

THE IDEALS OF THE ANALYST : THE COUNTERTRANSFERENCE

Like all human actions, psychoanalytic practice has its own ethics. Ethics are always linked to a moment of crisis, a conflict, a decision that results from the way the psychoanalyst takes responsibility for his psychoanalytic act. A strong ego ideal, as a result of Oedipal identifications, recognizes the otherness of the other and at the same time assumes responsibility for the more general humanistic values that constitute the right of every human being. However, in some circumstances that cause anxiety and/or depression in the analyst, the desire to return to the lost narcissistic paradise is strengthened. Then, the analyst's ego ideal regresses towards the ideal ego. The latter, with the cruelty and absoluteness that characterizes immature mental functions, demands from the analyst to be a "perfect" analyst and "blames" her/him when something deviates from ideal technique- thus, s/he is imaginatively "excluded", or "expelled" from the ideal and powerful group of psychoanalysts. Consequently, there is a risk that the desire to avoid expulsion will push the analyst towards metaphorical – and/or literal – abandonment of the analysand in favor of the attempt to conform to analytic ideals. In other words, the question arises: Will the analyst's ideal ego allow such a "technical error"? Or, will it prohibit him /her from attuning to the traumatic part of the analysand's psyche, thus keeping it outside the analytic process? On the other hand, the analyst's psychic availability for the reception of the pathological parts of the psyche of his analysands is not without risk. Conditions that favor regression to more archaic modes of functioning are observed in the analysis of extremely traumatized people when a countertransference enactment often takes place. The traumatic part of the analysand stirs up a corresponding traumatic part of the analyst, potentially creating a starting point for communication between the two. Supervision can encourage the continuation of analytic work with attention to the safety of the analyst first and foremost. Supervision, in this perspective, is directly related to the (inner) personal psychic work of the supervisee and constitutes a primarily analytic and secondarily educational process. In the desired case, the tolerance of the disconnected psychic element of the analysand will create connections of the disconnected parts of the psyche not only of the analysand but also of the analyst. This talk highlights the need to maintain the tension of the conflict between a) a vigilance over the processing of the enactment in order to limit its dangerous deviation beyond the boundaries and b) the unfolding of the enactment without being repressed prematurely as it potentially constitutes a way out of the "freezing" of the trauma.