Susan S. Levine

Act I—Playbill
It is difficult to imagine that any patient seeking analysis does not have, on
some level, in some form, a fantasy, wishful or fearful, of being made or
remade by her analyst. Analysts have been advised to cultivate the “positive
discipline of eschewing memory or desire” (Bion 1983, 31) in each clinical
hour. If we have a “rule” must this not indicate that there exists a corre-
sponding desire that must be suppressed out of the analytic ego? As Gabbard
(1996, 41) writes: “Patients typically enter analysis with a conscious (or