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“DEVELOPMENTAL
LAG” IN THE
EVOLUTION OF
TECHNIQUE FOR
PSYCHOANALYSIS OF
NEUROTIC CONFLICT

PAUL GRAY, M.D.

AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT—IF NOT THE most important element—in comparing one analyst’s technical approach with that of another lies in identifying, in more than usual detail, the manner or choice of the analyst’s *forms of attention* during the conduct of the analysis. In a previous contribution (Gray, 1973) I examined and described elements of such focus—by the analyst and in due time by the analysand—which have evolved in the course of the developing practice and theory of analysis of the neuroses, or to express it more realistically, *might well be expected to have evolved*.

Anyone interested in the technique of classical analysis who has observed clinical presentations, experienced supervisions, both passively and actively, and has taken part in those activities both “at home” and away becomes aware of distinct variations in the way different analysts focus upon patients’ productions. Moments in our literature which provide suitable details further

This is an abridged version of a presentation given first to the Baltimore-D.C. Institute Graduate Seminar on Psychoanalytic Technique in November, 1978 and subsequently at Center for Advanced Psychoanalytic Studies (CAPS II), Princeton, and the Psychoanalytic Societies of Cleveland, Baltimore-D.C., Western New England, Denver, and New York.

convey an impression of the existence of such a spectrum of practice. Thanks to a mitigating "scientific tact," to borrow a phrase attributed to Freud (Sterba, 1978, p. 191), this state of affairs has usually resisted close scrutiny, and admissions of such variations are often accompanied by an attempted explanation that there are of course "differences in *style*."

It has for some time been my conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that the way a considerable proportion of analysts listen to and perceive their data has, in certain significant respects, *not* evolved as I believe it would have if historically important concepts concerned with the defensive functions of the ego had been wholeheartedly allowed their place in the actual application of psychoanalytic technique. Study of the literature reveals that although for the most part they are quite brief, observations concerning delay in applying ego theory to technique are not new (Hartmann, 1951; Sterba, 1953; Waelder, 1967; Stone, 1973). Rather than review them here, I shall include references to them at those places where I feel they have particular application.

In this paper I am proposing the hypothesis that the above observations are manifestations of what I call a *developmental lag* in fully assimilating and applying certain of the information that has been acquired about the ego's importance in the therapeutic effectiveness of the psychoanalytic method. I shall restrict the term "developmental lag" to that of a convenient metaphor, borrowed from the long familiar analytic terrain (rather than from the varied, more specialized contemporary uses of "developmental"). If in time it should appear to have a somewhat more legitimate place in this present context than as a mere metaphor, I shall not be disappointed.

The standard explanation for the relatively slow emergence of conceptualizations about the ego holds that it was a matter of precedence, governed by time, expressed usually as: in the beginning there was interest in the repressed *content*, and naturally it took time to come to perceive the nature of the ego in its complexity. If my thesis is valid, that there exists a universal

resistance to truly assimilating certain concepts concerning the ego, then the standard explanation, lending as it does an appearance of an even rate of development to our theories, may not be adequate. It also follows that Freud would have shared this resistance.

For the time being, I shall reserve judgment as to whether the evidence for and characteristics of this lag are the consequences of an organic limitation in the ego's capacity to perceive itself, or due to a potentially modifiable resistance, borne out of intrapsychic conflict. Since I lean toward the latter, more optimistic perspective, I shall examine some of the data which I take to support the hypothesis that there exists a developmental lag and offer some speculations concerning psychological motivations for such a lag.

I

The first significant and far-reaching step toward modern ego-involving psychoanalytic technique was abandoning the use of hypnotic *trance* (Freud, 1910). This step was decisive; classical analysis has not returned to the *full* use of hypnotic influence, primarily because "results were capricious and not lasting" (Freud, 1917b, p. 292). As we know, coinciding with and contributing to this development was the discovery that the patient's conscious, voluntary cooperation could be enlisted to overcome repression. Although the initial manifestation of this cooperation was essentially the patient's attempt to free-associate, it soon became technically important to call the patient's attention to the existence of a resistance to do so. A brief transition period occurred, during which a supplementary laying on of hands was part of the persuasive method; nevertheless, the trend was definitely in the direction of making more use of the relatively autonomous aspects of the patient's psyche, in effect avoiding bypassing important components of the ego.

Although there does not seem to have been an explicit formulation of these trends, I believe they allow for an inference

or hypothesis that *the therapeutic results of analytic treatment are lasting in proportion to the extent to which, during the analysis the patient's unbypassed ego functions have become involved in a consciously and increasingly voluntary co-partnership with the analyst.*¹

Coinciding with the phasing in of the knowledge that resistance in analysis was not directed primarily against recall of traumatic past events, but against the emergence into consciousness of live impulses—with their attendant wish or fantasy components—came a second major element affecting technique—the principle that the important work of analysis lay primarily in working with the patient's resistances. Part and parcel of this trend was a rather slow acknowledgment that resistances themselves, although not part of the repressed, were in fact unconscious. Because this recognition is often cited as the stimulus for the formation of the structural theory, the illusion is created that this recognition was a rather late “discovery.” Waelder (1967), in a discussion of *defense mechanisms*, points out that, “It was first in *The Ego and the Id* that Freud stated *clearly* that parts of the ego were unconscious too. . . .” but adds, in a footnote, “Against this it may be held that Freud referred to defense as unconscious in one of his earliest papers: ‘symptoms arose through the psychical mechanism of (unconscious) defence—that is, in an attempt to repress an incompatible idea . . .’ (1896, p. 162).” Waelder continues, “But the unconsciousness of defense was then neither explained nor elaborated and applied in theory and technique and Freud referred more than twenty-five years later to unconscious guilt feelings as a ‘new discovery’ (1923, p. 27). Thus, while the passage proves that the idea was present, or germinating, in Freud’s mind, it can hardly be maintained that it was already part of psychoanalysis as a common and communicable body of knowledge or theory” (Waelder, 1967, p. 354; italics added).

Waelder adds other evidence that, from the beginning, Freud showed the need to pay attention to the ego in work with

¹ Thereby including what in a perceptive and practical study by Gutheil and Havens (1979) is felicitously called a “rational alliance.”

patients. Waelder credits Anna Freud with the crucial step from the early aim in technique of *overcoming* the resistances, to the contemporary aim (I would say the *ostensible* contemporary aim) of understanding and learning how to control them. He does not comment on the subsequent irregularities or the inertia in the application of Anna Freud's innovation; nor does he refer to the possibility of any ubiquitous internal conflicts contributing to the slow emergence of ego applications to technique. The suggestion he offers is only that the relatively slow pace was influenced by the unappealingly teleological nature of the ego concepts. Waelder's observations indicate how Freud early on gave evidence of perceptions that might have led sooner than was the case to a greater attention to, and a more effective use of the ego in technique.

