

Analysis as alternating “states of analysis” and “states of non-analysis” with reference to the book *A Dangerous Daughter* by Diana Davis

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Abstract

This paper focusses on how, in her book, *A Dangerous Daughter* (2021), Dina Davis describes the commencement of a psychoanalysis in which there is an interlacing of traditional psychoanalytic technique with education. Despite educative elements being a deviation from traditional psychoanalytic technique I argue that in sum total this process still amounts to analysis. I argue that analysis can be conceptualised as a dynamic balance between alternating “states of analysis” and “states of non-analysis”. Both are essentially part of analysis and education in analysis may be regarded as part of “states of non-analysis”. In this way education can be addressed in a conscious way by the analyst. There is potential further study of the question of how analysts might implement and monitor education in analysis.

Whakarāpopotonga

Earo ana tēnei pepa ki te tīmatanga momo whakaahuatanga a Dina Davis i tētahi wetewetenga hinengaro hikina haere ngātahitia ai ngā momo mahi hinengaro me ērā o te mātauranga, i roto i tāna pukapuka, *He Tamāhine Kōroiroi* (2021). Ahakoa ngā rerēkētanga o ētahi wāhanga mātauranga ki ērā momo wetewetenga hinengaro o mua, e tohe ana au ko te mutunga he wetewetenga tonu. E kī ana au ka tareka te whakataurite o te wetewetenga ki te “āhua wetenga” me te “āhua wetenga-kore”. Takirua he wāhanga ēnei o te wetewetenga, ā, me kī ko te mātauranga i rō wetewetenga he wāhanga o te “āhua wetenga-kore”. Mā tēnei ka taea e te kaiwetewetenga te āta whaiwhakaaro mātauranga. Tērā pea ka ara ake anō he rangahautanga o te tirohanga me pēhea te whakahaere me te aroturuki rō mātauranga a te kaiwetewetenga i rō wetewetenga hinengaro.

Keywords: states of analysis; states of non-analysis; education in analysis.

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Introduction

At the 2022 Australasian Confederation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapies (ACPP) conference entitled *Before and after the pandemic: The history and future of psychoanalytic thinking in Australia* a presentation was made by Australian author Dina Davis. She read extracts from her second novel, *A Dangerous Daughter*, which was published in 2021. A work of fictionalised autobiography, Dina describes parts of the protagonist’s first psychoanalytic session. This description is fascinating describing as it does some elements of the encounter immediately recognisable as psychoanalytic alongside other elements which a more strict and conventional approach to psychoanalysis seeks to eschew. In particular, she describes an interlacing of, on the one hand, very traditional psychoanalytic technique with, on the other hand, affirmation, direction and information all provided in an educational manner. The question arises: to what extent is this psychoanalysis?

Despite showing deviations from what is generally regarded as sound psychoanalytic technique, I believe that it may well be analysis. I will argue that analysis can be conceptualised as a dynamic balance between “states of analysis” and “states of non-analysis”. I propose in what follows to discuss some of this book extract using these notions, in particular as they pertain to the role of education in analysis.

A model of analysis

Before going further I need to make a note about terminology. I shall use the term “psychoanalysis” when referring to Freud’s own method and when referring to the practice of analysis considered a direct consequence of his thinking. I shall use the term “analysis” in the more general case which includes the analytic practice stemming from the thinking of C.G. Jung.

Initially, I shall take a very traditional perspective of psychoanalysis and I hope that this is not so simple and traditional to be considered simplistic or outdated. Turning to Freud’s (1914/2001) own articulation of psychoanalysis we learn that:

Any line of investigation which recognizes these two facts [the phenomena of *transference* and *resistance*] and takes them as the starting point of its work has a right to call itself psycho-analysis. (p.16)

It possibly does not need saying but essentially, for Freud, “investigation” was, in this context, the same as “treatment”. This “investigation” is supported, or as I prefer to articulate it “sponsored”, by certain recommended and traditional processes: a safe and sheltered “space”, the fundamental rule, evenly suspended attention and attunement by the analyst, neutrality, abstinence, and the presence of resistance, transference/countertransference and interpretation.

