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Title: Hate and Love in Psychoanalytic Institutes

Author: Reeder, Jurgen

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Move On! is what I hear Jurgen Reeder say in his latest book: Hate and Love in Psychoanalytic Institutes: The Dilemma of a Profession. Here is a scholarly plea for wresting psychoanalytic institutes from the grip of “the third epoch” begun in Berlin about 80 years ago. This 3rd epoch is characterized as “a time during which the psychoanalytic project has both submitted to and suffered under its institutions,” (p. 224) with their authoritarian models of training.

Reeder conducts a thorough analysis of the Psychoanalytic Institute System. He presents a history, formulates a diagnosis, listens for conflict, explores the institutional object world, and identifies what he calls an “institutional superego complex,” (p. 91). a paranoid structure marked by a fear of moving beyond the authoritarian fathers in our profession. He sets about analyzing the system carefully, identifying resistance, all the while interpreting the roots of the complex, pointing out the defenses against anxiety, and by the end of the analysis he leaves it to his patient (the present training system) to use the knowledge gained in whatever way it can. The patient has been given new tools to restructure itself: ego strength originally depleted by denial, projection, and identification with the aggressor, and a more benevolent superego no longer burdened by its repository of hatred that has been killing the patient over its lifetime: hatred that causes splits, harsh criticism of new ideas, unfriendly behavior, instead of the generative, respectful atmosphere that supports growth and independence.

Why are institutes still stuck in the 3rd epoch? Why is the hatred so hard to let go of? The book presents a mystery and a courtroom-like drama. The crime: attempted murder of psychoanalytic institutional life; weapon: authoritarianism and organizational suppression of the individual; means: the training analysis system and the subjective judgment of evaluators that is often hidden; motive: quest for power. The plaintiff: those who wish to change the system; the accused is the Institutional Superego Complex; and the jury is you.

Reeder builds his case, against his concept of institutional superego, (he speaks of it throughout the book, while never giving a simple definition, but identifies it as fueled by hatred, breeding destructive tendencies) using front line counsel and expert witnesses like Kernberg, King, Arlow, Cremarius, Eisold, Dorn, Balint (notably missing is Kirsner’s Unfree Association), and so many others who join him in asking for a verdict of guilty as charged.

This 300 page book, 50 pages of which are notes, outlines the ways in which Institutes have continued in many ways to identify with Freud’s early need to control:

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“[T]he psychoanalyst would now obey a paternalistic authority... inculcated in the training candidate through active persuasion, with the aim of making him accept anything that his superiors taught him and that he would in the end identify with the authority itself” (p. 68, and attributed to Michael Balint).

This is discussed in the chapter on the Central Functions of Psychoanalytic Training including selection and evaluation of candidates, the normalization of the analyst, the supervised cases (control, we call it), and question of just what a supervisor’s role is (p. 121). Here we find Reeder’s main critique of the system: the problems of educating psychoanalysts (power of the institute) and the maintaining of values that education is meant to instill while at the same time encouraging creativity and autonomy.

Jumping back and forth in this review, as Reeder does in the book, shuffling decades from the 40s through the 90s, and as the analysts do every day in their work, I single out the contributions that interested, moved, and inspired me, namely the praxis and the institutional superego complex, the latter needing resolution in order to find one’s own creative voice, which enriches the praxis. According to Reeder, “To assimilate the language of theory is part of the important but difficult endeavor of liberating oneself from the psychoanalyst’s professional superego and... finding one’s own voice as an analyst” (p. 48). Only with such assimilation and liberation can the analyst listen to her own presence in each analytic dyad. Such assimilation lays the foundation for creative thinking and provides freedom to listen to each patient without pre-formed ideas.

Reeder views institutions (IPA or others) as they stand today, as inhibiting creativity and relying on doctrine. Through identification with the aggressor and idealization of “received wisdom” (the curriculum) and the TA system, institutes are squelching the creativity so badly needed in this field while planting more seeds for the continued growth of the veiled hatred amongst ourselves.

While the praxis of psychoanalysis is fueled by “loving,” Reeder sees the institutional functions that are meant to safeguard it (the superego complex) fueled by hatred. We have all experienced and/or witnessed the abominable overt and covert cruelty to which we subject each other. I have seen close up what Reeder speaks of as pursuit of the psychopath (p.178) and rejection of those who may show the spirit of originality and inquiry; graduating only those who conform, expelling those who do not; talking secretly behind a candidate’s back; evaluating each other ad infinitum. A particularly blatant expression of hatred, symptomatic of a long-standing split, came when my society (NYFS) joined the IPA. The policy at that time had been five years of membership and one was automatically a TA. Mysteriously, those in control at that time excluded several members in good standing, including a former president from being interviewed by the IPA evaluators, ostensibly a form of grandfathering themselves in. A lawsuit resulted and the repercussions echo today.

