

Closeness In The Psychoanalytical Encounter

Happiness... is a problem of the economics of the individual's libido.

(Freud: *Civilization and its Discontents*)

I am deeply moved and honoured to be representing my country at the meeting of the European Psycho-Analytical Federation. I hope that *I* shall be able to create a friendly atmosphere, an easy dialogue and, above all, a sense of welcome to our Israeli society.

Presenting the encounter between analyst and analysand is very difficult for me. It means sharing this particular and very intimate experience with you, and exposing it to a discussion which I hope will be enriching.

The psychoanalytic encounter as I understand it describes the verbal, non-verbal and affective current between analysand and analyst. At first sight one might naively suppose that closeness in the psychoanalytic encounter would always be experienced as an important source of pleasure. In fact that is not the case and the pleasure of closeness assumes different meanings according to the libidinal phases to which it belongs. It seemed to me that it would be interesting to focus the discussion on this wish for closeness, and its vicissitudes and meaning in the psychoanalytic situation. I have therefore chosen a particular aspect of the psychoanalytic encounter, which concerns the pleasure or the fear of closeness between the two partners. Let us set the analytic scene: the analysand and the analyst are alone together in a room, physically close to one another for a regular and defined length of time in a very privileged situation. The analysand has his analyst all to himself. His veiled request to be heard, reassured, held in a 'holding environment' (Winnicott, 1963; Modell, 1976), to be understood, acknowledged and above all loved by his analyst (Nacht, 1963) is present throughout his analysis. His analyst can concentrate exclusively on what is happening in the analysand and between the two of them. A meeting between transference and countertransference, between free associations and free-floating attention, combined with a working alliance and exchanges of real feelings between the two partners is established with the creation of the psychoanalytic space (Viderman, 1970; Greenson, 1968; Roch, 1963; King, 1978). A special relationship, the psychoanalytic process, evolves between two people who work together and cathect one another.

In such an interaction, partly determined by the intrapsychic role relationship which each party attempts to impose on the other (Sandler, J. 1976), there arises *an* important variety of feelings, wishes, reflections and expectations (Sandler, A-M. & J., 1978). The two currents of unconscious sensitivity (Viderman, 1970) join and, via a verbal (Amado

Levy-Valensi, 1972) or non-verbal (Nacht, 1963; Stone, 1981) dialogue, tend towards a 'narcissistic union' (Grunberger, 1950), a 'consubstantial union' (Bouvet & Viderman, 1969). On the analyst's side, such a meeting implies a delicate balance between observation and participation (Viderman, 1970), free-floating attention and emotional sensitivity (Heiman, 1950), and between countertransference responses and free-floating behavioural responsiveness (Sandler, J. 1976). The analyst's psychic work on himself bears fruit in parallel with the analysand's psychic work on himself, and enables discoveries to be made and a new understanding attained which can be lived and shared by the two protagonists. That is what I understand by the analytic encounter. We are therefore speaking of an exchange with a degree of closeness such that the analyst can grasp his analysand's associations, allow them to mingle with his own conscious and unconscious contents, in order to discover his patient's unconscious fantasies (Braunschweig, 1971) with the purpose of communicating them to him in such a way that he can integrate them and produce more: a veritable artistic creation (Parat, 1976).

In spite of this privileged situation, we are frequently confronted with the fact that our analysands find it impossible to experience this closeness and to find in it a source of libidinal drive satisfaction for their basic wish (Nacht, 1963). Is it a question of the ego's inability to distinguish between subject and object (Nacht, 1963), or is there a fault in the 'principle of safety and trust' (Sandler, J. 1960b Sandler, J. 1960a), or does it involve the impossibility of reaching a compromise between a gratifying and a frustrating relationship (transactional relationship) (Lebovici, 1961), or is the anxiety associated with the actual reunion with the object, experienced as the fulfilment of a forbidden wish? Whatever the case, we are touching upon the problem of narcissistic integrity, constantly threatened by annihilation and helplessness on the one hand, and by the fear of losing the love object on which it depends, on the other.

Let us briefly re-examine the dynamic and economic process contained in the need for closeness.

The breaking of the primitive unity...is experienced as the loss of such an essential part of oneself that all subsequent development will take place under the sign of a basic deficiency, and the need for union with the other seems to be an essential necessity for man. (Nacht, 1963)

To emerge from the narcissistic sphere (the subject's love for himself to the point of feelings of omnipotence) into the object sphere (love for the object) demands, from the economic point of view, that libidinal investment moves from *a striving for total fusion* with the object to the satisfaction of 'sublimated sexual drives' (Freud, S., 1900). Object libido can be counted amongst the narcissistic investments which strengthen the feeling of self-worth and increase dependence on the object (Lebovici, 1961) on the one hand, but create the need for separation (Parat, 1976) on the other. Similarly we know how much being loved by both parents at once in an absolute, fusional and aconflictual way on the

narcissistic plane (the narcissistic triad) (Grunberger, 1971) is linked with the constant need for affirmation and reassurance, creating a safe environment until the child is able to use this unconscious dialogue with his object in fantasy (Sandler, J, 1960b; Sandler, A-M. & J.,1978; Freud, A.,1965). We know, too, how much the absence of such narcissistic confirmation jeopardizes the possibility of accepting narcissistic gratification later, and of seeking it in an appropriate and effective way (Grunberger, 1971). In order that the satisfaction of being safely loved can continue to evolve, and that appreciation by the superego and the wish to achieve the ego ideal (Renard, 1969) can do likewise, the superego must be sufficiently invested with libidinal energy (Roch, 1967).

