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## Neutrality and the subject-function

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## Overview

### Neutrality and the subject-function gap

Jean-Luc

The title of the Colloquium: "What has neutrality become?" immediately put the question of

The emphasis is on overcoming a rather summary antagonism that may have arisen in the course of the history of psychoanalysis between a neutrality held to guarantee the analyzability of the transference and a critique that, very early on, sometimes denounced its deception or unfortunate effects. This summary antagonism has sometimes marked the reading of the dispute between Freud and Ferenczi, whereas the dialectical opposition between orthodox analysis and transgressive analysis constitutes the very heart of theories of method. M. Gressot summarised this tension by evoking 'the contradiction between the demand for radical neutrality and the demand for a sufficiently high affective level'. A certain conception of neutrality was directly linked to the idea that the analytical framework itself remained external to the transference phenomena and that the analyst, by expurgating his or her countertransference, could place his or her interpretative function in the same exteriority. However, the recognition of the incidence of the framework in the transference phenomena as well as of the subjective involvement of the psychoanalyst does not make the issue of neutrality disappear: it only points out that neutrality is not neutral but that it is active.

It turned out, however, that the conception of objective neutrality and the rejection it calls for are deeply inscribed in our institutional memory traces, since, on several occasions during the Colloquium, voices were heard to reject neutrality, all neutrality, in the name of the subjective involvement of the psychoanalyst. One wonders what this global rejection owes to a conception of counter-transference so broad that it loses its consistency.

The project for the Colloquium was certainly not to defend or reject a neutrality defined in itself, but to explore the use of its reference and to place it in the context

in the more flexible and complex conception that we have today.

The questioning of the analytical situation in a more or less well theorised way.

The in-terrogation concerns all our practices. If neutrality

"Is it not because the interpretive treatment of the transference has itself changed,

because the whole of the parameters of the situation belong to another

configuration? And yet we feel that in the mind of the psychoanalyst the reference

to neutrality is linked to the emergence and maintenance of the third-party function.

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The semantic content of neutrality is so overloaded by transmitted tradition and institutional superego that it is worth going through a brief return to the origin. I will not seek to reiterate here the crucial body of Freud's Technical Writings, only to interrogate the reasons for the fortune of the term 'neutrality'. As we know, Strachey chose to translate the term *Indifferenz*, which appears in Freud's writings in his

"The term *Indifferenz* is used in the German text 'Remarks on Transference Love' (1914) to qualify what the analyst's state of mind should be in the face of the solicitations of the transference in love: 'He must not disavow the indifference he has acquired by restraining his countertransference. "In the German text, *Indifferenz*, with its italic root, is undoubtedly reminiscent of the Latin terms of medical discourse<sup>1</sup>; the term thus takes on a technical value which attenuates its violence but reflects the effort made to methodologically arrest the transference. Here, "indifferent" is to be understood in the sense of "unperturbed" or, as it is said in physics, of a thing "on which no force capable of modifying its state is exerted in this or that sense. Of course, the 'intersubjective' meaning that indifference takes on is an integral part of the problem opened up by the reception of the transference".<sup>2</sup> The use of this term must be linked to the immediate context of its emergence: Freud is evoking the temptation to show the enamoured patient a certain tenderness - affection, compassion, sympathy -, a temptation that would undoubtedly translate into a desire to attenuate frustration, to introduce a hint of consolation. The all-too-human dimension of this temptation sheds light on the radical nature of indifference. Freud could evoke the guilt of the psychoanalyst, but he only underlines that one never knows very well how much of a problem the

1. In the pre-analytical articles, Freud used for example the expression *vita sexualis*.

2. I note that at about the same time Freud, in 'Pulses and Fates of the Impulses', makes indifference one of the terms of the archaic indifference/love-hate alternative that precedes the love-hate ambivalence.

that tenderness can lead you<sup>1</sup>; above all, he denounces the sham that it would imply: the principle of feinting is challenged in the name of the truthfulness of psychoanalysis. Indifference is a form of integrity<sup>2</sup>. Indifference" is thus presented as the ultimate stop in the face of that peak of transference manifestations that constitutes the expression of the love transfer. It testifies to the strength, the mastery of the analyst; Freud affirms that there is a direct relationship between the reassuring invulnerability of the doctor and the capacity of the situation to 'deliver its analytic content'. It should also be noted that indifference is presented as an acquisition, the result of a mastery that refrains from countertransference movements. Certainly, Freud seems to suggest that this acquisition could be definitive, which would go in the direction of a very restricted conception of a disruptive counter-transference; but does not the spirit of his formulation make indifference a permanent and fluctuating counter-investment of constantly living counter-transference movements that it is advisable to