Exclusion versus inclusion is a topic that is mentioned throughout the book, but I would have appreciated a chapter dedicated to it with a fuller discussion of the analyst’s untamed narcissism and envy as contributing to the hatred Reeder discusses. The original exclusion of non-medical analysts by the American Psychoanalytic Association still reverberates and in fact may have sown the seeds of its present state where a large percentage of its members are senior citizens. To

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this day, APsaA hangs onto its authoritarian model, demanding certification of training analysts by the Board of Professional Standards. Most importantly, however, the institutional superego complex, says Reeder, thwarts new and creative ideas. How many of our esteemed theory builders, including Freud himself, would be admitted to join our IPA institutes today?

Reeder’s message, as I read it, is that identification with the aggressor and idealization of theory (received wisdom) squelch autonomy, thus breeding more conformity and more animosity. Many analysts keep to themselves rather than debate and contribute ideas; and Reeder is to be commended for his bravery. As each of our analysands shows us, the ability to move beyond the status quo is hard won. Rather than keep our members on a strict diet, we must find ways of nurturing and learning from each other without making some of us into authorities! Patients are the only real authorities and they make their own individual theories.

In his message to candidates and new graduates, Reeder speaks of the fear of loss of love and castration anxiety that fuels the identification with the aggressor. I would have appreciated the addition of separation anxiety as a way to understand the efforts to control and the difficulty in letting go on both sides of institute life. Candidates are ambivalent about stepping out of the sheltered institute atmosphere, and some remain attached to the authority role by serving on gate-keeping committees instead of training committees too quickly after graduation. Educational committees or training committees are often composed of like-minded keepers of the flame and would do well with the experience of recent graduates. Allegiance from graduates to the institute keeps it going and their ideas for reform and original thinking must be cherished. The doctoring of case material presented for graduation or certification is a well known phenomenon due to the need many feel to appear kosher and that plays right into the problem of institute paranoia. On the positive side, M. Klien, Bion, and others are no longer read secretly: they are in the curriculum!

Reeder shares his thoughts on praxis (the love part of the book) by presenting a vignette about his patient, Eve, which can be seen as the major metaphor for the book and as an example of Reeder’s personal voice. It occurred to me that the name assigned by Reeder to his patient might stand for either a pre-holiday celebration or the time before the dark of night. (Will our institutes be able to see a new dawn or will they succumb to the darkness of hatred?) Eve is struggling with owning her adulthood, on the brink of leaving her “shitty,” hungry little girlhood (p. 24). Reeder explores and interprets this dilemma, in a playful, concerned way, allowing us a glimpse of how he thinks and works. In my mind, it sets the tone of his book, a tone of respect and hopefulness and even a bit of daring, while letting us hear his own voice. I see Eve as representative of candidates and recent graduates whom he encourages to be creative, curious, and attentive to the cotransference (p. 21). He reminds us that there is life beyond father and mother (institute and received theory).

In summary, the roots of all this destructiveness, says Reeder, lie in the soil of identification with the aggression of the external authority. “The hate animating the superego complex is not something that spurts out in instances... but is rather an integrated (and definitely deplorable) aspect of a way of organizing the psychoanalytic institution during the third epoch,” (p. 175) which we are trying to move beyond. Otherwise, hatred is passed on from generation to generation (p. 177) culminating in poor morale, which contributes to the difficulties in attracting

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members and candidates, not to mention the public, today.

Reeder’s energy, scholarship, and courage shine through on every page. The book seems supportive of the NYFS’s change in its TA selection policy (on April 11, 2006, after intense discussion among members) from an evaluatory and subjective one to an experienced based one, where a member, after five or more years of documented analytic work, proof of immersion in psychoanalytic thought, and an inner readiness to supervise and treat candidates, chooses two TA colleagues to talk with about a case. This type of meeting with its collegial atmosphere encourages the new TA to speak in her own voice. A year of seminars in supervision is required, as is a statement that there have been no ethical violations, and a willingness to serve the society. Respect for integrity is the hallmark of the process. Reeder goes so far as to suggest that the term training analysis and the category of TAs should be abolished and quotes Lew Aron (p. 228) “What honesty is there in going along with [the institution of training analysts] if it is divisive, causes animosity, reinforces a feeling of failure, and is a factor producing society ‘splits’?” He concludes, “The idea that a candidate gets a training analysis due to a requirement and not because of her awareness of personal difficulties in living life is a poor prognostic indicator for a would be analyst” (p. 231).

Like a long analysis (308 pages) Reeder’s book is at times exciting, difficult, moving, but always interesting. It must not be ignored. I recommend reading it in small discussion groups and what lively juries they would be!

Jane Hall
janeshall@earthlink.net