
**CASE ILLUSTRATION: MOVING ALONG . . . AND,
IS CHANGE GRADUAL OR SUDDEN?**

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ABSTRACT: A sequence of analytic sessions of a professional woman in her forties is used to illustrate the moving along process. The material shows a gradual change, where the patient's experience of her sense of agency is altered through a particular kind of interactive sequence. The example is intended to make it clear that the group's view of how change occurs is not strictly or primarily in terms of sudden changes, and that the problem of assessing moments of meeting as well as quantitative and qualitative shifts is one with which the group continues to struggle.

RESUMEN: Se usa una secuencia de sesiones analíticas de una mujer profesional de unos 40 a 50 años de edad, con el fin de ilustrar el proceso de progresión. El material muestra un cambio gradual donde la experiencia que la paciente tiene de su sentido de albedrío se altera a través de un tipo particular de secuencia interactiva. Con este ejemplo se intenta clarificar que la opinión del grupo de cómo ocurre el cambio no se presenta estricta o primariamente en términos de un cambio repentino, y que el problema de evaluar "encuentros momentáneos", así como movimientos cuantitativos y cualitativos, es algo con que el grupo continúa debatiéndose.

RÉSUMÉ: Une séquence de séances analytiques d'une femme dans la quarantaine exerçant une profession libérale est utilisée pour illustrer le processus de développement. Le matériel montre un changement graduel là où l'expérience qu'a la patiente de son sens d'action est altérée à travers une sorte particulière de séquence interactive. L'exemple a pour but d'éclaircir le fait que le point de vue du groupe sur la manière dont le changement se passe n'existe pas strictement ou essentiellement en termes de changements soudains, et que le problème consistant à évaluer des moments de rencontre ainsi que des changements quantitatifs et qualitatifs est un problème avec lequel le groupe continue à se démener.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Eine Abfolge von Analysesitzungen einer arbeitenden Frau von über vierzig Jahren wird verwendet, um den fortschreitenden Prozeß zu illustrieren. Das Material zeigt eine langsame Veränderung, wobei die Erfahrungen der Patientin ihres "sense of agency" verändert wird durch eine besondere Art von Interaktionssequenzen. Durch dieses Beispiel soll klargestellt werden, daß die Gruppensicht über die Art, wie Veränderungen vor sich gehen nicht ausschließlich oder zuvörderst nur in Begriffen wie plötzliche Veränderungen und möglich ist, und daß die Probleme die einerseits die Momente, als auch quantitative und qualitative Bewegungen zu bestimmen, solche sind, bei denen die Gruppe noch immer um Erkenntnis ringt.

抄録: 「進んで行く」moving alongプロセスを例示するため、40代の職業婦人の分析面接の経過を報告する。相互交流の連鎖を通して、彼女の発動者としての自己感をめぐる体験が徐々に変化したことが、症例から分かる。この症例を以て、起こる変化は、ただただあるいは主として急激なものではないこと、また、出会いのモーメントおよび変換shiftの量的・質的評価の問題は、われわれのグループが格闘し続けている所である事を明らかにした。

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In this case illustration, I will address a question that our group has been pondering and that we bump up against when we consider case material: Are the shifts to "moments of meeting" always sudden or can they be gradual? Whereas our theorizing tends to the former view our clinical experience often supports the latter. To evaluate this question, I will present a fragment from an ongoing analytic treatment of a woman I shall call Jean. It will be based on my verbatim written notes. The material I will describe is fairly typical of the kind of sequencing that has characterized our work together, which has been marked by gradual but accumulatively dramatic improvements in Jean's general adaptation. What happens is that over time she becomes able to talk about a topic, sex, which she had not been able to discuss before. While this is a "classic content" of analysis, the critical focus is on the process of her moving along and her eventual appreciation of our experience together.

THE CLINICAL ILLUSTRATION

Jean, now in her mid forties, came to see me because she became suicidal when her then husband, Paul, accepted a professorship in another city. She felt unable to move with him, and they were divorced a year later. From the first days of her marriage, Jean had consistently thought to herself, "I'm not sure this is good for me."