"Is it not necessary to argue that the appeal to indifference only makes sense in Freud's technical context. Is it not worth arguing that the call for indifference only makes sense in Freud's technical context when correlated with sustained interpretive activity and a climate of 'sympathetic understanding'? If Freud seems to think that the psychoanalyst's indifference can escape the patient's transference interpretation, it is probably because he is not

- However, I will come back to this, the reference to the psychoanalyst's indifference will immediately raise the question of the principle of abstinence, and thus of the feeling of frustration that it arouses. However, I will come back to this, the reference to the psychoanalyst's indifference will immediately raise the question of the principle of abstinence, and thus the feeling of frustration that it would arouse in the patient.

What prompted Strachey to substitute the term Indifferenz for neutrality? I don't know what the exchanges between Strachey and Freud around the Standard Edition were, but it seems likely to me that Freud approved this substitution. Ten years after their first publication in German, the Technical Writings already belong to an established psychoanalysis and the term Indifferenz has probably become unnecessarily provocative. The term neutrality attenuates its salience and is better suited to the discourse of training. To what does it owe its fortune<sup>3</sup>? First of all, perhaps because of its congruence with the general line of an article rich in paradoxes and contradictions.

1. This theme will resurface in the discussion with Ferenczi on the kissing technique.
2. In the following, however, it will be noted that the truth must not run counter to the aims of the treatment.
3. This fortune also concerned the French psychoanalytic area, although in the French translations the term 'indifference' was retained.

fert - only makes sense when coupled with the one against the symmetrical temptation

to reject it. This rejection would be stupid, Freud writes, as stupid as the conduct of one who, after having made great efforts to raise a Spirit from the Underworld, would plunge it back into it without having questioned it. The line of the text aims at identifying the proper path of psychoanalysis, the one for which "real life offers no model".<sup>1</sup> But this path walks between two pitfalls, the Charybdis of seduction and the Scylla of rejection: it is therefore defined first of all by a "ni-ni" to which the "ne-uter" of neutrality strikingly corresponds. By thus meeting the central problematic of the article, the term "neutrality" is more immediately granted to the positive prescriptions through which Freud tries to draw in a sinuous, almost acrobatic way, the proper way of psychoanalysis:

"One is careful not to move away from the transference of love, to frighten it away or to disgust the patient with it; one abstains, with equal constancy, from any response to it. The love transference is maintained, but it is treated as something not real, as a situation through which the treatment must pass, which must be brought back to its unconscious origins, and which will inevitably help what is most hidden in the patient's love life to reach consciousness and thus to be controlled. The patient, whose sexual repression is not suppressed, but only pushed into the background, will then feel sufficiently secure to bring to light all the conditions of love, all the fantasies of her sexual desire, all the particular characteristics of her state of love, from which she will then open the way to the infantile foundations of her love. »

It is clear that the term 'neutrality' is better suited to this position of the analyst than that of 'indifference'. Once the principle of the transferential whole is fully established, it is clear that the reversals of the transference are in some way on the agenda, that hatred will follow love, etc. In the analyst's countertransference, the analyst's 'neutrality' is more appropriate than the term 'indifference'. In the analyst's countertransference, transference love may be experienced in a pleasant or unpleasant way depending on the patient: thus, the 'temptation' in the face of the same request may be to respond or to reject it. As soon as the process involves these variations of transference and the subjective register of counter-transferential solicitations, neutrality, by the ambiguity of its meaning, is better suited to its positioning. It signifies the non-commitment that foresees the inevitable reversals, but, by this very fact, it recognises the impossibility of its non-commitment and the inescapable nature of the analyst's involvement in the transferential scenario and its avatars. In sum, the term 'neutrality' is more easily integrated into the processual dynamics of transference with the fluctuations that duration implies. The term 'indifference' referred above all to the transference as resistance, that of

1. Freud emphasised, in 'The Dynamics of Transference', that the session created 'situations of which there are no equivalents in real life'.

