

## Psychoanalytic Education Today – A Critique

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At the last meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association in Atlanta, Dr. Steve Levy, editor of JAPA, the association's journal, proposed a new model for psychoanalytic education. His vision is to create a psychoanalytic university which would offer courses to a wide array of individuals ranging from students in psychiatry, social work and psychology to analytic candidates. It would also offer instruction to academics from a variety of fields who are interested in using analytic ideas in their own disciplines. There would be a varied and comprehensive curriculum, with the active participation of teachers from the neurosciences, sociology, anthropology and other related fields as well as researchers in the behavioral sciences. Levy's idea is to make psychoanalytic knowledge available to a wide spectrum of individuals who can both benefit from analytic knowledge and contribute to it. In this way, he is seeking to re-establish the central place of psychoanalysis in the intellectual life of the country and stimulate renewed interest in it.

This is an innovative and quite fascinating proposal which is actually being put into practice today in the restructured Atlanta Analytic Institute. Certainly it is an experiment worth studying and learning from. In developing it, Levy was responding both to the declining status of psychoanalysis in the intellectual life of America today and to the widely shared belief that to continue to grow, psychoanalysis must learn from and, where appropriate, integrate relevant data being generated by allied disciplines.

In the meantime we are carrying on our accustomed ways of educating candidates. Each year a sizeable number of graduates emerges from our institute and begins the practice of psychoanalysis. What have the students come away with? What is the nature of the product that we, as analytic educators who devote thousands of hours to teaching and supervising, are turning out?

This is what I want to focus on in these brief remarks; the current state of analytic education within our institutes. In the familiar words of Ed Koch, former Mayor of New York City and palpably insecure politician, “How are we doing?”

In some respects, not bad. Most of our graduates emerge from their training well informed about the field of analysis and are armed with a credible way of working. But, I believe, something vital, even something essential, is missing; or perhaps more accurately, has been lost. This does not have to do with what is taught. On paper the curricula of our institutes are quite good. Most centers offer a variety of courses in many phases of analytic thinking, from the theoretical to practice applications. Yes, we could—and should—broaden our offerings, teaching more about the various theories and technical approaches in psychoanalysis today, especially in the advanced years of training. We should not be afraid to offer courses for those interested in the use of analytic principles in psychotherapy, in couples and family work, in groups, in the treatment of deeply troubled individuals, and in work with addicts and the poor and disadvantaged. As educators and models for our students, we should be prepared ourselves, and should encourage our candidates to use their psychoanalytic knowledge to help the wide variety individuals whom they will—and should—encounter in the course of their work. I thoroughly agree with those who call for analysis to move thoughtfully

and intelligently into areas that heretofore have been regarded as outside the province of the analyst. Out doing so will not diminish, but enrich psychoanalysis.

But important as these considerations are—and I believe them to be very important—they do not speak to another issue; one that I feel has diminished and impoverished analytic education. This problem, in fact, has been responsible, in large measure, for threatening to turn our institutes into trade schools and analytic education into vocational training, often of a very limited kind.

I am speaking of the loss of a spirit of inquiry; loss of interest in the study of the human mind as an entity for investigation, and in psychology in its broadest and most comprehensive sense, not solely as limited to its application in the analytic situation.

In my view, there has been a loss of the intellectual rigor, the wide-ranging curiosity, the desire to explore, to study, to learn and to debate one another's ideas and beliefs that characterized an earlier time in our field.

My teachers; Ernst and Marianne Kris, Rudy Loewenstein, Heinz Hartman, Bert Lewin, Edith Jacobson, Annie Reich, and Leo Stone, for instance, were, first and foremost, students of man's mental life. With rich backgrounds in philosophy, history, psychology, anthropology, and literature, they approached psychoanalysis as a unique and invaluable way to study the workings of the mind. This study had its antecedents in the thinking and writings of the great philosophers, historians, and scientists, as well as the creative artists who came before them.

All of these individuals practiced analysis—it was a great satisfaction for them to work with patients—but they regarded practice not only as a therapeutic endeavor, but as

an opportunity to continue to learn, and, on the basis of what they learned, to formulate new ideas, new principles, new ways of thinking about the workings of the mind.

A couple of months before he died, Charles Brenner responded to a student's question as to whether psychoanalysis would survive as a viable discipline in this rapidly changing world. Charlie said he thought it would as it was a unique and invaluable way to study, not only the functioning of the human mind, but of the brain as well.

It is this spirit of inquiry, this capacity to view our work and our patients as providing an opportunity for study, an opportunity to learn more about the mind and brain that I find is largely missing today among both our students and their teachers.

I do not mean to say that this is always the case. There are candidates and teachers in every institute who retain their sense of wonder, their desire to explore new frontiers, and who view of clinical work as an opportunity to make discoveries and to question the analytic shibboleths handed down from one generation to the next.

But with too many of our students this quality is sorely missing. Many—too many—emerge from our institutes with little more than a method, a particular way of doing analysis, that itself is little more than an applied formula gleaned from their teachers and supervisors, and especially from their own analyst whose way of working is inevitably internalized and becomes part of their own operating style.

