A CONTRIBUTION TO
THE PHENOMENON OF
TRANSFERENCE

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will be concerned with the analysis of a girl of 25 years of age. The different levels her transference shows are of particular interest, especially because she exemplifies a condition which Erich Neumann (1955, 1963) has described as a disturbance of primary relationship (Urbeziehungs-störung).

BEGINNINGS OF THERAPY

I can still see the intimidated creature—‘Miss B’ I shall call her—as, more than three years ago, she slunk along the walls of the psychiatric hospital. She revealed thereby how she felt pushed up against the wall by her surroundings. I still hear her feeble knocking on the door of my therapy room, even though before our first meeting it was practically inaudible.

I opened the door for her. Yet she did not appear in my field of vision because she was pressing herself up against the wall behind my door. I can still feel the sapless hand offered as greeting and in a split second withdrawn. The patient slunk inside, sat down and started to laugh, which, even though obviously a compulsion, seemed not without a certain charm. Suddenly she covered her face with her hands and said in a tormented voice: ‘I can’t bear it if you look at me’. (I later saw an exactly identical gesture in a film. In it a child therapist wanted to demonstrate her findings on psychic disturbances suffered by children, who from earliest childhood on had grown up in homes. Those children who had been out of touch with their mothers could not bear being looked at directly and would protect themselves against visual contact by raising their hands before their faces.)

Miss B. used to wear torn stockings and the end of a white tattered
petticoat would show rather unappetizingly from under her dress of indefinable form and colour. Her hair was shaggy and unkept. ‘I am so repulsively ugly,’ she admitted in a whispering voice. She had already written out dreams for the first session; in them her sister, who is the elder by one and a half years, appeared in godlike beauty or was a magnificent queen, admired by all. Miss B., however, had no right to be near her.

In reality Miss B. is neither ugly nor is she a beauty. Maidenly charm is probably the word for the quality, which in spite of everything can be dimly seen—sometimes more, sometimes less—through her shoddiness. ‘Repulsively ugly,’ she said, and more than once. The compulsion to be as repulsive as possible in her supposed ugliness would manifest itself in a variety of characteristics, and not only in her manner of dress. To be repulsive meant to be rejected, and rejected she had to be. She had acquired quite a bagful of tricks to provoke it, if she was not in fact rejected. She was not allowed to be successful in anything, being deeply convinced that God demanded a terrible fate from her. He punished her with loneliness and fears and she had not the right to oppose herself sinfully against his wish. As the dream said: she had no right to be near to beauty.

In time I could see from her dreams that this cruel God was the great mother goddess in her destructive life-devouring form. For example her own mother, long dead, would appear as a mighty ghost pursuing or ravishing her as soon as Miss B. showed the slightest hint of a more independent life.

Miss B. was full of feelings of guilt, which she tried to mitigate by saying that she had bad, unclean or aggressive thoughts. Yet to exist at all she needed to experience her deepest and practically unbearable guilt. She thought of herself as completely worthless and was possessed by the notion of not belonging to human society at all. ‘Am I a human being at all?’ was one of her most frequent questions; ‘What a stupid cow I am’, a standing commentary on everything. In the beginning she brought dreams, in which she was in fact a cow; or in which she had been locked up in a rabbit-hutch and, no matter how hard she knocked at the door, no one would come to open it; or she would dream that her genitals were nothing but meat for the butcher.

So Miss B. did not feel she belonged to human society but to the society of animals whose lot it is to be slaughtered sooner or later. I thought in this connection of Erich Neumann’s paper ‘Narzissmus, Automorphismus und Urbeziehung’, where the following sentence can be found: ‘The great mother of primary relationship, as a goddess of fate, decides over life and death by her favour or disfavour and, at the same time, her attitude is a decree, a sentence passed by a supreme court’ (1955, p. 124).

It was the patient’s first stay in a psychiatric hospital. She had come of her own free will. In spite of good intelligence, she had no professional training of any sort, since she had been unable to stay any length of time at school, nor could she hold down a job of work. She always clearly believed
that others would despise her, laugh at her and reject her, because she was so ugly, so stupid and bad. ‘The others’, i.e. any person she had dealings with, were without differentiation. By reacting in such an unadapted fashion, she managed to be fired from any job in the shortest possible time, which of course served as further proof of her complete inability to live. Besides this she suffered from a laughing compulsion and complained of such somatic symptoms as continual bellyaches and headaches. She had undergone a Freudian analysis for three years, but without any apparent success. Therefore she decided in accordance with her family ‘to do something thorough for once’, as her father expressed himself to me, and so she entered the psychiatric hospital.

