

On the Theory and Application of Third Person Analysis in the Practice of Psychotherapy

Lauren Lawrence

The New School for Social Research

This paper critiques a new method which I have termed *third person analysis* and gives perspective on its range and application in clinical practice. Third person analysis turns the analysand into a narrator who will speak of herself in the third person. It is believed that the basic analytic principle inherent in narration can be employed in the form of third person analysis with a wide variety of patients. This new form of psychotherapy provides the analysand with the necessary tool of the narrator, an objectivity needed for the construction of her story. The idea of this paper, then, is not to denigrate the values of free association but rather to shed light on a new form of the mechanism. Free association in the third person may allow the narrating analysand a more creative spontaneity wherein a certain leakage of unguarded and heretofore unrealized material may guiltlessly emerge.

During the therapeutic situation many analysands are reluctant to impart their inner emotions due to inhibitory cognitions of maladaptive behavioral patterns based on previous disruptive affective experience. Freud (1905/1959) has noted that the frequent employment of resistance found in psychoanalysis is because of suppressed material that was actuated by motives which seemed necessary at the time the repression actually occurred. The process of letting go, however, may be facilitated by a new adaptive method of working through whereby the analysand shifts to a more dispassionate, detached, retrospective view of herself by speaking in the third person. I call this method *third person analysis*, wherein the giving up of the pronoun "I" is asked of the analysand. This narrational shift from first person to third person may allow a more palliative response to inhibited discourse and nurture a confidence previously unrecognized in the analysand. Here, the analysand, as narrator, can be free from the recriminations and negativistic determinations of her

prior experience so that it would not be necessary to highlight certain elements and shade others and thus impose an individual desired perspective on verbally constructed scenes.

When the therapeutic situation takes on the dimensions of storytelling the narrating analysand can experience a positive externalization of past information as opposed to a negative internalization of which causal connections could lead to some form of justification such as denial or guilt. In storytelling, one thing is clear, the narrator is never to be blamed. Rank (1936/1978, p. 82) has spoken of the hyperconscious neurotic as being "hemmed in by guilt . . .," a guilt which is non-permissive of self-affirmation or individuality, a guilt which Rank viewed as the greatest difficulty in the individual personal experience of therapy. In addition, Rank has written that the therapeutic experience is *only* to be understood from the creative aspect. The storytelling process of third person analysis, while eliminating the guilt element is also congruent with encouraging not only the creative aspect of the analyst, who, by playing the role of listener, takes part in the creative work, but more importantly, in stimulating the creativity of the analysand. Here, the verbalization of the analysand can take on a more inventive quality¹ where freedom of expression without justification can lead to an uninhibited and more fluent discourse. In this way, the analysand as narrator can overcome the paralyzing effect of guilt by becoming a creator who can assume an originality through creative indifference² to exteriorize the most intimate details of her life.

Sullivan (1954/1970) has noted that during the analytic session the conversational attitude of the patient is affected by the *direct* attitude of the patient toward the analyst wherein the patient may view the analyst as being disdainfully judgmental. The giving up the pronoun "I" for the more dispassionate "she" eliminates viewing the analyst in a way which might have negative attitudinal effects on the patient.

Narrational Techniques

Many novelists for purposes of illusion make use of the ambiguity of the "third person." Using the third person narrative is the conventional mode of expression used by novelists as a mechanism to achieve discretion so as to disinvolve the reader, or listener/analyst, in this case, of complicity or judgment in its most elemental form. To this extent, the pronoun "she" merely designates "another," a cardboard object that has become exteriorized. Yet,

¹During free association the analysand is encouraged to be descriptive and to utilize symbolic and metaphorical imagery whenever possible.

²By creative indifference I mean the neglecting of what already is, which eliminates any bias that could hinder originality and spontaneity or lead to recidivistic thinking.

the pronoun "she" also invites one into an intimacy which is patently expressed in the third person. The analysand/narrator, by relieving herself of the scrutinizing intimacy of the "I" can achieve a more faultless existence within the analytic experience wherein nothing need be protected or preserved. This semantic factor allows for a vast number of observances made by the analysand who now subsumes the position of the impartial observer, or reader, intent on following the communication to its ultimate conclusions.

Although consciousness often reveals the fictional creations of the unconscious culled from repressed material, these creations often go unnoticed or unanalyzed mainly because of the neurotic justifications or what I call spasmodic self-reconciliations. However, through the technique of third person analysis where the pronoun "she" is employed to give the illusion of a free perspective, and a freer consciousness, the analysand gains the privileged point of view of the observer and moreover the detachment needed to master the material critically.

Here, the reader must not be misled into thinking that the analysand completely loses sight of herself. On the contrary, the benefit of third person analysis comes from the analysand being both herself and someone else, a unique position worthy of further investigation, the implication being, that the aforementioned analysand/narrator is both subjective and objective simultaneously.