The term "neutrality" is better suited to its dimension of necessary actualisation, of ex-ante experience. But the neutrality of neutrality has - had? - its reverse side. As J. Guillaumin<sup>1</sup> points out, the double negation present in the neither is not without suggesting an "absence of being". Is this not what sometimes leads us to believe that the neutrality of the psychoanalyst could coincide with the pure imaginary that would be the projection of transference? This fantasy of a radical effacement of the psychoanalyst could be symmetrically answered by the representation of a psychoanalyst whose neutrality would coincide with a radical objectivity: a fantasy that could be concretised in the theory of the autonomous Ego, exercising an unflinching judgement of reality; an Ego of which the analyst would be the model. We recall the importance given to the notion of neutralisation, of neutral energy in ego-psychology.

This temptation could be compared to the one that would like to assimilate the analyst to the subject of Science, excluded from the operations that he conducts. In the end, the term 'neutrality' is not without evoking the 'neutral gender', designating the psychoanalyst as non-sexual, supporting all the better the gendered identities of the various imagos of which he or she becomes the support. I am convinced that these deep resonances of the semantic field of the signifier 'neutrality' have played a role in its fortune, as well as in the intensity of its rejection.

To conclude this brief review, I must return to the link between indifference/neutrality and the principle of abstinence. Indifference - which was presented as a prohibition of contact - immediately caused the reference to the principle of abstinence to emerge in Freud's writings. The way Freud presents it here is somewhat embarrassing:

"I am not thinking here only of bodily deprivation, nor of the deprivation of all that one desires, for no patient could possibly bear that. On the contrary, I want to lay down the principle that the patient must be allowed to retain his cravings and desires, as forces that impel him to work and change, and that he must be careful not to appease them with substitutes. Obviously, one could not offer anything other than substitutes, since the patient, as a result of her condition, is not capable of effective satisfaction as long as her repressions

Freud thus argues that the indifference of the psychoanalyst also has the effect of

This postulate necessarily leads him to recall the axiom laid down in his pre-analytical work: "Vita sexualis normalis, no neurosis. This postulate necessarily leads him to recall the axiom laid down in his pre-analytical work: "Vita sexualis normalis, no neurosis. "However, the rigour of this economic equation was already

1. Personal communication.

normal. But to this will be added the complexification of the drive theory and of the conflictualities in which the sexual impulse is caught. In fact, this complexification, present in the approximate formulation of the principle of abstinence, is clearly manifested in the contradiction relating to the question of the substitute. The question is what is not a substitute for the "satisfactions that no patient can do without". One might already ask what is not a substitute in the "satisfactions that no patient can do without"; but more clearly the substitutes prohibited by the principle of abstinence will reappear a little later as a condition for the success of the treatment. About certain women "with elementary passions", Freud writes that their treatment fails because they cannot be satisfied with... substitutes. Substitutes - like transference? - are therefore both an obstacle and a means, a brake and a necessary condition. Here Freud encounters the question of the processual economy, of the transactions it implies. It is not only a question of the reinvestment of the objects of reality during the treatment, but of the satisfactions linked to the transformations inherent in the implementation of the method (lifting of repression, epistemophilic pleasure, etc.). The process does not only postulate the renunciation of the transference illusion; it implies intratransferential transformations that must be classified under the heading of sublimation<sup>1</sup>. The patient, writes Freud, 'will herself open the way to the infantile foundations of her love': the analysis then seems to 'want to exchange material for psychic' within the transference. Does this not recognise the force of attraction of the processual path, the capacity of a subjectivation of the transference as such through the transference on the word? The emphasis placed on the reflection should not cover up this dimension. The direct link that has arisen here between indifference and the principle of abstinence may appear as an effect of the violence of the term "indifference"; the term "neutrality" inherits a link that does not sufficiently take into account the ambiguity that marks it: I will see a trace of this in the addition of the qualifier "benevolent" that suggests that neutrality could be malicious<sup>2</sup>.

1. Freud spoke of a sublimation of the transference in 'Dora'; in the context of the present article, it would have been difficult for him to raise this issue at the very moment when he rejects any deliberate attempt to pull the transference up. The sublimatory transformation of the transference is a possible effect of the interpretation that has brought out 'the infantile foundations of his love' - and of his hatred, etc. Sublimation must be taken in the sense of a sexual, impulsive destiny, the stakes of which have become vital with the impulsive duality and masochistic organisation that entanglement implies.

