Vicissitudes of Authenticity
In the Psychoanalytic Situation[1]

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One of the prevailing themes that have haunted the psychoanalytic discourse from its inception is the basis of the analytic relationship and the nature of the uneasy dialogue between analyst and patient. Whereas Freud characterized this discourse as one that both requires and enhances a unique capacity for honesty, I have increasingly found it more useful to characterize this relationship in terms of a quest for authenticity, a project that was first articulated by existentialist philosophers. Even when authenticity is not explicitly invoked by the person who aspires to it — which is usually the case in psychoanalysis — analytic patients and practitioners alike nevertheless allude to authenticity in the way they oftentimes characterize the goals of treatment and the demands that are made on both participants in the analyst-patient relationship.

Though authenticity is not a technical term in any conventional psychoanalytic text with which I am familiar, the idea of what I take authenticity to mean has pervaded psychoanalysis from its inception. For example, when Freud (Breuer and Freud, 1893-1895, p. 305) suggested that the goal of analysis is to "transform hysterical misery into common unhappiness," he was invoking authenticity as an essential, if undeniably ambiguous, goal of psychoanalysis. Similarly, when Winnicott (1989, p. 199) argued that, "If we are successful [as analysts] we enable our patients to abandon invulnerability

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and become a sufferer," he was addressing the analysand's capacity to accept the inescapable reality of suffering and the need to embrace such suffering honestly, or authentically. And when Bion (1974, p. 13) says that whenever analyst and patient meet together that both of them should be experiencing fear and that, if they are not, they have no business being there, he was also invoking authenticity as an inevitable presence in every analytic encounter. Neither Freud nor Winnicott nor Bion, of course, employ authenticity in their writing, but the sense of it pervades the corpus of their respective psychoanalytic sensibilities.

So why hasn't the term authenticity been incorporated in a more explicit way into the psychoanalytic discourse? I'm not sure I can provide a convincing answer to that question, as I continue to be puzzled by it myself. Of course, we know that authenticity was first employed as a concept by existential philosophers, not psychoanalytic practitioners. Though its sensibility can be traced back to Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, it was Heidegger who first coined the term itself and made it the backbone of his philosophical perspective. The term was subsequently adopted by other existentialist philosophers and soon after by psychoanalysts who became identified with the existential perspective. Ludwig Binswanger (1963), Medard Boss (1963), and R. D. Laing (1969) are only some of the many psychoanalysts who came to epitomize an explicitly existentialist approach to psychoanalysis in Europe, whereas in America mainstream analysts such as Hans Loewald (1980) and Stan Leavy (1980, 1988) were profoundly influenced by the writings of Heidegger. In recent years, other terms that were originally identified with existential psychoanalysis, e.g., hermeneutics, intersubjectivity, and social constructivism have filtered into the American psychoanalytic milieu, and authenticity itself has even been invoked in the recent contemporary relational literature (e.g., Mitchell, 1992). Yet none of the American analysts who have adopted these ideas would call themselves existentialists and few of the Europeans who preceded them are cited in the psychoanalytic literature. There remains a profound

cultural divide between European and American sensibilities when it comes to articulating the ends of the analytic treatment experience and it appears that the concept of authenticity occupies an uneasy role at the interface between them. For example, European cultures tend to view suffering as a source of strength and character whereas American culture tends to view suffering as a source of trauma and psychopathology.

Another obstacle to integrating authenticity in the analytic landscape is the aversion of the typical psychoanalyst to reading philosophical material, the source of authenticity as a concept. Still another obstacle is the ambiguous relationship between authenticity and morality. As I will argue, authenticity has no specific moral agenda, and while this may be acceptable to many psychoanalytic practitioners, others find this anomaly disturbing. But probably the most important obstacle to embracing authenticity as a treatment criterion pertains to the commonplace characterization of psychoanalysis as a way of increasing the patient's capacity for work and love — a characterization that is typically rejected by existentialists for being facile and market-oriented. While it is doubtful that Freud ever characterized more effectiveness in work and love as a specific goal of treatment but simply a common side-effect, the relatively pragmatic American analytic community has often invoked greater success with the neurotic's love life and career objectives as important treatment objectives — and among the few treatment goals that psychoanalysis is said to be good for!

Increasingly, the question of what psychoanalysis *is* good for is being debated in the American media, which usually consigns it to an antiquated, if quaint, treatment philosophy that isn't particularly adept at relieving the majority of ailments that typical therapy patients want relieved, including anxiety, depression, social phobia, low self-esteem, and so on. While many are prepared to allow that psychoanalysis is good at engendering self-understanding, I seriously doubt that analysis or even modified forms of analytic therapy are particularly effective at treating most of the disorders listed in the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. My reason for saying this is

because what psychoanalysis is best suited for, more than any form of therapy I know of, is greater authenticity in one's life — even when such may sometimes compromise one's capacity for work and love!

Though there are contemporary and popularized versions of authenticity that reduce it to feeling states and forms of moral behavior (Taylor, 1991), for the purposes of this paper I restrict the concept to three elementary attributes: 1) that it is inherently *unconventional* or pertains to the road less traveled; 2) that it is the more difficult or *arduous* path and consequently more rewarding in a way that the less onerous path is often not; and 3) that it is *genuine*, but in a way that resists generalization because it is context-specific and consistent, for example, with efforts in the psychoanalytic literature to characterize aspects of the extra-transference relationship as *real* or honest, with a concomitant absence of subterfuge or contrivance. My aim is not to introduce a novel conception of authenticity into the analytic situation but to locate those elements of authentic relating that have been implicit in the psychoanalytic discourse since its inception.

With this brief introduction, I divide the following paper into four sections. In the first I review the concept of authenticity in Nietzsche and Heidegger; in the second I discuss the principles in Freud's treatment philosophy that are consistent with authenticity, including free association, neutrality, and abstinence; in the third I explore the relationship between authenticity and the role of suffering in the work of Winnicott, Bion, and Lacan; and in the fourth I examine the role of authenticity in the so-called transference and countertransference relationship, specifically the real and genuine relationship in the analyst-patient interaction. I conclude with a brief discussion about the role of courage in the analytic situation.

I Authenticity in Nietzsche and Heidegger

Though Heidegger was the first philosopher to employ authenticity as a technical term, both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard were important sources for this component of Heidegger's philosophy. For Nietzsche (2002, 2003), authenticity characterized the person who is not afraid to face up to the fundamental anxieties of living. He saw this ideal person as one who would emerge one day in the future capable of "overcoming" the difficulties that his generation, Nietzsche believed, was incapable of facing. This special individual was embodied in Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch*, usually translated into English as a superman or more literally, "overman," a person who would come to grips with her fears and in that sense overcome the weight of her existence by accepting reality for what it is, unbowed and unafraid. Nietzsche rejected the Enlightenment view that society is in an inexorable process of evolution that will inevitably improve from one generation to the next with scientific breakthroughs that will make our lives more satisfying and countered that in many respects our lives are actually getting worse. In Nietzsche's opinion, our capacity to reason is not as objectively reliable as Enlightenment philosophers claimed, because humans are driven by passion, the source of which is predominantly unconscious. Nietzsche's *Übermensch* was capable of recognizing this observation and possessed the necessary courage to face it (Thompson, 2004d).

There are other qualities that the *Übermensch* embodies that are just as consistent with Nietzsche's rejection of contemporary society, including: 1) an opposition to authority that results in a fierce individualism; 2) a concerted scepticism that rejects absolute truths of any kind, embodied in Nietzsche's pronouncement that *God is dead*; 3) a perspectivism which holds that truth is wedded to the perspective of the person who promotes it, not fixed, immutable standards; 4) a moral relativism which holds that all truths are relative to a time and place and, so, neither eternal or objective but highly personal and fluid; and finally, 5) a decentering of the subject which rejects the notion that the self is autonomous because, according to Nietzsche, there is no depth to the

personality since we are what we *do*, not what we take ourselves to *be*.

So how does Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch* compare with Heidegger's notion of authenticity? Though Nietzsche's philosophy had a profound impact on Heidegger, one would be a mistaken to construe Heidegger's authentic individual as nothing more than a twentieth-century edition of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. One of the principal differences between Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and Heidegger's conception of authenticity is that for Heidegger there is no such person who epitomizes an "authentic hero" in juxtaposition to less endowed neurotics. Instead, authenticity is characterized by Heidegger as a specific act or moment in any individual's life where the context in which a situation arises offers opportunities to behave authentically or not. Unlike Nietzsche, Heidegger rejected the notion of an ideal person who would some day emerge to replace the stereotypical contemporary neurotic; an idea he thought was stuck in a modernist way of thinking. Heidegger argued that all humans are essentially inauthentic in their being, but that they may, when challenged to, behave authentically on given occasions. In other words, behaving authentically isn't a process of cleansing ourselves of inauthentic character traits through a transformative religious or psychoanalytic regimen, like the perfectly analyzed person. Because we are inauthentic through and through we cannot do anything to change our fundamental nature, which is to avoid anxiety as a matter of course. So how can we manage to act authentically in spite of our condition and, more to the point, what would doing so look like?

