

# POWER AND AUTHORITY IN INSTITUTE LIFE

By Joseph Scalia III

Sunday morning's sessions opened with "Power and Authority in Institute Life." Its chair, Thomas Bartlett, asked, "How is it that psychoanalysis, with its liberating influence on analysands' individual lives, could spawn an oppressive educational system and culture?" Dr Bartlett, pointing out that while this panel was prospectively open to all, there had been no traditionalist supporters who applied to it, invited any dissenting voices to speak up during the discussion period of the section. And indeed, the panelists were of kindred voices in their presentations.

Chap Atwell asked "How do candidates become merely candid?" when an atmosphere of oppression abounds to preempt freedom of thought. He suggested that while some candidate anxiety is surely intrapsychic, much can be done to address its external or institute-rigidity sources that attempt to silence multiple lines of inquiry. Carol Levin spoke of her training experience, which pressured her to adhere to the hegemonic theory of her institute, a theory she found overvalued by her teachers. She spoke of the guilt and uncertainty which she felt and candidates in general feel when daring to disregard the "rules" of the institute and grapple instead with an enlivening "collision of divergences and contradictions ... yielding" surprising new ideas.

Echoing the panel chair, Sandra Herschberg asked how it is that a liberating psychoanalysis can differ so greatly from an incarcerating psychoanalytic education? Suggesting an alternative method of selecting training analysts, she argued that institutes' traditional methods are themselves suppressive of creativity and freedom of thought in the applicants to those prized positions, and that the traditional approach invites the risk in new training analysts of reenacting with their training analysands the same oppression that they themselves endured.

Mitchell Wilson proposed a Lacanian understanding, with a nod to Klein, of the pitfalls and enactments of the traditional pathway to becoming a training analyst. Citing keynote speaker Jurgen Reeder's call for an analytic ethos as a guiding force in leading us out of the impasses addressed by the convention, Wilson argued that the neurotic's transference notion of the analyst as *the subject presumed to know* can be instructive here. If the psychoanalytic ethic entails the analyst's never *presuming to know* but instead accepting his lack in order to inhabit depressive-position functioning and open up an analytic space for the analysand, then, too, a training analyst is created not by any system which through authoritarianism supports his narcissistic position, which he suggests is inherent in the traditional system, but by a system that wants to know the unique voice of each training analysand.

Warren Procci, active in the psychoanalytic world and also a trustee at his *alma mater* Wagner College, spoke of the delight he experienced upon learning some years back how much different Wagner had become from the days when he studied there, its having abandoned traditional American educational approaches in favor of what he described as a now highly progressive model. He suggested that those trained in education itself, when getting a glimpse of traditional psychoanalytic education's methods, would find their users remarkably unable to innovate. While we have, he points out, an important

responsibility to ensure the training of sound psychoanalytic practitioners, which should be a benefit of pedagogical authority, we have poorly balanced that authority against its stultifying pitfalls.

This was a homogeneous panel, with everyone taking a position for the revamping of much of psychoanalytic education and pointing passionately to some of its more critical failures. Hearing this panel, and the sympathetic comments and elaborations of the audience's responses, one might almost have thought there is no longer any acrimony or tension for any of us to address, despite Thomas Bartlett's opening invitation for any opposing or traditional thinkers in attendance to speak up. As you will see from another writer's report of the section which followed, however, there was significant and impassioned dissent voiced by those who feel that much of traditional psychoanalytic education is being harshly and incorrectly represented by such speakers as those on this panel.

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