She is the youngest of five children: four girls and a boy. Her mother took very badly to her last pregnancy. According to the father, during the pregnancy and birth of Miss B., her mother was physically and psychically ill, so that this last child must have been an unbearable burden to her. The mother died of cancer when Miss B. was 17 years old. She was said to have been an intelligent, sensitive but a highly dissatisfied woman, suffering from a compulsion neurosis. The father is a well-meaning and harmless average citizen, undifferentiated and without much insight, who had lived a rather henpecked existence. After the death of his first wife he had married a primitive, rather egocentric person, who seeks to poison his relationship with his children. Miss B., who up to then could not make her own living, is especially a thorn in her side. One sister, who is about one and a half years older, is specially important to Miss B. In her eyes she is so gifted, beautiful and admired, that Miss B. feels largely the ugly duckling in relation to her—a problem which has already been referred to.

So Miss B. felt locked up in a rabbit-hutch; it is a fact that her mother used to breed rabbits. She knocks at the door, wants to be freed, but no one hears her. I wonder if she knocked as faintly as she did on the door of the therapy room? At least this suggests that she had not completely submitted to the rabbit-hutch existence.

PROGRESS OF THE ANALYSIS

Today, if I think back to these beginnings of our therapeutic meeting, the subsequent development of Miss B. seems like a miracle. And yet it is no miracle. The single stages of development are discernible and can be described. The analysis is far from finished. Miss B. is still largely dependent on me, but can see this tie now in a positive light. In our relationship she has found a place of trust from which she can sally forth to tackle difficult problems. Her guilt feelings, which would deny her any right to live, have lost their intensity and have now become open to discussion, whenever they pop up. The other day she dreamt that behind a department store, in which were members of her family, there was built on a single room which
belonged just to her. In this room there was a beautiful bath tub, her bed and an advent-garland. In another dream she is travelling, accompanied by me, to the place of her childhood. She carries milk with her and sees everything with new eyes.

Four months after beginning her analysis she could be released from the hospital. Many of her symptoms have disappeared and today she strives to make up for her lack of training with much courage and success.

NUCLEAR POINTS IN THE ANALYSIS

It is of course impossible to condense the essence of an analytical process lasting three and a half years into a short paper. To give a gist of the atmosphere, I would have to bore the reader with the year-long monotonous and dissonant litany that I myself was in one sense bored by. And yet, at the same time, I was not bored (at all) in spite of the ever-recurrent theme: ‘I feel exactly how you despise me.’ For I found Miss B. anything but boring. Her game of self-torment, ‘You can’t stand me, no one can stand me,’ had a multiple meaning but it had one aim: to provoke a real rejection from me and so repeat her old compulsive pattern.

At the same time, however, she was absolutely terrified that I could slam closed the door of her rabbit-hutch, after having not only heard her knocking but also opened the way out. Of course she wished for nothing more than to be freed from her lonely, narrow rabbit-warren, but she had to be sure first whether she could put any trust in her liberator. Were there not many dangers to surpass? The mighty mother might find out that she had fled and would pursue her everywhere. And perhaps the liberator might be just deceitful and prove to be a delegate of the mother—after all, he belongs to ‘the others’ as well. So she might get out of the frying-pan into the fire and become the liberator’s slave.

All these qualms, which were only too understandable, would make her hover undecidedly in her rabbit-hutch till, in analysis, all variations of her ‘I can feel how you despise me’ were played through. This was at least more entertaining than her complete loneliness. Up to this point, I wonder whether one can call our relationship transference in its specific sense, since she would experience her entire surroundings as an undifferentiated unity, most hostile to her, as ‘the others’, to use her language. The destructive maternal aspect was experienced by projection as a world of people universally hostile to her, and of course in her relationship to me as well. Yet in our situation she could verbalize her defensive attitudes to these experiences, which were quite discernibly accompanied by a certain undercurrent of masochistic pleasure. It certainly was a long stretch of road until step by step she could gain insight into all the implications of her rabbit-hutch existence.