The best way to characterize this bright, attractive, artistic woman, now a successful fellow in a think tank, is to say she has only been able to experience spontaneity and freedom in a context of nonengagement with others. A massive impingement of her sense of agency would be our term to describe her experience of being with another. Her relationship with me has been an important partial exception to this.

I will try to show how we moved along in considering an issue that we rarely discussed directly in her long therapy and analysis, namely the issue of sex. I chose this point because Jean goes from feeling not understood to feeling understood, and this alters the context, enabling her to articulate what her experience had been with me at the previous moment. Moreover, a shift occurs where she becomes able to talk about something she has never been able to discuss before. Implicit here is the idea that transformation does not necessarily encompass awareness at the moment it occurs. Our model is in fact more gradualist than you may have assumed from our theorizing.

Mind you, sex and analysis are two words that are inextricably linked in the minds of many. Yet Jean repeatedly made it clear that were I to interpret her thoughts as representing

sexual ideas and wishes, I would lose any claim as a valid understander of her subtle, complex inner world. Other than a brief affair as her marriage was dissolving, some 10 years ago now, she has been sexually abstinent. We might even call her celibate. During her marriage, she found the infrequent sex with Paul agonizing. She felt deeply ashamed to find it so unpleasant.

Along with this, however, she remains convinced that sex is not something that women enjoy. For her, this is an open secret men try not to see. In treatment she has not talked about sexual fantasies, desires, or fears. She does not seem to think about others sexually, although she lives in dread that she will be so considered. She has often railed against a culture that she feels uses the sexuality of women to sell everything.

The sequence I will describe begins on a Friday after Jean has told me a dream, a rare occurrence. It has appeared to me that it is only in her dreams that sex appears, invariably with bizarre or violent features, always dissociated. As in real life, she is never the one having sex. In the days preceding, I found ways to impart to her that what she calls her nerdy, dowdy clothing does not so much protect her from being humiliated, put down, seen as somebody who thinks she is sexy but is not, but rather insures that she will not elicit desire.

On the Friday in question I said, “have you noticed how frequently sex comes up in your dreams?” “No,” she giggled, it doesn’t seem frequent,” clearly pleased to disagree. After demanding that I say more of what I mean and my obliging, she sobered slightly and continued, “When it comes up, it’s a black box, something I’m suspicious of, uncertain of, afraid of.”

On Monday, after discussing a Cezanne exhibition, and my noting her identification with the artist whose early work showing violent and erupting sexual imagery fascinated her, she went on. “Ever since you said my sexuality is compartmentalized, is not in my life, I’ve thought yes, it’s true, and a very sad loss. But things could be a whole lot worse and I’m not sure you understand that. There are certain things where your understanding is so different from mine. Had my sexuality been better integrated, I’d have married better. But then, I would have been unable to resist the pressure to have babies.” “Feeling pushed into something is the theme,” I said. She vigorously agreed then said she doubted she would find a suitable sexual partner should she come to want sex, to “buy the hammering social message.” I said, “You might not know if it were really you.” “Absolutely,” she replied, “I don’t have such a strong belief in myself that I’d know, if I did come to like sex, if it would be me or the message hammered in. Maybe there is no way to filter out the external message about sex and babies, and it becomes part of you.” A silence lasting several minutes, ended with her asking me, as she is known to do, what I am thinking. Here I chose to answer and said, “I can’t help but think how vexing your fear of being influenced must be in dealing with me.” Jean said, “When we talk about influence, and I say you could hurt me by not understanding, that’s different from my absorbing things from you. With all the help you’ve given me, I’ve always felt I had to have responsibility for filtering, presenting you with things, seeing where you’re coming from, that’s still an issue.” “It’s unavoidable, isn’t it,” I say. “Yes,” Jean answers, “I’m afraid I could get to a place where I couldn’t control or steer where we’re going anymore.” As an aside, we could say, being with another, when she is understood, does not constitute an impingement. Moreover, the metacommunication when I said, “It’s unavoidable, isn’t it,” is that I accepted her fear-driven need to control the flow.

