

NARRATION IN THE PSYCHOANALYTIC DIALOGUE

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Psychoanalytic Theories as Narratives

Freud established a tradition within which psychoanalysis is understood as an essentialist and positivist natural science. One need not be bound by this scientific commitment, however; the individual and general accounts and interpretations Freud gave of his case material can be read in another way. In this reading, psychoanalysis is an interpretive discipline whose practitioners aim to develop a particular kind of systematic account of human action. We can say, then, either that Freud was developing a set of principles for participating in understanding, and explaining the dialogue between psychoanalyst and analysand or that he was establishing a set of codes to generate psychoanalytic meaning, recognizing this meaning in each instance to be only one of a number of kinds of meaning that might be generated.

Psychoanalytic theorists of different persuasions have employed different interpretive principles or codes – one might say different narrative structures – to develop their ways of doing analysis and telling about it. These narrative structures present or imply two coordinated accounts: one, of the beginning, the course, and the ending of human development; the other, of the course of the psychoanalytic dialogue. Far from being secondary narratives about data, these structures provide primary narratives that establish what is to count as data. Once installed as leading narrative structures, they are taken as certain in order to develop coherent accounts of lives and technical practices.

It makes sense, and it may be a useful project, to present psychoanalysis in narrational terms. In order to carry through this project, one must, first of all, accept the proposition that there are no objective, autonomous, or pure psychoanalytic data which, as Freud was fond of saying, compel one to draw certain conclusions. Specifically, there is no single,

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necessary, definitive account of a life history and psychopathology, of biological and social influences on personality, or of the psychoanalytic method and its results. What have been presented as the plain empirical data and techniques of psychoanalysis are inseparable from the investigators precritical and interrelated assumptions concerning the origins, coherence, totality and intelligibility of personal action. The data and techniques exist as such by virtue of two sets of practices that embody these assumptions; first, a set of *practices of naming and interrelating* that is systematic insofar as it conforms to the initial assumptions; and second, a set of technical practices that is systematic insofar as it elicits and shapes phenomena that can be ordered in terms of these assumptions. No version of psychoanalysis has ever come to close to being codified to this extent. The approach to such codification requires that the data of psychoanalysis be unfailingly regarded as constituted rather than simply encountered. The sharp split between subject and object must be systematically rejected.

In his formal theorizing, Freud used two primary narrative structures, and he often urged that they be taken as provisional rather than as final truths. But Freud was not always consistent in this regard, sometimes presenting dogmatically on one page what he had presented tentatively on another. One of his primary narrative structures begins with the infant and young child as a beast, otherwise known as the id, and ends with the beast domesticated, tamed by frustration in the course of development in a civilization hostile to its nature. Even though this taming leaves each person with two regulatory structures, the ego and the superego, the protagonist remains in part a beast, the carrier of the indestructible id. The filling in of this narrative structure tells of a lifelong transition. If the innate potential for symbolization is there, and if all goes well, one moves from a condition of frightened and irrational helplessness, lack of self-definition, and domination by fluid or mobile instinctual drives toward a condition of stability, mastery, adaptability, self-definition, rationality, and security. If all does not go well, the inadequately tamed beast must be accommodated by the formation of pathological structures, such as symptoms and perversions.

Freud did not invent this beast, and the admixture of Darwinism in his account only gave it the appearance of having been established in a positivist scientific manner. The basic story is ancient; it has been told in many ways over the centuries, and it pervades what we consider refined common sense.

Refined common sense structures the history of human thought about human action. It takes into account the emotional, wishful, fantasy-ridden features of action, its adaptive and utilitarian aspects, and the influence on it of the subject's early experiencing of intimate formative relationships and of the world at large. The repositories of common sense include mythology, folk wisdom, colloquial sayings, jokes, and literature,

among other cultural products, and, as Freud showed repeatedly, there are relatively few significant psychoanalytic propositions that are not stated or implied by these products (Schafer, 1977). Refined common sense serves as the source of the precritical assumptions from which the psychoanalytic narrative structures are derived, and these structures dictate conceptual and technical practices.

But common sense is not fixed. The common sense presented in proverbs and maxims, for example, is replete with internal tension and ambiguity. Most generalizations have countergeneralizations (A penny saved is a penny earned, but one may be penny-wise and pound-foolish; one should look before one leaps, but he who hesitates is lost; and so on). And just as common sense may be used to reaffirm traditional orientations and conservative values (Rome wasn't built in a day), it may also be used to sanction a challenge to tradition (A new broom sweeps clean) or endorse an ironic stance (The more things change, the more they remain the same). Since generalizations of this sort allow much latitude in their application, recourse to the authority of common sense is an endless source of controversy over accounts of human action. Still, common sense is our storehouse of narrative structures, and it remains the source of intelligibility and certainty in human affairs. Controversy itself would make no sense unless the conventions of common sense were being observed by those engaged in controversy.

Psychoanalysis does not take common sense plain but rather transforms it into a comprehensive distillate, first, by selection and schematic reduction of its tensions and ambiguities and, second, by elevating only some of these factors (such as pleasure versus reality and id versus ego) to the status of overarching principles and structures. Traditionally, these elevations of common sense have been organized and presented as psychoanalytic metapsychology.

As more than one such distillation of common sense has been offered in the name of psychoanalysis, there have been phases in the development of psychoanalytic theory, and there are schools of psychoanalysis, each with a distinctive theory of its own. Each distillation (phase or school) has been elaborated and organized in terms of certain leading narrative structures that are to be taken as certain.

For Freud, the old story of the beast was indispensable, and he used it well. His tale of human development, suffering, defeat, and triumph was extraordinarily illuminating in its psychological content, scientifically respectable in its conceptualization and formalization, dramatically gripping in its metaphorical elaboration, and beneficial in his work with his analysands. Because this archetypal story has been mythologically enshrined in the metaphoric language that all of us have learned to think and live by, it is more than appealing to have it authorized and apparently confirmed by psychological science. At the same time, however, it is threatening to be told persuasively how much it is the beast that perva-

des, empowers, or at least necessitates our most civilized achievements. Except when moralizing about others, human beings do not wish to think consciously of having bestial origins, continuities, and destinies, and so they develop defenses and allow themselves to think only of certain aspects of their »natures«. Through his uncompromising effort to establish a systematic psychoanalytic narrative in these terms, Freud exposed this paradoxical attitude toward his fateful story of human lives.

Freud's other primary narrative structure is based on Newtonian physics as transmitted through the physiological and neuroanatomical laboratories of the nineteenth century. This account presents psychoanalysis as the study of the mind viewed as a machine – in Freud's words, as a mental apparatus. This machine is characterized by inertia; it does not work unless it is moved by force. It works as a closed system; that is, its amount of energy is fixed, with the result that storing or expending energy in one respect decreases the energy available for other operations. Thus on purely quantitative grounds, love of others limits what is available for self-love, and love of the opposite sex limits what is available for love of the same sex. The machine has mechanisms, such as the automatically operating mechanisms of defense and various other checks and balances.