From 1913 to 1917 Freud's papers made more specific statements about psychoanalytic technique. They remain the most profound, incomparable contributions to the subject, yet there is evidence within them regarding the "lag." I believe there is specific importance to my thesis in Freud's style of referring to earlier ideas while simultaneously adding newly developed ones. It could be argued that, in general, Freud never entirely abandoned *any* of his previously held positions. He appears, at times, to have added new ideas somewhat in the manner of the miraculous archeological "dig."

Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past—an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest ones. [He then lists many co-existing structures.] And the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view or the other [Freud, 1930, p. 70].

While trying to find special implications in certain incon-

sistencies and ambiguities in Freud's statements relevant to technique, one also ought to keep in mind the sometimes offered explanation that Freud hesitated to write about technique because he wished to avoid putting such knowledge in the hands of unqualified individuals. Could this have contributed to an illusion of lag? I believe a more significant element is involved than either a reluctance to abandon a cherished position² or some measure of restraint in spelling out details of technique. I believe that Freud was in fact *ambivalent about the trend of involving more of the patient's ego during the analysis*—a trend in technique for which he was, of course, responsible.

Freud (1913), in discussing the nature of communications to the patient and speaking of sources of information about what exists in the patient's repressed unconscious, says, "It is not difficult for a skilled analyst to read the patient's secret wishes plainly between the lines of his complaints and the story of his illness." However, Freud condemns analysts who through early direct interpretations "arouse . . . violent opposition in [the patient]"; further, "As a rule the therapeutic effect will be nil; but the deterring of the patient from analysis will be final." Of himself, he states, "In former years I often had occasion to find that the premature communication of a solution brought the treatment to an untimely end, on account not only of the resistances which it thus suddenly awakened, but also of the relief which the solution brought with it." He includes an apparently unequivocal precept: "Even in the later stages of analysis one must be careful not to give a patient the solution of a symptom or the translation of a wish until he is already so close to it that he has only one short step more to make in order to get hold of the explanation for himself" (pp. 140-141, *passim*). Here the trend to work with material near the surface is so clear that the recommended interpretations even bear resemblance to what Bibring (1954) was eventually to call a "clarification."

² I am aware of Kuhn's (1970) illuminating account of the general difficulty encountered by scientists in paradigm change. I believe that the difficulties encountered by scientists in accepting paradigms that deal with dynamically unconscious elements compound those described by Kuhn.

Freud's main point here is the futility, and often harm to analysis, of an emphasis on the imparting of "knowledge" to patients about their repressed unconscious. He nails this point down by implying similarity between technical reliance on direct interpretations of the analyst's impressions of the repressed contents and that of telling the patient factual information about traumas, which has been gleaned from relatives. Following a clinical illustration, Freud concludes he had "no choice but to cease attributing to the fact of knowing, in itself, the importance that had previously been given to it and to place the emphasis on the *resistances*. . . . Conscious knowledge was . . . powerless against those resistances" (italics added). Freud then overrides the trend he has just been espousing by adding, "For the sake of complete accuracy, however, it should be added that the communication of repressed material to the patient's consciousness is nevertheless not without effect. It does not produce the hoped-for result of putting an end to the symptoms; but it has other consequences. At first it arouses resistances, but then, when these have been overcome, it sets up a process of thought in the course of which the expected influencing of the unconscious recollection eventually takes place" (p. 142). In an inconsistency here, Freud has maintained room for his previous approach of establishing by interpretation a "record" or impression, in consciousness, of what is presumed to exist as a separate record in the repressed unconscious (Freud, 1910, p. 42), and in so doing, he again gives credibility to "deep" interpretations.³

Later, Freud (1914) indicates that making interpretations "from the patient's free associations, what he failed to remember" is a technique of the past. Now the analyst ". . . contents himself with studying whatever is present . . . on the *surface* of the patient's mind, and he employs the art of interpretation mainly for the purpose of recognizing the resistances which

³ By "deep," I mean here interpretations of repressed unconscious material which present the patient "with thoughts that he had so far shown no signs of possessing. . ." (Freud, 1909, p. 104).

appear there, and making them conscious to the patient. From this there results a new sort of division of labour: the doctor uncovers the resistances which are unknown to the patient; when these have been got the better of, the patient often relates the forgotten situations and connections without any difficulty” (p. 147; italics added). The “two-records” approach and deep interpretations have apparently now been laid to rest. Strachey’s classic contribution in 1934 was a brilliant attempt to summarize and synthesize almost everything up to that time pertaining to the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis. It contained many technical implications and recapitulates Freud’s progress beyond the earlier technical practices of approaching the id more directly. Strachey referred to the early approach of *naming* in order to establish a registration in the consciousness of an otherwise repressed trend of “objectionable” thought, stating that, “It was only if these two impressions could be ‘brought together’ (whatever exactly that might mean) that the unconscious trend would be ‘really’ made conscious.” He then reviewed the progress made in giving more attention to the resistance, indicating that “. . . it was at this point that the *practical* lesson emerged: as analysts our main task is *not so much to investigate the objectionable unconscious trend as to get rid of the patients’ resistance to it*” (p. 276; italics added).

Despite an extraordinary capacity for grasping the extent to which various lines of psychoanalytic thought had progressed at that time, Strachey failed to make the decisive observations Anna Freud made soon after. I think that his failure to do so was another measure of the elusiveness of the applications to technique of the pertinent ego concepts.

Hartmann (1951) provides one of the most explicit statements in the literature on the existence of a lack of integration between psychoanalytic theory and psychoanalytic technique. His central point, “the lag is. . . on the side of technique [rather] than on the side of theory and of psychological insight” (p. 143), refers to insight about the ego. Apropos Freud’s technical papers under discussion above, Hartmann regards the occurrence

of Freud's explicit attention to the priority of working with resistance "without at first realizing all its implications for ego psychology" as indicating one time when theory lagged behind technique. It is true that Freud's conclusion that the analyst contents himself with studying what is on the surface of the patient's mind, and uses interpretation mainly for dealing with resistance was to be conceptually enhanced with the eventual formation of the structural theory. However, his concurrent theory provided adequate support for this technical advance. Freud (1915) states, "indeed . . . if [an idea] is not inhibited by the censorship, it regularly advances from one position [*Ucs.*] to the other [*Cs.*]" (p. 175). Here is a theoretical concept sufficient to support any developing priority for analytic attention to the resistances.