I personally have been distressed by the rote quality with which so-called technique is applied. As an example, I would cite the approach to transference that is so common today. It has become almost a mantra to seek out the transference, and even when it is not visible, or workable, to attempt to bring it into a session anyway. *This is largely because of the narrow view, regularly promoted in modern psychoanalytic*

teaching, that therapeutic gains in analysis are totally dependent on vigorous and insistent interpretation of the transference. This approach not only deforms the listening process and has the effect of influencing the analytic material in subtle-and not so subtle—ways, but often results in limiting or excluding much that the patient wishes and needs to communicate.

Perhaps you will think that I am being harsh or unfair in this critique of how many of our graduates work and of the teaching that they have received. But I do not think that I exaggerate. The trend toward the routine and unthinking application of method largely learned through imitation or identification is all around us and represents a genuine problem in analytic education. It leads to stagnation and the drying up of the creativity that is necessary for a field to continue to develop and grow.

Of course our students want to be practicing analysts and to apply what they have been taught. This is entirely natural. And it is also true that it takes years of work to emerge from under the shadow of our experiences as students. As Joyce McDougal has written, all of analytic education is imbued with transference affect, and every analyst has to struggle with enduring transferences to her analyst, teachers, supervisors and our institutes' belief systems. All of us have experienced great personal challenges in attempting to break out of the cocoon of our training in order to exercise independent judgment.

But even if that goal is accomplished over time, is it sufficient to become more independent, less parochial practitioners? Can analysis grow and flourish, and, equally important, can individual analysts grow and flourish if they remain only skilled technicians?

I would say no. Analysis and its practitioners will eventually suffer and the field will become stunted. Its practitioners will shrivel into being essentially therapeutic machines who function in a routinized way, without originality, without spirit, and without the joy of learning or of discovery.

What is to be done about this situation, about the limitations and shortcomings of analytic education today? *The answer lies, I believe, not in more and different courses, welcome as these may be, but in rethinking our teaching, rethinking what attitudes, what values, what spirit we are trying to convey.*

Most analysts know very little about the art of teaching, about the principles of pedagogy; and most analysts know little about the supervisory process and have had little or no formal training in how to supervise. They are assigned a course to teach or a student to supervise, and they are on their own.

This is no way to run an educational institution. ***Everyone who teaches should be required to undergo a year or more of preparation in pedagogy, in how to prepare a course, how to work with students, how best to transmit knowledge of the subject, and what values and attitudes to stress in his teaching. The same is true for supervision; supervision should not be a verbal manual of do's and don'ts, not simply a transmission of the supervisor's way of operating.*** It should be a study, an investigation not only of a given patient, but about the questions—often fundamental questions—concerning our theories and our practices that the patient evokes. We should learn from and follow the Swedish approach to supervision. No one in the Swedish Institute can supervise without first taking instruction in the methods, purposes, and art of supervising.

We need to respect our students by making sure that their teachers have immersed themselves in the study of teaching.

And students should be made to write a good deal more than they do now, to make a study of all of their patients, locating those individuals and their treatment within the wider framework of the history of our field. They should read widely about the entities that their patients embody so that they become knowledgeable about how Loewald, Loewenstein, Kohut, Klein, Thompson, Fromm, and Lacan, for instance, would think about the person they are trying to treat.

Of course students need a way of working, a theory and technique to rely on, to lean on, as Larry Friedman has put it, but that should not exclude knowledge of how others would approach the patient. In this respect, supervisors should not simply be supervisors. They should be tutors as well, who take on the challenge of educating themselves about the various ways of treating the patient. Then they will be in a position to help their students understand the rationale for the particular method that they favor.

We owe it to our candidates to help them expand their minds, and not simply employ the familiar—and limited—supervisory approach of listening to process material and then relating how he, the supervisor, would respond to the material. We need a return to a truly educational approach, one that is committed to conveying knowledge, not simply methodology, and not the blind transmission of our particular biases and accustomed ways of doing business.

In short, our institutes need to recover the wonder, the adventure, the joy of discovery that can and should accompany the study and practice of psychoanalysis.

This may seem like an idealized goal and a nostalgic yearning for a time past when the world, including the analytic world, was a very different place. No doubt it is just that, but it is also, I believe, an eminently practical idea. For what is at stake is not only the road that psychoanalytic education will take, either toward a pragmatic, routinized and ultimately sterile approach or toward a genuine university model, one that values exploration, inquiry and the opening of minds. Also at stake is the very road that psychoanalysis itself will travel. For if we become simply a cadre of practitioners applying theories and methods that we have been handed down from one generation to the next, without thoughtful evaluation and true reflection, our field will lose its vitality. It will become bankrupt and will surely shrivel up. It will shrink to a place of irrelevance or it will simply cease to exist.

And no one wants that to happen. No one wants the great gift that we have been given, that Freud bequeathed to us and so many others have nourished over so many years to end in such a way. So the challenge is here. It is now. Perhaps this conference and the spirit that infuses it will constitute the first step forward.