In the beginning, the forces that move the machine are primarily the brute organism's instinctual drives. Here the tale of the mental apparatus borrows from the tale of the brute organism and consequently becomes narratively incoherent: the mechanical mind is now said to behave like a creature with a soul – seeking, reacting, and developing. The tale continues with increasing incoherence.

To sketch this increasing incoherence: in the beginning, the mental apparatus is primitive owing to its lack of structure and differentiated function. Over the course of time, the apparatus develops itself in response to experience and along lines laid down by its inherent nature; it becomes complex, moving on toward an ending in which, through that part of it called the ego, it can set its own aims and take over and desexualize or neutralize energies from the id. At the same time, the ego takes account of the requirements of the id, the superego, external reality, and its own internal structural problems, and it works out compromises and syntheses of remarkable complexity. When nothing untoward happens during this development, the machine functions stably and efficiently; otherwise, it is a defective apparatus, most likely weak in its ego, superego, or both. A defective apparatus cannot perform some of the functions for which it is intended, and it performs some others unreliably, inefficiently, and maladaptively, using up or wastefully discharging precious psychic energy in the process. Its effective operation depends on its mechanisms' success in restricting the influence of the archaic heritage of infancy. This machine is dedicated to preserving its own structure; it guarantees its own continuity by serving as a bulwark against primal chaos, and chan-

ges itself only under dire necessity. This mechanistic account accords well with the ideology of the Industrial Revolution. We still tend to view the body in general and the nervous system in particular as marvelous machines, and traditional metapsychologists still ask us to view the mind in the same way.

Both of Freud's primary narrative structures assume the thoroughgoing determinism of evolutionary necessity and of Newtonian forces. No room is left for freedom and responsibility. Those actions that appear to be free and responsible must be worked into the deterministic narrative of the beast, the machine, or the incoherent mingling of the two. Freedom is a myth of conscious thought.

Freud insisted on these two narrative structures as the core of what he called his metapsychology, and he regarded them as indispensable. But, as I said at the outset, Freud can be read in other ways. One can construct a Freud who is a humanistic existentialist, a man of tragic and ironic vision (Schafer, 1970), and one can construct a Freud who is an investigator laying the foundation for a conception of psychoanalysis as an interpretive study of human action (Schafer, 1976, 1978). Although we can derive these alternative readings from statements made explicitly by Freud when, as a man and a clinician, he took distance from his official account, we do not require their authority to execute this project; and these alternative readings are not discredited by quotations from Freud to the opposite effect.

That Freud's beast and machine are indeed narrative structures and are not dictated by the data is shown by the fact that other psychoanalysts have developed their own accounts, each with a more or less different beginning, course, and ending. Melanie Klein, for example, gives an account of the child or adult as being in some stage of recovery from a rageful infantile psychosis at the breast (Klein, 1948; Segal, 1964). Her story starts with a universal yet pathological infantile condition that oscillates between paranoid and melancholic positions. For her, our lives begin in madness, which includes taking in the madness of others, and we continue to be more or less mad though we may be helped by fortuitous circumstances or by analysis. Certain segments of common speech, for example, the metaphors of the witch, the poisonous attitude, and the people who get under your skin or suck out your guts, or the common recognition that we can all be »crazy« under certain circumstances, all support this account that emphasizes unconscious infantile fantasies of persecution, possession, and devastation.

To bypass many other more or less useful narratives that over the years have been proposed in the name of psychoanalysis, we currently have one developed by Heinz Kohut (1971, 1977). Kohut tells of a child driven in almost instinctlike fashion to actualize a cohesive self. The child is more or less hampered or damaged in the process by the empathic failures of caretakers in its intimate environment. Its growth efforts are con-

sequently impeded by reactive and consoling grandiose fantasies, defensive splitting and repression, and affective »disintegration products« that experientially seem to act like Freud's drives or else to take the form of depressive, hypochondriacal, perverse, or addictive symptoms. In truth, however, these pathological signs are, according to Kohut, bits and pieces of the shattered self striving to protect itself, heal itself, and continue its growth. The ending in Kohut's story is for each person a point on a continuum that ranges from a frail, rageful, and poverty-stricken self to one that is healthy, happy, and wise.

For the most part, Kohut remained aware that he was developing a narrative structure. He went so far as to invoke a principle of complementarity, arguing that psychoanalysis needs and can tolerate a second story, namely, Freud's traditional tripartite psychic structure (id, ego, super-ego). On Kohut's account, this narrative of psychic structure is needed in order to give an adequate account of phases of development subsequent to the achievement, in the early years of life, of a cohesive self or a healthy narcissism. This recourse to an analogy with the complementarity theory of physics fails to dispel the impression one may gain of narrative incoherence. The problem is, however, not fatal: I am inclined to think that complementarity will be dropped from Kohut's account once it becomes clear how to develop the tale of the embattled self into a comprehensive and continuous narrative – or once it becomes professionally acceptable to do so (see also Schafer, 1980a).

My schematization of Freudian narration and of Klein's and Kohut's alternatives can be useful. Schematization, when recognized as such, is not falsification. It can serve as a code for comparative reading in terms of beginnings, practices, and possible endings. It can clarify the sets of conventions that govern the constituting and selective organizing of psychoanalytic data. And in every interesting and useful case, it will help us remain attentive to certain commonsensically important events and experiences, such as the vicissitudes of the development, subjective experience, and estimation of the self or the vicissitudes of the child's struggles with a controlling, frightening, and misunderstood environment. Let us say, then, that some such code prepares us to engage in a systematic psychoanalytic dialogue.

I shall now attempt to portray this psychoanalytic dialogue in terms of two agents, each narrating or telling something to the other in a rule-governed manner. Psychoanalysis as telling and retelling along psychoanalytic lines: this is the theme and form of the present narration. It is, I think, a story worth telling. This introductory section has been my author's preface – if, that is, a preface can be clearly distinguished from the narration that it both foretells and retells.

Narration in the Psychoanalytic Dialogue

We are forever telling stories about ourselves. In telling these self-stories to others we may, for most purposes, be said to be performing straightforward narrative actions. In saying that we also tell them to ourselves, however, we are enclosing one story within another. This is the story that there is a self to tell something to, a someone else serving as audience who is oneself or one's self. When the stories we tell others about ourselves concern these other selves of ours, when we say, for example, »I am not master of myself«, we are again enclosing one story within another. On this view, the self is a telling. From time to time and from person to person, this telling varies in the degree to which it is unified, stable, and acceptable to informed observers as reliable and valid.