Twenty-three years after the important 1914 technical statement, however, Freud resurrects the earlier approach in his paper, "Constructions" (1937b), when he describes communicating to the patient extensive reconstructions to create an impression in the patient's consciousness "so that it may work upon him" (p. 260). It is almost as though the refinements of ego analysis, which by then had been elaborated from Freud's own observations by Wilhelm Reich, Anna Freud, Richard Sterba, Otto Fenichel, and others, had never taken place. To my knowledge, only Stone (1973) has taken notice of this major inconsistency, when he spoke of "Freud's early, never fully relinquished biphasic process" (p. 47).⁴

Since those *resistances*, which in Freud's writings later became the mechanisms of *defense*, had early been assigned to some version of the ego, it follows that whenever he did give precedence to working on the resistance he was of course speaking of working on or dealing with the ego. Many of his descriptions or recommendations sound almost modern (i.e., post Anna Freud), if one *fails to realize* that Freud was not speaking of *analyzing* the ego in the manner eventually conceptualized.

⁴ Stone refers to a pre-Anna Freud "cultural lag in the sphere of resistance analysis. . . ."

To “work upon,” to “overcome,” to “deal with” the resistances, involves technical measures that are often different from those used in *analyzing* defenses. Yet Freud was unequivocal in his recognition that the key to effective, lasting therapeutic results lay in reversing the pathological alterations that the defense mechanisms had wrought on the ego. This is illustrated by his observation: “Indeed we come finally to understand that the overcoming of these resistances is *the essential function of analysis and is the only part of our work that gives us an assurance that we have achieved something with the patient*” (Freud, 1917b, p. 291; italics added).

What was it that Freud, if he was not *analyzing* the defenses, had primarily relied on to influence the ego? I have touched on the persistence of the biphasic technical device of interpretatively establishing “two records.” There is a more fundamental factor that should be explored.

Dropping full-scale hypnosis or hypnotic trance from psychoanalytic technique did not result in the exclusion of suggestion—a partial hypnosis⁵—to *influence* the patient. Just as strong positive transference was the earlier vehicle for the trance-hypnosis which entirely excluded the ego’s participation, so positive transference became the vehicle for *influencing* the patient’s participation in the analytic process. The *authoritarian* element, although applied with a different emphasis, was nevertheless preserved. In lieu of the not yet developed technique for *analyzing* the defenses, Freud retained the force available for “influencing” and “overcoming” them, namely the power of suggestion: no longer utilizing the trance, but using the related device of relying on the *ego-disarming* quality of the positive transference. Freud (1917b) acknowledged this:

If the patient is to fight his way through . . . resistances which we have *uncovered* . . . he is in need of a powerful stimulus which will influence the decision in the *sense we*

⁵ Both Ferenczi and Bernheim regarded hypnosis as only a form of suggestion. For a full consideration of the matter, see Gill and Brenman (1961).

desire. . . . At this point what turns the scale . . . is . . . simply and solely his relation to the doctor. In so far as his transference bears a 'plus' sign, it clothes the doctor with *authority* and is transformed into *belief* in his communications. . ." [p. 445; italics added]. The change which is decisive for a favourable outcome is the elimination of repression. . . . This is made possible by the alteration of the ego which is *accomplished under the influence of the doctor's suggestion* [p. 455; italics added].

Prior to a more detailed grasp of the ego's mechanisms in its defensive role, the continued use of a partially hypnotic influence may well have been a necessary technical adjunct. Judging from the last quotation, the use of suggestion to overcome resistances appears to have continued for Freud, and has to the present time continued for many analysts as an accepted part of their work, giving further evidence of the lag in integrating knowledge of the ego into psychoanalytic technique. I would not dispute that suggestive influence may be to some degree inevitable in any human interaction, but I am referring to dependence on it and a fostering of it in the analytic situation. Many practitioners who may not be particularly interested in sorting out therapeutic factors in their analytic work and who do not knowingly use suggestion, might object to any implication that they were doing so. However, the analyst who makes interpretative remarks referring to unconscious matters of which the patient cannot become aware—instead of referring to ". . . a preconscious derivative which can be recognized as such by the patient *merely by turning his attention toward it*" (Fenichel, 1941, p. 18; italics added)—has left the patient to take the interpretation "on faith" and is still making use of the "two-record," biphasic method. This is an authoritative approach that relies heavily on suggestion to influence rather than on analysis of the resistance. Recent critical examinations of some of the processes and factors subsumed or hidden under references to "therapeutic alliance" (Brenner, 1979) should help clarify this little-discussed area of persistent hypnotic-suggestive influences in analytic technique.

Clearly, not only Freud had a tendency to draw back from fully applying to technique the acquired knowledge of the ego's role in attaining therapeutic action. Recurrent observations stressing therapeutic advantages in giving the ego a more prominent position in the overall task of making the unconscious analytically conscious are often treated as if they were discoveries or new points of view rather than elaborations on parts of Freud's own earlier observations. Memories of references to the ego's unconscious defensive activities tend, with time, to undergo retroactive blurring or distortion, so that a rereading of some of the "classic" contributions on the subject can produce some surprises. Reich is an early contributor among those associated with the uneven emergence in analytic technique of priority for "defense before drive" analysis. Reich's contribution is generally remembered for his rather extreme concept of "armoring" and the rather heavy-handed technical measures involved, matters which are in fact largely found only in the *later* part of his classic paper, "Character Analysis" (1928); there the difficulties he speaks of encountering, with patients we would likely include today in the categories of narcissistic character disorders or narcissistic personality disorders, are formidable to be sure. However, his thoughtful and detailed suggestions pertaining to the analysis of defenses of the more clearly neurotic conditions very closely resemble many of Anna Freud's eventual observations. Anna Freud was certainly not unmindful of Reich's early contributions. However, that Freud himself does not once mention Reich's early, reasonably presented technical recommendations may be difficult to explain entirely in relation to Reich's later fall to unacceptability with his eventual analytically foreign ideas. I am of course implying that there was something about the nature of ideas that gave such priority to resistance *analysis* that Freud treated with reservations.

Anna Freud's (1936) monograph, with its clarity and detail regarding the ego's function in relation to the instinctual drives—in particular during the analytic process—went beyond

Reich in elaborating the analysis of the transferences of defense. Only one of the several early reviewers, Ernst Kris (1938), captured the essence of her insights and recommendations. He referred to them as "something *entirely new*, not only in point of form, but in the penetration of the material." He alone drew attention to her calling for "a change in the method of observation" (p. 139; italics added) to provide a more effective technical approach. The phrase Anna Freud used was, "change the focus of attention" (p. 20). An even, hovering attention, tuned via the analyst's unconscious primarily to the drive derivatives, was no longer sufficient to satisfy the technical requirements. Kris not only made note of her new way of analytic listening, but in a unique and prophetic observation anticipated that "the *change in the mode of observation might pass unnoticed*" by other analysts (Kris, 1938, p. 139; italics added). Unfortunately, he failed to comment on why analysts might be so resistant to this development. However, he continued throughout his career to implicitly support the increased importance of ego analysis by a deemphasis on the therapeutic value of highly specific reconstructive interpretations (Kris, 1956).