This description of dynamic evolution illustrates the two fundamental and contradictory aspirations which push man on the one hand toward separation from the object, and on the other hand toward the absolute union with it (Nacht, 1963). The words addressed by the patient to the analyst confirm a separation which, at an unconscious level, is painful. The fundamental need for union is manifest when the spoken word gives way to silence, a safe silence which is possible only if fear and aggression have previously been overcome on both sides. The longing for paradise lost can only be the representation of an experience which has previously been perceived (Freud, S., 1920;~Diatkine, 1978; Lebovici, 1969). Thus each patient unconsciously seeks in the analysis the impossible disappearance of the boundaries which separate him from his object (Diatkine, 1978), by trying to reproduce in the transference this early experience of closeness, or to evoke the defence against such closeness if it is experienced as dangerous to him (Sandler, A-M. &J.,1978). This helps us to understand the need for the analyst to bring with him to the setting a certain quality composed of internal availability and a welcoming attitude (Nacht, 1963). It is an important aim of psychoanalysis to trace the pathway of a distortion of the original unconscious wish - and the fantasies attached to it - in its search for gratification in the role relationship (Sandler, 1976), and to analyse the extent of the distance between the wish and expressions of the wish in the communication (Bouvet & Viderman, 1969). The analyst must allow his analysand to experience, recognize and elaborate in the current relationship his longing for union, as well as his need for separateness (Nacht, 1963). If the ego can allow itself to experience its desire for closeness in the psychoanalytic encounter, it is an important achievement. It is the achievement of completeness and a quality of happiness which, once established, are essential and necessary for the highest level of maturity in object relations (Grunberger, 1971).

As you will see, my analysand, Pierre, is afraid of closeness although it is greatly desired. He does not allow himself to experience it; he fantasizes, projects and transfers the whole range of his internal prohibitions, in order to avoid the close encounter. It is with this aspect of the psychoanalytic encounter in mind that I would like to share with you two non-consecutive psychoanalytic sessions, and a summary of two others. I will try to present to you, as nearly as possible, what took place between my analysand and myself, whilst preserving the highest degree of professional confidentiality, so that the person in question cannot be identified.

To enable you to participate in an analytic encounter of this kind, it is necessary to give you some background information, as well as a brief description of the period which preceded the one which concerns us.

It concerns a young man of twenty-six, of Italian origin, now an immigrant in Israel who does not speak Hebrew fluently. He is married, the father of three children and an archaeologist by profession. He is the eldest son and his parents remained in Italy with his two sisters. He experiences his parents as very attached to one another, a rigid father and a gentle and responsive mother. Pierre remains attached to his parents and supposedly dependent upon them, although in reality he lives independently a long way away from them and carries out his responsibilities towards his young family well.

During the course of his analysis, Pierre began with a paternal transference towards me, which was highly charged with aggression, imagining that I required of him a specific kind of behaviour in the analysis, that I was rigid, cold and distant. His dream of walking hand in hand with his father in an extraordinary landscape was often repeated, accompanied by a painful feeling of frustration since his father was never able to gratify this wish for closeness. Then he underwent a period of profound disappointment in his analyst, often fantasizing that, if he had another analyst and particularly a male, his analyst would be better able to provide the spiritual image of a 'master'. He sought this image in vain in me, without ever allowing himself to find it. This period was followed by a phase linked with the maternal transference, in which he feared that I would interfere too much in his business without respecting his autonomy and his boundaries. The present phase is marked by a very strong need for closeness. Pierre is transferring on to me the image of a mother who is unable to contain and understand him, whilst simultaneously feeling that I am attentive, understanding, capable of containing and understanding him and far from being cold as he once thought. He finds difficulty in understanding how his feelings about me could have changed in this way, as he is certain that there is no transference element involved, because his mother has none of the qualities that he has perceived in me. He cannot bear her to kiss him because kissing is unnatural for her. After the sessions he often feels a great affection for me, sometimes crying with emotion, but always outside the session. During the session itself, he is not yet able to feel this affection.

Let us now turn to the analytic situation to describe the encounter between analysand and analyst.