Subjectivity and Objectivity

Subjectivity and objectivity have two divergent functions; both systems are flawed. During self-observation it is thought that reality exists only within the subjective experiencer's mind, her conscious self and its sensory states. Subjectivity is therefore linked with indefiniteness and conjecture whereby abstractions and suppositions occur due to the loss of clarity – not from being too near the subject but rather from a total immersion "in" the subject. In other words, we are focused "in" ourselves rather than "in front of" ourselves. This phenomenon can be viewed as a kind of psychological myopia wherein hyperoptic distortion occurs. In hyperoptic distortion the subject is farsighted but cannot see near due to total immersion in the subject. The subject cannot be adequately distanced from the subject and is therefore incapable of any external verification. The farsightedness of the subject unfortunately allows the subject to absorb a surrounding excess of stimuli which continually leads to experiential distraction.

Objectivity is when one subject is at a certain distance from another subject and can therefore view that subject in its full perspective, with a minimalization of abstraction occurring. However, not discarding the interpretative element withstanding, this "other" subject will exhibit myopic distor-

tion in that although she can see near, she will never know what is inside the subject. She will focus "on" the subject but will not be able to focus "within" the subject – which inevitably leads to a lack of discernment in thinking. She can see the quality of state of external reality based on observable phenomena uninfluenced by emotion, however, it is precisely because of this inability to enter into the mind of the subject that brings about the observer's surmisings and/or personal opinions.

The realization and understanding of an absolute reality is contingent upon distinguishing objectivity from subjectivity and combining the two flawed systems insofar as they are viewed as interdependent. The technique of third person analysis seeks to accomplish a blending of the objective with the subjective systems of perception with the intent of realizing a more functioning absolute reality.

The Objective Unconscious

Meanings that are beyond the realm of conceptual awareness have been tampered with by repressive mechanisms but have not been misunderstood. It is precisely the understanding of the formerly repressed material that has necessitated its submergence into the unconscious.

In the therapeutic situation the analysand, by vocalizing in the narrational third person, assumes an objectivity which brings her closer to her unconscious mind. This assumption is based on the idea that unconsciousness is a manifestation of objectivity and consciousness a manifestation of subjectivity. Counter to normal conceptualization, the unconscious herein is viewed as objective in the following manner. The "I" as the signifier of the conscious self is necessarily "subjective," whereas the "not I" as the signifier of the unconscious self is an "objective" other. The unconscious is hypothesized as the third person, observing the first person much like the unconscious is operationally watchful during consciousness. Here, the narrator becomes the third person vocalizing about the first person in the same uninhibited manner the unconscious exhibits symbolic material in the dreamwork. The importance of this distinction is that the third person analysis by virtue of the narrational technique brings the analysand closer to her unconscious, which is no small task in the psychoanalytic process.

The Hybrid Individual

During third person analysis the analysand as both narrator and first person becomes a hybrid individual capable of assimilating both systems of objectivity and subjectivity simultaneously, the outside and the inside of a single self. The knowledge of this unity comes through the original detachment

whereby the subjective "I," totally transcended, takes on an objective value.

To establish the duplicitous nature of the hybrid individual one need only mention the duplicity of lying and then hiding the lie from oneself, or performing an act and then pronouncing judgment on it through interpretation or analysis. This is like two people in one, the "doer" and the "thinker" whereby the doer is subjective and the thinker is objective, compacted together by the deterministic links of her existence. Third person analysis is a way of operationalizing the hybrid individual within every analysand.

The Object Implicating the Subject

Methodologically speaking third person analysis allows the analysand "to squeal" on herself, vocalizing and reappropriating what was deeply hidden by the first person, through the third person. Thus, we find the object implicating the subject.

This subject implication process is established in the following manner. The object/narrator is encouraged in this task of subject implication in order to reconstruct the original critical, judgmental, parental and/or societal voice of external condemnation in an attempt to forfeit the previously engendered internal condemnations through abreaction and reinterpretation. To the extent that all neurotic symptomatologies are an objectification of self-punishment brought on by internal condemnations rather than external condemnations, it is now the analysand who has the control of the dispersement of punishment in that the power to punish has been taken out of the threatening, far-reaching hands of paternal society. Punishing oneself is a way of placating the enemy and which is not without its negative consequences. In order to eliminate internal condemnations one must summon up external ones. This process, whereby the object implicates the subject, manifests itself in the technique of third person analysis and allows the analysand, as narrator, and hero of her own narration, to call forth the opposing external forces to put an end to them.