Almost twenty years later Sterba bore witness to the accuracy of Kris's early prophesy. Sterba is among those few who openly recognized and accepted the greater technical demand imposed on the analyst when there is more explicit perception and interpretation of the patient's ego. His early contributions (1934, 1940) indicate his consistent interest in this area. He may have anticipated some of Anna Freud's recommendations. Later, Sterba expressed concern over the shallowness of many of the contemporary analysts' comprehension and use of Anna Freud's recommendations:

It is my impression the importance of this newest addition to our science has not been sufficiently recognized and that it has not yet penetrated the thinking and therapeutic technique of most analysts. It is easy to understand why this is so. We are still very much impressed, even fascinated by the id contents which psychoanalysis enables us to dis-

cover. The working of the ego is so inconspicuous and silent that we are hardly aware of it. . . . We never can catch the unconscious defense activities at work; we can only reconstruct them from the result. While one can listen with the "third ear" to the utterances of the id, it needs a most refined instrument to register the working of Anna Freud's studies, although often lip service is paid to them. "Mechanism of defense" is used glibly to indicate the advanced state of one's analytic thinking and "identification with the aggressor" is mentioned in order to display consideration of the ego.

It has been my observation that it is a most difficult task to teach students to pay attention to these mute and subterranean workings of the ego. Even the experienced analyst must constantly exercise self-discipline in order to remain aware of the ego's defense measures in therapy. . . . I believe it will require a great deal of time and effort on the part of training analysts to make Anna Freud's discoveries of the silent activities of the ego penetrate general analytic thinking and improve psychoanalytic technique so that it will consist of id-plus-ego analysis applied alternately [Sterba, 1953, pp. 17-18].

Sterba could validly make these same observations *today*.

We can see that among the internal factors at work in the slow adoption of technical modifications, such as Anna Freud describes, are numerous misperceptions of what is meant by *defense* or *ego analysis*. One of the more common is expressed, "Of course analyzing the defenses is important, but one must analyze the drives also." This perspective fails to recognize that to observe a defense—much less to demonstrate its existence and motive to the analysand—is, with rare exception, not possible without having perceived and referred to the id derivative against which it is directed. Another distortion: "Interpret defense before drive" is frequently rendered as, "At the beginning of the analysis one is concerned with defenses, but then one gets down to the *real* analysis"—another example of how knowl-

edge of the ego in neurosis slips away. It is as if Freud had not observed, the patient "meets us with a violent and tenacious resistance, *which persists throughout the whole length of the treatment*" (Freud, 1917a, p. 286; italics added).

There have been singular attempts to correct such distortions, notably by Fenichel (1941), who demonstrates so clearly that reference to the defense, and then to the drive derivative defended against, typically takes place within a single interpretation. Appropriate defense analysis does gradually strengthen the ego and bring change in the intensity or predominant form of defense. However, to conceptualize a technique which after a while would not have to work with the ego appears either illusory or implies the use of a degree of hypnotic-suggestive influence which would prevent the ego from full participation in the analytic process. Freud's (1915) observation, "... we shall . . . assume that to every transition from one system to that immediately above it (that is, every advance to a higher stage of psychical organization) there corresponds a new censorship" (p. 192) has rarely been grasped as a recognition of the hierarchical concept of the defensive functioning of the ego during the analyzing process. It is a theoretical point that when taken seriously guides one to work technically from the side of the ego throughout the analysis. Freud (1913) came very close to expressing such a conclusion. He obviously recognized the important distinction of the evolving technical approach from that of the early authoritative id-content interpretive emphasis:

If the patient starts his treatment under the auspices of mild and unpronounced positive transference it makes it possible at first for him to unearth his memories *just as he would under hypnosis*, and during this time his pathological symptoms themselves are quiescent. But if, as the analysis proceeds, the transference becomes hostile or unduly intense and therefore in need of repression, remembering at once gives way to acting out.⁶ From then onwards the

⁶ Here Freud uses "acting out" in its original form, i.e., within the analytic setting.

resistances determine the sequence of the material which is to be repeated. *The patient brings out of the armoury of the past the weapons with which he defends himself* against the progress of the treatment—weapons which we must wrest from him one by one. . . . We have . . . made it clear . . . that we must treat his illness, not as an event of the past, but as a present-day force [Freud, 1914, p. 151; italics added].

Fenichel refers to the general inertia in translating observations regarding resistance into technical development. He stated, "One of the stimuli to the development of so-called 'analytic ego psychology' was insight into the fact that *resistance* [author's italics] analysis is the real therapeutic agent . . . the volume of the literature concerning the newly gained psychological insight is incomparably greater than the number of papers which seek to *utilize this insight to contribute to an improvement of psychoanalytic technique*" (Fenichel, 1941, p. 106; italics added). In addition to referring to Anna Freud's work, he spoke of one paper by Nina Searl (1936) which attempted to "clarify what it means to *analyze* a resistance in contradistinction to refuting a resistance."⁷ Since then it continues to be just as rare to find papers specifically concerned with that issue.

Freud's treatment of the developments in defense analysis in the mid-thirties deserves special attention. When Anna Freud spoke in Philadelphia in 1973, she said she had prepared her (1936) monograph in honor of her father's eightieth birthday. She indicated it was to be a summary of her father's ideas on the subject. Kris and others would of course see it otherwise. Freud himself made reference to this work in only two of his papers. First, there was a brief comment in anticipation: "An investigation is at this moment being carried on close at hand

⁷ Why this gifted writer's contribution, with its many helpful guides to understanding some of the principles and techniques of defense analysis has remained virtually untouched is a mystery and is probably germane to my thesis. In a sensitive tribute to another "neglected classic" of Searl's, Scott (1976) suggests that there may be parallels with the development of Wilhelm Reich's career.

which is devoted to the study of [the ego's] methods of defence: my daughter, the child analyst, is writing a book upon them" (Freud, 1936, p. 245).

After the monograph appeared, Freud had time to write six more papers. In only one of these—"Analysis Terminable and Interminable" (1937a)—does he speak of her work (pp. 236, 238), seemingly crediting her with the essential ideas she expresses. Section V of Freud's (1937a) paper, if read carefully, reveals evidence of *a change in Freud's way of regarding the analyst's approach to observing ego resistance* as compared with the approach that characterized some of the important developments within his outstanding early technical statements. Let us compare his earlier and later comments.