In order to understand what authenticity entails it may be helpful to ponder what it means to be inauthentic. In Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1962), he characterized inauthenticity as an incidence of "fallenness" (*Verfallenheit*), as when a person sells out to public opinion in order to curry favor. A preoccupying theme throughout Heidegger's work was the relationship between the individual and society and how it engenders a conflict that we can never resolve. This is because humans are existentially isolated and in their loneliness crave the comfort of feeling at one with

others, not unlike the *Oceanic* experience that Freud describes in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). For Heidegger and Nietzsche alike, this sense of belonging is an illusion. Though this quest is inconsolable, says Heidegger, the only way of approximating this feeling is by abandoning an essential aspect of what we are about, our personal integrity. Yet, if we are condemned to be inauthentic as a basic feature of our character, how can we also be granted a choice in the matter, to choose *not* to be so on certain occasions?

A good example of the difficulty we all face in recognizing when we have fallen from authenticity was offered by Heidegger himself, when he describes his own infamous lapse into inauthenticity when he joined the National Socialist Party in Germany in the 1930s (Safranski, 1998). Because sacrifice is an essential aspect of authenticity, Heidegger believed he was behaving courageously and resolutely — two ingredients of authentic choice — when he abandoned the comfortable role of a sequestered academic for the relatively precarious position as Rector of the German University system, in the service of the Nazi Party. The fitful collaboration was short-lived and ended less than a year later. Many years after in a famous interview (Heidegger, 2003, pp. 24-48) given shortly before his death, Heidegger characterized his excursion into politics as an incidence of inauthenticity, an insight that only came to him in hindsight. In other words, according to Heidegger, he wasn't able to tell he was behaving inauthentically *in the moment of doing so*. After the fact, Heidegger could recognize he was mistaken to believe that National Socialism (or for that matter, any political platform) could serve as a vehicle for authenticity. Like so many others, he was caught up in the feeling of being at one with the German people and even saw himself as an instrument of National Socialism's success. Because any act necessarily exists in time, it is also necessary to give one's actions the time they require to reveal, in their unfolding, what those actions were about, after the fact, a fundamental tenet of psychoanalytic investigation. This is why Heidegger's conception of authenticity offers little in the way of

reassuring, external markers that can discern the motives one is serving at the moment action is taken, because our motives are always to a significant degree hidden or, as Freud argued, overdetermined. In other words, fate plays a role in whether our actions are authentic or not; it isn't just a matter of knowing right from wrong and exercising one's will accordingly. In the moment of decision, I effectively abandon my choices to forces that are beyond my ability to predict or even fathom. My authenticity isn't something I can perfect, no matter how compliant I am to the customs of my community because my choices always harbor an element of uncertainty about them, and only time will reveal the full scope of what I intended the moment I acted on them.

So if this is how Heidegger characterizes inauthenticity, how does he articulate what it means to behave authentically? But first, where did Heidegger derive his views about authenticity from? Were those views original or did he have precedents in Western philosophy? In fact, there are important antecedents to Heidegger's conception of authenticity in addition to Nietzsche, going all the way back to the Greeks who influenced both of their philosophies. Guignon (2004) suggests that traces of authenticity begin with Socrates' dictum in the 4th century BCE to "know thyself": "To know yourself . . . is to know above all what your place is in the scheme of things — what you are and what you should be as that has been laid out in advance by the cosmic order. Only because finding your place in the scheme of things is what is truly important does it become worthwhile to assess your personal nature (p. 13)." For Heidegger and Nietzsche, however, it is not Socrates or Plato who epitomize the roots of authentic relating but, as we shall see (below), the Greek sceptics, whose lineage goes back even further to the pre-Socratics, especially Heraclitus.[2] After the Greeks, Augustine's *Confessions* represent the next important chapter in the pre-history to authenticity due to

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[2] We will examine the sceptic contribution to authenticity when we review the impact of Michel de Montaigne.

his account of a determined inner quest undertaken to shake off a life of carnal sin and wanton materialism. Unlike other impassioned religious conversions, Augustine's stands out for its naked honesty and contemporary relevance as well as its considerable impact on Heidegger's philosophical temperament. Though his confessions were to God, Augustine himself comes across as a "man's man" whose trials of the flesh and consequent soul-searching easily resonate with seekers of every generation, including our own.

Despite Augustine's singular impact, the rise of Christianity gradually brought a halt to the kind of impassioned search for answers "within" that men of the cloth taught could only be found through devotion to God. Perhaps this is why Augustine is the last great example of existential literature until the Renaissance and with it the rise of Romanticism and rebirth of Greek scepticism. It is from this later, post-sixteenth century era that many of the ideas we now associate with authenticity eventually crystallized, some of them veering off into a reified version of the self as inner substance, whereas the other trend — which was eventually embraced by Nietzsche and Heidegger — perceived the self as more fluid and less tangible. Most of our notions of authenticity today can be traced to the Romantic period when the self emerged as a component of the human personality, which imbued people with an inner core that is in turn composed of an ego or psychic substance. Consequently, many people in contemporary culture equate authenticity with getting in touch with their feelings, or being true to their self, which, in turn, they believe, is made up of their feelings and experiences.

The origin of this depiction of authenticity can be linked to Rousseau's rebellion against the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationality, epitomized by Descartes. Like Descartes, Rousseau believed there is a substantial self to get in touch with, but he disagreed about its nature. Whereas most Enlightenment philosophers equated the self with rationality, Rousseau and other Romantics equated it with non-rational feeling states, a perspective that became invaluable to artists, poets, and novelists. One of the

implications of this argument is that subjective truth has precedence over objective, or scientific truth, and that the artist is in a more advantageous position to obtain such truths than scientists are. Moreover, the kind of truths available was now open to debate. *Self*-discovery needed to be distinguished from, say, the discovery of new worlds across the oceans. For Rousseau, the most important task a man or woman could set for themselves was to discover who they are, because we are opaque to ourselves and can only find ourselves by virtue of extraordinary effort and courage.

While the validity of Rousseau's conception of the self is open to debate, one can nonetheless recognize something of both Nietzsche and Heidegger's debt to the Romantic quest and their rejection of the Enlightenment's privilege of rationality over more subtle forms of experience. If nothing else, the emergence of the artist as a new authentic figure has its origins in the Romantic era and influenced both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's identification with art over science. As Guignon (2004) points out, our contemporary notion of the artist as an uncompromising, morally pure agent, so dedicated to his work and its inner truth that he refuses to "sell out" for the sake of becoming rich or popular is a relatively recent phenomenon.

> The modern use of the word "artist" to refer to those engaged in the arts as we understand them first appears in English only in 1823 with the adoption of the French term, *artiste*. The very idea that there is something that painters and musicians and architects and poets and chefs have in common — something called being an artist — is relatively new in Western experience. (p. 70-71)

The distinguishing feature of the so-called true artist contrasted with the pretensions of commercial artists rests precisely on the notion that the real article is authentic, that the work this artist is faithful to is a truth that is generated from somewhere "within," from an inner core of his or her being that cannot be accessed by skill or training, but rather

some indefinable trial of suffering, *angst*, or unique something or other that belongs to this artist and none other. By this reckoning, we don't have to rely on Rousseau's or Descartes' conception of a tangible self, whether real or inner, to render the notion of the contemporary artist as we have come to know him legitimate. On the contrary, the artist has helped *us* learn something about the nature of authenticity itself, irrespective of which theory of the self (de-decentered or otherwise) we are partial to. It is this conception of the artist that inspired many of Heidegger's later writings about the relationship between language and poetry, epitomized by the German Romanticist poet, Friedrich Hölderlin (Heidegger, 1971).

But of all the literary figures who inspired Nietzsche's and Heidegger's respective nineteenth and twentieth-century notions of authenticity, it wasn't Rousseau or Rilke or even Hölderlin, though all of them influenced contemporary notions of it to varying degrees. Instead, the person who should be given credit for serving as the link between the ancient Greek tradition of authenticity and the starker, more secular contemporary one derives from the sixteenth-century essayist and sceptic, Michel de Montaigne. Montaigne's facility with the sceptic method of *epoché*, or suspension of judgment, as a means of accessing the deepest recesses of personal experience, served as the basis for entertaining a conception of authenticity that could dispense with notions such as selfhood, subjectivity, egoism, and the like (Montaigne, 1925, pp. 288-358).