In the meantime, of course, I had to meet all provocations of the ‘you don’t like me’ type in some way or other. For a long time interpretations
could not reach Miss B., so I had to react directly to her behaviour. Sometimes I would have a brainwave, sometimes not. Yet it seemed to me that the main thing was to have an understanding of her conflict situation slowly growing in me. This process of Einfühlung, feeling-into, gave to my spontaneous therapeutic attentions a certain direction, an aim, which in due course had an effect.

As early as the third session, some break-up in her 'nobody likes me' pattern seemed to have been started. She had dreamt that I was her mother and carried her as a babe at the breast. In another dream I gave her a lovely toy. Bashfully she even told me a spontaneous fantasy in which I was her kind father, carrying her as a little child in a basket. ‘That would be lovely,’ she commented, but immediately continued: ‘But it is ridiculous, I feel that now you can stand me even less.’ The need for good parents and her need to make up for this early lack, to compensate for her childhood frustrations, was still active and could be transferred on to the analyst. A decisive factor in her case.

A CRITICAL DREAM

Miss B. brought a dream to the tenth session which for many reasons seemed very meaningful to me. To my mind it expressed the basic pattern, the Leitmotiv, of our subsequent therapeutic endeavour and it seemed to anticipate in some way the course of development my patient would take. I therefore would like to choose this dream for closer examination of the mass of material that accumulated: 'I am in a large room. We are about ten girls who are waiting for therapy. Mr Jacoby enters and questions us all to find out who knew any meaning for the name Johann Sebastian Bach. A girl says something about Isis and Osiris. Consequently, Mr Jacoby goes out with her.'

What is our analysand experiencing in this dream? For once, not without cause, she commented: ‘You see, I am only one among many and you do not prefer me, but that girl who knows the answer.’ Her association suggests that this girl was a condensation, a mixture of her wonderful and artistic sister with another patient in the hospital who was in analysis with me, a fact which evoked strong jealousy in Miss B.

Thus she lived her old pattern in the dream: she is incurable and ignorant. She is worthless and therefore rejected and left alone. There are ten girls waiting for the analyst. Ten must refer to the tenth session which was anticipated in her dream. All ten are asked a question, which, reviewed in the light of the developments in the therapy so far, is new and unexpected. One girl obviously knows the right answer and becomes the chosen one. ‘You would prefer my sister a thousand times more, she is beautiful and artistically gifted,’ was Miss B.’s repetitive theme. Naturally this co-patient immediately became a sister to be hotly competed with.
Today Miss B. knows that her sister's reason for existence is not just to push her into the background. In the course of analysis Miss B.'s relationship to her has, indeed, changed profoundly. In reality this artistically gifted sister had broken away from her family and is now a painter in Paris. In due course she became a more and more helpful and liberating figure in Miss B.'s dreams as the embodiment of our patient's own artistic and imaginative being, a side of her with which she now dares to have more and more a living relationship. Later Miss B. started a lively correspondence with her and even visited her in Paris. To her astonishment she found: 'Actually my sister and I have the same wave-length.'

During the first ten sessions Miss B., just as much as I myself, was hopefully searching for a common ground on which a contact, sufficiently deep to be sufficiently stable for therapy to proceed, could manifest itself. The meeting occurs at a level which is still far removed from consciousness of the analysand. Her ego is left behind in the dream and indeed she fits happenings of her dream into her old mode of experience. So the following thoughts regarding the dimensions of this dream were largely *ad usum medici* and could not then be shared with the patient.

Miss B. and the other girls in the dream are approached by the analyst to be questioned about the meaning of Bach's name. The patient was aware of my strong ties to music and had indeed heard in the hospital that I was once a professional musician. She had told me that she used to play the piano and had been taking lessons until only recently. Yet this dream goes far beyond these details to speak my own language in a truly astonishing way. The meaning of Bach's name is something which interests me closely. Yet—consciously at any rate—it did not concern Miss B. at all.

The music of Bach is profound and religious. He expressively wrote his works for the glory of God only. His ingenious fugues, constructed according to strict laws, can bring about the experience of timelessness bound to time in a listener. Like the mandala, which seeks to represent the transcendent in a geometrical order, so—psychologically speaking—Bach's fugues could also be symbols of wholeness. There is another most meaningful detail in connection with this dream, which should be mentioned: in his 'Art of Fugue' Bach used the letters of his name, B A C H, as a basic theme for one of his fugues. (In English notation the theme would be built on B flat, A, C, B. The German B is identical with B flat, H with B.) He died while he was working on this very fugue based on the theme made out of the letters of his name. His life-work was completed. These connections are in themselves most impressive, though further speculations could be added with profit.