In a general way it is for me a pleasure to work with Pierre who finds it easy to free-associate with the help of an observing ego which makes it possible for him to establish a good working alliance. I feel at ease in this analysis, and on the same 'wave-length' as Pierre, I often find it easy to understand his unconscious dialogue with me. The dialogue enables a productive stream of free associations to follow my interpretations. For me the analytic work is interesting and enriching.

Pierre rings the bell and at once the analytic encounter begins. I realize that I go to open the door to him with a certain sense of relief that it is no longer the previous patient, who still finds it extremely difficult to work in a psychoanalytic language. Pierre free-associates fluently, using the tool of psychoanalytic language on his own behalf. I open the door to him and Pierre looks at me very directly, as if he wished to discover, by this look, what I feel about him today. As soon as his eyes meet mine, he lowers them, very embarrassed. He enters, waits for me to put the napkin on the cushion, lies down on the couch, and there is a short silence with the same atmosphere as when he came in. 'I want to tell you about the dream I had this morning,' he said, 'I am in the street waiting for my mother.' She doesn't arrive and I look round for some means of calling her but I don't find any. I call my friends for help, but they don't come either.' Pierre ends his account of the dream and associates to it: 'I have no idea why I had this dream. The only thing I can think of is my jealousy of your other patients. I am sure that you make better contact with them than you do with me. I particularly have in mind another man whom I met coming in the day before yesterday. A nice, good-looking man, and I imagine that he sat facing you because the couch was cold that day. I am sure that in the face-to-face situation you are warmer with him than with me.'

I have a distinct feeling from the tone of Pierre's voice that he is seeking to communicate with me and also that he is anxious about finding me. I wonder about the reason for this conflict and follow his associations to the dream.

'Yesterday morning,' he continues, 'I came earlier than usual and I saw you in the street with your daughter, the little one. You were probably on your way to the kindergarten. I suppose that she is your youngest child, for I know that you have some big children too. The girl was so radiant, she was skipping and enjoying herself with you and you with her. I think you were singing together. It wasn't like the other mothers yesterday morning, impatiently dragging their little ones after them. I felt intensely jealous of this situation and longed to be with you as she was. And you are too quiet, too far removed from me today.'

I have the feeling that the jealousy which Pierre feels is making its appearance today only in order to dilute the intensity of his wish for closeness. I think to myself that it would be better to concentrate on his longing for closeness, on his anxiety about finding me and on the fact that he does not allow himself to feel close to me, when basically I am so close to him. I feel that to elaborate on the distribution of his cathexes relating to his jealousy is to run the risk of taking us away from the problem, when work on his cathexes of the objects of his libidinal drive satisfaction may bring us closer to the unconscious origin of his anxiety about closeness. I therefore prefer to elaborate with him the libidinal - let us say the positive - side of his wish to rediscover the object, which also seems to me to be closer to the subject which is preoccupying him at present. I think of his dream and I say, 'In your dream too you want your mother and you wait for her, but without finding her. It is just as if, here and now, you are looking for me without allowing yourself to find me as

you want to.'

Pierre is still puzzled. 'I would never have thought,' he says, 'that I could be so afraid of feeling close to you and fulfilling the wish that I know so well. I often think of it as I did yesterday when I saw you with your daughter. I don't understand what I am afraid of. Here I am, in a privileged situation with you, the others aren't here, you are here just for me, and like an idiot I can't take advantage of it. Instead, I can only think of all the others who come to see you. For a long time now I have known that you - or rather the sessions with you - have become the little centre of my life and that I want to be your favourite...'

He stops, and a short silence reigns. It feels to me like a relaxed silence, as if he has no further need of words. I let him plunge into this silence and I feel that I am meeting him in the silence with a welcoming attitude on my side, a feeling of comfort and patience. Being at ease, I wonder whether it is my interpretation which enabled him to permit this closeness. My intuition tells me that the closeness which he has allowed himself is of the fusional kind. It is the satisfaction that I am with him in this welcoming atmosphere. After a few moments' silence another patient who is also looking for closeness comes to my mind, but that one provokes rather a feeling of impatience. Still during this silence I wonder why there is this difference. Is it the quality of the dialogue with Pierre and his longing compared with the monologue and narcissistic expectations of the other patient which makes a difference to my reactions? During my reflections, Pierre's silence seems to become heavy and painful without my yet being able to understand why.

Pierre says, 'I am suddenly taken with the uncomfortable fear that you are going to tell me you no longer want me in psychoanalysis and that the treatment is over. It is ridiculous, I know, but it is a painful feeling. You despise me and you are going to take someone better in my place, and you will forget me. I am thinking of my wish that I told you about a long time ago, to make something in life which would last for ever, a kind of edifice. 'I am thinking about the war in Lebanon,' he said, 'and I am filled with anxiety that I may be called up for the war.'

Whilst Pierre is speaking, I feel his fear of losing me and that I will drop him. I think that his fear of being forgotten is linked to his guilt about the closeness which he has only just experienced with me. An association with the previous war, the war of Yom Kippur, linked with a former analysand, comes to my mind. It is a painful association to this other man who volunteered for the war even before being called up. He succeeded in controlling his fear of combat and he was even proud to go and defend his country along with many of his friends. One day during the war, he arrived at my house in a state of panic and distress. Seeing his friends killed alongside him in Sinai with no time, at the moment, to bring them home, overwhelmed him. He was seized with anxiety that he too might meet a similar fate and be forgotten without being brought back to his own country and family, and without even being buried in a cemetery. This painful association interferes with my capacity to concentrate on the flow of the session. I wonder whether it

is Pierre who has provoked in me this anxiety about being so painfully forgotten. It is astonishing, I tell myself, how many associations one can have in such a short silence. Are my associations linked to a personal reaction produced by his anxiety about going to war? And now Pierre says, "I have just remembered that my mother had an abortion and I do not understand how she could do such a thing."

I interpret to him: "After you allowed yourself a brief moment of relaxed closeness with me, you were seized with the anxiety that I would drop you, as if this closeness had become too dangerous for you, or forbidden."

'Nowadays I know,' says Pierre, 'that it was a spontaneous abortion and yet I experienced it as if it had been voluntarily induced.' The end of the session approaches, and Pierre looks at his watch and says, 'I know it is time to go, but this time I really don't want to leave you. It's funny because on the one hand I am talking about painful things, like this abortion, and on the other hand I feel nothing for you, and now I don't want to go because I feel so good here.'

Pierre gets up and again gives me that piercing look, and goes, leaving behind him that heavy atmosphere, with the feeling that closeness with me is impossible for him, and the anxiety that I will drop him.'

As I have no time to present more than two sessions in detail, I would like to summarize two others before broaching the second session.

A few sessions later, I experienced a different kind of encounter. Pierre arrives, very excited, unable to find words to express how happy he is to be in analysis, because he is happier with himself these days and he wants to tell me. At work he has allowed himself a greater degree of success, and he has been able to talk to his wife about his wish for greater autonomy.

These words fill me with pleasure at his achievements even if it still seems fragile.

A little later, he speaks of his fear of autonomy, his own, but more especially his wife's, because she may forget him. 'I shall soon be called up for the war and I am terribly afraid that I shall get a bullet in the head and die,' says Pierre. I perceive that what Pierre is really afraid of is not that he will die, but that his wife will be independent after his death and that there will be nothing left of him; as if only the closeness of mutual dependency could save him from this autonomy which he conceived as losing the other.

Pierre remembers that he very often fantasied his own death when he was little, in order to establish whether his parents would be sad and would remember him. He often had the feeling that he did not exist for the other person, and that is what death means to him. It is 'nothingness, more than physical death,' he explains. He expressed his unease at my

approaching holiday and said that I was going to forget him during that time. Nor could he understand how his wife had lived before she had known him, nor how a woman friend from whom he had recently parted could no longer be attached to him.

Pierre's utterances produce in me the unpleasant feeling that I need to free myself from his grasp, from his need to attach himself to me so that I do not forget him. I have a feeling in the countertransference which is familiar to me. Perhaps Pierre feels it too and sees it as an expulsion in the interests of autonomy. Pierre then expresses an even stronger need to stay with me. It is as if closeness was now no longer a source of libidinal drive gratification, but a defence against separation and anxieties about death, whence the lack of pleasure.

Pierre tells me about his new compulsive need to tell his wife all his little secrets and for her to tell him all hers; a need to be together all the time. It seems to me that Pierre is expressing the need for a fusional kind of encounter and I interpret it to him. 'It is as if it is impossible for you to maintain a relationship unless there are no boundaries between you and me. This is because you are so afraid that my independence means that during my holiday I shall forget you and drop you.'

This interpretation brings Pierre back to an awareness of his "pathology", as he puts it. He understands that his complaints about his mother are experienced in the transference, and that she permeates every aspect of his life and causes him great suffering. 'It is I who imposed the boundary,' he says. 'It is I who needed to do it and eventually my mother too had the same need, but I was definitely the one who provoked it.'

We can therefore deduce something of which we were previously unaware, namely that the pleasure which he had with his mother as a young child within a close relationship in which there were supposedly no boundaries between them, was at one and the same time a source of pleasure and a source of anxiety. Closeness without boundaries is connected with anxiety about the loss of the object, and a clinging relationship is imposed upon the other person who experiences it as unpleasant.

One month later we were able to understand how Pierre's need for a fear of death represented his preferred defence against the forbidden wish to seduce his mother. In the transference he was worried that, in view of his recent success, I might not be strong enough to resist his seduction. The idea that I could think about him even outside sessions frightened him. The forbidden seduction involved the mother keeping him inside her in both senses. Soon he 'preferred' a new regression which confronted him with the anxiety that I would drop him and that I would forget him and prefer another analysand to him.

The second session, which illustrates in detail the psychoanalytic encounter which I want to present to you, is a special session. The truth of the matter is that when it happened I

had already completed a first draft of my paper and I felt in no need of additional material. However, shortly after the beginning of this session, I felt a strong desire to tell you about it, because it seemed to round off my thinking better than I could have hoped. Had Pierre noticed what was in my mind at the time? Could that have happened? I do not think so; it is probably my own wish in the encounter with him. I remember that on entering he looked at me more calmly, I could even say welcomingly. Having installed himself on the couch, he begins talking to me straight away. 'I am thinking about your holidays, and about my own, and I can think about it happily and look forward to a rest, without needing to get something out of you right up to the last minute as I did before. I am thinking about the separation and especially about the pleasure of our meeting again afterwards.'

Something in the tone of what he said seems very sincere to me, a sort of presence, and that is what made me want to tell you about this session, with the feeling that here at last we have an encounter between two people personified.

Pierre continues, 'I want to tell you that I have written a letter to my sister in Italy. It is a long time since I have written to her. Yesterday I felt like writing to her and I did it. I told her about my feelings about the war in Lebanon. I told her that I am not in favour of the war and that I do not know whether we have any other means of defence than this horrible war, but most of all I wanted to tell her how attached I feel to this country, and to everything that happens here, with a sense of belonging, a feeling that I have never experienced before, and I wanted to let you know about it too. Everything that happens here belongs to me, for better or worse. I think it is fantastic how this country has developed in so short a time. I am pleased that I chose it. On the other hand I fear for its future, and particularly for my son who will also have to fight for this country one day. Did I have the right to choose this country for him? Isn't it like the sacrifice of Isaac?'

Pierre is speaking and during his communication I feel something like a new melody in the room; a new encounter, as if we had something in common. I too feel the same fears for my own son. My husband has recently been called up for the Lebanon war, and I re-experience the worry about him that I felt that morning whilst listening to the news on the radio. It is funny, but I feel as if Pierre is giving me permission to have contact with my own worries today. During the other sessions I have not been able to take this liberty. There is no question that my worries belong to me, but it seems clear to me that Pierre does not feel the unconscious need on this occasion to attach me to him as before. It is a non-verbal encounter distinctly perceived, but difficult to describe to you. On this occasion I can think about all that, not during a silence, but in floating, as it were, whilst he speaks. I have the feeling of being with myself and with him at one and the same time, listening both to what he is saying to me and to what I discover in my own intimate thoughts about myself.

I hear Pierre say, 'I presume, without actually knowing, that you were born in this country. You didn't choose it, so that the threat of war is possibly different for you, but the

belonging and the future are the same for both of us.'

The more Pierre speaks, the more I sense that he is not only talking about his belonging to the country, but also of his belonging to analysis and to his analyst. 'I want to speak Italian,' says Pierre. 'I know that it is not because I will be able to find the words more easily, but so that I can speak to you in my own language.' I interpret to him, 'Today it is as if you can allow yourself to experience to a greater degree the sense of belonging to a country, to our country, and possibly too a sense of belonging to what we are doing in the here and now of the analysis, using the same language.'

Pierre is astonished. 'How did you know? Just at the moment when you made your interpretation, I was thinking that I knew your voice but that I couldn't see you. Am I attached to your voice, or to you when you speak, or to you in the transference? It is as if I was wondering today whether you were there in person where your voice is. Are you, as I feel you are today, close to me, behind my head, or is it the transference which brings you close? It is difficult to describe to you my contentment and my wish to feel close. I remember my fear that you were going to end the analysis and already I feel a stranger to that fear. With my children I often experience these feelings of closeness. I love doing things with them. I never had a relationship like that with my father and I am happy that I can give them that. But immediately I become afraid that some misfortune might befall them.'

Pierre evokes clear memories of his childhood without difficulty today, but unfortunately I cannot tell you about them without revealing his identity. The most important thing about his memories, it seems to me, is that he allowed himself to come closer to his own history. He is close to himself and close to me as I find myself closer to myself and closer to him: the true pleasure of working together. At the same time, I begin to realize how much more difficult it is to work with his libidinal investment in the here and now of the session. I have often noted that a libidinal encounter is more awkward to handle.

'I am thinking about your holidays again,' says Pierre towards the end of the session. 'It is funny, just when I feel so good and so attached, I also feel able to separate from you for the holidays. It should be the other way round. The only thing which I am beginning to regret, really regret, is that just when I am starting to have pleasure in working in the analysis I have to stop for the holidays.'

I too experience the same regret as he and I wonder whether this important change is not also connected precisely with the fact that we are stopping for the holidays.

'I think I am a bastard, you know,' Pierre continues, "an egotist. How could I have failed to wonder during these two months of the war whether your husband might also have been mobilized for Lebanon, and whether you were worried about him? My attachment to you was to your voice and not to you as a person with a personal and family history, as if

that was outside the analysis and did not concern me. I feel that it is beginning to be difficult for me to have these feelings for you. I am no longer sure where the transference ends and my relationship with you begins. I am puzzled."

My personal worries about my husband and the war, and the way in which Pierre allowed me to have them at the beginning of the session comes back into my mind, and here he is ending the session with a dawning awareness of the still frightening need to take me into consideration as a person in this encounter. I seize the moment to interpret: "As if you had taken advantage of the analytic setting and the idea of transference in order not to face up to this other relationship with me which still frightens you.'

'Yes,' says Pierre. 'But that is transference too, the fact that I am so afraid of the relationship with you, of discovering what I feel for you or think of you and what you think of me, it is still attached to the transference, and I dream of freeing myself from it.'

To me as his analyst, this dynamic in the psychoanalytic encounter also begins to be clearer. The more Pierre becomes aware of his transference, including his wishes and his fears, the better able he will be to free himself from the repetition of the transference in all his relationships, and thus to liberate his libidinal cathexes in more subtle and more real relationships. Relationships in the various encounters would thus assume a subtle and different quality. Pierre leaves with manifest satisfaction, telling me, 'We will meet again tomorrow,' something which he never dares to say. And I am left with a feeling of enrichment and joyful creativity as I think of this presentation.

Discussion

I have presented two non-consecutive psychoanalytic sessions, describing the main theme of the psychoanalytic encounter between my analysand and myself. The problem of closeness was the central point of my paper.

What is the significance of pleasure in closeness?

The feeling of pleasure in closeness of a psychoanalytic encounter derives, to my way of thinking, from the continual distribution of the narcissistic economic balance in both partners. It is a balance between the cathexes of narcissistic wishes and the cathexes of the wishes of the object, the demands of reality and society. The distribution of narcissistic and object cathexes is linked with the three levels of the encounter: feelings of pleasure at being received by the object and at receiving him, feelings of pleasure at giving to the object or to oneself, and feelings of pleasure at the gift received by the object and the mutuality with him.

This subject has long preoccupied me and has since been enriched by some theoretical

work which I elaborated several years ago on the subject of the aspect of pleasure in object relations. I would therefore like to refer to my conceptualization of the three levels of the narcissistic pleasure of closeness.

In face of the trauma suffered by the ego, its ever-increasing separation from the love object, and in face of the narcissistic blow suffered in the striving for omnipotence, a need develops in the ego. It is the persistent need to recover its omnipotence, and the necessity for retrieving the object, possessing the object through other modes of relating and thus re-establishing integrity and the narcissistic balance. Such a balance remains fragile and is threatened by every frustration or every guilt feeling in the object relationship. It is shaken by the anxiety awakened by *the wish* to allow itself to be invaded by the sensation of pleasure to the point of the annihilation or loss of autonomy and boundaries. The wish is a longing to leave the state of unpleasure for that of pleasure (Freud, S., 1900) and is linked with the need for and the anticipation of gratification and its achievement (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1968; Kanzer & Eidelberg, 1960; Rapaport, 1967). It is irrational, stronger than necessary for its purpose and indicates the lack of the object who is precisely the object of the wish (Viderman, 1968a). Self and object representations and representations of the interaction between them are incorporated in every wish (Sandler, A-M. & J., 1978). There is no pleasure without a wish, and so often there is a marked absence of it in our patients.

Pleasure can only be acquired in parallel with libidinal evolution, the development of object relations and the growth of narcissism. The more the ego '*allows itself*' to have wishes and to satisfy its libidinal drives through the object of those drives (Freud, S., 1915), and through this expedient succeed in possessing the internalized objects, the more the ego succeeds in reducing the traumatic experience and attenuating the threat to its narcissistic integrity. By this means the ego can obtain the feeling of pleasure connected with fusion with the object, feeling complemented by it, pleasure associated with mastery, autonomy and creation. In the reunion with its objects it can thus obtain the pleasure of joy and internal freedom in relation to its objects (Nacht, 1967). In parallel with the object cathexes which produces the development of object relations and the internal images of the object, the cathexes of the ego as object produces the growth of narcissism, identity and the self image. The flexibility of the oscillations of the libidinal cathexes between the object and narcissism, makes it possible to maintain narcissistic integrity, object relations, and qualitatively different encounters with different objects. This dynamic economic process produces the feeling of pleasure at three levels of narcissism, and in pregenital and genital object relations.

Here is a short description of the three levels of narcissistic pleasure which we have found in the analytic sessions described:

1. Primordial Narcissistic Pleasure, a pleasure connected with the pleasure principle. (This is not primary narcissism which does not differentiate between subject and object but rather a narcissistic level which encompasses the object and is changed into a 'purified

pleasure-ego', which places the characteristic of pleasure above all others.)(Freud, S., 1915)

Faced with the blow to oral narcissistic integrity, the fear of annihilation, of being abandoned or devoured by the object, a flexible ego can allow itself the primordial pleasure which symbolizes and corresponds to fusion with the object, and the fantasy of absolute satisfaction, and is thus able to reduce the trauma. The quality of this pleasure depends upon whether the ego is able and flexible enough to allow itself to be invaded, and transported with the pleasure produced by drive gratification with the object of the drive, without fear of the destruction of acquired identity, even if the control of time, space and reality is temporarily blurred and external pressures disappear. Such ego capacity depends upon the acceptance and realization of the limited duration of the pleasure, and the acquired distinction between ego and object, and adaptation to the periodicity of this reunion with the object.

Numerous analysts (Spitz, 1968; Winnicott, 1953; Grunberger, 1971; Balint, 1956; Kohut, 1966; Nacht, 1967; Klein, M., 1957; Parat, 1974) have emphasized the importance of the early mother-infant relationship as an indispensable dyad for any future encounter or communication, for the capacity for a balanced investment both in the object and narcissism, and for the development of pleasurable sensation. The experience of pleasure at this level produces the incorporation of the satisfying object through the act of receiving (Luquet, 1969) which is a form of love (Freud, S. 1915). This pleasure is characterized by 'a coincidence at that particular moment in time between a perceived reality and a fantasy, between an external and an internal object united, merged in a single cathexis. This is what produces a feeling of omnipotence and narcissistic triumph.' (Parat, 1974)

The wish for closeness in the encounter in silence and the pleasure derived from it, which I have described to you today, corresponds to the aspect of primordial narcissistic pleasure which can also be experienced as the "joy of being" (Nacht, 1963) or else as the 'happiness of a two-person narcissistic unity' (Grunberger, 1971).

2. Secondary Narcissistic Pleasure, connected with the reality principle.

Faced with the failure of anal narcissism based on omnipotence, a flexible ego is able to take pleasure which symbolizes its power through *self-control and self-esteem* (self representation). The origin of this quality of pleasure has to do with the ego's capacity and wish to distinguish itself from others, and it depends upon the ego's capability to face up to the pressures from the object and reality, its capacity to manipulate its various personal capabilities, its ability to be in control of itself, to delay satisfaction, and its motivation to succeed as a function of the anticipation of pleasure.

The ego must be capable of controlling its inclination towards megalomania through the integration of aggressive tendencies - its own and other people's - without fear of losing

the object or of losing self-control. The oscillation of the cathexes at this level of pleasure is possible by virtue of consideration given both to the object and to reality as well as to the realization and acceptance of the limitations of its power. It is the 'pleasure in functioning' and the pleasure in extended and continuous work, manifested and experienced in the endeavours of both analysand and analyst as they appeared in the description of the analytic process with Pierre.

3. *Tertiary Narcissistic Pleasure*, connected with the socio-cultural principle.

Faced with the genital trauma of oedipal failure and the incest taboo, a flexible ego is able to obtain pleasure through the conjunction of narcissistic pleasure (personal values, and socio-cultural membership) and object pleasure (pleasure in the object's pleasure) which symbolizes and corresponds to creative, genital, procreative relationships, thus attenuating the narcissistic trauma. This quality of pleasure depends upon the ego's capacity to take pleasure in the cathexes of its own abilities and activities which are part of a creative process; cathexes of communication and reciprocity with others, linked to cathexes of socio-cultural membership. The oscillation of cathexes at this level of pleasure becomes possible by virtue of consideration given to the pleasure of the object as well as one's own, the distribution within the object relationship and by virtue of the possibility of personal realization through creativity, linked with cultural values of one's own and one's objects. Such creativity which results from the conjunction of narcissistic and object pleasure may be the symbol of continuity beyond one's own life, and the element which links the ephemeral and the eternal. The realization and acceptance of a limited life-span- one's own and other people's- is indispensable.

'...sensuality is gradually overpowered by intellectuality, and men feel proud and exalted by every such advance' (Freud, S., 1971). Progress has made mutual love and happiness possible. Together with the element of 'exaltation, which it includes, it is experienced as the possession of narcissistic wealth, and thus betrays that it belongs to the wish for omnipotence and is linked with the Ego Ideal' (Parat, 1974). It is a progress which has made possible a mystical and ethical evolution and the pleasure of belonging to a faith (religious, political, professional, etc.) and which is an internalized object relationship (Roch, 1972; Parat, 1974) as well as the ability to 'create actively the conditions for pleasure' (Widlöcher, 1971).

The satisfaction of creation in the psychoanalytic process described in my paper, as well as the satisfaction of communication, interpretation, and even of the way things evolve within the treatment, accompanied by a feeling of belonging and well-being, are among the features of this category of pleasure and treatment.

Returning to the psychoanalytic process which I have described, Pierre could not *allow himself* to satisfy his wish for closeness with me, as his analyst- an object who was ready to be reunited with him in working together in a welcoming atmosphere. His ego, invaded

by the anxiety predominantly produced by guilt at the return of the oedipal wish, and his feeling of fear and wrong-doing - transferred on to the analyst - prevented him from allowing such closeness, because it was connected with the possible satisfaction of a forbidden libidinal wish. He needed time for the elaboration and recognition of his wish and his anxiety connected with the narcissistic blow, experienced once more as abandonment and the threat of annihilation and helplessness. He needed time for work on his aggression towards the frustrating and threatening object as well as on his fear of devouring closeness, before he could move on to the experience of pleasure in closeness.

An account of a few selected sessions runs the risk of giving you a false impression of the ease with which the analysand changed. It is for this reason that I would like to remind you that in Pierre's analysis there had been long and laborious work elaborating his frequently rigid defence mechanisms, the distribution of his aggression and of his often very intense anxiety. My approach was in general to analyse with Pierre *his need to establish* relationships in which he saw the other person as the one who did not respect his boundaries and his autonomy; to analyse with him *his need to forbid himself* the experience of pleasure and pain which produced in him the fear of losing his own boundaries; to analyse with him too *his need to avoid* pleasure in a situation which he half expected to be a possible source of happiness, experiencing it as a source of fear of losing his loved object, and how in this way Pierre was unable to allow himself to wish for closeness or to take pleasure in it. This process gradually allowed Pierre to integrate the difference between himself and his analyst-object in order subsequently to cathect his need for autonomy, belonging and mutuality. The content connected with the return of the repressed was oedipal, in my opinion, but the mode in which it emerged often assumed a narcissistic form.

The cathexes of his narcissism and the momentary elimination of his fear produced in the analysand the primordial narcissistic pleasure in silent closeness which I have described, of the fusional kind linked to pleasant mnemonic traces of the primary relationship with his mother. It consists in feeling contained, accepted and kept safe by myself, his analyst. For my part, I was able to meet him in his experience of pleasure at the primordial narcissistic level at which the boundaries between the partners are momentarily blurred. The oscillation in his cathexes of the object, still charged with the transference of unconscious mutual pleasure with his mother, provoked anew the fear of the return of the repressed oedipal wish. That is to say, that his mother would keep him inside her without boundaries. This wish is experienced as an oedipal seduction, with oral mnemonic traces, and the ego denies itself the pleasure of such guilt-provoking closeness. A defence is developed which is linked with the reverse of this wish, already encountered at the time when the failure to keep the object dealt a narcissistic blow. In consequence, the fantasy that the object, in its autonomy, will drop him and let him die in the object's psyche, becomes his defence against the forbidden wish. This need for fusional closeness thus becomes a demand in the psychoanalytic encounter such as I can barely tolerate. It involves a defence against the fear of death which is aroused in him, whence the absence

of pleasure and the avoidance of the encounter with me. A new awareness of the narcissistic blow experienced at the failure to satisfy his original wish for omnipotence, the distribution of his aggression, the wish to be helped by the object, as well as the recognition of his guilt, will allow him to accept the limits of pleasure more easily, and once he can allow himself to cathect his narcissism once more, he will cathect his own autonomy and allow himself to experience the pleasure of secondary narcissism, connected with his personal control and his personal and professional abilities. At this point, I meet him with a satisfaction which is associated with his gains. Pierre thus recathects his analyst-object, this time with the wish to please her in the transference, and to establish a relationship on the basis of a new mode of exchange. He is therefore once more invaded by anxiety at the return of the repressed wish to seduce his analyst. Thus one can understand the difficulty involved in closeness as being at the secondary level.

A greater acceptance of himself and his limits, greater consideration of his object as well as recognition of his oedipal wish, experienced as forbidden, and also the integration of the narcissistic blow at the failure to be totally loved, enable him to take part in an encounter with me and experience closeness linked with pleasure at secondary and even tertiary levels of narcissism. The closeness allows both partners to take pleasure in autonomy in the encounter, and Pierre was able to consider my concerns.

The succeeding cathexes of his own narcissism, by producing increasingly clear limits for him, create in him the pleasure of belonging and the pleasure of working together, a kind of conjunction, with me. At the tertiary level, mutual pleasure is experienced in a more important quality of closeness between himself and me, to the point where he begins to be able to allow himself, in the psychoanalytic encounter with me, to face up to a relationship which is now personified, even though it is still very frightening for him.

The presentation of my relationship with Pierre in psychoanalytic sessions has, I hope, enabled us to follow the oscillations of the cathexes between object and narcissism. We have been able to see the prohibitions coming from his ego (under the influence of the superego) against realizing his wish for closeness, and in consequence against allowing himself feelings of pleasure associated with any one of the three levels of narcissistic pleasure described. We were able to follow the non-verbal encounter in a fruitful silence which was tolerable for analysand and analyst alike, the meeting of transference and countertransference, and then between the two autonomies until we come to the encounter between two personified people, linked by a psychoanalytic working alliance.

I have presented you with only *a* brief episode from an analysis, considered from the point of view of closeness in the psychoanalytic encounter. I hope, however, that it has been sufficiently dynamic to stimulate a pleasant encounter between all of us here and an enriching discussion.