Unlike Plato and Aristotle, who advocated rationality and the accumulation of knowledge as an intrinsic aspect of man's identity, the sceptics were so opposed to formal methods of rational inquiry that it is difficult to characterize their system as a *philosophy*, but more an attitude developed out of trends it inherited from pre-Socratic thinkers, such as Heraclitus and Democritus, including: a) an anti-realist bias; b) the turn to a more subjective attitude about truth; and c) the development of philosophy away from abstract epistemological inquiry toward the more practical goal of acquiring a state of serenity, or happiness.

Whereas Socrates and Plato offered what is arguably the first notion of authenticity rooted in a self that knows who it is by achieving a kind of wisdom that derives from self-knowledge, the sceptics advocated a method for overcoming the need to acquire such knowledge in the first place, treating such quests as symptoms of obsessional neurosis (Groarke, 1990). Instead of a knowing self, the sceptics envisioned an *experiencing* self that is capable of submitting to the world *as it is given*, in all its mystery and ambiguity. By suspending judgment about my ability to predict the outcome of events as they occur from one day to the next, the sceptic learns not to comprehend his experience in order to surmount it, but to *suffer* it in order to accept it and be with it. The sceptics believed if you can overcome your obsessional quest for knowledge — including *self*-knowledge — a transformation in consciousness could occur, a kind of releasement or giving-way they claimed is free from worry (and a source for authenticity).

So the question we need to ask ourselves is whether authenticity is necessarily incumbent on the concept of a self in the first place? One of the areas of contention among postmodernist thinkers regarding authenticity is the problem of the self, or subjectivity which postmodernism rejects. As we have seen, popular literature on authenticity, going all the way back to Rousseau and the Romantics, situate authenticity in the notion of a feeling-self that is a version of the Cartesian ego, but in place of an ego that is based exclusively on rationality, the Romantics preferred a self imbued with feeling-states instead. In either case, the notion of a reified self that is substantial and constant is consistent with the idea of a hidden or true self that lies beneath an outer or social self, so this conception of authenticity degenerates into a private kernel of a self that is "inside" oneself, so to speak, and unconscious. While this conception of authenticity has been adopted by popular culture and American humanistic authors, it was summarily rejected by both Nietzsche and Heidegger. In fact, a great deal of Heidegger's efforts were devoted to addressing the problem of the nature of the self and

how to conceive of authenticity without recourse to the notion of a substantial or reified self.

In contrast to Descartes' privileging of the ego's status as a thinking-subject *par excellence*, Heidegger argued that we live our lives in an everyday sort of way without thinking about what we are doing and, more importantly, without having to think our way through our activities as a matter of course. The place he assigned to reason is an after-the-fact operation that is not primary to our engagement with the world, but secondary. It is only when our involvement with the world breaks down that we take the time to divorce ourselves from it for the purpose of pondering what has happened and why. According to Zahavi (2001), "At the beginning of his analysis of *Being and Time* Heidegger writes . . . that a subject is never given without a world and without others. Thus . . . it is within the context of [every human being's] being-in-the-world that he comes across intersubjectivity (p. 124)."

Whereas Husserl begins with the individual's relationship with oneself and goes from there to others, Heidegger begins with our relationships with others and then sets out to investigate how to determine, or reclaim, our relationship with our selves (Thompson, 2001c). In other words, we dwell within a common public "totality of surroundings" that constitute us as individuals in a world *from* which all of our perceptions, sensibilities, and experiences derive. We are not principally occupied with perceptual objects in a remote theoretical way, but rather with handling, using, and taking care of things in a manner that does not rely on our cognition of what we are doing when we are doing it. Heidegger is at such pains to emphasize the primordial structure of our being-with the world before we ever become individual subjects that he coins a new term for depicting each human being's essential status as a being. So instead of using the familiar terms subject, ego, or self — each of which, in Heidegger's thinking, harks back to Descartes' solipsistic ego — he uses the German *Dasein*, which, unfortunately, has no English equivalent. In German Dasein is a common everyday term

to which Heidegger gives his own meaning. The literal English translation would be there-being or the more common, being-there, a cumbersome and unsatisfactory rendition compared with what some translators have rendered as the more colloquial *existence*, which is also misleading because, after all, we are still talking about a *person*. Consequently, most translators simply retain the German Dasein without translating it and then, as I am now doing, are obliged to explain what it means.

Basically, Heidegger is drawing a distinction between what we typically depict as the subject or self, which, in his view, are constructs from a more fundamental way in which we exist in the world primordially. Hence "I" exist first and foremost as a being of the world from which I cannot extricate myself very easily. The person I take myself to be is essentially an invention that I have a hand in creating, but the greater part of my self's authorship derives from what others make of me. In fact, I am so obsessed with what others think of me and how they see me that I want to make myself into the person they expect me to be and, to a significant degree that is who I am. Moreover, who I take myself to be is not just rooted in the past; "I" am also constantly in the making, every waking moment of my life. In Heidegger's view, we never really overcome this condition and are always looking to "them" to tell us what we should do and whom we must become in order to be loved and acceptable. My ambitions play a pivotal role in the person I take myself to be, because I am constantly striving to become someone who will be able to escape the awful feeling of never being completely accepted by others, no matter how much I try to meet their expectations.

This doesn't suggest that Heidegger ignores the past; it is just as crucial to him as it was to Freud, but for Heidegger the past is co-existent with the future to which I aim because I am always trying to correct perceived inefficiencies from my past life with possibilities I perceive ahead of me. Most of the time I feel, to varying degrees "thrown" into a maelstrom of competing notions and ambitions that others have a hand in constructing what I take my "self" to be. To make matters even more complicated, others

are not everybody else but me, a totality from which I stand apart. Instead, they are me also, but from whom I do not customarily distinguish myself, despite my experience to the contrary. Dasein — this matrix in which I constantly dwell without necessarily ever knowing it — is something that can be, and usually is, *others*. Yet in everyday experience we do not ordinarily experience our "selves," nor do we ordinarily experience "others" — in fact, we are for the most part incapable of telling the difference between the two. According to Zahavi (2001), "We do not experience ourselves in contradistinction to some sort of inaccessible foreign subjects; rather, our being-with-one-another is characterized by replaceability and interchangeability. We are there in the world together with others [so that] the "who" of the *Dasein* who is living in everydayness is therefore anyone, it is *they* (p. 130)." My everyday relationship with others dissolves into my own Dasein wherein I "lose" myself in others and merge in and out of them, just as they merge in and out of me, relieving me of my responsibilities just as they relieve themselves of theirs. Zahavi concludes that, "Dasein *allows* itself to be carried along with others, and its formation of judgment, its estimation of values, its self-apprehension, and its interpretation of the world are determined, dictated, and controlled by the publicness of being-with-one-another" (p. 130). My problem is not, as Husserl argued, one of how to establish a relationship with others, in order to verify that others exist and occupy a role in my life; my problem is one of becoming my own person, with my own perspective, apart from others and what they would have me think and become.

From a Heideggerian perspective, the problem of empathy with which Husserl was so preoccupied — the problem of how an isolated subject can ever make contact with others — is a moot issue because we are with others in our primoridality to such an extent that we can never escape them. This is why my absorption in the world has the character of being lost, not in a desert but amongst others, in search of the self I genuinely am or can become. This is because I (or rather Dasein) do not possess a self-identity on which I rely, nor can I. Instead I have to appropriate myself and because of

this, once having done so can just as easily lose myself again, and eventually do, over and over again. Dasein's self, which is always in the making, can never be an objectively constituted entity, the culmination, one might wish, of a "thorough" analysis, but only a *manner of existing*. The manner in which I exist is either authentic or inauthentic; I am inauthentic, according to Heidegger, when I allow myself to be determined by others and what they expect me to be. This is the way we typically are except for those moments when we realize the degree to which we have compromised ourselves and, hence, lost ourselves in a socially constituted they-self.

So if Heidegger's conception of authenticity is rooted in a rough and ready notion of a self that is inherently insubstantial, that lacks fixed characteristics and exists in a state of yearning towards a future that it never reaches, then how can the essence of such a self be conceived, even when it is couched in this mysterious context that Heidegger calls Dasein? In Heidegger's earlier period authenticity was articulated in the context of *resoluteness*, an attitude that characterizes the inherent difficulty that living on the edge entails. Later, language played a more important role in Heidegger's philosophy and influenced his thoughts about authenticity as well. By then he saw human beings as basically language-bearing, story-telling creatures. Whereas postmodernists tend to view the self as a fragmented collection of episodic states of semi-consciousness that is constructed by the social and cultural forces constantly working on it, including economics, sex, politics, fashion, and media, Heidegger sees all of these elements as important influences, but none as important as the power that language has over our self-identity. Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly, we aren't merely shaped by language passively, like robots; we also *have a hand* in our relationship with the words that constitute our being and the kind of person we turn out to be. If my history plays a decisive role in the person I am, I also play a role in changing my history, adding to it, and arriving at new understandings of it through new interpretations of it every time I revisit and think about it. My past and my self are never

fixed — they are alive to change and revision as long as I am capable of giving thought to the circumstances my life is rooted in.

