

Psychoanalysis Comparable & Incomparable, The Evolution of a Method to Describe and Compare Psychoanalytic Approaches by David Tuckett. New York: Routledge, 2008; 297 pp., \$41.95.

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David Tuckett is a brilliant, creative, and somewhat obsessional psychoanalyst, who designed and spearheaded a wonderfully promising project that shows all the signs of offering avenues of exponential value for psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts. This book details the progress of one of those avenues, a project to study and compare different psychoanalytic traditions of practice in the hope of eventually being able to address the vital question, what is psychoanalysis? The study included the participation of many European psychoanalyst colleagues, some of whom worked closely with Professor Tuckett to develop the project and become coauthors writing seven of the ten chapters of the volume being reviewed.

When the newly elected Tuckett became President of the European Psychoanalytic Federation (EPF), a scientific group of International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) Societies in Europe in 2000, he, “working within the context of a creative and constructive executive” (p. 262) introduced a new scientific policy which provided the impetus for the first EPF Working Party on Clinical Issues led by Haydee Faimberg. Not only did this particular project come to fruition, but also a burgeoning assemblage of other, somewhat similar, but also very different, parallel projects were developed by other EPF psychoanalysts. Moreover, since the first project was conceptualized in 2000 and launched in 2001, the world of IPA analysts has taken up the task and begun to introduce similar projects in North America and Latin America. The success of this venture and the possibilities for the future of psychoanalysis can take your breath away!

The book itself, the subject of this review, is a “How To” volume and an attempt, by making the development transparent—both effective efforts and mistakes—to help the reader understand the “working party group” process, as the activity has come to be known. In doing so, the writers have one eye on being as accurate and honest as possible about what transpired in order to make clear what they did, and the other, on giving gentle nudges (suggestions) of ways that the kind of work groups being described could benefit other aspects of the psychoanalytic enterprise. For example, as part of the education of psychoanalysts it could be helpful for training and as an alternative model of supervision, as well as being used in clinical groups of colleagues.

The ten chapters plus an appendix detail the sequence of events in this small paperback book. As mentioned above, David Tuckett credits Haydee Faimberg with initiating this workshop path and selecting the initial moderators. I learned from the Appendix, however, that Haydee Faimberg’s sense of how to proceed with this project differed markedly following the first two series of workshops from the way that Tuckett and those most closely aligned with his point of view envisioned, causing her to continue on a separate working party path, with a different proposed format. Her separate proposal for proceeding is described to some extent in the Appendix. She, as well as other European analysts, probably influenced by the concept of developing a new kind of clinical group with which to explore research into psychoanalytic practice, have pursued their own visions of how to tackle the challenges of the task in equally creative, but distinct, ways. Hopefully these other approaches will also become available in other publications. They are not, however, the focus of this book.

The book is divided in part on the basis of the developmental sequence—what happened “when”—as the authors learned from the results of each new workshop event. The development culminates in Chapter 6, which describes the current state of the procedure, the two-step method. Briefly, the method involves an initial period of free discussion once the participants have listened to the clinical material. This is followed by “Step One,” which asks the group to consider each of the presenter’s interventions, then to discuss and select from among six categories offered that which best describes the intervention. These categories include:

1. Maintaining the basic setting;
2. Adding an element to facilitate unconscious process;
3. Questions, clarifications, reformulations, aimed at making matters conscious;
4. Designating here and now emotional and “phantasy” meaning of the situation with [the] analyst;
5. Constructions directed at providing elaborated meaning; and
6. Sudden an apparently glaring reactions not easy to relate to A’s [the Analyst’s] normal method. (p. 136-7)

“Step two” asks the group to consider another level of thinking about the analyst’s approach in the session according to five categories. These include

1. What’s wrong with the patient;
2. Listening priority;
3. View of [the] analytic situation;
4. How does analysis work; and
5. Furthering interventions. (p. 147)

In reading the book, but especially Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, the reader can get a clear vision of how to conduct one of these workshops, with discussion of the logic behind each aspect of the procedures. The progression is undertaken over a 12 hour time frame to ensure plenty of time for discussion, with 12 to 15 experienced, participant-analysts, moderators who are highly conversant with the procedures skillfully keeping the group on task with gentle but firm leadership, and with experienced senior analysts as presenters. The task through both the steps has as its emphasis trying to understand the presenter–analyst’s interventions from the analyst’s point of view. It is, thus, analyst–focused, not patient–focused, to get at what the analyst is trying to achieve in the psychoanalytic session.