Additionally, we are forever telling stories about others. These others, too, may be viewed as figures or other selves constituted by narrative actions. Other people are constructed in the telling about them; more exactly, we narrate others just as we narrate selves. The other person, like the self, is not something one has or encounters as such but an existence one tells. Consequently, telling »others« about »ourselves« is doubly narrative.

Often the stories we tell about ourselves are life historical or autobiographical; we locate them in the past. For example, one might say, »Until I was fifteen, I was proud of my father« or »I had a totally miserable childhood«. These histories are present tellings. The same may be said of the histories we attribute to others. We change many aspects of these histories of self and others as we change, for better or worse, the implied or stated questions to which they are the answers. Personal development may be characterized as change in the questions it is urgent or essential to answer. As a project in personal development, personal analysis changes the leading questions that one addresses to the tale of one's life and the lives of important others.

People going through psychoanalysis – analysands – tell the analyst about themselves and others in the past and present. In making interpretations, the analyst retells these stories. In the retelling, certain features are accentuated while others are placed in parentheses; certain features are related to others in new ways or for the first time; some features are developed further, perhaps at great length. This retelling is done along psychoanalytic lines. What constitutes a specifically psychoanalytic retelling is a topic I shall take up later.

The analyst's retellings progressively influence the what and how of the stories told by analysands. The analyst establishes new, though often contested or resisted, questions that amount to regulated narrative possibilities. The end product of this interweaving of texts is a radically new, jointly authored work or way of working. One might say that in the course of analysis, there develops a cluster of more or less coordinated

new narrations, each corresponding to periods of intensive analytic work on certain leading questions. Generally, these narrations focus neither on the past, plain and simple, nor on events currently taking place outside the psychoanalytic situation. They focus much more on the place and modification of these tales within the psychoanalytic dialogue. Specifically, the narrations are considered under the aspect of transference and resisting as these are identified and analyzed at different times in relation to different questions. The psychoanalytic dialogue is characterized most of all by its organization in terms of the here and now of the psychoanalytic relationship. It is fundamentally a dialogue concerning the present moment of transference and resisting.

But transference and resisting themselves may be viewed as narrative structures. Like all other narrative structures, they prescribe a point of view from which to tell about the events of analysis in a regulated and therefore coherent fashion. The events themselves are constituted only through one or another systematic account of them. Moreover, the analysis of resisting may be told in terms of transference and vice versa.

In the traditional transference narration, one tells how the analysand is repetitively reliving or reexperiencing the past in the present relationship with the analyst. It is said that there occurs a regression within the transference to the infantile neurosis or neurotic matrix, which then lies exposed to the analyst's view. This is, however, a poor account. It tells of life history as static, archival, linear, reversible, and literally retrievable. Epistemologically, this story is highly problematic. Another and, I suggest, better account tells of change of action along certain lines; it emphasizes new experiencing and new remembering of the past that unconsciously has never become the past. More and more, the alleged past must be experienced consciously as a mutual interpenetration of the past and present, both being viewed in psychoanalytically organized and coordinated terms. If analysis is a matter of moving in a direction, it is a moving forward into new modes of constructing experience. On this account, one must retell the story of regression to the infantile neurosis within the transference; for even though much of its matter may be defined in terms of the present version of the past, the so-called regression is necessarily a progression. Transference, far from being a time machine by which one may travel back to see what one has been made out of, is a clarification of certain constituents of one's present psychoanalytic actions. This clarification is achieved through the circular and coordinated study of past and present.

The technical and experiential construction of personal analyses in the terms of transference and resisting has been found to be therapeutically useful. But now it must be added that viewing psychoanalysis as a therapy itself manifests a narrative choice. This choice dictates that the story of the dialogue and the events to which it gives rise be told in terms of a doctor's curing a patient's disease. From the inception of psychoanalysis,

professional and ideological factors have favored this kind of account, though there are some signs today that the sickness narrative is on its way to becoming obsolete. Here I want only to emphasize that there are a number of other ways to tell what the two people in the analytic situation are doing. Each of these ways either cultivates and accentuates or neglects and minimizes certain potential features of the analysis; none is exact and comprehensive in every way. For example, psychoanalysis as therapy tells the story from the standpoint of consciousness: consciously, but only consciously, the analysand presents his or her problems as alien interferences with the good life, that is, as symptoms in the making of which he or she has had no hand; or the analyst defines as symptomatic the problems the analyst consciously wishes to emphasize; or both. In many cases, this narrative facilitates undertaking the analysis; at the same time, a price is paid, at least for some time, by this initial and perhaps unavoidable collusion to justify analysis on these highly defensive and conscious grounds of patienthood.

My own attempt to remain noncommittal in this respect by speaking of analyst and analysand rather than therapist and patient is itself inexact in at least three ways. First, it does not take into account the analysts also being subject to analysis through his or her necessarily continuous scrutiny of counter transferences. Second, during the analysis, the analysand's self is retold as constituted by a large, fragmented, and fluid cast of characters. Not only are aspects of the self seen to incorporate aspects of others, they are also unconsciously imagined as having retained some or all of the essence of these others; that is, the self-constituents are experienced as introjects or incomplete identifications, indeed sometimes as shadowy presences of indeterminate location and origin (Schafer, 1968, chapters 4 and 5). The problematic and incoherent self that is consciously told at the beginning of the analysis is sorted out, so far as possible, into that which has retained otherness to a high degree and that which has not. A similar sorting out of the constituents of others' selves is also accomplished; here the concept of projecting aspects of the self into others plays an important role. The upshot is that what the analysand initially tells as self and others undergoes considerable revision once the initial consciously constructed account has been worked over analytically. A third inexactness in my choice of terminology is that the division into analyst and analysand does not provide for the increasing extent to which the analysand becomes coanalyst of his or her own problems and, in certain respects, those of the analyst, too. The analysand, that is, becomes coauthor of the analysis as he or she becomes a more daring and reliable narrator. Here I touch on yet another topic to take up later, that of the unreliable narrator: this topic takes in analyst as well as analysand, for ideally both of them do change during analysis, if to different degrees, and it leads into questions of how, in the post-positivist scheme of things, we are to understand validity in analytic interpretation.

If we are forever telling stories about ourselves and others and to ourselves and others, it must be added that people do more than tell: like authors, they also show. As there is no hard-and-fast line between telling and showing, either in literary narrative or in psychoanalysis, the competent psychoanalyst deals with telling as a form of showing and with showing as a form of telling. Everything in analysis is both communication and demonstration (cf. Booth, 1961).