The function of language, from this viewpoint, is to tell stories, which we engage in every time we communicate with each other. From a narrativist perspective, the self is not a static entity, like a character in a book whose personality is fixed in the mind of its author. It is instead a continuous, never-ending story that has no culmination until the moment of death, so our stories have this open-ended quality to them that defies clearly defined boundaries. Although this produces anxiety in each of us, it also elicits a sense of wonder and possibility, without which our lives would be unimaginable. It is this very sense of wonder that the psychoanalyst capitalizes on in the analytic process by utilizing language to discover approximately who the person being analyzed *is*, by reflecting on the significance of the communication patterns that spontaneously come to mind in the course of the open-ended conversations shared.

But if my self, or Dasein, is so insubstantial, if I am what I take myself to be in that moment that I wrest my identity from an inauthentic they that competes with me at every turn to determine who I am for me; and I have the freedom — the responsibility, even — to revisit my previous interpretations of myself with fresh eyes and perspectives to detect the fallacy of previously undetected corruptions in my earlier self-definitions, then what, ultimately, does anyone have to hang the hat of his or her self-identity on? What's to stop me from just changing my mind — and my self — at every whim and convenience whenever it suits me to do so? What's to stop me, in the name of authenticity, from giving myself over to a form of unbridled narcissism that surreptitiously seeks the easy way out at every turn, but does so in the name of authentic "unpredictability"? One of the German words that Heidegger employs for authenticity in *Being and Time* is *eigentlich*, which comes from the root meaning "own." Heidegger sees the authentic act as one in which I appropriate from the myriad of influences that I am constantly subjected to in my world and my history that which I choose to make "my

own." Character traits, attitudes, opinions, and what have you become identified with who I take myself to be, not because of some reasoned argument but arbitrarily and unconsciously. But due to my powers of reflection I am also able to survey these choices and in a secondary sort of way decide whether I want to commit myself to them and become them, until such a time that I choose to revise them anew. The point Heidegger is making is that the committed person, which is to say, the authentic one, takes such choices seriously and views them in terms of building a structure or, in his later work, a temple to his or her relationship with being. As such, *who* each person is becomes something of a tradition and the seeds of a destiny that can be counted on, what we in America would call a man of substance or character.

Now all this may sound suspiciously narcissistic — and potentially criminal — to the person who is looking for evidence of a concept of authenticity that is tied to a standard of moral virtue that meets acceptable social mores, which, after all, is precisely what morality implies.[3] Postmodernists reject authenticity because they reject any pretension to a socially sanctioned code of ethics that can be imposed on the individual, which they mistakenly assume all theories of authenticity embrace. Like Nietzsche, Heidegger was opposed to the idea that society has the right to impose such standards willy-nilly except in the form of laws that are legislated and adjudicated in the courts, but he wasn't opposed to the idea of *virtue* in principle. The problem comes down to who gets to decide what virtue is and which virtues one should hold as most important, how religiously they should be applied and how allowing we should be of individual imperfections. Remember that for Heidegger we are essentially *inauthentic,* fallen creatures and that authentic selfhood is the exception, not the rule. Moreover, Heidegger refused to link authentic choices with ethical ones. Because ethics is a product of our

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[3] See Charles Taylor, 1991, for a conception of authenticity that embraces a moral perspective.

relationships with others, we need a standard for our relationship with our *selves*, however insubstantial and inherently narcissistic the self may be. The concept of authenticity is intended to meet this standard. So when push comes to shove, how do we know when we are choosing authentically and when we are taking the easy way out? How can we tell when we are in touch with our ownmost being and when we are deluding ourselves with an act of momentary convenience?

Heidegger's answer to this problem is not so easy to grasp. It comes down to the observation that the authentic choice is never the easy one, but always the road less traveled. If we're going to trust our conscience to be our guide, the inherent anguish that authentic choice entails should as a reliable, if not perfect foil to the folly that more crippling editions of narcissism often engender, yet consistent with the "destining" that Heidegger associates with authentic moments of importance. Contrary to the postmodernist who rejects values in principle because they cannot be universalized, the authentic person embraces values, however arbitrarily and subjectively chosen they necessarily are. And even if my values are different from yours, those values are nevertheless my own and an integral part of my authentic self-identity. In the end, because the self is insubstantial, the only thing I have to hold onto is what I make of myself, so the person I call myself stands for and represents a tradition I have become that I will continue to foster and tinker with for as long as I live. Certain views and character traits become precious simply because they are *mine*, because they are now part of this strange and indefinable, yet indispensable "me." While I can always change who I am, the important thing is to determine whom, of all the people I can be, I decide to resign myself to.

All this comes down to living with an awful lot of anxiety about who I am, why I do the things I do, and what I can possibly do to change the person I am when the person I have become is untenable. Both Nietzsche and Heidegger saw anxiety as a necessary and inevitable accompaniment to acting authentically. We are anxious due to a

pervasive sense of alienation, the starkness of which is captured by Nietzsche's declaration that God is dead, or has abandoned us — meaning that in the postmodern era in which we live there are no universal values to which we can cling and the ground we walk on is no longer as solid as we once assumed. In Heidegger's phrase, we are thrown into a world that is not of our choosing, but we are nonetheless obliged to decide who we will be by the choices we make, even if our so-called choices are predominantly unconscious. This leaves us feeling alone in our decisions and the world in which we live, so we try to mitigate our anxiety by complying with what we imagine others want from us. The inauthentic individual, like the neurotic, eventually discovers that compliance never meets with the kind of reward he longs for, yet he finds the alternative — the isolation of being his own person — equally untenable.

If, as Heidegger proposes, it is impossible to know from one moment to the next what our motivations are, and whose motives we are, in fact, serving at a given moment, then it isn't difficult to see why this conception of authenticity would be so troubling to conventional morality. If no one can set definitive standards for what authenticity entails, then how can we ever know whether we are being true to our selves or just acting from a convoluted strategy of compliance, on the one extreme, or a not-so-subtle form of conventional narcissism on the other? This is the question I now want to turn to in examining those aspects of authenticity that are readily evident in psychoanalysis.

II Authenticity in the Work of Sigmund Freud

In order to appreciate the importance of authenticity in Freud's treatment perspective first we need to examine his presuppositions about the nature of suffering and the role it plays in our lives. This topic is important because analysts and patients alike go into the treatment situation with their own views about what suffering entails and how much of it we can we can expect to diminish. There's no denying that Freud's take on the human

condition is unconventional by contemporary North American standards. This is largely because it was born from a European, post-World War One, existential perspective that is anathema to the typical American mind-set. Whereas in this country psychoanalysis was enthusiastically embraced as a tool of psychiatry in its never-ending war on mental illness, in Vienna and other European capitals such as Berlin, Paris, and London psychoanalysis was marginalized by psychiatry and became a refuge for artists, writers, and intellectuals — and anyone wealthy enough to pay for a six-times-a-week analysis. Many of Freud's patients came to see analysis as a means of facing the harsh realities of living instead of a device for the simple relief of their symptoms.

Yet, this paradox presented Freud's patients — most of whom came to him from all over the world — with a quandary: Everyone goes into analysis in the first place because they suffer and want their suffering to diminish. In fact, without the motivation to sacrifice whatever it takes to effect a change in one's condition, the prospective analytic patient, Freud advised, should be refused treatment. Since the beginning of Western thought philosophers, physicians, and religious leaders have been concerned with the nature of suffering, its ostensible causes, and its elusive relief. From earliest times we have sought to understand what our suffering is about and how to relieve, accommodate, or accept it. Freud, though trained as a physician, was never willing to accept the strictly medical approach to suffering: To relieve it by any means possible, whatever the cost. Freud knew from personal experience that *life entails suffering*. The patients he treated suffered miserably, yet seemed peculiarly intolerant of it. Because their desire for happiness caused them frustration, they instinctively suppressed those desires they believed occasioned their suffering. How could psychoanalysis help them? Whatever kind of anguish analysis is suitable for relieving, Freud soon realized it could not be expected to relieve the kinds of suffering that life inevitably entails. This is because life subjects us to suffering. Life, in turn, eases the burden of suffering with momentary respites of pleasure and the promise of fleeting, if not lasting happiness. In

Freud's opinion we are only capable of experiencing happiness in the first place because we suffer, but we compound our suffering even more because we aspire to happiness to unreasonable extremes. How can any person be expected to come to terms with this equation, which by its nature entails more suffering, not less?