This definition of Freud’s aside, there are a range of categorical “definitions” of psychoanalysis, based either in extrinsic criteria or intrinsic criteria (e.g. Roazen, 1975; Greenson, 1978; Gill, 1984; Stern, 2009). Over time I have come to understand analysis generally in a more dynamic rather than categorical manner. In particular, I have come to understand analysis in terms of a shifting back and forth between “states of analysis” and

“states of non-analysis”. I believe that “states of analysis” are recognisable through a felt ambiance, a quality, which, repurposing Bion’s description of an analytic “something”, is “either wholly present or unaccountably and suddenly absent” (Bion, 1967/1988, p.16). I have come to understand that the apprehension of “states of analysis” is built up over time from multiple sources but that its significant origins lie in experience.

Phenomenologically, and this needs more extensive articulation, “states of analysis” may include a sense of freedom, attunement to the analysand and an experience not dissimilar to dream. They may also feel expansive or dense and full of potential or uncertain, boring, frustrating, soporific, etc. “States of analysis” have a bodily quality. At times, there is an ambiance of mutual emotional attunement; at other times, there is not. A gulf of unknowing, even disconnection, opens up in silence or when a surfeit of words crowds the space. The ambiance of “states of analysis” is evocative but not always comfortably so.

At times this ambiance is lost and the mutual enterprise no longer feels like a “state of analysis”. When this happens the analyst and analysand have moved into what I understand as a “state of non-analysis”. Overall “states of non-analysis” occur when there is a deviation from the analytic frame, a notion developed since Freud’s first articulations in 1904 (Bleger, 1967; Freud, 1904/2001, 1912/2001, 1913/2001 & 1915/2001; Langs, 1978; Milner, 1952; Winnicott, 1955). “States of non-analysis” include moments of shared humour, the analyst’s use of self-disclosure, asking questions, and, significantly for this discussion, providing education. I have suggested elsewhere (Milton, 2016) that the effect of “states of non-analysis” may be monitored for by being open to the analysand’s unconscious communications, when these occur. It is also possible that “states of non-analysis” emerge under other conditions than frame deviations.

I have come to see “states of non-analysis” as an inevitable and even necessary part of analysis. Paradoxically, they may overall support the analytic enterprise even though they are not analytic themselves. “States of non-analysis” may have direct usefulness (especially in educating the analysand, something that occurs at the outset of analysis) or their value may be in the contrast they provide and the process and effort that goes into recovering “states of analysis”.

In any event, there is a shifting between the presence and absence of “states of analysis” and “states of non-analysis”, somewhat in the fashion of a chemical buffer. Like a chemical buffer, analysis settles around a dynamic equilibrium point which is lost and recovered between “states of analysis” and “states of non-analysis”.

Although education of the analysand may be present as a “state of non-analysis” there is also the capacity to incorporate the knowledge and effect from education into the process and return to a “state of analysis”. Overall, this may help establish the process as one of analysis rather than hinder it.

Education in analysis

So, education in analysis may be regarded as part of “states of non-analysis”. Traditionally we would not at all admit “education” as an element of analysis. In fact, it would likely be regarded as some form of enactment and certainly a frame deviation. I would argue that whilst it is not itself a “state of analysis” education is inevitable and even necessary in analysis.

Freud (1919/2001) referred to education with analysands who were very compromised in their ordinary life. In this case the analyst was bound to take up the position of teacher or mentor. This needed great caution and it was not itself to be seen as analytic. In fact more than twenty years later he (Freud, 1940) warned against the analyst becoming a teacher and educating the analysand.

The above notwithstanding, I believe that even in psychoanalysis there is some ambiguity around the role of education in analysis (Gray, 1994, cited Abend, 2007). Jung (1929/1966) believed that education formed a part of analysis and explored this in his 1929 paper “Problems of Modern Psychotherapy.”

In this respect, and for this paper specifically, the views of Anna Freud on education in analysis are relevant. In her paper to the ACPP 2022 Conference, Christine Brett-Vickers (2022) informed us that “Bennett [Dina Davis’s actual psychoanalyst] was accepted into Anna Freud’s training program commencing in 1947.” Prior to the 1960s, Anna Freud (1927) argued that *small* children tend to relate to the analyst as a new object and not dominantly through a transference neurosis. Consequently, her approach was to act more as a caring and even educative adult. By 1965, however, Anna Freud revised her understanding of this. This meant that she shifted away from her earlier pedagogic model of child analysis.