Miss B., who seemed to be hardly aware of me as a human partner and who seemed to have built me safely into her complex-world, this same Miss B. had found in a dream a common denominator, where I am in reality personally engaged. The common denominator goes much further than her
complex of ‘Do you really like me?’ and is symbolized by the name of J. S. Bach and its connotative meaning of wholeness.

This gave me much food for thought. I had to ask myself: am I really and honestly prepared to engage myself in such a total with Miss B.? In pondering this I needed to find out that her fate had got right under my skin, due to several of my own experiences, which seemed to follow a pattern not too far removed from hers. It also became clear to me that I was already spontaneously truly relating to her inner artistic sister—as the dream says quite rightly. That is to say, right at the beginning I had found her infrequent but none the less original fantasies and images highly stimulating. In short, I was already partly engaged and the dream seemed to confirm that a mutual engagement through thick and thin, through hell and high water, was the only meaningful therapeutic possibility. Another response given to the question in the dream is in this context striking. ‘Isis and Osiris’: as an association Mozart’s ‘Magic Flute’, which she had once seen, came to Miss B.’s mind.

The ‘Magic Flute’ is mainly concerned with the overcoming of the power of the dark goddess—Miss B.’s central problem. ‘The vengeance of hell’ is boiling in the heart of the Queen of Night, who wants to use her daughter Pamina to murder Sarastro, the priest of light, in order to bring the solar circle under her whip. Through Pamina’s overpowering love of the prince Tamino, which first has to hold true in the test of fire and water (going through hell and high water), the girl is liberated from the power of her vengeful mother and is initiated into the cult of Isis and Osiris.

Much could still be amplified about this dream, about the divine pair Isis and Osiris and their mysterious hieros gamos with the consequent begetting of the boy Horus—again about the kind and loving mother Isis, the prototype of many Christian representations of the madonna with her child. All this seems very meaningful, if we think of Miss B.’s grave mother-problem. Also the antithesis between Bach and Mozart, between Lutheran Christian piety and the freemason’s fascination with oriental pagan mysteries is worth much thought. However, in dealing with our patient, all that was now called for was to find a relationship to the side of her which seemed to know the meaning of Isis and Osiris.

At the time when this dream occurred all this was still far removed from her conscious being, but I made her understand how much this dream occupied my thoughts and my feelings, also tried to tell her about the name of Bach in the ‘Art of Fugue’. But she was still so much confined in her complexes that she could never listen and could not take anything in. Yet prognostically speaking I was more optimistic after this dream and curious as to what might happen and develop further. After about a year the reciprocal effect turned up, which was hinted at in the dream. The more Miss B. could approach the spontaneous imaginativeness of her inner sister, the more her feelings for me grew in intensity. And vice versa, the more she learned
to accept the often painful intensity of such feelings, unknown to her so far, the more her fantasies, her inner sister, would act as a liberating power.

As was to be expected, the maternal life-devouring force in her tried to sabotage attempts at liberation with all its forbidding might. At the time when her feelings had developed a strongly erotic tinge, her compulsive ‘I can feel how much you must despise me’ rose to an almost unbearable pitch. But here also, her inner sister, ‘knowing about Isis and Osiris’, proved to be helpful. She enabled Miss B. to open herself to certain insights into psychic interdependencies with the result that, for the first time, a reductive analysis became possible. To transform her continual repetitions of early childhood modes of relating into memory—as Freud (1963) defines the therapeutic goal—was in the case of Miss B. highly relevant and most beneficial.

Yet knowing about Isis and Osiris meant still much more. It enabled Miss B. to find meaning in the necessary frustrations of her transference-love. She made the experience that in her love for me, even though it entails a most painful foregiving, she can experience an enriching force. Hence she knows, at least sometimes, that these feelings do not mean me as a person but are the fire that is necessary to bring about any change. Indeed, an intensive transference generally leads into a strange in-between realm, where human meeting is vitally necessary but by no means an end in itself. For in it the meeting only becomes instrumental to a far deeper process, and the lover, even though continually thrown back upon himself, will all the same feel a supporting ground in the experience of togetherness. Such insight is possible to her today—at least from time to time.