Perhaps the simplest instances of analytic showing are those non-verbal behaviors or expressive movements that include bodily rigidity, lateness to or absence from scheduled sessions, and mumbling. The analyst, using whatever he or she already knows or has prepared the way for, interprets these showings and weaves them into one of the narrations of the analysis: for example, »Your lying stiffly on the couch shows that you're identifying yourself with your dead father«; or, »Your mumbling shows how afraid you are to be heard as an independent voice on this subject.« Beyond comments of this sort, however, the analyst takes these showings as communications and on this basis may say (and here I expand these improvised interpretations), »You are conveying that you feel like a corpse in relation to me, putting your life into me and playing your dead father in relation to me; you picture me now as yourself confronted by this corpse, impressing on me that I am to feel your grief for you.« Or the analyst might say, »By your mumbling you are letting me know how frightened you are to assert your own views to me just in case I might feel as threatened by such presumption as your mother once felt and might retaliate as she did by being scornful and turning her back on you.« In these interpretive retellings, the analyst is no longer controlled by the imaginary line between telling and showing.

Acting out as a form of remembering is a good case in point (Freud, 1914). For example, by anxiously engaging in an affair with an older married man, a young woman in analysis is said to be remembering, through acting out, an infantile oedipal wish to seduce or be sexually loved and impregnated by her father, now represented by the analyst. In one way, this acting out is showing; in another way, it is telling by a displaced showing. Once it has been retold as remembering through acting out, it may serve as a narrative context that facilitates further direct remembering and further understanding of the analytic relationship.

The competent analyst is not lulled by the dramatic rendition of life historical content into hearing this content in a simple, contextless, time-bound manner. Situated in the present, the analyst takes the telling also as a showing, noting, for example, when that content is introduced, for it might be a way of forestalling the emotional experiencing of the immediate transference relationship; noting also how that content is being told, for it might be told flatly, histrionically, in a masochistically self-pitying or a grandiosely triumphant way; noting further the storyline that is being followed and many other narrative features as well. The analyst also

attends to cues that the analysand, consciously or unconsciously, may be an unreliable narrator, highlighting the persecutory actions of others and minimizing the analysand's seduction of the persecutor to persecute; slanting the story in order to block out significant periods in his or her life history or to elicit pity or admiration; glossing over, by silence and euphemism, what the analysand fears will cast him or her in an unfavorable light or sometimes in too favorable a light, as when termination of analysis is in the air, and, out of a sense of danger, one feels compelled to tell and show that one is still »a sick patient«. All of which is to say that the analyst takes the telling as performance as well as content. The analyst has only tellings and showings to interpret, that is, to retell along psychoanalytic lines.

What does it mean to say »along psychoanalytic lines«? Earlier I mentioned that more than one kind of psychoanalysis is practiced in this world, and so I will just summarize what conforms to my own practice, namely, the storylines that characterize Freudian retellings. The analyst slowly and patiently develops an emphasis on infantile or archaic modes of sexual and aggressive action (action being understood broadly to take in wishing, believing, perceiving, remembering, fantasizing, behaving emotionally, and other such activities that, in traditional theories of action, have been split off from motor action and discussed separately as thought, motivation, and feeling). The analyst wants to study and re-describe all of these activities from the standpoint of such questions as »What is the analysand doing?«, »Why now?«, »Why in this way?«, and »What does this have to do with me and what the analysand fears might develop between us sexually and aggressively?«

Repeatedly the analysand's stories (experiences, memories, symptoms, selves) go through a series of transformations until finally they can be retold not only as sexual and aggressive modes of action but also as defensive measures adopted (within modes of response commonly called anxiety, guilt, shame, and depression) to disguise, displace, deemphasize, compromise, and otherwise refrain from boldly and openly taking the actions in question. The analyst uses multiple points of view (wishful, defensive, moral, ideal, and adaptive) and expects that significant features of the analysand's life can be understood only after employing all of these points of view in working out contextual redescrptions or interpretations of actions. Single constituents are likely to require a complex definition; for example, sexual and aggressive wishing are often simultaneously ascribable to one and the same personal problem or symptom along with moral condemnation of »self« on both grounds.

The Freudian analyst also progressively organizes this retelling around bodily zones, modes, and substances, particularly the mouth, anus, and genitalia; and in conjunction with these zones, the modes of swallowing and spitting out, retaining and expelling, intruding and enclosing, and the concrete conceptions of words, feelings, ideas, and events as food, feces,

urine, semen, babies, and so on. All of these constituents are given roles in the infantile drama of family life, a drama that is organized around births, losses, illnesses, abuse and neglect, the parents' real and imagined conflicts and sexuality, gender differences, sibling relations, and so on. It is essential that the infantile drama, thus conceived, be shown to be repetitively introduced by the analysand into the analytic dialogue, however subtly this has been done, and this is what is accomplished in the interpretive retelling of transference and resisting.

Drives, Free Association, Resistance, and Reality Testing

To illustrate and further develop my thesis on narration in the psychoanalytic dialogue, I shall next take up four concepts that are used repeatedly in narrations concerning this dialogue: drives, free association, resistance, and reality testing.

DRIVES

Drives appear to be incontrovertible facts of human nature. Even the most casual introspection delivers up a picture of the passive self being driven by internal forces. It might therefore seem perfectly justified to distinguish being driven from wishing, in that wishing seems clearly to be a case of personal action. The distinction is, however, untenable. It takes conscious and conventional testimony of drivenness as the last or natural word on the subject; but to take it that way is to ignore the proposition that introspection is itself a form of constructed experience based on a specific narration of mind.

The introspection narrative tells that each person is a container of experience fashioned by an independently operating mind, and that by the use of mental eyes located outside this container, the person may look in and see what is going on (cf. Ryle, 1943). The introspection narrative has been extensively elaborated through a spatial rendering of mental activity, perhaps most of all through the language of internalization and externalization. This spatial language includes: inner world, inwardly, internalize, projection, deep down, levels, layers, and the like (Schafer, 1972). Thus the introspector stands outside his or her mind, thinking – with what? A second mind? We have no unassailable answer. The introspection narrative tells us that far from constructing or creating our lives, we witness them. It thereby sets drastic limits on discourse about human activity and responsibility. The uncritical and pervasive use of this narrative form in daily life and in psychological theories shows how appealing it is to disclaim responsibility in this way.

The drive narrative depends on this introspection narrative and so is appealing in the same way. It appeals in other ways as well. As I mentioned earlier, the drive narrative tells the partly moralistic and partly

Darwinian-scientific tale that at heart we are all animals, and it sets definite guidelines for all the tales we tell about ourselves and others. By following these guidelines, we fulfill two very important functions, albeit often painfully and irrationally. We simultaneously derogate ourselves (which we do for all kinds of reasons), and we disclaim responsibility for our actions. Because these functions are being served, many people find it difficult to accept the proposition that drive is a narrative structure, that is, an optional way of telling the story of human lives.

