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The Analyst's Uncertainty and the Analysand's Guidance

This presentation discusses a radically mutual way of working analytically which emphasizes the role of the analysand as a consultant to the analyst during the course of the inherently ambiguous and subjective analytic process. It stresses the centrality of the analyst's receptivity to such consultation, which, it is argued, analysands offer with regularity. Analysands universally make such offerings both consciously and unconsciously, whether or not their analysts are paying attention. Yet analysands are able to become more directly informative in proportion to their analysts' receptiveness.

In the psychoanalytic process it is usually hard for the analyst to know what would be best. The clinical situation is fraught with ambiguity; the data relied upon to make decisions are often ephemeral, ambiguous and, largely, subjective. But as psychoanalysis has become increasingly co-participatory, the manifold layers of meaning of any analytic event or moment have exponentially increased, it is argued. Because of this analysts need, now more than ever, guidance as they explore the variegated territory of their analysands' interior and interpersonal lives. This paper proposes that the most potent source of such guidance in the analytic process resides in the analysand's own sense of what the analyst could best be doing. Through the use of illustrative case examples this paper explores both the advantages and challenges of closely attending to and taking seriously what analysands convey about what their analysts should, and should not, be doing during the course of the analytic process.

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