By assuming the parental attitude an odd reversal of perception may reveal itself whereby the analysand may, for the first time, identify with the "aggressee" as opposed to the aggressor. Although contrary to the Freudian identification with the aggressor theory this identification with the "aggressee" is not so hard to grasp in that we are all born anaclitic victims of our own helplessness and dependency. Manifesting the critical paternal attitude may allow the narrator to protect the object as an entity detached from herself without fear of parental reprisals. Thus, the real strength of third person analysis is derived through the narrational system which, while self-referential in approach, allows a maximum reflexive control on the part of the narrator, who, by no means, is consciously self-conscious, and more importantly,

minimalizes the self-coercive aspects of the first person narration wherein the subject is driven to some form of protective mediation.

Subjectless Reflexivity

Third person analysis is a way of gaining non-identity with the self. Frank (1984/1989) in a lecture on neostructuralism refers to Heidegger's dictum that consciousness is self-concerned, and that one can only transgress this pre-given, unchosen concern by going with its essential separateness, this non-identity with itself. Non-identity with the self finally allows the subject/analysand to interpret its Being.

Third person analysis is an alternative to the reflexive model of self-consciousness whereby the subject is no longer involved in her own self but rather in another subject whom she has conceived, in this case, narrationally conceived. Lacan (1966/1977) critiques the self as a subjectless machine in which reflections are recorded minus the subject; in effect, these reflections have no causal originator. Thus viewed, Lacan's model of subjectivity as reflection is precisely a model of subjectless reflexivity which has ideational rapport with third person analysis; in the realm of representation who can better represent oneself than the self in the guise of a third person. Reflection on another subject allows the self to become a detached and apersonal self characterized by unreserved disclosure of heretofore untenable thoughts. Thus, one can reflect without being the subject of one's own reflection.

Narrational vocalization perpetuates narrational thought which specifically gains access to the third person, indirectly, wherefore a kind of non-existential self-disclosure emerges. There is no longer a personal self to be responsible for. The self becomes anyone else. Therefore, narrational thought engenders less mediation on the part of the analysand/narrator and is a way of putting back into the hands of the analysand the labor of construction.

Narrator as Witness

From a methodological standpoint, the narrator must inevitably have witnessed a sequence of events in order to make a kind of historiography. Obviously this historicalization is not free from the interpretative element. At this juncture it is necessary to point out that all which has happened to an individual has undergone some degree of modification and adaptation, two elements intrinsic in the mechanism of interpretation. Therefore, it must be noted that interpretation can only exist in the realm of the non-temporal and that one must necessarily distance oneself in order to achieve interpretation.

Regarding non-temporality, Paul Valery (1937/1989, p. 174) noted that "the

eye is not only an organ of sight but an instrument endowed with foresight" Similarly, in Promethian tradition, we might consider the mind as not only an organ of thought but also an organ of forethought. Viewed in this way, which is not dissimilar to psychic determinism, the accountability of certain incidents being shaped and adapted to prior to their happening becomes more plausible, as does the assumption that although seemingly unknowable, all the events of life which the mind holds as uncertain are somehow here all along, as imaginable contingencies. Thus, through experiential assessments, the third person narrator, as witness, seems a more reliable source of information imbued with a kind of ideological legitimation by a non-temporality based on the detachment to a past she has determined in the third person.

Concluding Comments

The narrational approach of third person analysis in contradiction with the classical form of first person free association no longer sees the establishment of a self-identity connected with negativity and nonindividuation presented in the therapeutic situation, but rather concerns itself with the positivity of self-nonidentity achieved—through an obscuration of "I"—whom the third person narrator gradually becomes reconciled with in the differential joining of the subjective/objective binary nature of the individual. The exchange or substitution of a particular "I" for a nonparticular "she" displays an exchangeable viewpoint and a substitutable emotionality on the part of the analysand/narrator which establishes the objectivity needed for a more totalistic interpretation of one's being.

There exists, however, the theoretical problem of the narrator transfiguring the existing past. If the past was already envisioned from the beginning, the narrator took part in shaping whatever happened in the past and therefore is not guiltless in its result. This would warrant the employment of a justificatory mechanism on the part of the narrator/analysand which would short-circuit the narrational technique. However, it is my belief that the narrator while giving up the "I" is not in the world of the "I" and therefore will not be conscious of taking part in the creation of it. Through third person analysis the narrator/analysand will assume the necessary impartiality gained from her renunciation of the "I" to express what might not otherwise be expressed, for although she may be conscious of what part the "I" played in the shaping of its past, the "she" as the "not I" will be able to give perspective on an inner life no longer her own. In other words, the chance of transfiguring the past is minimized through the narrational technique which allows the analysand an unguarded objectification of the self which leads to an empowerment of self-conception.

It is the task of the analyst to enable the analysand to impart with all that she knows. What is asked for, then, is a giving up of knowledge in that whatever is given up becomes part of the public domain and thus visible. The analyst must allow the analysand to become visible. Through the application of third person analysis the analysand may achieve a more painless visibility, albeit, a third person visibility.

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