In his most popular work, *Civilization And Its Discontents* (1930), Freud argued that neurotics find this equation unacceptable because they feel, to varying degrees, that life is systematically cheating them. They grow to resent their suffering and become increasingly desperate to rise above it. In their haste to relieve their suffering, however, they overlook what their anguish is trying to tell them. In effect, they become so preoccupied with diminishing their unhappiness they forget that if you reduce life to simply relieving your misery you become so obsessed with it that the relief you covet becomes even more elusive. These were the kind of people Freud wanted to help, but the way he decided to help them wasn't by diminishing their suffering, but by increasing it, in Zen-like fashion!

Freud knew that if the patients he treated had any chance of success, he would have to reeducate them about the role that suffering properly plays in our lives. Taking from Aristotle, Freud believed that every human action is in pursuit of the good, but the problem lies in each person's conception of the good, and such conceptions can serve us well or lead us to ruin. So what conception of the good did Aristotle advocate? Aristotle believed that the good life can be equated with the pursuit of happiness, but he also observed that, for most people, pleasure is the focus of their lives and, consequently, how they conceive happiness. Aristotle believed there was a good far nobler — and in the end, more reliable — than pleasure, which is virtue, not because virtue serves utilitarian aims (such as relief from suffering), but because virtue is its own reward. In other words, whereas most people pursue happiness by accruing wealth and pursuing pleasurable activities, Aristotle argued that people of poor character will always be miserable while those of good character will be rewarded for it. Consequently, the

virtuous person is happy — at any rate *with himself* — while the person who pursues only pleasures is always in danger of losing them and, hence, plagued with anxiety.

And what is the highest virtue? According to Aristotle, honesty — the capacity to be honest with others but, more importantly, the capacity to be honest, or more authentic, with oneself. Freud's problem was in persuading his patients to follow this counsel to the degree that it could make a difference in their lives. Like Aristotle, Freud believed that the capacity for honesty hinges on the strength of character each person is capable of developing. So the first thing every analyst must learn is that you don't build character by conceiving ways to relieve suffering, but by developing the strength to bear it. This makes the outcome of analysis and the drama that occasion's termination ambiguous, and sometimes tragic. This is because the kind of suffering analysis is capable of relieving isn't the pain of suffering, specifically, but the alienation we experience when we know that the life we are living is a lie. The ability to overcome this lie, by becoming more honest with ourselves, can relieve the alienation, but not the anguish that the slings and arrows of misfortune invariably exact from us.

It should be clear by now that the standard Freud is using for the outcome of analysis is far more complicated than the simple reduction of symptoms that we have become accustomed to in the rhetoric of contemporary psychobabble. In fact, he is talking about something most people probably don't ordinarily equate with relief from mental distress, but something along the lines of character building, or personal integrity. What is peculiar to analysis is its singular approach to suffering, embodied in the rule of abstinence and the so-called classical technique, which holds that a certain quota of suffering should be endured in order to accrue the full benefit of what analysis can offer. While psychoanalysts have always experimented with *relaxing* this aspect of their treatment regimen, they never opted to entirely abandon it, so the question comes down to how much suffering are we talking about? what kind of suffering does psychoanalysis subject us to? and what are the varieties of contexts in which analytic patients are

expected to encounter such suffering and surmount it?

I now want to focus on three components of psychoanalytic technique that are especially evocative of authenticity, the three technical principles that most poignantly characterize Freud's treatment philosophy: 1) The fundamental rule of analysis, i.e., the patient's acts of self-disclosure; 2) the rule of neutrality, i.e., the analyst's capacity for openmindedness; and 3) the rule of abstinence, i.e., the patient's capacity to suffer. These three principles are hardly exhaustive. Most of the basic technical principles of psychoanalysis, including the use of countertransference and the admonition against therapeutic ambition are concerned with authenticity, but I will only examine the first three in this context.

Basically, the fundamental rule is a contract that analytic patients are enlisted into during the early stages of analysis. Freud called this contract a pledge or a promise, so when patients agree to free associate they essentially promise to. (Let's leave aside for the moment whether this pledge is explicit or merely implied which is nowadays more typically the case.) On the other hand, the *act* of free associating is not a pledge but a spontaneous form of conversation in which patients are invited to participate by being unreservedly candid. To free associate in the manner that Freud intended requires nothing more complicated than the willingness to speak spontaneously and unreservedly, as we sometimes do when not the least self-conscious about what we are disclosing to another person. Obviously, Freud's conception of free association doesn't make much sense unless we appreciate the degree to which we ordinarily conceal most of what spontaneously comes to mind in the course of a typical conversation.

Free association is not, however, so much a *process* as a form of verbal meditation that entails speaking unreservedly while remaining attentive to what we are disclosing, something we do not ordinarily do. Most of us either speak impulsively without awareness of what we say, or we think through everything we are about to disclose before speaking. This is because patients instinctively want to censor things

about themselves that they believe will lead the analyst to judge or dislike them. As we know, it takes a lot of courage to disclose things about ourselves that we customarily keep hidden, no matter how open minded an analyst purports to be with his or her patient.

Yet, simply disclosing things about ourselves doesn't necessarily entail an authentic way of being. We may be "honest" in the strict definition of the word by verbalizing everything that comes to mind, but not always in a fashion that is consistent with authenticity — in a manner that is heartfelt, considered, risky. The one isn't always or necessarily the same as the other. Freud was aware that some patients are content with engaging in a kind of verbal diarrhea by disclosing virtually nothing of significance, though technically "honest." What makes free associating potentially authentic is the way each of us faces the risk of exposing things about ourselves — to our analyst as well as to ourselves — that we are ambivalent about knowing. This is because, as Nietzsche observed, once such secrets are exposed they change our perception of ourselves and thus, the *core* of who we take ourselves to be, for better or worse. We may regret having said them and want to take them back, but we cannot. Once uttered, we have ingrained a piece of ourselves onto the fabric of the world for all to see. The analyst bears witness to our confessions and admissions, and however spontaneous and unconsciously intended they may be, they are no less true for being so.

Similarly, the rule of neutrality speaks to the analyst's capacity to be as authentic with her patients as her patients are trying to be with her. One of neutrality's most salient features was Freud's counsel to adopt a mode of free-floating attentiveness that is probably more familiar to practitioners of Buddhist meditation than to scientifically trained psychologists. For example, Freud advised analysts against trying to *remember* everything that patients tell them because by the act of trying to they select what they think is important instead of giving everything equal weight. This is hard to do because the most difficult thing analysts frequently encounter is how little they know about what is

going on in the treatment and whether it is on or off the track. The typical treatment is no doubt off the track most of the time, yet patients somehow find a way to make the process work for them if the analyst can only learn to be patient — or, as Freud might have said, "neutral."[4] Unskilled analysts may inadvertently try to compensate for their lack of knowledge by pretending to know more than they do and acting accordingly, an incidence of what Freud called therapeutic ambition, in his view the most egregious example of countertransference, or inauthenticity.

Such behavior is inauthentic due to the analyst's unwillingness *to trust the process*. What this boils down to is the analyst learning to tolerate the patient's self-disclosures by abandoning the need to over-interpret. This was also a feature of Winnicott's (1989) later technique after he realized that his penchant for interpreting everything was actually interfering with his patients' free associations. Winnicott concluded that the principal task of psychoanalysis is to create a space where patients are free to explore their experience by speaking to it. From this angle, interpretations are not supposed to replace the patient's explanations with the analyst's, but to subvert explanations altogether. Like Freud, Winnicott concluded that the most difficult thing analysts have to learn is to dispense with demonstrating how brilliant they are, and instead giving their patients the time they need to find their own voice.

But probably the most poorly understood technical principle in Freud's nomenclature is the rule of abstinence, the technical rule that pertains to the patient's relationship with his or her suffering. Patients expect analysis to relieve them of their suffering, but soon learn that there is a kind of suffering they have to endure for the therapy to be of some consequence. Whether we like it or not, therapy *hurts*. I don't think anyone disputes this statement in principle, though one of the most contested debates from the inception of psychoanalytic practice has revolved around the question as to

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[4] Actually, *indifferent* in the original German.

precisely how much it ought to hurt in order to be effective.

Freud's position on the matter was typically ambiguous, saying only, "The treatment must be carried out in abstinence . . . [so that] the patient's need and longing should be allowed to persist in her, in order that they may serve as forces impelling her to do work and to make changes" (1915, p. 165). We are all abundantly familiar by now with the stereotype of the so-called classical analyst who never offers a word of encouragement or support, who sees the analytic process as a kind of deprivation chamber that is designed to inflict as much discomfort as legally permissible, and who perhaps feels giddy with the knowledge that he actually has patients who are desperate or dependent enough to permit him to get away with such behavior. This kind of torture, however, is not what Freud envisioned, nor was it the way he conducted analysis with his patients. He was conversational, engaged, alive; if anything, he was over-involved with his patients by contemporary standards.