Consider, for example, a man regarding a woman lustfully. One might say, »He wishes more than anything else to take her to bed«; or one might say, »His sexual drive is overwhelming and she is its object«. The wishing narrative does not preclude the recognition that physiological processes may be correlated with such urgent wishing, though it also leaves room for the fact that this correlation does not always hold. In case the physiological correlates are present, the wishing narrative also provides for the man's noticing these stimuli in the first place, for his having to give meaning to them, for his selecting just that woman, and for his organizing the situation in terms of heterosexual intercourse specifically. From our present point of view, the chief point to emphasize is that the wishing narrative allows one to raise the question, in analytic work as in everyday life, why the subject tells himself that he is passive in relation to a drive rather than that he is a sexual agent, someone who lusts after a specific woman.

A similar case for wishful action may be made in the case of aggression. In one version or theory, aggression is a drive that requires discharge in rages, assaults, vituperation, or something of that sort. In another version, aggression is an activity or mode of action that is given many forms by agents who variously wish to attack, destroy, hurt, or assert and in each case to do so for reasons and in contexts that may be ascertained by an observer. The observer may, of course, be the agent himself or herself.

In the course of analysis, the analysand comes to construct narratives of personal agency ever more readily, independently, convincingly, and securely, particularly in those contexts that have to do with crucially maladaptive experiences of drivenness. The important questions to be answered in the analysis concern personal agency, and the important answers reallocate the attributions of activity and passivity. Passivity also comes into question because, as in the case of unconscious infantile guilt reactions (so-called superego guilt), agency may be ascribed to the self irrationally (for example, blame of the »self« for the accidental death of a Parent).

FREE ASSOCIATION

The fundamental rule of psychoanalysis is conveyed through the instruction to associate freely and to hold back nothing that comes to mind. This

conception is controlled by the previously mentioned narrative of the introspected mind. One is to tell about thinking and feeling in passive terms; it is to be a tale of the mind's running itself, of thoughts and feelings coming and going, of thoughts and feelings pushed forward by drives or by forces or structures opposing them. Again, the analysand is to be witness to his or her own mind. The psychoanalytic models for this narration are Freud's »mental apparatus« and »brute organism«.

If, however, one chooses the narrative option of the analysand as agent, that is, as thinker and constructor of emotional action, the fundamental rule will be understood differently and in a way that accords much better with the analyst's subsequent interpretive activity. According to this second narrative structure, the instruction establishes the following guidelines: »Let's see what you will do if you just tell me everything you think and feel without my giving you any starting point, any direction or plan, any criteria of selection, coherence, or decorum. You are to continue in this way with no formal beginning, no formal middle or development, and no formal ending except as you introduce these narrative devices. And let's see what sense we can make of what you do under these conditions. That is to say, let's see how we can retell it in a way that allows you to understand the origins, meanings, and significance of your present difficulties and to do so in a way that makes change conceivable and attainable«.

Once the analysand starts the telling, the analyst listens and interprets in two interrelated ways. First, the analyst retells what is told from the standpoint of its content, that is, its thematic coherence. For example, the analysand may be alluding repeatedly to envious attitudes while consciously portraying these attitudes as disinterested, objective criticism. By introducing the theme of envy, the analyst, from the special point of view on analytic narration, identifies the kind of narrative that is being developed. (Of course, one does not have to be an analyst to recognize envy in disguise; but this only illustrates my point that analytic narration is not sharply set off from refined common sense.) The specific content then becomes merely illustrative of an unrecognized and probably disavowed set of attitudes that are held by the analysand who is shown to be an unreliable narrator in respect to the consciously constructed account. Ultimately, the unreliability itself must be interpreted and woven into the dialogue as an aspect of resisting.

The analysand's narrative, then, is placed in a larger context, its coherence and significance are increased, and its utility for the analytic work is defined. The analyst has not listened in the ordinary way. Serving as an analytic reteller, he or she does not, indeed, cannot coherently, respond in the ordinary way. Listening in the ordinary way, as in countertransference, results in analytic incoherence; then the analyst's retellings themselves become unreliable and fashioned too much after the analyst's own »life story«.

In the second mode of listening and interpreting, the analyst focuses on the action of telling itself. Telling is treated as an object of description rather than, as the analysand wishes, an indifferent or transparent medium for imparting information or thematic content. The analyst has something to say about the how, when, and why of the telling. For example, the analyst may tell that the analysand has been circling around a disturbing feeling of alienation from the analyst, the narrations circumstantial nature being intended to guarantee an interpersonally remote, emotionally arid session; and if it is envy that is in question, the analyst may tell that the analysand is trying to spoil the analysts envied competence by presenting an opaque account of the matter at hand.

In this way, the analyst defines the complex rules that the analysand is following in seeming to »free associate« (Schafer, 1978, lecture 2). There are rules of various kinds for alienated discourse, for envious discourse, and so on, some very general and well known to common sense and some very specialized or individual and requiring careful definition in the individual case, but which must still, ultimately, be in accord with common sense. The analyst treats free association as neither free nor associative, for within the strategy of analyzing narrative actions, it is not an unregulated or passive performance.

The analysand consciously experiences many phenomena in the passive mode: unexpected intrusions or unexpected trains of thought, irrelevant or shameful feelings, incoherent changes of subject, blocking and helpless withholdings of thoughts, and imperative revisions of raw content. The analysand consciously regards all of these as unintentional violations of the rules he or she consciously professes to be following or wishes to believe are being followed. But what is to the analysand flawed or helpless performance is not that to the analyst. In analysis, free associating is a no-fault activity. What is consciously unexpected or incomprehensible is seen rather as the analysand's having unconsciously introduced more complex rules to govern the narrative being developed: the analysand may have become uneasy with what is portrayed as the drift of thought and sensed that he or she was heading into danger, or perhaps the tale now being insistently foregrounded is a useful diversion from another and more troubling tale. In the interest of being »a good patient«, the analysand may even insist on developing narratives in primitive terms, for instance, in terms of ruthless revenge or infantile sexual practices, when at that moment a more subjectively distressing but analytically useful account of the actions in question would have to be given in terms of assertiveness, or fun-lovingness, or ordinary sentimentality. Whatever the case may be, a new account is called for, a more complex account, one in which the analysand is portrayed as more or less unconsciously taking several parts at once – hero, victim, dodger, and stranger. These parts are not best understood as autonomous subselves having their say (»multiple selves« is itself only a narrative structure that begs

the question); rather, each of these parts is one of the regulative narrative structures that one person, the analysand, has adopted and used simultaneously with the others, whether in combination, opposition, or apparent incoherence. The analyst says, in effect, »What I hear you saying is . . . «. or »In other words, it's a matter of . . . «, and this is to say that a narrative is now being retold along analytic lines *as the only narrative it makes good enough sense to construct at that time.*