"The patient's resistance is of very many sorts, *extremely subtle and often hard to detect*" (Freud, 1917a, p. 287, italics added). This opinion is quite in keeping with Anna Freud's eventual description of the ego's defenses, activities so subtle that they "can only be reconstructed" (A. Freud, 1936, p. 2) after the mechanism has taken place. And this is in keeping with Sterba's remarks that "it needs a most refined instrument to register the working of the ego defenses" (Sterba, 1953, pp. 17-18). Later, however, we find Freud (1937a) saying of resistances, "The analyst recognizes them more easily than he does the hidden material in the id" (p. 239).

The most revealing evidence that at this time in his life Freud did not see eye to eye with Anna Freud's clarifying and probably original concepts concerning the technique of defense analysis—more exactly, the analysis of transference of defense—lies in his discussion of the "alterations of the ego" which have been brought about by the mechanisms of defense. Here is where he elaborates upon the idea of "resistance against the uncovering of resistances." Freud had said for so long that mechanisms of defense are automatic, dynamically unconscious activities of the ego, that to some extent his phrase was redundant. However, Freud uses the phrase in the context of discussing massive increases in resistance on the part of the patient when the analyst approaches *dealing* with the resistances:

One might suppose that it would be sufficient to *treat them* [the ego's defenses] *like portions of the id* [italics added] and, by making them conscious, bring them into connection with the rest of the ego. . . . But what happens is this. . . . The ego ceases to support our efforts at uncovering the id . . . , negative transferences may now gain the upper hand and completely annul the analytic situation. The patient now regards the analyst as no more than a stranger who is making disagreeable demands on him, and he behaves towards him exactly like a child and does not believe everything he says. If the analyst tries to explain to the patient one of the distortions made by him for the purpose of defence, and to correct it, he finds him uncomprehending and *inaccessible to sound arguments* [italics added]. Thus we see that there is a resistance against the uncovering of resistances . . . [Freud, 1937a, p. 239].

I would argue that what Freud describes is a classic example of an analytic patient who has experienced an interpretation that has been too "deep." Freud has described the reactions of an ego that has had to cope with the threatened emergence of frightening degrees of id derivatives too soon. This is, in fact, one of the very problems that led Freud (1913) earlier to recognize and emphasize the value of working from the surface and withholding interpretation of symptoms or wishes until the patient "is already so close to it that he has only one short step more to make in order to get hold of the explanation for himself" (p. 140). This trend led eventually to the contemporary concept of the ego.

Following *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), Freud's interest in detailed attention to the *nature*—not the existence—of resistance appears to have diminished. As described above, he later shows an apparent recurrence of a predilection for the earlier "two-impressions" interpretative approach, which depended strongly on the authoritative, hypnotic-suggestive influencing potential of transference in overcoming resistance.

Individuals influenced by Freud during his time have

shown that they could evolve differing technical approaches, offer theory to support their approaches, and yet maintain that they were strictly following Freud's guidelines. Reich (in his early phase), Anna Freud, Sterba, and Fenichel all chose to emphasize rather similar perspectives, clearly deriving from certain of Freud's contributions. Nunberg, also as a bona fide Freudian, developed a technical and theoretical approach that differs in important respects from these others. He placed less confidence in an ego-analytic approach intended to facilitate and develop in the analysand an autonomously cooperating and participating observing ego. On the contrary, Nunberg (1937) continued to take the persistence of the hypnotic type of influence as the necessary component of the analytic process:

For . . . making conscious what has been reproduced in repetition [in analysis], the patient obviously needs the cooperation of . . . that part of his ego which in the transference is siding with the analyst. In obedience to the analyst's request to remember—to repeat—experiences from the past, the patient's ego braces itself for the readmission of the repressed into consciousness. . . . *The ego's reaction is similar to that which occurs in hypnosis, where, in obedience to our compliance with the hypnotist, even unpleasurable suggestions are accepted and carried out.* The obedience is reproduced owing to libidinal ties belonging to the oedipus complex [p. 169; italics added].

Nunberg, appearing to follow a practice of facilitating removal of resistance by authoritative reinforcement is described by former supervisees as having encouraged the use of direct, deep interpretations for resolution of certain near-panic anxiety eruptions.⁸

⁸ Friedman (1969) examines the "paradoxes" created by the analytic approach that attempts to eliminate transferences while regarding them as simultaneously necessary for the alliance involved in the analytic work itself. He perceptively describes the approaches that explicitly regard the hypnotic factor as essential, and compares them with points of view that increasingly emphasize the use of rational aspects of the ego.

On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Anna Freud's monograph, Arlow (Panel, 1967) raised important questions related to the fate of the defense theory over the previous three decades, and inquired as to why there was such a lack of emphasis on *psychic conflict*. Lustman attributed the move "away from a focus on conflict, anxiety and danger. . ." to the emphasis on developmental psychology. In another panel eleven years later, "revisiting" the monograph, Arlow, by raising some of the same questions, was able again to underscore the need for better scrutiny of this area.

II

I borrowed the phrase "developmental lag" to characterize a puzzling reluctance to apply certain ego concepts to the method of psychoanalytic technique. I shall now take further advantage of the metaphor and examine the implied "conflicts" in terms of particular "fixations" at earlier periods of development in analytic theory and practice. I shall also consider the resulting "resistances" to progress in this area in the face of certain burdensome consequences encountered by the analyst who makes ego analyzing a constant part of his technique. Selected are only four so designated fixations: (1) fascination with the id; (2) predilection for an authoritative analytic stance; (3) preoccupation with external reality, including past as external reality; and (4) counter-resistance to transference affects and impulses.

Fascination with the Id

Analysts are often reluctant to give up or dilute the degree of gratification they so commonly experience when they seek, perceive, and name drive derivatives of another human being. In analytic practice, when this source of the analyst's gratification becomes conspicuously intense, we ordinarily recognize it as some form of countertransference or perhaps a limitation of the analyst. With appropriate regulation, it may become one of

the sublimations in analytic work, through the effective resonating use of the analyst's unconscious as he senses instinctual derivatives of a patient. This is not to suggest that there is anything inherently wrong with gratification experienced in connection with applying analytic technique. I am suggesting, however, that the analyst who invests a greater amount of his attention to the non- (or very much less) instinctualized ego activities must significantly sacrifice some of the above source of gratification in the work. Sterba, as recounted earlier, reminded us of the analyst's being "impressed, even fascinated, by id contents." Stone (1973) refers to "the strange magnetism which the verbal statement of unconscious content exerts on analysts. . ." (p. 47).