Cf. J.-L. Baldacci, "From the beginning... Sublimation", RFP, t. LXIX, no. 5, special Congress, 2005, 1405-1474, and J.-L. Donnet, *La voie sublimate et la situation analysante*, RFP, t. LXIX, no. 5, special Congress, 2005, 1485-1490.

2. In her May 2006 lecture at the SPP, "Between neutrality and abstinence", M. Jung-Rozenfarb questions, after other authors, the univocal link between neutrality and the principle of abstinence: she designates the principle of abstinence as actively frustrating, constraining, by opposing it to the receptivity that characterises neutrality.

The quasi-equivalence between neutrality and refusal against the backdrop of the principle of the abstinence principle may have played its part in the objectivist conception of the

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How do we now approach the various registers in which we invoke neutrality? In Laplanche and Pontalis's *Vocabulary*, neutrality first concerns religious, moral and social values: 'The analyst does not direct the treatment according to any ideal and abstains from any advice. »

These basic recommendations concerning what the analyst should refrain from are the natural correlate of the positive prescription of the method: it is a question of promoting the expectations of the fundamental rule, the deployment of spontaneous speech placed under the sign of free association, and the release of an interpretative function relative to unconscious psychic processes. The analyst is neutral in the sense that he or she is not there to coach, and that his or her silence and possible interventions are intended to facilitate the establishment of an analysing situation. Patients may resist the offer of this word from the outset by asking for advice or instructions, but most of them experience the psychoanalyst's withdrawn presence as a welcome that contrasts in a surprising and pleasant way with the ordinary eagerness of those close to them to give advice, make recommendations, etc. It cannot therefore be assumed that neutrality automatically implies the logic of refusal, and if we often speak of an analytical honeymoon, this does not mean that what follows is only frustration. It is also clear, however, that it is difficult to dissociate neutrality as a simple methodological position from the meaning it has for the patient. We have seen what interpretations of indifference can lead to in the case of intensive transference love. In moments of extreme transference, this interpretation can take a frankly projective form. However, the profound value of holding it over the long term should not be ignored.

At this first level, neutrality is presented as a quality of professional attitude which consists of a mimicry, gesture, and verbal behaviour marked by reserve and discretion; behaviour which implies mastery and continuity during the session and at the end of it; in a sense, it constitutes a facade, an appearance. This appearance partly protects the psychic life of the analyst (Freud); however, it is not dissimulation; it implicitly indicates to the patient that the practitioner is adopting a professional attitude; it thus signifies the subject-function gap whose symbolic significance Winnicott underlines. The ma-

The way in which a patient perceives and invests this gap is one of the foundations of this

I call it the 'situation analytic', whose subjectivation conditions the analysability of the transference. This achievement supports the continuation of the process in those moments when borderline situations (R. Roussillon) challenge the framework-disposition and the whole site.

At the outset, neutrality is thus modestly conceived as a simple position of expectation, of non-knowledge offered to the patient in the same way as the fundamental rule. But it cannot fail to appear as the bearer of the anticipation of the avatars of the processual adventure. In this sense, and because it guarantees the aftermath, it contributes to the constitutive dissymmetry of the situation.

Neutrality, as a stable, constant façade behaviour, could be described as making the analyst an extension of the invariant frame-disposition. It has been suggested that the analyst's wall-coloured neutrality reinforces the perceptual effacement, the loss of sight of the couch-chair device; hence the idea that he or she might coincide with the pure projection of the imaginary transference. Symmetrically, the idea may have emerged that by dint of neutrality the analyst would achieve a kind of impersonalisation, the ultimate figure of the objectivity or objectification of his or her function... thus decorated<sup>1</sup>.

It seems to me appropriate to distinguish this external face of neutrality from an internal face, in a way intimate. Neutrality is interposed between the patient and the analyst, but it is interposed, one might say, between the analyst and himself, underpinning the division between the subject and the function. Seen from within, neutrality is presented as an inner disposition of the analyst: it allows him or her a priori to receive the messages coming from the patient in an impartial manner, whether they are affected for him or her by an index of pleasure or displeasure. This postulate implies ipso facto that the analyst is equally receptive to messages from his or her own psyche. Defined in this way, neutrality completes the principle of listening in equal suspense which the fundamental rule imposes on the analyst.