RESISTANCE

Resistance can be retold so as to make it appear in an altogether different light; furthermore, it can be retold in more than one way. Before I show how this is so, I should synopsise Freud's account of resistance (see, for example, Freud, 1912). For Freud, »the resistance«, as he called it, is an autonomous force analogous to the censorship in the psychology of dreams. The term refers to the many forms taken by the analysand's opposition to the analyst. The resistance, Freud said, accompanies the analysis every step of the way, and technically nothing is more important than to ferret it out and analyze it. The resistance is often sly, hidden, secretive, obdurate, and so on. In the terms of Freud's theory of psychic structure, there is a split in the analysand's ego; the rational ego wants to go forward while the defensive ego wants to preserve the irrational status quo. The analysand's ego fears change toward health through self-understanding, viewing that course as too dangerous or too mortifying to bear. These accounts of resistance establish narrative structures of several pairs of antagonists in the analytic situation: one part of the ego against another, the ego against the id, the analysand against the analyst, and the analyst against the resistance. The conflict centers on noncompliance with the fundamental rule of free association, a rule that in every case can be observed by the analysand only in a highly irregular and incomplete fashion. Presenting the resistance as a force in the mind, much like a trive, further defines the form of the analytic narration. Resistance is presented as animistic or anthropomorphic, a motivated natural force that the subject experiences passively.

How does the story of resistance get to be retold during an analysis? In one retelling, resistance transforms into an account of transference, both positive and negative. Positive transference is resistance attempting to transform the analysis into some repetitive version of a conflictual infantile love relationship on the basis of which one may legitimately abandon the procedures and goals of analysis itself. In the case of negative transference, the analyst is, for example, seen irrationally and often unconsciously as an authoritarian parent to be defied. Through a series of transformations, and with reference to various clues produced by the analysand, the opposition is retold by the analyst as an enactment of the oral, anal, and phallic struggles of infancy and childhood, that is, as a refusal to be fed or weaned or else as a biting; or as a refusal to defecate in the

right place and at the night time, resorting instead to constipated withholding or diarrhetic expelling of associations, feelings, and memories; or as furtive masturbation, primal scene voyeurism and exhibitionism, defensive or seductive changes of the self's gender, and so on. Thus the distinction between the analysis of resistance and the analysis of transference, far from being the empirical matter it is usually said to be, is a matter of narrative choice. Told in terms of transference, resistance becomes disclaimed repetitive activity rather than passive experience. And it is as activity that it takes its most intelligible, coherent, and modifiable place in the developing life historical contexts. *Resistance* becomes *resisting*.

There is another, entirely affirmative way to retell the story of resistance. In this account, the analysand is portrayed as doing something on his or her behalf, something that makes sense unconsciously though it may not yet be understood empathically by the analyst. The analyst may then press confrontations and interpretations on the analysand at the wrong time, in the wrong way, and with the wrong content. Kohut's account of narcissistic rage in response to such interventions presents the analysand as protecting a fragile self against further disintegration in response to the analyst's empathically deficient interventions. Or the analysand may be protecting the analyst against his or her own anticipated ruthless, destructive, or at least permanently alienating form of love. Matters of personal pride and honor may be involved. In one instance, the analysand's resisting was understood as a form of self-abortion and in another instance as a refusal to be forced into what was taken to be a phallic role.

Whatever the case and whatever the manifestly oppositional attitude, the analysand is portrayed as engaged in a project of preservation, even enhancement, of self or analyst or both. The project is one that the analysand at that moment rightly refuses to abandon despite what may be the misguided efforts of the analyst to narrate the analysis along other lines. In this affirmative narration of resisting, the analyst may be an uncomprehending brute or an unwitting saboteur. One young woman's spontaneously defiant insistence on persistently excoriating her parents had to be retold analytically in two main ways: as a turning away from the unbearable horror of her imagined inner world and as a firm assertion on her part that the problem resided in the family as a system and not merely in her infantile fantasies and wishes. On the one hand, there was a crucial strategy of self-prevention implied in her apparent resisting: as she said at one point, »If I let myself appreciate myself and see what, against all odds, I've become, it would break my heart«. On the other hand, there was the analysand's search for the self-affirming truth of parental madness. To have thought of her strident analytic activity simply as resisting would have been to start telling the wrong kind of psychoanalytic story about it.

A third way to retell the story of resisting radically questions the ana-

lysansds use of ability and inability words. It is developed along the following lines. »Resistance« seems to go against the analysands wishes and resolutions. The analysand pleads inability: for example, »Something stops me from coming out with it«, or »My inhibitions are too strong for me to make the first move«, or »I can't associate anything with that dream«. The narrative structure of inability in such respects is culturally so well established that it seems to be merely an objective expression of the natural order of things. Yet it may be counted as another aspect of the analysand as unconsciously unreliable narrator. In the first example (not coming out with it), the retelling might be developed along these lines: »You *don't* come out with it, and you don't yet understand why you *don't* act on your resolution to do so«. In the third example (inability to associate), it might be developed like this: »You *don't* think of anything that seems to you to be relevant or acceptable, anything that meets your rules of coherence, good sense, or good manners, and you dismiss what you *do* think of«.

In giving these examples, I am not presenting actual or recommended analytic interventions so much as I am making their logic plain. In practice, these interventions are typically developed in ways that are tactful, tentative, circuitous, and fragmentary. For a long time, perhaps, the »don't« element is only implied in order to limit the analysand's mishearing description as criticism and demand; exhortation has no place in the analyst's interventions. Nor am I suggesting that the analysts initial descriptions are the decisive words on any important subject. They are only the first words on the subject in that they beg into establish the ground rules for another kind of story to be told and so of another kind of experience to construct. These are the rules of action language and the reclaiming of disclaimed action.

Choosing action as the suitable narrative language allows the analyst to begin to retell many inability narrations as DISCLAIMINGS of action. In order to analyze resistance – now to be designated as *resisting* – one must take many narrations presented by analysands in terms of *can* and *can't* and retell them in terms of *do* and *don't* and sometimes *will* and *won't*. Usually, the analysand is disclaiming the action unconsciously. That this is so does not make the disclaiming (defense, resistance) any the less an action; nor does it make what is being disclaimed any the less an action. In analytic narration, one is not governed by the ordinary conventions that link action to consciousness.

So often, the analyst, after first hearing »I can't tell you« or »I can't think about that«, goes on to establish through close and sustained consideration of free associations the reasons why the analysand does not or will not tell or think about whatever it is that is troublesome. It may be that the action in question would be humiliating, frightening, or apparently incoherent and therefore too mad to be tolerated. It may be that unconsciously the not telling or not thinking is an act of anal retention or

oedipal defiance that is being presented as innocent helplessness. It may be that an important connection between two events has never before been defined, so that the analysand, lacking a suitable narrative structure, simply does not take up the two in one consciously constructed context; connections and contexts might come into existence only through the analyst's interpretive activity. Interpretation may also give the reasons why the context and connections never have been developed. In all such instances, it is no longer ability that is in question; it is the proper designation of a ruled performance.

