

Transference of Freud and transference to Freud

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“Sexual love”, writes Freud, “is undoubtedly one of the chief things in life, and the union of mental and bodily satisfaction in the enjoyment of love is one of its culminating peaks”. In the paper ‘Observations on Transference Love’ (Freud, SE12: 159) Freud is addressing the young male analyst who is tempted by a beautiful, young, witty hysteric in analysis, the butcher’s wife or other, to have a sexual affair.

“The patient’s willingness,” he says, “makes no difference; it merely throws the whole responsibility on the analyst himself [...] the aim he has to keep in view is that this woman, whose capacity for love is impaired by infantile fixations, should gain free command over a function which is of such inestimable importance to her; that she should not, however, dissipate it in the treatment, but keep it ready for the time when, after her treatment, the demands of real life make themselves felt”.

How could one not fall in love with Freud for such writing and for his ethical recognition that however highly the analyst “may prize love he must prize even more highly the opportunity for helping his patient over a decisive stage in her life”.

Freud was an explorer of the passions and the founder of a method to orient these passions away from the exquisite prison of incestuous objects to finding a way to live with social connections that are not too captivated by the original erotic family. He was not afraid to recognize and work with “highly explosive forces” and he cautioned psychoanalysts neither to push down what erupts in the patient nor to act on it.

So having made a claim to falling in love with Freud and psychoanalysis, where does that leave one when, towards the end of analysis, this transference to a ‘father’ who speaks desire while at the same time finding a way to direct it, is not in the same place of passionate love as it was. At the end of my analysis it left me in a critical position with regard to psychoanalysis. What happens when transference to a father, addressed to psychoanalysis as the field of Freud and a theory of what to do with one’s passions, when that transference comes to a point of recognition that the father is not-all?

At the end of analysis is the “excellent” father, if one was lucky enough to have one and find others, any less excellent? I think not – he is still excellent but he is not the master to whom everything of consequence is to be addressed and who has the answer as to how to live one’s life. No such master exists – I’ve traveled the world looking, ending up with Freud. It was thanks to Freud’s conceptualisation of the transference in a psychoanalytic setting and his years of experiencing the effects of it and developing a place and technique for it, that it was possible for me to finally play out the parameters of my search and its connections with my unconscious sexuality, discovering in the end, among other things, that Freud is not the definitive master, masterful though he was.

I was concerned at first that my interest in psychoanalysis would lessen because of this, but it has not been the case, even though there is something fundamentally different. Can one find a place in which there is a

separation of the discovery and practice of psychoanalysis from the transference to Freud as father? This is not something that happens once and for all but is a continual operation.

There is no way of avoiding a conflict concerning where to direct one's libido. Freud's idea is that the conflict which confronts you ought to be on the level of real conscious conflict and not where one component is repressed. In a lecture on transference he addresses his audience's potential disappointment with the outcome of a psychoanalysis as just transforming the conflict to a place which still requires it to be dealt with:

"You had formed a different picture of the return to health of a neurotic patient – that, after submitting to the tedious labours of a psycho-analysis, he would become another man; but the total result, so it seems, is that he has rather less that is unconscious and rather more that is conscious in him than he had before. The fact is that you are probably under-estimating the importance of an internal change of this kind. The neurotic who is cured has really become another man, though at bottom, of course, he has remained the same; that is to say, he has become what he might have become at best under the most favourable conditions. But that is a very great deal." (Freud, SE16:431)

Freud himself needed a place to which to address his own conflicts. He said that he could only analyze his dreams when he treated them as belonging to someone else. That place was embodied by Fliess. In the end Freud destituted Fliess from that position of "you are my only audience", considering that he never again needed a similar relationship with any other human being like he had with Fliess.

So, returning to the question: does the fall of the father as excellent master mean the end of that place? I don't think so. But I think that it refers to the end of the call for one master in one place. There is no "the master" and any one master is not-all. There are a number of places to which to address a conflict and thanks to Freud, psychoanalysis is one of the best. I take this to refer to the direction of a treatment away from the infantile obsessions with the details of every sign of love (and its counterpart, rejection) for incestuous loved ones towards a partner with whom to make a life. This is the Oedipal orientation – the destruction/dissolution of the narrow oedipal ties which make one so inhibited and unable to make it in life towards... responding to the demands of a real everyday life as a desiring person.

When I reached this point in my own analysis it confronted me with a conflict in my relation to psychoanalysis. I did not feel a transference away from the analyst towards working in psychoanalysis but towards what seemed to me life itself, everyday social life. I had been working as a psychoanalyst for many years at this point of ending my final and definitive analysis. The conflict did not come with regards to my practice, but rather, my relation to the master psychoanalysis which included the father Freud. But I hope that what I was and continue to deal with lies along the lines of separating the discovery of Freud from the person of Freud who was a master in being the first man to discover a method of treating Oedipal sexuality.

My own transference to Freud as the excellent father – a man of stature, of substance, a great intellect, a pioneer, one who could stand alone in the face of criticism and antagonism and we could go on. Transference is an enactment of the unconscious inasmuch as the unconscious appears in an analysis expressly addressed to an Other. What we consider as the unconscious includes the Other.

Freud's answer to Ferenczi was that he never again needed a similar relationship with any other human being – he destituted Fliess from that position of “you are my only audience”. In his aggression to Fliess – the moment of concluding, not the transference but the analysis with Fliess.

The end of analysis is not to be confused with the end of the Oedipus complex. The end of the Oedipus complex in Freud culminates in an identification. I am presenting something of my own experience regarding a transference to Freud so as to try to map a little where I am up to with it. It was thanks to Freud's conceptualisation of the transference in a psychoanalytic setting and his years of experiencing the effects of it and developing a place and technique for it that it was possible for me – many years later to travel the globe finally finding a place to which to address my unconscious sexuality.

References

Freud, S. (2001 [1911]). *Observations on Transference Love* (Standard Edition 1953-74. ed. Vol. SE 12). London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis.