

## Elastic Freud

In our article entitled, 'An even hover-reading of Freud: the work of metaphor', we show how Freud's writing, because of what we call its 'elasticity', consistently says more than it says, much like the discourse of the psychoanalytic patient. An attentive reader, like a psychoanalyst, will open her ears to the multiple, and hidden, meanings that are embedded in his skillful use of metaphor. We test this hypothesis through a close reading of a classic text, 'Recommendations for Physicians', that appears to be a straightforward compilation of dos and don'ts for the psychoanalyst, thus announcing itself as saying nothing more than it says. This presentation of the text as straightforward actually sets up the reader's understanding to be subverted, and our close reading reveals just some of the ways the text subverts itself. There are important implications for psychoanalytic work and theory.

Our reading of Freud, and his foundational use of metaphor, contradicts the approach that a dogmatic, rigidly consistent theory or theoretical 'system' can be derived from any one of his texts, let alone from his oeuvre. Therefore psychoanalytic schools, whether they are 'for', 'against', or 'beyond' 'Freud', are often at risk of oversimplifying Freudian theory.

With respect to psychoanalytic technique, we find Freud offering up metaphors for the competing concepts of subjectivity and objectivity as simply evident, but which upon closer scrutiny can be difficult to reconcile. The 'cold surgeon' and 'blank screen' metaphors have been conventionally used to support the notion (often stereotyped) of the removed 'objective' analyst. But then he introduces the telephone metaphor where the analyst's unconscious functions as the receiver to the patient's. This notion of direct unconscious-to-unconscious communication that skips over (indeed avoids the obstacles of) conscious communication subverts any unidimensional view of objectivity. It forces us to reconsider conventional understandings of the surgeon and blank screen metaphors, not as suggesting the removal of the analyst's presence, but of a very different kind of presence – a 'hovering' presence that leads us back to the concept of 'evenly-hovering-attention' upon which his paper is based.

This 'hovering' presence lies neither in the injection, nor in the removal of the analyst's self. Some versions of 'relational' analysis may caricature the over involved analyst while 'classical' analysis has at times caricatured the removed silent analyst, but the hovering stance, which could be referred to as a 'presence through absence', lies not only in neither extreme, nor even in between. How does one capture the ideal stance for the psychoanalyst? Close or removed? Present or absent?

Psychoanalysis has struggled creatively and quite productively with this dilemma throughout the course its history – a dilemma that is quite at home in, and has been generated by, the elasticity of Freud's texts, which prove themselves to be as slippery as the psyche they study. And they are best read with the same kind of close but hovering attention as the analyst uses to listen to her patients.

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