On the other hand, Freud was not warm and cozy. He saw the analytic process as an inherently painful affair that necessarily draws blood. This is because the transference revolves around a kind of expectation that the analyst has the power to make the patient well, happy, improved —however you want to put it, instead of recognizing that the outcome of treatment ultimately hinges on the *work* that patients accomplish, and nothing more. The *person* of the analyst plays a role, to be sure, (which I examine in Section IV, below) but not necessarily the one the patient envisions. The rule of abstinence speaks to whether or not the analyst is in a position to help the patient in this endeavor *in the way* the patient expects the analyst to, or if the kind of help being offered seems more or less useless to the patient at the time, and in the manner, it is offered.

What all this boils down to is that the rule of abstinence is the technical principle that Freud conceived to say that it is through a kind of disillusionment that analysis ultimately has the power to effect change in a person's life. The term, itself, is perhaps

unfortunate, and would be better served, I suggest, by the term *authenticity*, because what we are talking about is essentially our relationship to suffering and whether we are going to spend our lives trying to devise ways to turn away from it or determining how to face it and developing more effective ways of dealing with it.

III Authenticity and the Role of Suffering in the Psychoanalytic Encounter

I have argued that authenticity originated in the existentialist observation that humans have a tendency to suppress their innermost being in order to relieve themselves of alienation, by abandoning their principles and abdicating their agency to forces that pull them this way or that, as long as the social incentives are sufficiently compelling. I have also suggested that one of the principal features of authenticity as conceived by Nietzsche and Heidegger is the wherewithal to *go against the grain* in one's day-to-day affairs by subjecting oneself to experiences that are undeniably painful, yet rewarding. I now want to examine how this tendency applies to the patient's efforts to avoid as much suffering as possible, and why the capacity to bear suffering is a necessary component of every analytic encounter. In psychoanalysis as in existentialism, the capacity to bear suffering and the anxiety associated with being oneself are hallmarks of authenticity. My thesis is that this sensibility is already latent in psychoanalysis although the term, authenticity, is seldom used to depict it.

Perhaps nowhere was Freud's authentic sensibility more aptly demonstrated than in the closing pages of his *Studies on Hysteria* (1893-1895, p. 305) where he proposed that the goal of analysis is to "transform hysterical misery into common unhappiness." One of the reasons Freud rejected happiness as a goal of therapy was the way he conceived the transference, that patients harbor fantasies about what the analyst will or should do to make them happy. In Freud's opinion, this amounts to eliciting the analyst's love, the easy way, he says, of obtaining momentary happiness,

but without having to work for it, so it cannot endure. As every analyst learns, no matter how painful this lesson turns out to be, the analyst is ultimately obliged to *thwart* such longings instead of trying to make them come true. As we noted earlier, it is through *disillusionment* that analysis effects its power to transform the neurotic from a hopeless dreamer into an individual who is willing to take life by the horns and accept its conditions, by fighting for what he wants or going without it (Thompson, 2004a).

Another way of putting this is that what we *ought* to do or *should* do, when it goes against what we *desire* to do, is almost always inauthentic. This is consistent with Freud's conception of the superego, the seat of a pseudo-morality that is fixed by introjects from one's parents or immediate environment. Essentially primitive in nature, the superego acts against our capacity for desiring by prompting us to think of what others think of us at the expense of ourselves. While this arrangement is no doubt usually pleasing to others, it often becomes a blueprint for neurotic conflicts that systematically compromise our own chances for happiness. While there are situations when we are obliged to choose an inauthentic course for non-neurotic reasons, the analyst is concerned with those choices we make that are neurotic because the choices are predominantly unconscious.

Another example of authenticity in psychoanalysis is Winnicott's observation that the goal of analysis is to become a sufferer, when he linked our fear of suffering with our wish to abolish it through omnipotence. Quoting Winnicott (1989):

> If we are successful [as analysts] we enable our patients to abandon invulnerability and [thereby] become a sufferer. [And], if we succeed, life will become precarious to those [patients] who were beginning to know a kind of . . . freedom from pain, even if this meant non-participation in living. (p. 199)

Enigmatic though this statement sounds, Winnicott apparently believed that *relief* from

suffering was only a preliminary stage of analytic treatment that comes at a cost: non-participation in living. The real problem, as we know, is to prepare our patients for *post*-analytic existence, away from the sheltered container of the consulting room, where *life* and the anguish it occasions leads to new adventures that challenge them with unanticipated developments. But why is the ability to suffer a necessary component of authenticity? This may seem like a curious question to ponder when the purported purpose of psychoanalysis is to relieve suffering, not increase it. The problem comes down to the observation that there are two kinds of suffering, not one. The first is the kind of suffering that is incumbent on everyday life and consistent with Freud's dictum that neurotics need to learn to accommodate the reality principle by delaying their gratification long enough to achieve the goals they set for themselves. The second kind of suffering is the consequence of not accommodating the first. This second, pathogenic form of suffering is peculiar to neurotic and other forms of psychopathology and is the consequence of intolerable frustration or insurmountable trauma. In either case, we are left with the same painful choice of having to either look at the mess that our life has become and do something about it or continue with the folly to which we have become adapted. Either path is painful, but it was Freud's and Winnicott's respective conclusions that the more painful path is the always the one less traveled — and the more therapeutic.[5]

Yet another example of authenticity in psychoanalysis is Bion's observation that, "In every consulting room there ought to be two rather frightened people; the patient and the psychoanalyst. If they are not, one wonders what they are doing there (1974, p. 13)!" Why the fear? Bion seemed to feel it has something to do with finding something out about ourselves that we would rather not know, the contrary of learning the truth about

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[5] For the relation between Winnicott's thesis of a true-self and false-self system and authenticity see Jon Mills, 2003 and R. D. Laing, 1960.

ourselves, i.e., being authentic with the instrument of analysis. One of Bion's earliest insights into the nature of the transference came when he recognized that members of the groups he led wanted to deprive him of the freedom to think what he wanted to think and to speak his mind about them accordingly. In other words, they wanted to control what he thought and what he said about them, and he recognized that one of the features of the countertransference is to succumb to this pressure by trying to meet such expectations by telling patients what they want to hear. Though Bion never used the term, this observation is a perfect example of how difficult it is to exercise authenticity in the analytic situation and why doing so is always uncomfortable, and often exasperating. Like Freud, in his later period Bion also advocated a prodigious use of neutrality, but whereas Freud characterized it as adopting "evenly suspended attention" Bion conceived it in terms of "erasing memory and desire" (Bion, 1967). Both manners of putting it are characteristic of authenticity.

Still another example of authenticity in psychoanalysis is reflected in Lacan's famous "short session," a device he conceived as a way of thwarting the typical obsessional patient's attempts to control the analytic hour (Schneiderman, 1983, pp. 129-156). This device was consistent with Lacan's use of interpretation, which he believed should be measured in order to be optimally effective. For Lacan, the role of interpretation isn't to explain or to translate the unconscious, but to take the patient by surprise by saying something startling and thereby unsettling the patient's narcissistic relationship with reality. In perhaps Lacan's most explicit allusion to authenticity he advised analysts against trying to be helpful when help is asked, to abandon the wish to perform miracles, and to give up hope of terminating the treatment with the patient's gratitude for everything that has been done for them. The goal of analysis is to disappoint, and disappointment is necessarily painful and not immediately appreciated, though potentially liberating in the long run. Though there is something undeniably Stoic about Lacan's vision of psychoanalysis, one can also recognize his debt to the

existential philosophical tradition to which he was wedded in his formative years and his resistance to following the more popular analytic herd.

Yet the application of authenticity is a complicated affair and analysts may opt to emphasize some of its features in their work while neglecting it elsewhere. Freud, Winnicott, Bion, and Lacan had remarkably different, even opposing clinical styles, so the examples of their relationship with authenticity cited above shouldn't be taken to imply that the experience of being analyzed by one if them would be the same as being analyzed by another. Freud and Winnicott, for instance, permitted more of their personal relationship to intrude in their analytic space than Bion or Lacan did, who employed considerably more abstinence in their technique. Yet, each of these dimensions of the treatment situation, taken in isolation, is telling of what authenticity properly entails.

What all these examples share in common is the view that analysis contrives a situation in which analytic patients are able to finally abandon the fantasy that someone else — be it the analyst, a friend, lover, or benefactor — will rise from the shadows to solve their problems for them, like a parent who comes to the rescue of a child. No amount of reasoning or coercion will persuade us to abandon this fantasy; it is only relinquished through the nitty-gritty, day-to-day *experience* of bearing this disappointment while engaged in the work of trying to understand our resistance to it.

