

IS INTEGRATION POSSIBLE FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS?



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As we encounter psychoanalysis in our education, from the very start, we learn that it is a discipline divided and in constant internal conflict. On one level, by 1950 psychoanalysis was split into several schools of thought that displayed deep animosity toward each other and were unable to collaborate in any substantial way. Probably every major textbook on personality psychology first provides an overview of Freud's theory and then Jung's and Adler's schools that separated from the initial psychoanalytic movement and developed in their own directions (Ellenberger 1970; Ryschlak 1975; see also Makari 2008). The separation of Adler, Stekel, Jung, and other early disciples of Freud resulted in them forming new psychotherapeutical procedures, educational institutes, and even movements that made the refutation of Freud's theory one of their central goals. At the same time, Freud and the second wave of his disciples tried to prove that, for instance, Jung was a mystic (Bair 2003) or that Ferenczi was psychotic (Bonomi 1999), which resembles political campaigning more than scientific refutation. As time went on, these different schools did not move any closer, and one can even claim that differences are now so big that most members of the various schools of psychotherapy that grew out of *The Interpretation of Dreams* do not follow the others' work. Worse still, their languages have become so different that they understand each other less and less.

These differences are becoming increasingly larger among various versions of psychoanalysis as well. Most often they do not come from their members' devotion to different research topics, clinical methodology, or technological devices they have at their disposal. The most frequent reason for this situation is to be found in the social structure of the psychoanalytic world. (One can only wonder why we still do not have a study of psychoanalytic institutes methodologically similar to Erving Goffman's [1961] studies of asylums.) I believe that we can get a glimpse of these different structures if we analyze the language used in constructing this social world: we talk of "the early schisms" and "heresies" (Bergmann 2004, 5), as if psychoanalysis were a sort of church or religious cult; there are "deviations from Freud's teachings," as if his papers were a holy book and not a source of testable hypotheses; or, as recently as 2006, Hanna Segal (2006, 289) claimed that the Freud/Klein/Bion model is a search for truth, while the Independents (specifically Ferenczi, Bálint, Winnicott, and Kohut) "invite the patient to live in a lie."

On another level, psychoanalysis may easily be the only scientific discipline plagued by the problem of dissidence -otherwise a political phenomenon that appears in totalitarian societies. It all began with the view of psychoanalysis more as Freud's creation and less as a method for the scientific research of mental phenomena. The "Secret Ring" of Freud's closest collaborators was formed with the aim of protecting "real psychoanalysis," and for almost fifteen years, the seven of them (including Freud himself) sent out circular letters to each other and dealt with the politics of "the Master's teaching" as best they could, deciding, en route, who should be ostracized -until, of course, their personal antagonisms grew too strong and two of *them* were treated as dissidents (Grosskurth 1991). Unfortunately, more recent models are not very different. Many of the most important psychoanalytic societies and institutes have dissolved, and many charismatic individuals have created their own schools, centers, periodicals, etc. At one moment, there were thirty seven different psychoanalytic institutes in Manhattan alone (Mitchell 2000).

Most unfortunate is that the list of dissidents in the history of psychoanalysis includes some of its most creative authors: Lacan, Sullivan, and Kohut are just some of the examples of those who founded their own schools, while Ferenczi, Fairbairn, Winnicott, and Bowlby, are among those who did not. Therefore, Otto Kernberg recommended that psychoanalytic institutes should be evaluated according to the following

criterion: “Are multiple psychoanalytic theories and clinical approaches respectfully taught?”; the sad conclusion was that, in most cases, the answer is “no” (Bergmann 2004, 96–97).

Various reasons were offered to explain the problem away (Bergmann 2004): resistance toward Freud’s personality; a basic attitude of ingratitude and criticism; unsuccessful training analyses; structural flaws in the organization of training institutes -this last one is most persistently advanced by a former president of the IPA (Kernberg 1986, 1996, 2000); the requirement of conviction in the postulates of psychoanalysis -and convictions can be found and lost; an unclear idea of what constitutes progress in psychoanalysis and how it can be verified (Stepansky 2009).

Admittedly, there were efforts to mend the divides, although it seems that none succeeded. I will give a short overview of the most influential solutions for the lack of integration.