Tuesday Jean began by telling me about a situation at work where she had given Don, a male colleague, some work he could easily appropriate. “This is really wild,” she stated, “it’s a feeling of a rape, a sexual violation, as with Paul. I was the one who willingly offered him the work, feeling it was not an option to give in to my hesitance because I shouldn’t do something that makes me look weird. Here I’ve not only freely consented, I’ve given Don the idea. I got myself in a tizzy feeling violated, then I picked up where we left off yesterday.” She continued, “If you had that point of view, you could make me feel I won’t be happy unless

I have babies. I know you don't think that, you're much more open-minded than I am, you're not a 50's Freudian." Having disabused herself of one reason to fear me, she immediately constructed another. "But you came of age in the 60's and might have the 60's delusion that integrated sexuality is the right thing for everyone. That's why I felt suspicious Friday when you said I didn't talk about sex, I do." I responded, "To pursue that, when you talk about what happened with Don, you're talking about your sexuality." "Yes," she said, "you're being too narrow-minded, I think. I talk about sex with you all the time." I said, "You Freudians, you think everything is sex." She laughed and retorted, "You're a 60's hippy, you think of sexuality as genital sexuality but you don't deny I'm talking about sex when I describe what happened with Don, so what are you complaining about?" I replied, "If that is so, you and I are engaged in sex, but rather than 60's joyful mutual realization sex, it's sex where one person imposes himself on the other, where I force myself on you and you must accede."

Wednesday, Jean began, "I didn't feel bad after yesterday, but energized that we'd moved the discussion from Friday where I felt, eww, ick!, my sexuality is dissociated. I was feeling you shouldn't blame me, I can't do what you want—and then yesterday, you were so open to my saying I *do* talk about sex, it's just not genital sex. I went from being apologetic to propounding my own point of view. The other thing, yesterday I realized when you said Friday that I didn't talk about sex, it felt like a sexual maneuver to me and more specifically, I felt you wanted me to strip, to look at me, it gave me the creeps. Your justification would be the 'you should have sex, it will be good for you, break through those childish feelings, I know more than you.' " I replied, "Your realizing yesterday how you felt Friday is very important, I agree, it's good we were able to get beyond Friday, we see more clearly the degree to which being exploited, humiliated, controlled, pervades your sense of yourself *and* your sexuality." Jean responded, "I don't think my sexuality is off to one side, when you say the fear of being done to permeates all aspects of my life, that's what I mean by integration, it's just a problematic one."

DISCUSSION

As you may surmise, I have had to condense and omit much rich associative material, but I wanted to illustrate a shift over time where Jean became able to talk about something, sex, that she had not been able to discuss before. The recurrence of the sequence of moving from not feeling understood to feeling understood alters the context, enabling her to articulate what her experience with me, unrecognized at the time, had been at a given moment. Her saying, "Yesterday, you were so open to my saying *I do* talk about sex . . ." signaled that my actions had challenged her expectancy. We might consider this delta learning, what one learns about the world because something does not happen, in this case something bad. Her vigilance lessened. She moved from the position of being a helpless responder to others, with the even worse possibility of being subjugated, or in her words, "extinguished," to being an agent in the exchange. Each time the patient was able to mobilize her initiative in the interaction, "I went from being apologetic to propounding my own point of view," her sense of agency was altered and strengthened in previously unrecognized ways, and she was on the road to being able to claim her desires as her own.

One might ask, has a moment of meeting occurred in this illustration? My answer would be, yes "but." For, although we have come together, the question would be, at which moment? The nodal moments are: (1) Friday, my asking, "Have you noticed?" (2) Monday, my saying, "It's unavoidable, isn't it . . ." (3) Tuesday, "To pursue that, when you talk about what happened with Don . . . Yes," and our exchange of jokes, "You Freudians . . . You're a 60's hippy." (4) Wednesday, "I was feeling you shouldn't blame me. . . . and then . . . you were

so open to my saying. . . . I went from feeling apologetic to propounding my own point of view.” It is here that the shift has occurred in Jean, but it is not until the next day (Wednesday), that she tells me and we join on it and she says, “I realized it felt like a sexual maneuver.” Thus, it seems that there has been a gradual shift, rather than one that is sudden. In the group’s continuing work, we hope to be better able to sort out the differences, if any, in gradual versus sudden shifts, in quantitative versus qualitative shifts, and to better understand their interrelationship.

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