The common tendency to find gratification in naming id content raises a question about the varieties of sublimation characteristic for different analysts and which contribute to their technical preferences. Has this naming been a rather universal tendency, not only because of its frequent therapeutic (but perhaps not always lasting) result, but also because in itself it is an instinctually gratifying working experience to which would-be analysts have traditionally been drawn?⁹ If so, what are the sublimations that may serve a greater attention to ego observation? A supervisee who was keenly perceptive of instinctual derivatives—a good "third ear"—had the intellectual and imaginative capacity of also comprehending ego defense details, but was bored by them. He found it difficult to resist giving direct interpretations, even in the face of an observable increase in the patient's resistance or of a patient's passive or masochistically motivated complying confirmation of such an interpretation. Driven to improvisation, I drew on my knowledge that the supervisee was an excellent chess player—a game where his capacity for restraint regularly took precedence over im-

⁹ Sterba (1941) in a discussion on irresponsible interpretations illustrates how common the tendency is among those who have even an elementary knowledge of the unconscious to become "wild analysts outside of the analytic situation," suggesting that a compulsion toward "naming" of id content is an easily aroused trait.

mediate gratification. I openly discussed with him the question of sublimation in relation to his priorities in interpretation. I suggested he try to let himself be as confident with a more systematic ego-including analytic "game," as he was about his chess moves, hoping that he might thus find that aspect of the work less boring and derive a different kind of sublimatory gratification, even though sacrificing his thrill in direct id interpretations. My efforts were only partially successful.

Predilection for an Authoritative Analytic Stance

Analytic neutrality is a more complex task than is often recognized. The achievement of an amoral attitude toward the hourly productions of an analysand and the avoidance of personal reactions to transference impulses are requirements that are taken for granted. The sacrifice of gratification from authoritative experiences is another matter. Such gratification may reasonably accompany many legitimate and effective forms of psychotherapy. Given a dichotomy between the role of authoritarian, hypnosis-related suggestion and defense analysis in modifying resistance, it is tempting to speculate that former hypnotists might be biased in their eventual choice of a technical approach. Both Freud and Nunberg began their psychological careers as hypnotists; both were profoundly impressed by the response of the hypnotic subject. The power to manipulate another's psyche can provide a strong narcissistic gratification. However, since there are experienced hypnotists who also strive in their psychoanalytic work for nonsuggestive approaches to resistance, a hypothesis of hypnotist predilections as accounting for the exercise of an authoritative technical approach does not seem to be supportable.

It is not only the "playing God" type of authoritarian role that must be sacrificed to a neutrality which allows an optimal approach to analytic material from the side of the ego's defensive activity. I have in mind something closer to the authoritarianism inherent in a parental role—even a benign parental

role. I am not speaking of the analyst who gives interpretations in a dogmatic, commanding, or authoritative tone. I am referring to the analyst who, in effect, says, even gently, "What you really feel (mean, etc.) is such-and-such, because I perceive it that way," or, "this is the way it is." It is an analyst who does not invite the analysand to use his observing ego to share the analyst's perception of the data. Such an analyst is apt to be experienced by the patient as an authority, not as an observer who treats the patient's observing ego as of potentially equal value to his own. Treating a patient's ego with the respect of equality obviously does not mean that the patient will always hear it that way; the transference may have it otherwise. But if the patient's eventual perception of a kindly scientific neutrality is prevented by an actual authoritative approach, the patient will be handicapped from achieving the eventual measure of autonomous self-analytic skill of which it is potentially capable. The benignly authoritative roles which I believe are inimical to effective *analysis* of defenses may of course have useful, even essential, functions in the intensive treatment of many patients for whom consistent defense analysis would be too burdensome (i.e., many patients with narcissistic disorders, borderline conditions, some very severe neuroses, most children, and many adolescents).

Patients have various motivations for trying to keep the analyst in an authoritative position. Usually these are recognized and dealt with as transference phenomena. Let us select one such motivation that may elude transference recognition and hence make "rational alliance" with the patient's observing ego difficult, and in some instances impossible. That is a *tendency or need for incorporative, or internalizing types of identification*. Although Strachey's (1934) classic paper offered a model for therapeutic action that tried to integrate much of the analytic theory and practice of that period, Klein's influence appears to me to have resulted in a paradigm, limited and limiting in its application.¹⁰ His description of the gradual replacement of the pri-

¹⁰ I believe that the resemblance between Strachey's description of the process of "mutative" interpretations and Kohut's (1971) "internalizing transmutation" is more than superficial.

mitive superego by the incorporation of the contemporary image of the analyst was to a significant degree modeled on the process of hypnosis. The essential difference was that his "mutative" process involved repeated, small increments of introjection, as compared with the massive incorporation in hypnosis. It is likely that therapeutic action by internalization comes about in many valuable analyses, but to consider this as the ultimate therapeutic factor for *all* analyses significantly limits the development of a technical approach which could offer greater opportunity to many patients for more autonomous ego growth. Fenichel, in his reply to Strachey's original paper, said, ". . . I think he uses the concept of 'introjection' in a wider sense than is legitimate. When I recognize that what someone says is right, it does not necessarily mean that I have introjected him" (1937, p. 24).

If one is to provide opportunity through psychoanalysis for therapeutic change not due primarily to internalizing processes, what elements of change can we rely on? For the time being, I suggest that the essential cognitive and experiential factors involved in such an analysis of neurotic conflict can conveniently be categorized and understood within the concept of *learning process*.¹¹ This is cognitive process, in respect to the patient's *comprehension* of the analyst's observations concerning the ego and id aspects of the neurotic conflicts; and an experiential process, in respect to the patient's discovery that his ego can *tolerate and control* the increments of drive derivatives.¹²

Although some patients, pathologically and defensively, react more than others to the analyst with incorporations, probably all show some regressive tendency in this direction. To the extent that the analyst presents himself, through his remarks, in an authoritative or parentlike manner, the nonincorporative learning modes of acquiring insight are significantly compro-

¹¹ See Meissner (1973) for distinctions between identification and learning process.

¹² See Hatcher (1973) on "experiential" and "reflective" self-observation in relation to insight.

mised. The analyst who makes direct interpretations of id derivations without approaching them through the defense relies primarily on the suggestive power of the positive transference to overcome resistance. In addition, he risks moving in the direction of "wild analysis" (A. Freud, 1969, p. 34). In so doing, he facilitates the internalizing processes and limits the patient's opportunity to learn with the fullest possible participation of the ego. Some patients have incorporative tendencies and needs which may well exclude change through acquisition of significant areas of insight; therapeutic changes have to depend on what is possible. However, the clinical impression of what is "needed" by the patient is often slanted by that part of one's natural parental potential to take some satisfaction in being incorporated by someone who is in one's "care."