IV Authenticity in the Transference-Countertransference Relationship

We have discussed the philosophical and cultural underpinnings of authenticity and its roots in our relationship with suffering, how to contend with it, relieve it, and when everything fails, face it, accept it, and let it be. We also examined the elements of authentic relating in Freud's technical principles and the clinical philosophies of D. W. Winnicott, Wilfried Bion, and Jacques Lacan. I now conclude our résumé of authenticity by examining its role in the so-called transference-countertransference relationship; in

fact the *extra*-transference and countertransference aspects of the analytic relationship.

There is a considered and even passionate debate in the psychoanalytic literature pertaining to distinctions between so-called classical technique and more contemporary, relaxed technical standards. The prevailing view is that classical technique originated with Freud and found its culmination with American ego psychology, which is noted for an exaggerated use of abstinence and neutrality. This is confusing because classical technique, so defined, is actually foreign to the way Freud conducted psychoanalysis, as I have discussed elsewhere (1985; 1994a; 1994b; 1996a; 1996b; 1998a; 1998b; 1998c; 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2001a; 2001b; 2002; 2004b; 2004c). Freud's conception of the transference lies at the heart of a dramatic shift in psychoanalytic technique that evolved in the post-World War Two era in the New York Psychoanalytic Institute by a group of European émigrés who began to publish articles critical of the way Freud conducted his analytic treatments. In an article that shocked many of his Chicago psychoanalytic colleagues, Lipton (1977) cited Freud's published treatment of the Rat Man to demonstrate the degree to which his psychoanalytic behavior diverges from contemporary "classical" standards using voluminous evidence of publications by analysts — virtually all identified with ego psychology — who roundly condemned Freud for the technique he employed in his treatment of the Rat Man.

All the analysts cited complained about the absence of strict adherence to proper analytic principles, e.g., that Freud was too personally engaged with his patient, gave him a gift, asked to see a photo of his fiancé, fed him a meal during a therapy session, failed to consistently analyze the transference, improperly asked his patient questions, engaged in extra-interpretative, conversational dialogues with him, etc. It has been widely reported by Freud's former patients how personally engaging he was as an analyst, that some even complained that he talked too much, that he invited some to accompany him on vacations, that he spoke openly of his personal problems with patients he was fond of, and so on. Freud did not report these "interventions" in his case

reports[6] because he did not view them as *technical* interventions; they were part of his ongoing personal relationship with patients that he believed were not worth noting. The criticisms are surprising on two counts. First, because Freud's treatment of the Rat Man was successful and was used as a teaching tool in virtually every psychoanalytic institute in world until Freud's death; it was only in the late 1940s that his analytic technique was deemed inadequate by so-called classical standards. Secondly, these criticisms suggest that the definition of classical technique changed after Freud's death into what is now defined as the standard for classical technique, yet this technique is erroneously attributed to Freud by contemporary authors who condemn this technique for its excessive use of detachment in the analytic relationship. What accounts for this shift in technique? I believe that the most telling feature of *revised* classical technique is its reconceptualization of the transference by omitting from the analyst-analysand relationship all vestiges of the personal, or real relationship. Moreover, I propose that the effort to defend the analyst from the personal elements of the relationship shared with patients serves as a source of inauthenticity and robs the relationship of genuineness, which patients experience and invariably complain about.

The situation is so confusing that Lipton proposed that this *newer*, post-World War Two technique that evolved during the late 1940s and early 1950s should be termed "modern" instead of classical in order to distinguish it from Freud's which, because it came earlier, should be termed classical. This is not likely to happen, so we are left with the unfortunate dilemma of *two* classical techniques, one belonging to Freud and the other belonging to ego psychology but claiming to originate with Freud, though

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[6] The gist of these extra-analytic interventions were revealed in case notes that Freud typically destroyed after the published his cases, but for some reason were left intact in the case of the Rat Man. Strachey included them in his translation of Freud's case report of the *Standard Edition*.

ego psychologists complain that Freud himself did not practice it! (Thompson, 1994a, pp. 230-240).

American ego psychology identifies itself with Freud and claims to be adhering to technical principles that he advocated, but did not follow. The principal objection they raised concerns the way they perceived the interplay between Freud's *personal* relationship with the Rat Man and Freud's narrow *technical* interventions. Some analysts saw Freud's personal relationship with the Rat Man — e.g., feeding him a meal when he had apparently not eaten for days — as a *technical intervention* designed to manipulate the transference, but claim that Freud did not satisfactorily deal with this unconventional "intervention" and that, in hindsight, he should have refrained from doing so. It seems that none of these analysts were able to fathom what Freud had in mind with any of the personal asides he engaged in *unless* they were intended as expressions of technique; in other words, it was impossible to conceive his behavior as specifically personal in nature. Lipton concludes that, "The essence of the difference between modern/classical technique and Freud's is that the definition of [this newer] technique has been expanded to incorporate aspects of the analyst's relation with the patient which Freud excluded from technique" (p. 262). In other words, Freud recognized both a personal relationship as well as a transference relationship that co-existed side by side during the course of a patient's treatment. The personal relationship was not typically subjected to analysis or interpretation unless there was a compelling reason for doing so.

In order to appreciate this distinction and why ego psychologists had difficulty understanding Freud's clinical behavior I will briefly review the way Freud conceived the nature of the transference and how this technical principle has evolved since his death. For Freud, transference was essentially another word for love and ubiquitous to the human experience. It goes on everywhere, in and outside the analytic relationship, so the only thing that is special about the emergence of the transference (the patient's love for the analyst) in analysis is that instead of acting on such feelings they are examined

and talked about, *without* acting on them. Freud distinguished among three kinds of transference: positive and negative; and the positive transference was divided again into two the erotic and unobjectionable. Both negative and erotic components of the transference are unconscious and serve as sources of resistance, whereas the unobjectionable transference is comprised of conscious feelings of affection or positive regard toward the analyst and the work both are engaged in collaboratively. Remember that for Freud analysis is about the *work* accomplished and suffered. The transference can either further this process or engender a wish that the analyst will cure the patient's ills through magic or infantile love, manifesting editions of resistance that need to be interpreted and worked through.

Now love has a role, but a subtle one. To equate transference with love is a complicated claim and demands a concerted exploration into its nature, both its mature and regressive editions. Unlike most contemporary classical analysts, Freud believed that love plays a critical role in the outcome of every analysis. Why, after all, would anyone put up with all the anguish and heartache that the work of analysis demands from patients if it weren't for the bond of affection felt for the analyst by the typical analysand? Freud was aware that this kind of positive (unobjectionable) transference was crucial for a desirable outcome for the treatment, not because love heals, but because without it who would be willing to stay the course through all the difficulty expected of them? Separating this form of love from the infantile projections that urge the analyst to abandon all vestiges of abstinence is not easy, but Freud expected that every analyst should be equipped to perform this role with sufficient preparation and training. One form of love Freud deemed personal, whereas the other he conceived as a technical component of the transference (Freud, 1915).

Perhaps in order to make matters appear to be less ambiguous, Kanzer (1952) and Kris (1951) were in the vanguard of analysts who expanded the concept of transference to include the entirety of the patient's relationship with the analyst, so the

idea of a personal — or what Freud termed unobjectionable — dimension to the analyst-patient interaction became moot. Until this development it was common for analysts to engage in conversations with their patients and to make non-analytic comments of a personal nature, ask questions, even disclose information about themselves, and so on.[7] Now analysts were expected to speak only when giving interpretations but to otherwise remain silent. Why did this happen? Lipton suspects this developed by accident when Eissler (1953), in a paper condemning Franz Alexander's expansion of transference to include personal gestures by the analyst, advocated a revision of technique that encouraged a *minimum* of analytic interventions other than the use of interpretation. This paper had a decisive impact on the analytic community, partly because New York analysts were searching for a way to marginalize what they saw as Alexander's corruption of proper analytic technique.

In short order all the other elements that we have come to associate with classical technique coalesced into its current form: 1) a concerted attention to the analyst's behavior instead of his purpose; 2) the exclusion of the analyst's *personality* from the treatment; 3) the use of the analyst's silence as a mode of communication instead of a mode of listening. Ironically, efforts to eliminate the personal relationship from the analytic discourse are not only ill advised, but also patently impossible. Moreover, such attention to detail has the effect of placing too much weight on minor matters instead of major ones, and lends to classical technique a prospective or prophylactic approach instead of a retrospective one. Instead of occupying himself with examining the meaning of his patient's associations, the analyst diverts a great deal of

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[7] I am describing the way analysts who were identified with the classical approach of *Freud* tended to work. Analysts such as Melanie Klein developed a more austere form of analytic technique that dispensed with personally engaging with patients by employing abstinence to unprecedented degrees.

his attention to excluding interventions that would otherwise become the subject of future associations and discussion. This diverts the analyst's attentiveness from a neutral state of mind to a critical one. And what does the potential impact that working in this fashion has on the personality of a typical classical analyst? He is more liable to become shy, cautions, tentative, circumspect, and inhibited in his demeanor instead of bold, creative, adventurous, self-confident, and spontaneous. Even the selection process of analytic candidates in training institutes is more likely to favor obsessional types over hysterics, as history has demonstrated.