My contention is that education is generally present and more or less consciously deployed in all forms of analysis. Understood psychodynamically, an educating process in analysis acts as the attempted provision of helpful introjects and/or it acts as a potential transference cure. Today this would generally be seen as a countertransference enactment and therefore undesirable at worst and in need of analytic attention at best. Not surprisingly I have found in both conversation with colleagues and in supervision that education of the analysand is criticised and eschewed as a deviation from the analytic attitude and the frame. That said, based on what I have learnt, despite this, education within analysis occurs not infrequently. Furthermore, I remain suspicious that even though there may be conscious avoidance of educating an analysand this does not necessarily mean that the analyst is not acting in an unconsciously educational manner. I have noticed how the inflecting of questions, reflections and interpretations can carry educational import. Even the length of a pause before the analyst responds can carry meaning which shapes the analysand’s understanding in an educational way.

I believe that we see the use of education in analysis very explicitly in the extract (spanning pages 112 to 115) from Dina Davis’s book, *A Dangerous Daughter*, which she read to the 2022 ACPP Conference. I shall turn now to that book.

Extract from *A Dangerous Daughter*

In her 2021 book *A Dangerous Daughter* Dina gives an account of her protagonist’s first meeting with her psychoanalyst Dr de Berg:

Ivy gingerly stretches her shaky body full length onto the brocade couch. Dr de Berg sits behind Ivy’s head, in an upholstered upright chair, which Ivy glimpses as she lies down. With a sigh, she lets herself sink onto the couch, feeling the pain leave

her aching legs. She feels somehow foolish, as if she's been caught in an intimate act. Here, in this new space, she gives in to the weakness in her body. She can almost forget the griping of her stomach as she feels her tight muscles relax. 'While you are here, nothing you say will go beyond this room,' says Dr de Berg from behind her head. 'The most important part of this treatment is for you to tell me whatever comes into your head, even if it seems silly. I will sit here and listen, without interrupting. In this way we can both observe your thoughts, and try to understand what is troubling you.' (ibid, p. 111)

In this first portion Dr de Berg gives Ivy direction on the fundamental rule, to say whatever comes into her mind without censoring it. This is quite normal psychoanalytic practice. Her analysand, Ivy, responds to this as follows:

'You mean there'll be no needles or anything? All I have to do is talk?' 'That's right. A lay term for psychoanalysis is "the talking cure". Have you heard of it?' 'No. Uncle Sid just told me this is a new form of treatment for people with a mental illness. Does coming here mean I've gone mad?' 'We don't use that word here, Ivy. Nor words like 'crazy' or 'normal'. Rather, our task is to explore the workings of your mind, in order to confront the cause of your suffering.' (ibid, p. 111)

Almost immediately in response to Ivy's questions, perhaps to foster the working alliance, Dr de Berg breaks the abstinence that she has just communicated to Ivy by saying: "I will sit here and listen, without interrupting." Instead she challenges Ivy's word usage and orients her towards the work as exploratory.

Bearing in mind that Ivy was suffering from anorexia nervosa there may also be a complex and ambiguous dynamic around the provision of such introjects. Dr de Berg says to her, "We don't use that word here, Ivy. Nor words like 'crazy' or 'normal'." Saying this seems to be the attempted provision of a positive introject, by Dr de Berg to Ivy, which serves to counteract Ivy's super ego activity of self-judgement when she fears she has "gone mad". However, although we can subject the process to a criticism in terms of analytic practice, something about what Dr de Berg does has an impact and it feels very much like an analytic moment, i.e. a shift to a "state of analysis":

There's a pause, while Ivy takes in the softly spoken words. She feels tears gathering, amazed that instead of blame, there is an acknowledgement of her pain. (ibid, p. 111)

Ivy settles further into a space of feeling understood. She seems to me to be able to "flounder" like an infant (Winnicott, 1958, p.418). Some at least of this seems due to Dr de Berg's comfort with being educational and providing positive introjects. Some of us might be tempted to label this a "transference cure", but it seems to me that there is an ambiance to the intersubjectivity which has an analytic feel.