At the end of the ‘Magic Flute’ the priest of Isis says: ‘The rays of the sun drive out the night’—a banality from the libretto-writer Schikaneder’s pen. But Mozart’s music endows this scene with a wonderful atmosphere of pure solemnity. The music, so to speak, establishes the needed feeling-aspect. And I must admit that to me it became quite an experience, as the rays of the sun little by little lit up and transformed a large patch of darkness in Miss B. As it happened, in many of her dreams the sun played an important role.

CONCLUSION

C. G. Jung, as is well known, saw in the transference phenomenon more than just a repetition of modes of experiencing the world stemming from early childhood. In his view, contents of the archetypal nature also can be transferred on to the analyst, contents which do not lend themselves to being reduced to early memories regarding the personal life-history. Rather, these contents are possible, though still unconscious, modes of being which can be experienced through the analyst by being projected on him. They constitute
part of the patient's psychic development, serving the integration of his personality.

In the case of Miss B., her dream of Isis and Osiris seems to point to the above-mentioned meaning of transference. For this reason I thought her dream to be of special interest. I worked out and amplified this dream _ad usum medici_ and then tried to relate it to the patient's situation. The question is, does this kind of procedure make therapeutic sense at all? How could this influence the therapeutic field in which Miss B. and I are situated?

With reference to this question, the following suggestions can be made. Firstly, it seems obvious that Miss B. feeds me with something which gives me a certain pleasure and satisfaction. This fact is important in my attitude towards her and serves to compensate the paralysing effect which her compulsive repetition has on me. On the other hand, the patient can experience through my reaction—even though still very darkly—that something in her can get through to the core of another human being. This is a most important experience for someone who, locked up in a 'rabbit hutch', feels an outcast from human society.

Secondly, a dream of such nature lends me an imagery, which can often be used with great pertinence in analytic conversations with the patient, since the imagery stems from her own fantasy world. At the same time the dream also shows her unconscious expectation of myself and how, in fact, I am drawn into the happening. Thus I am furnished with hints which serve decisively to increase my understanding of the therapeutic situation. Based on this form of comprehension, reactions and interpretations occur which strike home and thus give the patient a feeling of being understood.

Thirdly, I tended to see this dream as a so-called initial dream (Jung, 1934); in other words I contemplated it as indicating a possible prognosis of the course the analysis might take. In doing so, a potential of expectation is set up by the 'unconscious programme' touched upon by the dream. Of course I am quite aware that such an emotionally tinged state of expectation on the part of the analyst has to be looked at critically and examined very closely. The danger is self-evident: the analyst could become a presumptive parent and therefore constellate an askew or blocked transference/counter-transference situation.

On the other hand, every time it is of scientific interest whether Jung's hypothesis regarding initial dreams can be verified empirically. Without wanting to go into the various and complex problems posed by such a question, it still seems evident to me that, in the course of this analysis, contents which the dream hinted at and which at the time were still far removed from consciousness have slowly become a tangible living reality.

At any rate, the course which Miss B.'s analysis took so far proved most useful to me in understanding different levels of the transference phenomenon. The repetitive aspect of early childhood modes of behaviour was clearly evident. On the other hand, however—still far removed from
consciousness—a highly meaningful potentiality for future development is
constellated and experienced through projection to the analyst. These levels,
together with my counter-transference reactions, need most careful scrutiny
and attention. All this is really nothing new, yet as a living experience it is
new, often full of riddles and, in spite of repetitions and inherent laws, again
and again a unique occurrence.

SUMMARY

This paper deals with the analysis of a young woman, aged 25. Her neurotic
behaviour, based on the fantasy that she is an outcast of society locked in a
rabbit-hutch, can be understood in the frame of Erich Neumann’s ‘disturb-
ance of primary relationship’ (Urbeziehungsstörung). Her mother had not
been able to function at all adequately since the birth of our patient, and was
experienced by her as being highly destructive.

The patient felt basically that she had not the right to live and thus was
continuously compelled to provoke rejection from her surrounding in a
masochistic way. This compulsion was extensively acted out in the trans-
ference situation. At the same time, right from the beginning of analysis,
there were indications of her intense longing to experience me as a good,
accepting and liberating parent, but fear, guilt and distrust arose immediately
to counteract it.

One dream, brought to the tenth session, is worked out in detail, because
it shows the transference/counter-transference situation in a deeper and
meaningful light. It seems to express the basic pattern of the subsequent
therapeutic endeavour and to anticipate the development of the patient—
thus illustrating Jung’s findings concerning the ‘initial dream’. Some reflec-
tions on this procedure conclude the paper.

REFERENCES

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