Neutrality thus appears to me as part of the internal framework of the psychoanalyst: it implies that the surface that receives messages from outside as well as from within is attached to a protective psychic layer, acquired through training and which supports the transformations required by the function. It is

1. Impersonalisation is one of the characteristics of the Freudian post-oedipal superego: in general, a patient's ability to invest the frame and neutrality in a trusting mode - moderate positive transference - can be considered to reflect the elaborated dimension of their inevitable superego projection; it is true that transferential regression will bring back the infantile sexual origins of the superego. To account for this process, Strachey introduced the reference to an analytic superego whose impact is in the benign circle that alleviates unconscious guilt.

difficult to describe the optimal mix of extreme 'perceptual' sensitivity and It is clear, however, that the very possibility of a functionalization of countertransference presupposes the containing reflexivity of this internal framework. It is clear, however, that the very possibility of a functionalisation of countertransference presupposes the containing reflexivity of this internal framework. It is in this place that the specific side-step by which the analyst detaches himself from the object of the transference without rejecting it can occur: we can invoke a movement of desimplication leading to a re-implication, at another level, on the counter-transferential scene. The analyst's training and, in particular, his or her personal analysis, not only enable him or her to identify with the patient's transference experiences and to perceive his or her own countertransference experiences, including the offshoots of his or her unconscious, but also to 'acquire for himself or herself' (Freud) a certain immunity against the 'various temptations' that the situation gives rise to. Neutrality appears to imply a certain capacity for indifference. Its implementation is based on a methodological conviction of the analyst that links him to other analysts, to the institution, to the analytic ideal, to Freud. In many circumstances, his identification with his function may temporarily bring into play a supramental register.

It is understandable that neutrality lends itself to misunderstanding. It is not surprising that the extreme image of the Freudian analyst, free of any disruptive counter-transference, of any subjective involvement, would be able to assume without the slightest deformation a mirror function that avoids any deformation<sup>1</sup>. It is not surprising either that such a de-subjectification should provoke an outcry. Seen from the outside, the façade of neutrality seems to be part of the problematic of the frame; seen from the inside, the intimacy of neutrality is part of the subjective problematic of counter-transference. Neutrality links and unlinks these two inseparable poles. If it is necessary to maintain the more or less virtual gap between the two sides of neutrality, it is because it is equally impossible to reduce it to an attitude than to dissolve it in the problematic of counter-transference. In fact, the two sides of neutrality reflect the ambiguity of the psychoanalyst's status: the analytical function cannot not involve the subject who supports it; but this involvement should be limited to what the function requires.

Within this function, neutrality appears to be a screen with a third-party potential. Indeed, it is interposed between the patient and the analyst: on the one hand, it protects the analyst's intimacy; on the other, it protects the patient

1. This representation, it may be noted, finds a new relevance - virtually present in the Freudian metaphor - when the mirror function is taken up in a more complex context: with the mother's face, or functioning as a double, 'the mirrors start to reflect better'.

against some of the risks to which it is exposed by the operation of the fundamental rule of

tale. This function of semi-permeable partition is, as we have seen, part of the constitutive dissymetry of the situation. Contrary to what one might think, it is not at all contradictory to the phenomena of interpsychic osmosis such as the chimera (de M'Uzan). It should not be confused with the fracture of this partition constituted by the professional attitude, which Winnicott was able to show repeated a failure of the primary environment and could eventually prove to be processually integrable.

The functionality of neutrality is revealed in the interplay between its outside and its inside, between appearing and being. In the processual times of the well-tempered couch<sup>1</sup>, there is no tension between the two poles<sup>2</sup>. The gap between the two poles becomes perceptible in difficult transference moments, especially when the frame is challenged. The analyst then finds it difficult to put on a brave face and his neutrality becomes a mask<sup>3</sup>.

It is in the countertransference register that the tension between the two faces of neutrality is most interesting. A countertransference movement does not develop instantaneously but requires a delay; this delay corresponds temporally to the space between the 'disturbed' internal face and the 'maintained' external face. But, beyond a certain limit, when the counter-transference movement has not been able to put itself at the service of the function, it has a variable incidence on the neutrality of the facade: either the analyst acts out in a way that is not always untoward, or, within an intervention, his enunciation betrays the incidence of the counter-transference<sup>4</sup>. It is therefore counter-transference that constitutes the

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It is undeniable that, in practice, "institutionalised" neutrality has covered up many excesses<sup>5</sup>. However, one of the risks of critically questioning it is to ignore its ambiguity and to fix it in a caricatured image. The

1. See article by Paul Israël.

2. The pleasant feeling that the analyst then performs his function without effort is perhaps not unrelated to the movement which leads to the apology of the authenticity of the psychoanalyst, of the quality of his presence, as something which would escape, or even transgress, neutrality. We can thus come to affirm with Nacht that 'the analyst acts more by what he is than by what he says, and that he must be good'. It should even be pointed out that it is not a question of 'showing himself to be good'. This quest for 'being' is necessarily accompanied by an interpretative renunciation that will also be found with the promotion of the Lacanian "dis-being".