I invite us to reflect briefly on the spectrum of contemporary "wider scope" modifications or "alternative approaches," sometimes with authentic, sometimes with ostensible psychoanalytic aims. Most of these have offered technical recommendations designed to contribute therapeutic factors considered essential to the treatment process. Almost without exception these models provide aspects of parental roles. Some, in addition, include the specific importance of a traditional aspect of "the doctor." One thing that they appear to share is a reliance on interpersonal influences. I do not argue against the validity of these therapeutic contributions. I do believe, however, that in each instance the theoretical formulation has been based on a particular category of patients.

It is within the experience of most analysts to work with patients for whom the technical efforts must take into consideration that the problems to be dealt with extend beyond neurotic conflict; not infrequently, the therapeutic objectives must accordingly be modified. The approaches which I referred to above contain valued sources of guidance in providing such modification where it may be needed. Those patients whose egos *are* suited to an approach that does not require interpersonal therapeutic ingredients should not have to be deprived of the opportunity for greater autonomy.

Preoccupation with External Reality, Including Past as External Reality

It is common clinical knowledge that some people, when confronted with a therapeutic approach that asks them to look inward, become “reality-bound.” I suggest that this defensive method, in less blatant forms, plays a greater role in psychotherapeutic interactions, and in analysis in particular, than is ordinarily recognized. Freud (1917a, 1917b, p. 368) speaks of manifestations of this problem regularly encountered in analysis: He observes that if a patient is confronted with the fact that he is expressing things that contain fantasy material, “his interest in pursuing the subject further suddenly diminishes in an undesirable fashion. He *too* [italics added] wants to experience realities and despises every thing that is merely ‘imaginary.’” It is at this point that Freud, after expressing the technical dilemma of when to choose to direct the patient’s attention to the intrapsychic importance of his productions, makes his oft quoted statement, “The phantasies possess *psychical* as contrasted with *material* reality, and we gradually learn to understand that *in the world of the neuroses it is psychical reality which is the decisive kind.*”

Freud is explicit about the technical difficulty of assisting patients to contemplate psychic productions—whether they be fantasies, memories, or abstractions—as a *reality*, as an *immediate event* to be observed. In saying “He too,” Freud appears to recognize a corresponding problem in the analyst. I do not believe he specifically approached this issue again.¹³ With the subsequent development of clearer concepts regarding the ego’s defensive mechanisms, the task of focusing on intrapsychic realities could become more comprehensive, though even more demanding than before.

A common challenge in analytic focusing is in having to

¹³ Freud (1899) elaborated on the principle of other uses of memory, beyond those of accurately recording the past, in his early paper on “Screen Memories.”

observe that what is manifestly a recollection has a function separate from memory, of *immediate* importance—an intrapsychic event—in the associative stream of thought. Let me add to previously mentioned reasons for this, that developmentally and because of continued wishes that it be so, memory and fantasy are closely linked. With the ordinary occurrence of something being recalled, the individual experiences the phenomenon as a *reference* to something that happened in the past, something that is perceived as a former, recent or distant past reality, *external* to the intrapsychic here-and-now. Analysts know, however, that their patients' memories may serve other purposes. The memory may, for instance, be of primary importance as an "association," because of a topic or detail within it; it may serve as a displacement away from the analyst or someone else; it may come to the patient's mind as a screen; it may serve as a source of nostalgic gratification, etc. In brief, what has taken place with the appearance in consciousness of a memory is an immediate, internal *psychic event* which potentially can be perceived by both analyst and patient in several ways. Although analysts do know this very well, there is nevertheless, and for a variety of reasons, a great temptation to yield to the natural tendency of giving memory a priority in its function as referring to *past external reality*, over its role as an *internal event of immediate intrapsychic importance* (see Gray, 1973). Analytic supervision provides endless opportunities to observe analysts presenting process notes, during which, unwittingly, they drop their perceptions of memories in the material as psychic events, turn to the ordinary way that memories are listened to, and speak of the external events to which the memories refer. The analyst lapses into telling the supervisor what the patient "did" in his daily life rather than what the patient remembered and verbalized only *manifestly* referring to such events. To the extent that this tendency on the analyst's part predominates over focusing on the occurrence of memories as a part of the mind's display of activity as it struggles with the ever-present task of ego-id conflict, the resistance is thereby supported. Fur-

ther, if it is a tendency that is tacitly (or passively) encouraged by the supervisor, a counter-resistance in the analyst will be supported. What is not as apparent is a tenacious attraction to this tendency, conveniently viewed here as a "fixation."

When memory is experienced in the ordinary way, there is a fleeting illusion of nearness to the particular moment in the external world that has been recalled. We recognize sustained forms of this in acts of reminiscing. This illusion of nearness to an external reality is to some extent true regardless of whether it refers to an occurrence that ostensibly happened yesterday or many years ago.¹⁴ External reality, in contrast to psychic reality, is the phylogenetically more familiar ground upon which we seek solutions and gratifications, move away from distress, and bring about changes.

The analyst's knowledge of the genetic backdrop, of the infantile temporal origins, often may encourage this bias toward continued listening to memory only in terms of its reference to the past. And thus, whenever the past is vividly described, it may evoke the illusion, for the listener as well as for the experiencer, that one is close to an external reality. This in turn can, blatantly or subtly, cause the edging out of any concurrent focusing on the details of the less conspicuous internal psychic conflict—the "then-and-there" activity of the ego (A. Freud, 1936, p. 14).¹⁵

It is not surprising that, after all these years, the universally preferred stereotypic view of psychoanalysis remains, that it is a procedure which consists of a search for memories of the past, rather than one devoted primarily to the gaining of voluntary controls over previously warded-off instinctual impulses. It is difficult to know to what extent Freud, in his later years, revived his never altogether dormant interest in "the past," and in particular the concept of "historical truth," because of certain

¹⁴ For elaboration on the role of the *actuality* or *presentness* of the past in mental life, see Namnum, 1972.