The first is derived from the supposed common scientific core. Freud exposed psychoanalysis as a natural science with a specific hermeneutic method for the exploration of complex mental states. The ideal changed from biology to paleontology to physics, and Freud wrote in terms of drives, primal hordes, excitation, etc. It was not only that he wanted to show how psychoanalysis can be relevant to physical and biological sciences, but also that he hoped his method would unify the field and clearly show who is a psychoanalyst and who is not. The first demarcation was drawn on the line of the sexual etiology of neuroses: everyone who refused to accept this basic tenet was not to be considered a psychoanalyst. Then, as Freud wrote to Georg Groddeck (1977), everyone who was devoted to the analysis of transference and resistances could be considered a psychoanalyst. And as time went on, these definitions multiplied: Hartmann studied processes of adaptation, Klein unconscious phantasies, Sullivan interpersonal experiences, Lacan had a passion for linguistics, Spitz observed hospitalized children, Bowlby worked with juvenile thieves, Kohut claimed that the essential method of psychoanalysis was empathy, and so on. Agreement was hard to reach even when it came to defining the core of psychoanalysis. In many instances, a previous generation would say that what the youngsters were doing was not psychoanalysis. Of course, this was based only on personal authority and could not be substantiated with any clinical or scientific evidence.

At this very moment, many hope that contemporary scientific trends will help us overcome the fragmentation of our field. More and more institutes provide training in research methodology, there are specialized journals in neuropsychology, evidence-based approaches to the effectiveness of psychoanalysis as therapy have emerged and to psychoanalytic training as a specific form of education are beginning to take root (Dimitrijevic 2018). Most analysts, however, see these trends as irrelevant for their clinical work and even as non-psychoanalytic. Their ranks include Freud himself and his daughter Anna, Melanie Klein, Winnicott, Kohut, Andre Green, and many, many others.

A good number of our colleagues think that psychoanalysis should be regarded as an original clinical discipline. It may sound strange that this idea was first articulated as late as 1924. In their joint book *Development of Psychoanalysis*, Sándor Ferenczi and Otto Rank proposed that instead of metapsychology, we should use analytic situation as a defining feature of psychoanalysis. All this was in part a reaction to Freud’s introduction of the death drive, since the authors believed that he had paid far more attention to abstract concepts than to issues of clinical technique. In the words of one of the foremost historians of psychoanalysis: “Psychoanalytic method had fossilized, [Ferenczi] believed, and become an overly intellectualized process of educating patients about the contents of their unconscious” (Makari 2008, 352). This was the moment when the reorientation of psychoanalysis was initiated, and transference repetitions were suggested as its core. “Everything relevant to the cure of neurosis happen[s] in the analytic situation and the transference. Interpretations should focus on reactions to the analyst, for in those reactions lay infantile repetitions” (353) -we take these words for granted, but they were revolutionary in the mid-1920s and led to Freud’s dismissal of two men he had considered worthy of being his heirs and, less importantly, one whom he had wanted to become his son-in-law.

If there is anything that can unite us now, almost ninety years later, it is our motivation to investigate complex mental phenomena as they unfold in the transference situation guarded by the safe-enough setting. From our experiences of personal analyses and supervisions, to the impact of psychoanalysis on philosophy and culture of our times, to newspaper cartoons and Hollywood movies, transference equals psychoanalysis for many people. However, we have managed to split over issues concerning what transference is and how

best to deal with it: some interpret right away, others wait until the transference is fully developed, some hardly interpret at all; some focus on the here and now others home in on relationships with significant others; many emphasize repetitions from early development; some insist that no enactments on the side of the analyst are allowed if they cannot be neutralized by interpretation; others find enactments impossible to avoid and good leaders if reflected upon; some allow the use of medication, while others use only psychoanalytic counseling. Again, different approaches and conceptions lead to bitter fights and the confusion of tongues among the rival schools.