3. One could say that the explicit demand for love constitutes an 'attack on the frame' and it is true that it is hardly compatible with an interpretative response. Some (O. Mannoni) have suggested that such an *agieren* is necessarily the consequence of a technical fault.

4. See addendum.

The temptation then arises to claim to 'correct' it by appealing to a more committed

In the case of the psychoanalyst's subjective character, or the addition of a 'humane dimension: warmth, contact, sympathy, etc. On the whole, the criticisms levelled at neutrality concern its facade, its behavioural dimension, the impersonal coldness of which is denounced, the claim to invariance, the prohibition of any spontaneity: this neutrality, as we can see, is correlated with a climate of frustration that is unbearable for many patients, or induces silent masochistic positions. I underlined earlier the forced nature of the direct link between neutrality and the principle of abstinence. It should therefore be remembered that the same neutrality - or condition that it is not displayed as a psychoanalytical guard - is invested by most patients in a positive way.

But should we not pose the problem in a deeper way? Neutrality is only what it becomes between the analysand and the analyst: the merit of its waiting position is to offer the widest and least determining range to the patient's investments. The processual postulate implies in effect that the transference dynamics of the encounter will confer value on it taken from the potential of the transference repetitions that the patient carries. At an immediate level, the pleasantness of neutrality corresponds to a moderate transference, which in turn indicates a secure basic transference. In the range of potential repetitions, neutrality can be invested in a positive register (capacity to be alone in the presence of the object, non-intrusive silent lap, gift of absence, involving disimplication, containing function) or in a negative register (abandonment, threat of castration, seductive narcissistic withdrawal). Given the depth and processual variations of these regressive issues, it may seem risky, to say the least, to claim to be the only way to "deliberately 'correcting' neutrality with well-measured displays of 'affection'.

A more 'reflective' response to the question posed by neutrality involves the recognition of the oscillating fluctuation of what is played out between its inside and its outside; the analyst will be all the more attentive to the variable indices of the meaning that the patient gives to neutrality as he or she is situated in the logic of the transitional use of the analytic site; that is to say, he or she does not confer on his or her neutrality a univocal and assured functionality; the modulation of neutrality is, in fact, determined by the global self-regulation of the analysing situation<sup>1</sup> and the correlations between it and the other.

1. If the conception of neutrality is sufficiently theorised and inscribed in the analyst's internal framework, the issue of crossing its ordinary limits is purely empirical and singular in each case. For example, it is not uncommon for the analyst to intervene 'in the real', to help the analysand to exercise an action judgement, etc. However, as the vignette by D. Ribas illustrates so well, it is more frequent that the temptation to leave one's attitude of neutrality, without taking into account what is at stake in the transfer, is revealed afterwards to be the effect of a counter-transference movement.

It is not a matter of a one-way street, but rather of a one-way relationship between the various factors involved. This means that neutrality only derives its functional value from its place within the coherent overall configuration of the method's means. In her presentation in Deauville, Marie-France Dispaux showed in an exemplary way how the variations of its neutrality are correlated in each case with the functional ensemble of the work situation. Michèle Jung-Rozenfarb, for her part, emphasised how snags in the neutrality background correspond to significant and virtually dynamic moments of decorrelation<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, the real issue of neutrality cannot be reduced to the objection of the psychoanalyst's subjective involvement: the crucial problem is that of the interference between the unconscious countertransference and the analyst's internal framework with its instance value. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that a real test for neutrality is only grasped through countertransference disruption; in fact, neutrality is only perceived when it is evaded, when it is lost; or, conversely, when the transformation of the countertransference into a functional contribution makes it reappear in the intimate feeling of the analyst. It could be said that the psychoanalyst is never more subjective than in the way he or she assumes the attitude of neutrality, of linking facade containment and trophic containment. Neutrality has been described in the false subject-function antinomy as a demand for de-subjectification, which we can clearly see calls for the return of the subjective. I would rather describe the paradox it supports as resting on the oscillation between movements of desubjectification and movements of subjectification.