¹⁵ Kanzer (1952) provides illustrations of how focusing on the past can obscure recognition of transference elements, in Freud's analysis of the Rat Man.

preoccupying realities, namely his health, his age, and especially, his emigration. In the 1935 "Postscript" to his "Autobiographical Study" Freud wrote:

Shortly before I wrote this study it seemed as though my life would soon be brought to an end. . . ; but surgical skill saved me. . . . In the period of more than ten years that has passed since then . . . a significant change has come about. . . ; interests which I had acquired in the later part of my life have receded, while the older and original ones become prominent once more. . . . This circumstance is connected with an alteration in myself, with what might be described as a regressive development [pp. 71-72].¹⁶

Freud's "regressive development" may have been manifested by the return, in some of his very late writings, to forms of interpretation he had ostensibly set aside over twenty years before and thereby contributed significantly to the developmental lag. Here I am referring, among other things, to his use of the large-scale, direct interpretation reconstructions. This is not to be taken as an across-the-board antireconstruction position on my part. There are varieties of reconstructions that I find quite compatible with and essential to the technique of competent analysis of defenses against specific drive derivatives.

Counter-Resistance to Transference Affects and Impulses

Counter-resistance refers here to ways of the analyst's perceiving and conducting an analysis so as to stimulate or reinforce resistance beyond that degree which occurs due to the internal conflicts mobilized by the task of free association. In a strict sense, counter-resistance might well be confined to ways that are unconsciously motivated within the analyst. Some counter-resistance, of course, exists chiefly because of less than skillful technique. Be that as it may, it is the unconsciously motivated

¹⁶ For additional views about Freud's emphasis on past realities, see Schimek (1975) and Jacobson and Steele (1979).

form directed against the full emergence of analyst-catheted affects and impulses that I include as one of the fixations that contribute to relative neglect of analyzing the ego and its defenses.

Historically, it was not uncommon for the analyst to make genetic interpretations of observed unconscious material relating to the analyst, without providing the patient with an opportunity to work through the full awareness of those affects or impulses toward the analyst. The patient's resistance to this particularly advantageous experience was thus supported.

This resistance-supporting tendency persists, although to a lesser degree. We see it whenever the analyst interprets the genetic aspects of barely or newly, yet cautiously conscious, transference of id derivatives (as distinguished from interpreting genetic aspects of transference of defense) without having made sure that the patient had worked through virtually all of the defenses against experiencing those derivatives in their immediate form, toward the analyst (see Gill, 1979). The analyst who does provide the latter experience will, of course, have to be subjected to drive derivatives of a more detailed and intense variety. Inevitably this will expose *all* of the ways in which the analyst has been or is being perceived, fantasied *and* real. It is, therefore, gratuitous to make a special technical point of getting the patient to verbalize his observations of and reactions to "the real relationship" (Greenson, 1967). Actually, it is especially *because* the patient's "real" perceptions of the analyst will be *included* in the material, particularly as defenses against the act of perception (Lustman, 1968) are worked through, that the analyst's counter-resistance to observing and analyzing the ego's activities is easily aroused. It is difficult for analysts to overcome narcissistic self-protection against having their actual characteristics—appearance, ways of speaking, ways of thinking (as these become apparent), etc.—accurately perceived by the patient as a part of effective analytic process. It is a challenge, when this problem occurs in supervision, to transmit this principle successfully without inflicting a narcissistic wound.

Conclusion

Freud's phrase, "There is resistance to uncovering resistances" could well refer to an ubiquitous reluctance to consider, perceive, and conceptualize—both to oneself and to one's analysand—the detailed workings of the ego in its defensive measures against specific drive derivatives.

Many obstacles the analyst meets in making observations about the ego's defensive activity occur because of, or are reinforced by, the fact that there is something to be gained by the analyst—as distinct from the patient—in *not* making such observations. The gains range from enhanced instinctual satisfactions to relief from conflicts. Some of the conflicts have to do with the analyst's narcissistic vulnerability to the patient's id; some are superego-induced conflicts within the analyst which compromise his neutrality. Essentially the conflicts resemble the intrapsychic conflicts of neurosis itself and qualify often as a form of countertransference. A burdensome byproduct of the widening-scope applications of analysis is increasing emphasis on the therapeutic uses of countertransference. Given the trying aspects of the work with many such cases, this trend has often been a matter of attempting to make a virtue out of a necessity, and historically has made an appearance whenever analysis moved toward the treatment of nearer-psychotic pathology.

I have reserved one obstacle until last because I do not think it lends itself to the metaphor of a *fixation* and because there is not much to say about it. This obstacle concerns an inner tendency to maintain a natural or at least a maturely typical state of virtual ignorance of those functions of the ego that potentially enable it to observe itself. Freud (1900) first called attention to the fact when he discussed analyzing one's dreams: "Practice is needed even for perceiving endoptic phenomena . . . from which our attention is normally withheld; and this is so *even though there is no psychological motive fighting against such perceptions*" (pp. 522-523; italics added). Over thirty years

later, addressing his unseen “Lecture” audience, Freud (1933) wrote more specifically about the ego:

I must . . . let you know of my suspicion that this account of mine of ego-psychology will affect you differently from the introduction into the psychical underworld which preceded it. I cannot say with certainty why this should be so. . . . I now believe that it is somehow a *question of the nature of the material itself* and of our being unaccustomed to dealing with it. In any case, I shall not be surprised if you show yourself *even more reserved and cautious* in your judgement than hitherto [p. 58; italics added].

Evolution has provided man, in spite of repression, with numerous ways of becoming aware of much about his unconscious *id* activity—through dreams, art, literature, etc. Eventually, to these was added psychoanalysis. To borrow a concept from Jonas Salk’s *Survival of the Wisest* (1973), the capacity of Freud’s ego for certain new perceptions brought forth a “metabiological mutation” which speeded the evolutionary change of man in ways which, for better or worse, have transcended those changes brought about by the course of “biological” mutations. It is an interesting question and relevant to this discussion whether, were it not for an interest in *analyzing* neurotic conflicts, there would have been occasion for man to try to perceive his own unconscious *ego* activity and make it part of his consciousness. In the evolution of our capacity to perceive demonstrable ego mechanisms in their detailed roles in neurotic conflict, we are not assisted as with the “cooperative” qualities of the drive derivatives, which strive to find us: The workings of the *id* are, in many ways, available for those who wish to study them—even in settings that are not analytic situations; the defensive activities of the ego can hardly be captured in “closeup” except in an analysis which includes a consistent attempt to develop an increasingly autonomous capacity for an ever-freer intrapsychic spontaneity, reflectively observed and verbalized. Let us not be dissuaded by limiting factors from

further evolution of our psychoanalytic technique in the realm of neurotic conflict.

Summary

The practice of psychoanalysis of neurotic conflict has not—to the extent that might be expected—evolved a consistent use in technique of available knowledge of the ego's mechanisms of defense. This is primarily related to a general resistance that can usefully be regarded as a "developmental lag." The evidence for this, particularly in Freud's writings, is reviewed as are the observations of others who have made note of this phenomenon. Some of the reasons that have contributed to this resistance among analysts are discussed.

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