Dr de Berg establishes some of the working conditions but this definitely takes the shape of an educative activity:

‘Through your dreams and fantasies we delve into a part of the mind that is usually hidden from us. You may start to talk whenever you’re ready. But remember, we have a strict time limit of fifty minutes for each session.’ (Davis, 2021, p. 111)

I would expect this to normally be clearly set off from the analytic enterprise and stated before framing the fundamental rule and the process. Of course this is after all a novel and the memory upon which the narrative is constructed is very far in the past but to me there is an alive sense of verisimilitude to the narrative.

For a long time Ivy says nothing. It is peaceful lying there, as if all the pressure inside her head has magically lifted. She fancies the spicy smell in the room is Dr de Berg’s perfume. This is certainly better than having my brains fried, she thinks. At the same time she feels a little resentful, wondering why she has to do all the work in this strange treatment. The silence in the room stretches until it becomes a presence, and a rebuke. (ibid, p.113)

At this point Dr de Berg becomes more abstinent. At the same time Ivy falls silent, very possibly as a resistance. In the wake of this resistance a shift from positive to negative transference seems to form. Instead of any type of interpretation or even simple reflection of anxiety Dr de Berg goes on to ask Ivy what her thoughts are and then if she remembers a dream. She instructs Ivy about free association. Ivy does remember a recent dream and narrates it.

This was almost all that Dina Davis read to participants at the 2022 ACPP Conference but it suffices to make my fundamental point — it demonstrates something of the fluctuation between “states of analysis” and “states of non-analysis”.

Discussion

It is hard to know, presuming that this is an accurate portrayal of how Bennett acted in conducting analysis, just why she deviated from abstinence and even neutrality, into instruction and education. It could simply reflect a practitioner who was not yet settled into conducting analysis in a strict manner. This could have been due to countertransference illusion or even countertransference proper (Fordham, 1979), or a mixture. It could have been a complementary countertransference (Deutsch, 1926; Racker, 1957) enactment, called forth by the psychodynamics of anorexia nervosa. Bennett was presumably not able to get any sort of reasonably immediate supervision given that she was in Perth and seemingly the nearest psychoanalyst with whom she would have had contact, Dr Klara Lázár Gerő, was in Melbourne.

On the other hand, although Dina was an adolescent, Bennett may have felt that with Dina, given the significantly regressed condition that she was in, the appropriate analytic technique was that which one would use with a small child in the way that Anna Freud had advocated at the time of Bennett’s training. Given the period during which Bennett trained, i.e. before 1966, my suspicion is that she was influenced by Anna Freud’s earlier more pedagogic view of analysis of children. It was noticeable that during the ACPP Conference Dina Davis herself referred positively to an explanatory text that Bennett had provided her with.

However, is there normally any place for education in adolescent or adult analysis where such regression is not an issue? The common answer would likely be that there is not, but in terms of the notions of “states of analysis” and “states of non-analysis” that I have advanced education in analysis becomes something that can be entertained. Jung (1929/1966), as mentioned, certainly felt that it was part of analysis. A crucial question is just how might Jung have implemented education in analysis and how might analysts do so today? I believe that question could properly be the subject of a separate study. However, it perhaps suffices to say that all analysts at some time consciously or unconsciously utilise education in analysis. The challenge then becomes to decide when and how to do so, how to monitor the impact of such activity on the analysis and, if needed, how to repair and re-establish “states of analysis” when it is done.

Conclusion

I have focused on how, in her book, *A Dangerous Daughter* (2021), Dina Davis describes the commencement of a psychoanalysis in which there is an interlacing of traditional psychoanalytic technique with affirmation, direction and education. I have proposed that despite being a deviation from psychoanalytic technique this may still be regarded as analysis. I have argued that analysis can be conceptualised as a dynamic balance between a shifting back and forth between “states of analysis” and “states of non-analysis”. “States of analysis” are recognisable from their ambiance. Both are essentially part of analysis and education in analysis may be regarded as part of “states of non-analysis”. In this way, education can be addressed in a conscious way by the analyst. Although the subject of potential further study, the question remains: how might analysts implement and monitor education in analysis?

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