In conclusion, it does not seem out of place to return to this capacity for indifference evoked by Freud, the analyst's capacity not to allow himself to be diverted from his goal<sup>2</sup>; the fact that this goal occasionally passes for him through a state in which he would be "without memory or desire" (Bion) only makes the paradox more complex. What does the "state of indifference" as evoked by Jung-Rozenfarb show us? It is an extreme, ultimate form of neutrality. The important thing, it seems to me, is not to envisage on which counter-transference foundations this state of indifference has sedimented, but to situate it in the pro- longement of the methodological paradox that the author has clearly identified. In this self-destructive patient, the negative therapeutic reaction is triggered with the greatest virulence, at the very moment when the analyst, by dint of elaboration

1. In the end, true inadequacy in a given case implies questioning the adequacy of the whole analytical situation: for example, when neutrality is experienced in a frankly persecutory or abandoning way, it refers to a failure of the initial mirror function, and it is not a warmer presence that could help to restart the process.

2. Cf. the greyhound race metaphor.

counter-transferential, and by bringing into play his most life-like masochism. The paradox thus constituted is that it is the analyst's desire for analysis, an indispensable emanation of Eros, that becomes the target of the disqualified destructiveness. The paradox thus constituted is that it is the analyst's desire for analysis, an indispensable emanation of Eros, that becomes the target of the disqualified destructiveness. In such a way that the analyst's indifference presents itself as a capacity, a capacity to maintain the formal framework, the facade of neutrality, but also a capacity to bludge and to manifest his non-dependence on his desire for analysis. In a sense, indifference here achieves the contradictory unity of a total desubjectivation and a radical subjectivation.

The case of M. Jung-Rozenfarb made me think of what Winnicott says to one of his patients: "I have no hope but I continue. "I find it significant that the term "indifference", which arose in Freud's text in the face of the solicitation of the love transference, returns here to designate the endurance necessary to succeed in discouraging the pure culture of destructiveness.

What, it seems, allowed this indifference to re-launch the process? What identification with the analyst acted? It is certain that this indifference froze the sado-masochistic exchange that was so vital in this patient. It seems to me that it may have made her discover the limits of her power to destroy the otherness of the other.

The functionality of neutrality ultimately seems to summon an ultimate contradiction: on the one hand, neutrality appears to be close to the position of malleable medium, or dual functioning, which may have described the articulation of two psychic apparatuses rather than two subjectivities; on the other hand, neutrality signifies in the most radical way, because it is the most miniature, the otherness of the analyst.

I find here the ambiguity of the *neben Mensch*, the neighbour who is both similar and foreign. Perhaps these two sides correspond to the double requirement of the analytic process in the reception of the transference: neutrality supports both the endorsement of the transference figures, with the hallucinatory dimension of their investment, and, in a second stage, the renunciation by the interpretative symbolisation.

#### Addendum

Dr. M. Genta, present in Deauville, evoked a strong clinical vignette. I have already had the opportunity to discuss this with him. I will repeat the account here as it appears in the text he presented at the recent Colloquium of

Lausanne in May 2006, dedicated to neutrality. My commentary will focus on on the way in which the double face of neutrality is illustrated:

"In the course of the analysis, Lucy was able to let her "true self" grow, giving up the defensive cara-path of a strong, self-sufficient woman and the temperamental approach she once displayed, out of identification with her twin brother, who was so admired in the family for his academic achievements and sports performance.

"One day, she is very upset that I am late for a session; she attacks me angrily, points out how bad I am, and points out that just when she is starting to feel good, I start playing tricks on her again!

"She adds, after a brief silence, that her friend's analyst, whom she names for the first time in a session, is certainly much better than I am: he never keeps his patients waiting, he is very precise about his schedule, you ring the bell and you go straight into his office!

"I am surprised to learn that my patient's friend has just started an analysis with this colleague, whom I know and respect personally.

"I had already apologised for my lateness at the beginning of the session and had proposed to extend it by the time needed to recover it. I had already apologised for my lateness at the beginning of the session and had offered to extend it by the time needed to recover him. But now I intervene again, saying that of course I have to respect the framework myself and be on time, and that at the same time we could ask ourselves why this lateness on my part is affecting him to such an extent and to what in his past we could link what is affecting him in the present.