Presumably most "modern" classical analysts have recognized the impossible situation they put themselves in after removing the personal relationship because they were subsequently obliged to reinsert it in the guise of the so-called working or therapeutic alliance, which now becomes, not strictly personal in the conventional sense but a part of the technical, analytic relationship, because it is subject to analysis and interpretation. Obviously there is a difference between a dimension of a relationship that I have with a person that occurs naturally and spontaneously and one that I know is laden with hidden meanings and unconscious intentions; one that my analyst will always, after the fact, inform me about as to what I was really thinking of or up to when such and such was said or shared between us. Lipton even suggests that utilizing a working alliance can be injurious to the analytic relationship:

> Devoting explicit attention to [the working alliance] encumbers the analysis with a series of dangers and disadvantages. It tends to foster artificiality; tends to give undue weight to the analyst's behavior; tends to expand technique beyond the area which the patient knows about and collaborates with; and tends to substitute for the genuine, personal relationship on which the analysis is based an idealized relationship in which the patient meets not another person but a sort of encompassing, technically-correct instrumentality. (p. 266)

In effect, all vestiges of the personal relationship shared with patients have been transformed into aspects of the patient's transference with the analyst, which the analyst is obliged to interpret accordingly. From the classical perspective, transference has become a rarefied, trance-like state of childlike hypnotic regression that places the patient in a one-down position from which she cannot easily extricate herself, because she is always "in" the transference, which she cannot get out of. This has the chilling impact of perceiving the analysand as never really being the author of his or her experience or a proper adult in an I-Thou relationship, but the "effect" of unconscious forces that only the analyst is privy to. In other words, the concept of transference has become a vehicle of defense against the realness of the person of the patient in treatment, whenever it is convenient for the analyst to remove himself from the impact of proximity with his patients. So instead of using the transference/countertransference situation as a means of obtaining intimacy, of moving back and forth between the specific work of the treatment and the relationship shared between them, the so-called classical analyst rejects any vestige of extra-analytic engagement and interprets any incidence of closeness or informality as seduction, or "transference."

So what are the criteria of the personal relationship that so many analysts find so frightening that they have been factored out of the treatment? Unlike technical aspects of the treatment situation, there cannot be universal standards for how a given analyst is going to use his or her person in the treatment with each patient. Freud wasn't even comfortable with mandating strict standards for the application of his technical principles, let alone the personal ones! As a rule of thumb, however, what is deemed personal should be obvious. It is both outside technique and subject to individual variation. It cannot be codified because, just as analysts differ from person to person, each analyst's conception of the personal relationship will vary as well. Moreover, analysts are liable to form different conceptions of what the personal relationship entails at different stages of

their careers and with different patients, when they inhabit different moods, and so on. Even narrow interpretations need clarification and expansion and such conversational digressions require a departure from strict interpretative speech. The many times that analysts must talk to their patients about such matters as whether the analysis is working for them, whether they should use the couch, disagreements as to matters of frequency, absence from sessions, increase in fees, and so on, have to be hammered out on a person to person basis that ultimately comes down to how credible the analyst is in the eyes of the patient. In my experience of these situations, the concept of a therapeutic alliance has been of little help in ironing these issues out.

For the personal relationship to be spontaneous, unpredictable, and authentic it has to be free of contrivance and guile. Yet sometimes it isn't so easy to tell when it is personal and when it is transference. Otto Will once told me a story of his analysis with Harry Stack Sullivan that may serve as an apt example. This was an uncomfortable period in his analysis and Will was feeling frustrated with the progress of his treatment and with Sullivan, who could be difficult under the best of circumstances. Finally, one day Will blurted out that he felt angry with Sullivan. Will immediately felt guilty for his outburst and said in so many words that he was sorry for his behavior and supposed that this was evidence of his father transference emerging. Sullivan immediately corrected Will and said, "No, Doctor, that was not your father transference. It just so happens that right now you don't like me very much and I don't like you, but I'm sure if we persevere we'll get through it somehow" (Will, 1992). The distinction may seem arbitrary, but it is typical of the way Freud, Fenichel, Glover, Winnicott, and a legion of other analysts have typically distinguished between personal and transference communications between their patients and themselves, the one requiring interpretation, the other a simple acknowledgment of feelings that *analyst and patient feel for each other*.

The most common incidence of the personal relationship that exists in the analytic relationship is ultimately embodied in the forms of *conversation* that evolve

between them. Classical analysts tend to reject the term because they argue that "conversing" has no discernable role in the analytic discourse. The patient speaks and the analyst interprets; conversation, as such, is avoided. Yet Freud conversed freely with his patients and engaged in straightforward dialogues with them, a form of speech that has subsequently become *verboten* to classical analysts (Racker, 1968, p. 35). This form of conversation is obviously gratifying for patient and analyst alike and is necessarily restrained by the rule of abstinence, but to abandon it entirely is artificial. It serves as an exemplary tool for furthering free association when employed skillfully, but it is also a humanizing aspect of the analyst's personal relationship with each patient, showing concern for each patient as a person with whom he or she is engaged, helping to prolong the treatment toward an optimal conclusion. Analysts reveal personal things about themselves to patients mature enough to contain them, and when patients make personal observations about their analysts they are not always interpreted as projections, but sometimes astute observations that may be taken as complements or criticisms. Naturally, one monitors what occurs in such conversations and brings their content under scrutiny *when appropriate*, but not necessarily or systematically as when addressing components of a technical regimen. Permitting one's personality to become part of the constellation of elements that patients experience serves as an invaluable source for authentic relating and complements the exercise of technical principles discussed earlier.

But probably the principal motive for engaging in a personal relationship with patients is that there is no good reason not to, because this is the context in which the analysand experiences genuine love for the analyst, not love as a projection or idealization or regression to infantile fixations, but the genuine or real edition of love that manifests itself in the course of just about every analysis, and without which a meaningful analysis is impossible to imagine. How could patients be expected to put up with the trials and tribulations they are subjected to during the course of their treatment if

not for the love they come to develop for their analyst in the first place? It is relevant that few analysts talk about love or acknowledge its relevance to the analytic process, and most analysts go out of their way to insist that it has no role to speak of. Indeed, the concept of transference, once synonymous with love, is now viewed as little more than an algebraic equation, a place on the map occupied by one participant acting out a fantasy onto a blank screen whose function is little more than to interpret back as accurately as possible the etchings of the projections recorded. Anything of a personal nature is checked at the door and retrieved at the termination of treatment, if then.

In short, the capacity to acknowledge the existence of a personal relationship with patients, to accept and freely engage it in a manner of one's choosing and that complements the needs of each patient, lends a dimension of genuineness to the relationship that has profound implications to the way the treatment is experienced, and even how the technical principles are construed. Intuitively, most analysts know this and conduct themselves accordingly. Recent controversies in analytic technique under the rubric of relational and contemporary perspectives have targeted these very issues, though some of the authors fail to recognize that the so-called classical technique they rightfully condemn has little relation to Freud's treatment philosophy or behavior, but is the creature of a more recent lineage.

V Conclusion

In conclusion, what do the foregoing clinical examples of authenticity share in common with the way the concept was conceived by Nietzsche and Heidegger? Although Freud, Winnicott, Bion, and Lacan never invoked the term as a feature of their analytic technique, the way they each reject the easier and undoubtedly more comforting strategy of doing everything one can to please one's patients in the hope this will elicit an easier treatment experience is a critical feature of how both Nietzsche and Heidegger

characterized authentic being in the world. On the other hand, we have also seen how easily analysts just as frequently take the opposite tack in *doing nothing* to reach out to their patients, and talk to them, but hold them at arm's length in order to mitigate the anxiety they feel for being at close quarters to another human being. The treatment is obviously not served by this. This isn't a moral position, but a recognition that change is necessarily painful and requires sacrifice, so if analysts expect their patients to shoulder the quota of sacrifices they need to in order to benefit from the treatment, then the analyst has to be willing and able to shoulder the same measure of sacrifice himself.

What this comes down to is that the analyst instills the capacity for sacrifice in his patients *through his own example*. This instilling is not a matter of technique that can simply be "applied" from the comfort of detaching oneself from the process, but an *act of courage* that has to be suffered, repeatedly and constantly throughout the treatment with every patient. This is why the wherewithal to endure the first kind of suffering discussed earlier in order to mitigate the second kind is what Freud, Winnicott, Bion, and Lacan had in mind when they concluded that, not only life but analysis entails suffering. Though none of them used the term, the wisdom of submitting to suffering and making use of it makes little sense without at least an instinctive awareness of the role that authenticity properly plays in all of our clinical endeavors.

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