The description of the development of the project is interspersed with chapters grappling with some of the important issues associated with the project. For example, author Paul Denis exposit on the value and meaning of an empirical approach in Chapter 2. Focusing on the value of empirical knowledge, that is, knowledge derived from experience and observation upon which this project claims to rest, Dr. Denis notes that much of Freud’s conclusions were based on empirical observation. He sets the tone for his argument by describing in some specificity a panel presentation at an IPA Congress when one prestigious analyst, André Green as discussant, publicly lambasted another distinguished analyst’s presentation, Ted Jacobs’, as unpsychoanalytic and worse (if possible). I personally remember that awful occasion, but the reason for Denis’ recollection was to point out the abuses of supervision that occur in large part on the basis of strongly held beliefs that make one’s own way of doing psychoanalysis the only right way. The issue, in this time since Freud when a range of psychoanalytic traditions have emerged with psychoanalysts each claiming his/her own as the true psychoanalytic way, is how can these psychoanalytic views actually be understood and eventually assessed.

The authors report on their decade long project, as an attempt to do just that: understand what the analyst in analytic practice is doing. In almost every chapter, the basic assumption is stressed that the presenters in the workshops are conducting psychoanalysis, to sidestep the oft-quoted complaint of analysts listening to other analysts’ clinical material: “This, what I am hearing, is not analysis.” Or, “I, the listener, hear and understand this aspect of the patient better than the analyst presenting and would intervene in some other way.” In contrast, the authors contend that “there are many roads to Rome.” According to them, the presumption that what is being presented *is* psychoanalysis, with the prohibition against supervising, and intervention of skilled moderators using the two step structure of the working party format, all combine to make

these workshops extremely successful in their intended goal of understanding the presenting analysts.

Although forthcoming in reporting complaints—valued as relevant to continued improvement of the process—the authors suggest that the majority of participants find the discussions rich, helping them to sharpen and clarify their own thinking about their own concepts, and feeling safe to be open because of the task oriented, non-judgmental atmosphere. In support, they point out that many participants return year after year, with more and more analysts choosing to participate. Moreover, while perhaps not universally experienced, many of the presenters claim to gain considerable insight into their own ways of doing psychoanalysis from listening and participating in the groups.

The one complaint levied at the two step procedure that seemed to give the authors pause, in that they return to digest it in several chapters, is that the approach itself is not psychoanalytic: the requirement of listening for and seeking out particular variables in the two steps, even though at different levels of abstraction, creates a structural methodology antithetical to psychoanalysis. The authors argue that the approach is not intended to and is not used to achieve the categorizing information in itself; rather, it is a structure that provides the guidance toward focusing on the analyst's work in a non-judgmental way and with emphasis on the task of being inquiring detectives rather than supervisors. While the success of the project supports the authors' view about the value of the structure of the two step method, it seems likely that the particular criticism here mentioned has led to the emerging of different working party formats by other groups of psychoanalysts.

In the final chapter Tuckett gives a hint of what might be considered the core of a future, as yet unpublished, volume: the results of comparing analysts' work. As exemplars, he describes in a few short paragraphs the work sessions of three analytic presenters who have participated in the project. He then compares the three, each to the others, both in terms of similarities and differences. I was pleased at the *idea* of the effort, but a little disappointed in the limited picture that emerged of these analysts' work, due perhaps to the brevity and newness of the effort. I have, however, no reservations with regard to the descriptions in the book about the results of experiencing these work groups, as participant, presenter, or moderator. Having personally had the opportunity to be a participant, I can advocate enthusiastically for the value of the method.

While I have not given full discussion to the many examples and thoughtful ideas expressed throughout this book, my well underlined text demonstrates how interesting and valuable I found it to be. For those interested in psychoanalysis, especially psychoanalytic practice, who might want to consider experimenting with another approach to psychoanalytic learning and development, I urge the reading of this book.

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