"This heavy-handed way of intervening might make you think of a defensive reaction on my part. So did I, in the aftermath, but not at the time.

"Lucy remains angry and even leaves me furious.

"At the next session, I feel her very distressed. She says curtly: "I've been thinking about your interventions last time and I noticed that between the lines, in an indi- You have repeated at least twice that you are a good analyst, after I I told you about my friend's analyst... It made me think that there is a problem with you."

"I receive this remark from him as a psychoanalytical interpretation, with a feeling similar to the one I experienced during my personal analyses. sonnelles. I have a moment of perplexity, then I simply say: "You are right, there you have touched a problem with me..."

"We stand in silence for a moment, she suddenly looks relaxed and goes on to talk about her relationship with her mother and how it works, through her story, could be reminiscent of the "narcissistic perversion" described by Paul-Claude Racamier<sup>1</sup>.

"The object is invested narcissistically by the subject and at the same time receives the message that it is for his own good.

"She associates with the fact that her mother never admitted that the problem could be located within it.

"Most of all, her mother could not admit that the smothering attentions she his own anxiety about letting her grow up, rather than for her well, as she claimed.

"In view of the developments, I can say that this episode, which is reminiscent of the "Ferenczian 'mutuality', like others of the same type, has been of extreme value in the past. This is a structuring and pro-gredeal experience for the psychic economy of my patient.

"Lucy, sensing an unconscious defensive movement on my part, "gives me

1. P.-C. Racamier, *Autour de la perversion narcissique, Le génie des origines. Psychoanalysis and psychoses*, Paris, Payot, 1992.

## Comment

I will first look at the analyst's first intervention, the one where he reiterates his apology while inviting the patient to elaborate. It will appear to her, in the light of the aftermath, 'heavy', and in relation to an unknown counter-transferential movement. I stress that it is the moment when it intervenes and not its relatively banal content that makes it appear this way: in fact, it is stated after the patient has provided significant indications on the reasons for her extreme irritation.

What I want to highlight here is that this intervention is part of the verbal behaviour of the attitude of neutrality: on the one hand, the analyst acknowledges his wrongdoing; on the other hand, he implicitly but directly points to the irrationality of what is happening in the patient; he appeals to the ego, takes it as witness to his 'objectivity'. In fact, the analyst identifies with the third party reference, in a realist mode. This is a manifestation of neutrality, the somewhat ostentatious nature of which bears the trace of counter-transferential repression. It seems to me that the essential thing is that the analyst, for a moment, is not in a position to ensure the other pole of what makes the functionality of neutrality: the listening in equal suspense allowing a receptivity that would link transference and counter-transference. The neutrality displayed covers up the temporary failure of intimate neutrality, which ideally underpins the functionalisation of countertransference.

The countertransferential movement comes out of its repression when the patient, in the following session, gives an interpretation to her analyst. The analyst's recognition of his truth seems to me to be the happy catching up of a failure of functional neutrality. By admitting 'that he has a problem', the analyst does not really break with neutrality: he testifies to his receptivity, a condition of the process, and re-establishes the link between the two poles of neutrality. His 'confession' is only worthwhile by its very limitation: if it has an elaborative effect for the patient, it is because the progress of her analysis allows her to invest it as an analysand, not to fall into a curiosity that would have been aroused by the possible seductive value of the confession.

I would be tempted to go a little further in the commentary to point out the extreme complexity of the analytic process. The author suggests that it is the corrective value of the experience that gives access by contrast to the particularly narcissistic register of maternal functioning. In spite of the undeniable demonstrative scope of the narrative, I wonder about its truly mutative value. It is quite clear that the elaboration of the maternal imago in its historical reality constituted an important step in the patient's work, but the

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The question raised by the agieren of his extreme irritation remains unanswered. Should not

Can we not postulate in his behaviour an identification with this imago? In support of this hypothesis, it can be noted that his friend's analyst not only does not keep him waiting, but also that, as he has no waiting room, he makes the very virtuality of waiting disappear, evoking a fusional relationship.

Basically, we see a reversal of the first logic of the narrative according to which, in function of a transference by reversal, the patient identified with her mother would demand from the analyst, projectively identified with her, that he belong to her, that he be only an extension of her, without any third reference. The paradox here would be that the patient simultaneously summons the reference to the rule of respect for time and its denial. We can thus measure what underlies the symptomatic character of the analyst's intervention, well beyond a movement of

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