The same narrative treatments of action and inaction are common in daily life. One hears, »I couldn't control myself«, »I can't concentrate on my studies«, »I can't love him«, and so on. Implicit in these narrations, as in the resisting narrations, is the disclaiming of the activity in what is being told. This disclaiming is accomplished by taking recourse to the terms of uncontrollable, impersonal forces. These accounts, too, may be retold analytically. For instance, after some analysis, »I can't concentrate on my studies« may become the following (synopsized) narrative: »I don't concentrate on what I resolve to work on. I think of other things instead. I think of girls, of my dead father, of all the failures of my life. These are the things that really matter to me, and I rebel against the idea that I should set them aside and just get through the reading like a machine. It's like shitting on demand. Additionally, by not working, I don't risk experiencing either frightening grandiose feelings if I succeed or the shame of mediocrity if I just pass. On top of which, really getting into the work is sexually exciting; it feels something like sexual peeping to read, as I must, between the lines, and it feels wrong to do that«. Retold in this way, »I can't concentrate on my studies« becomes »I don't concentrate for certain reasons, some or all of which I did not dare to realize before now. I told myself I was trying to concentrate and couldn't when actually I was doing other things instead and doing them for other reasons«. The narrative has changed from the consciously constructed one of helplessness and failure, designed to protect the consciously distressing status quo, to a narrative of unconsciously designed activity in another kind of reality. The new story, told now by a more reliable narrator, is a story of personal action, and as such it may serve as a basis for change.

Nothing in the immediately preceding account implies that for narrative purposes, *inability* words or, for that matter, *necessity* words are narratively ruled totally out of the analytic court. Rather, these words are now found to be useful and appropriate in far more restricted sets of circumstances than before. These sets of circumstances include unusual physical and mental ability and training and also one's inevitable confrontations with the forceful independent actions of others and with impersonal events in the world. Yet even these necessities become analytically relevant only in terms of how the analysand takes them. In any case, necessity (or happening) does not include mental forces and structures

that reduce a person to impotence; much impotence is enacted rather than imposed (Schafer, 1978, lecture 5). Thus the analyst may retell resisting to the analysand in two ways, as what the analysand *is not doing* and why and as what he or she *is doing* and why. It is a matter simply of how best to retell the actions in question. Both versions are technically useful in the analysis of resisting. Neither depends on a narration composed in terms of autonomous and antagonistic natural forces that are thwarting conscious and wholehearted resolve. Both may be encompassed in a narrative of action. In sharp disagreement with Ricoeur (1977), I would assert that there is nothing in the analysis of resisting that necessarily leads beyond this narrative framework into the one structured in terms of psychic forces or other processes of desymbolization or dehumanization.¹

REALITY TESTING

Traditionally, the official psychoanalytic conception of reality has been straightforwardly positivistic. Reality is »out there« or »in there« in the inner world, existing as a knowable, certifiable essence. At least for the analytic observer, the subject and object are clearly distinct. Reality is encountered and recognized innocently. In part it simply forces itself on one, in part it is discovered or uncovered by search and reason free of theory. Consequently, reality testing amounts simply to undertaking to establish what is, on the one hand, real, true, objective and, on the other hand, unreal, false, subjective. On this understanding, one may conclude, for example, that *x* is fantasy (psychical reality) and *y* is fact (external reality); that mother was not only loving as had always been thought but also hateful; that the situation is serious but not hopeless or vice versa; and so on.

But this positivistic telling is only one way of giving or arriving at an account of the subject in the world, and it is incoherent with respect to the epistemological assumptions inherent in psychoanalytic inquiry, that is, those assumptions that limit us always to dealing only with versions of reality. The account I am recommending necessarily limits one to constructing some version or some vision of the subject in the world. One defines situations and invests events with multiple meanings. These meanings are more or less adequately responsive to different questions that the narrator, who may be the subject or someone else, wants to answer; they are also responsive to the rules of context that the narrator intends to follow and to the level of abstraction that he or she wishes to maintain. Sometimes, for example, an assertive action of a certain kind in a certain situation may with equal warrant be described as sadistic *and* masochistic, regressive *and* adaptive. In this account, reality is always mediated by narration. Far from being innocently encountered or discovered, it is created in a regulated fashion.

The rules regulating the creation of reality may be conventional, in which case no questions are likely to be raised about the world and how

we know it; if needed, consensual validation will be readily obtained. But things can be otherwise. Once certain rules are defined, they may prove to violate convention in a way that is incoherent or at least not understandable at a given moment. In this case, the place of these rules requires further investigation and interpretation. Those rules that inform truly original ideas may necessitate revision of accepted ideas about the rules that »must« be followed and the kind of reality that it is desirable or interesting to construct. Freud showed his genius by developing his highly particularized »overdetermined« accounts of the idiosyncratic systems of rules followed in dreams, neuroses, perversions, psychoses, and normal sexual development.

One may say that *psychoanalytic interpretation tells about a second reality*. In this reality, events or phenomena are viewed from the standpoint of repetitive recreation of infantile, family-centered situations bearing on sex, aggression, and other such matters. Only superficially does the analytic construction of this second reality seem to be crudely reductive; it is crudely reductive only when it is performed presumptuously or stupidly, as when the analyst says, »This is what you are really doing«. The competent analyst says in effect, »Let me show you over the course of the analysis another reality, commonsensical elements of which are already, though incoherently and eclectically, included in what you now call reality. We shall be looking at you and others in your life, past and present, in a special light, and we shall come to understand our analytic project and our relationship in this light, too. This second reality is as real as any other. In many ways it is more coherent and inclusive and more open to your activity than the reality you now vouch for and try to make do with. On this basis, it also makes the possibility of change clearer and more or less realizable, and so it may open for you a way out of your present difficulties«.

From the acceptance of this new account, there follows a systematic project of constructing a psychoanalytic reality in which one retells the past and the present, the infantile and the adult, the imagined and the so-called real, and the analytic relationship and all other significant relationships. One retells all this in terms that are increasingly focused and coordinated in psychoanalytic terms of action. One achieves a narrative re-description of reality. This retelling is adapted to the clinical context and relationship, the purpose of which is to understand anew the life and the problems in question. The analysand joins in the retelling (re-describing, reinterpreting, recontextualizing, and reducing) as the analysis progresses. The second reality becomes a joint enterprise and a joint experience. And if anyone emerges as a crude reductionist it is the analysand, viewed now as having unconsciously reduced too many events simply to infantile sexual and aggressive narratives.