Finally, throughout the century it was thought that psychoanalysis can reach its integration through one international organization. It was a vision of, again, Sándor Ferenczi, and it should have had the purpose of unifying Freud's disciples and controlling the quality of work self-proclaimed as psychoanalytic -somewhat curiously, because when formed, in 1910, it had less than fifty members. It was only after the World War I that Freud agreed to obligatory training analyses (Makari 2008), and in the following decade that Karl Abraham (2008) introduced the tripartite model of psychoanalytic training that strengthens our professional identities and gives us the inner sense of our identity as psychoanalysts. Still, in the last sixty years, psychoanalytic organizations bloomed everywhere, often without interest for existing ones, which were sometimes hostile to them: Lacanian organizations in France and Latin America, interpersonal and relational organizations in the United States, the many non-IPA institutes in Central Europe, etc. I have met many young colleagues with strong devotion to psychoanalysis who are enrolled in training programs not recognized by the IPA, and, especially in the United States, many senior analysts and important authors wrote that they had no interest in either the American or international associations (Mitchell 2000).

Why is this issue important? My intention is to open a discussion that will not be resolved quickly. Basically, I wish to argue that this situation will present the most perilous problem for those who will practice psychoanalysis in the decades to come, and that the future of our discipline may well depend on our capacity to create a cohesive field.

In one of the most important books published in the field of psychoanalysis in recent years, Paul Stepansky tries to turn our attention to the fact that psychoanalysis has become a marginal phenomenon in contemporary Western culture. After several decades of enormous -and, to my mind, somewhat inexplicable- success and influence, psychoanalysis has lost psychiatric clinics to biological approaches and cognitive-behavioral therapy, and it has lost universities to paradigms devoted to more easily controllable and testable phenomena. Judging by any objective criterion one can think of, psychoanalysis is not the leader in the field. On the one hand, other approaches solicit more practitioners and gather more clients; on the other, psychoanalysis can boast only a handful of doctoral programs and research institutes, highest-quality journals, high positions on citation indexes. Something has to be done!

I think that the main reason for a vigorous response to its current status is that the world needs psychoanalysis and has not come up with anything that can replace it. On the general level, I refer to the idea first articulated by Thomas Mann (1956) on the occasion of Freud's eightieth birthday: the project of the Enlightenment has to be informed by psychoanalysis or it remains a naïve utopia -that is, societal reforms need to include our insights into human unconscious. And on the individual level, in the world of unprecedented acceleration, "in times when time is a scarce commodity" (Gergen 2000), the psychoanalytic setting may easily be the only safe resort that allows us the privilege to admit and experience the pains of growing up in a world that seems to do nothing but invent new ways to deny that same pain. Finally, there is growing evidence showing that psychoanalysis is superior to all other forms of psychotherapy, and this is especially the case in terms of its effects on post-treatment development (Schedler 2010).

Yet, how does this immensely important discipline react to its current marginalization? Stepansky shows very convincingly that as psychoanalysis is less recognized by other fields, it grows more internally fragmented, becoming "a loose federation of psychoanalytic subcommunities" (2009, xi). The more they ignore us, the more we create divides among ourselves and take an exclusionary stance towards our closest collaborators. Strangely, common external adversity does not make us more but rather *less* cohesive. When they tell us "You are irrelevant," our response is "This is not a toilet-breast, this is a mirroring self-object."

To sum up, it seems that disintegration has been inevitable throughout the entire history of psychoanalysis. That is why we need to think about solutions that have already been suggested and use them to overcome the

problem. It will not disappear on its own, and even the newest solutions do not seem to be effective enough: many believe that psychoanalysis needs a stronger alliance with the natural sciences; Otto Kernberg (2004) believes that cross-fertilization between different psychoanalytic schools has already begun and that we need only wait for its effects to bear fruit; in a powerful finale to *Psychoanalysis at the Margins*, Stepansky (2009, 312) wrote: “I am increasingly convinced that the survival of the profession in the foreseeable future lies beyond the couch and outside the consulting room.”

I strongly believe that Stepansky’s use of the word “survival” is justified. Four- or five-times-a-week “non-training” couch analyses that last for many years and delve into the dark regions of the unconscious are becoming rare; in fact, they take up a tiny percentage of the clinical practice of those of us who are not training analysts. It may well be the ultimate task of our generation, those of us who are soon to become psychoanalysts, to foster the survival of our field and our professional identities against the opposition that has swept us out of the mainstream; but even more so, to protect us against our own tendencies toward inner disintegration. To protect this core and unite the field, we have to find out where the curse of inner hostility comes from and how to overcome it. In order to better help our clients and remain relevant for them, we need to start healing psychoanalysis from the dark forces that seem inherent to it.

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