At this point we may return once more to the question of the unreliable narrator, for it bears on the large question of validity of interpretation. To

speak of the unreliable narrator, one must have some conception of a reliable narrator, that is, of validity; and yet the trend of my argument suggests that there is no single definitive account to be achieved. Validity, it seems, can only be achieved within a system that is viewed as such and that appears, after careful consideration, to have the virtues of coherence, consistency, comprehensiveness, and common sense. This is the system that establishes the second reality in psychoanalysis. The analysand is helped to become a reliable narrator in this second reality which is centered on transference and resisting. A point of view is maintained and employed that both establishes a maximum of reliability and intelligibility of the kind required and confirms, hermeneutically, that achievement. The increased possibility of change, of new and beneficial action in the world, is an essential aim of this project and an important criterion of its progress. It must be added at once that the appropriate conception of change excludes randomness or personally ahistorical or discontinuous consequences, such as abrupt and total reversals of values and behavior. The reallocation of activity and passivity is another important aim and criterion. Finally, the analytic accounts achieved may be judged more or less valid by their ability to withstand further tough and searching questions about the story that has now been told and retold from many different, psychologically noncontradictory though often conflictual perspectives and in relation to considerable evidence constituted and gathered up within the analytic dialogue.

The Normative Life History

Psychoanalytic researchers have always aimed to develop a normative, continuous psychoanalytic life history that begins with day one, to be used by the psychoanalyst as a guide for participating in the analytic dialogue. Freud set this pattern by laying out the psychosexual stages and defining the instinctual vicissitudes, the stage of narcissism, phase-specific orientations and conflicts (oral, anal, etc.), the origins and consolidation of the ego and superego, and other such developmental periods, problems, and achievements. Yet it is safe to say that in the main, his life histories take shape around the time of the Oedipus complex, that is, the time between the ages of two and five. In his account, earlier times remain shadowy prehistory or surmised constitutional influences, not too accessible to subjective experience or verification.

Today the field of psychoanalysis is dominated by competing theories about these earlier, shadowy phases of mental development. These now include the phase of autism, symbiosis, and separation-individuation; the phase of basic trust and mistrust; the phase of pure narcissism, in which there are no objects which are not primarily part of the self; the mirror phase; and variations on the Kleinian paranoid-schizoid and depressive

phases or »positions« of infancy. For the most part, these phases are defined and detailed by what are called constructions or reconstructions, that is, surmises based on memories, symbolic readings, and subjective phenomena encountered in the analysis of adults, though some direct observation of children has also been employed. These surmises concern the nature of the beginning of subjective experience and the formative impact of the environment on that experience, an impact which is estimated variously by different theorists. In all, a concerted attempt is being made to go back so far in the individual's subjective history as to eliminate its prehistory altogether.

These projects are, for the most part, conceived and presented as fact-finding. On the assumption that there is no other way to understand the present, it is considered essential to determine what in fact it was like way back when. Whatever its internal differences, this entire program is held to have heuristic as well as therapeutic value. It is not my present intention to dispute this claim. I do, however, think that from a methodological standpoint this program has been incorrectly conceived.

The claim that these normative life historical projects are simply fact-finding expeditions is, as I argued earlier, highly problematic. At the very outset, each such expedition is prepared for what is to be found: it has its maps and compasses, its conceptual supplies, and its probable destination. This preparedness (which contradicts the empiricists' pretensions of innocence) amounts to a narrative plan, form, or set of rules. The sequential life historical narration that is then developed is no more than a second order retelling of clinical analysis. But this retelling confusingly deletes reference to the history of the analytic dialogue. It treats that dialogue as though – to change my metaphor – it is merely the shovel used to dig up history and so is of no account, except perhaps in manuals on the technique of digging up true chronologies. The theorists have therefore committed themselves to the narrative form of the case history, which is a simplified form of traditional biography.

Is there a narrative form that is methodologically more adequate to the psychoanalytic occasion? I believe there is. It is a story that begins in the middle, which is the present: the beginning is the beginning of the analysis. The present is not the autobiographical present, which at the outset comprises what are called the analysand's presenting problems or initial complaints together with some present account of the past; the reliability and usefulness of both of these constituents of the autobiographical present remain to be determined during the analysis. Once the analysis is under way, the autobiographical present is found to be no clear point in time at all. One does not even know how properly to conceive that present; more and more it seems to be both a repetitive, crisis-perpetuating misremembering of the past and a way of living defensively with respect to a future which is, in the most disruptive way, imagined fearfully and irrationally on the model of the past.

It soon becomes evident that, interpretively, one is working in a temporal circle. One works backward from what is told about the auto-biographical present in order to define, refine, correct, organize, and complete an analytically coherent and useful account of the past, and one works forward from various tellings of the past to constitute that present and that anticipated future which are most important to explain. Under the provisional and dubious assumption that past, present, and future are separable, each segment of time is used to set up a series of questions about the others and to answer the questions addressed to it by the others. And all of these accounts keep changing as the analytic dialogue continues. Freud's major case studies follow this narrative form. His report on the Rat Man (1909) is a good case in point; one has only to compare his notes on the case with his official report on it to see what different tales he told and could have told about this man, that is, about his work with this man.

I said that the analytic life history is a second-order history. The first-order history is that of the analytic dialogue. This history is more like a set of histories that have been told from multiple perspectives over the course of the analysis and that do not actually lend themselves to one seamless retelling; I shall refer to it as one history, nevertheless, inasmuch as analysts typically present it in that way. This history is situated in the present; it is always and necessarily a present account of the meanings and uses of the dialogue to date or, in other words, of transference and resisting. The account of the origins and transformations of the life being studied is shaped, extended, and limited by what it is narratively necessary to emphasize and to assume in order to explain the turns in this dialogue. The analysand's stories of early childhood, adolescence, and other critical periods of life get to be retold in a way that both summarizes and justifies what the analyst requires in order to do the kind of psychoanalytic work that is being done.

The primary narrative problem of the analyst is, then, not how to tell a normative chronological life history; rather, it is how to tell the several histories of each analysis. From this vantage point, the event with which to start the model analytic narration is not the first occasion of thought – Freud's wish-fulfilling hallucination of the absent breast; instead, one should start from a narrative account of the psychoanalyst's retelling of something told by an analysand and the analysand's response to that narrative transformation. In the narration of this moment of dialogue lies the structure of the analytic past, present, and future. It is from this beginning that the accounts of early infantile development are constructed. Those traditional developmental accounts, over which analysts have labored so hard, may now be seen in a new light: less as positivistic sets of factual findings about mental development and more as hermeneutically filled-in narrative structures. The narrative structures that have been adopted control the telling of the events of the analysis, including the many tel-

lings and retellings of the analysand's life history. The time is always present. The event is always an ongoing dialogue.

NOTE

1. Jürgen Habermas, working within a purely hermeneutic orientation, has taken what is, from the present point of view, an intermediate position on this matter in his discussion of the contents of the unconscious as deformed, privatized, de-grammaticized language. See his *Knowledge and Human Interest* (1971, chapters 10-12). My discussion owes much to Habermas's penetrating analysis of the linguistic and narrative aspects of psychoanalytic interpretation.

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