

Psychoanalysis in Crisis: The Danger of Ideology

By Arnold D. Richards, MD

Abstract

Psychoanalysis is in crisis. Its prestige with the public has plummeted, as well as its economic viability and even its population. There are fewer analytic candidates and fewer patients, less insurance coverage, less presence in departments of psychiatry, and less prestige among the traditional academic disciplines. Analysts are getting older, and there are fewer and fewer young ones to replace us. A once-fascinated public now distrusts us as unscientific, deluded, authoritarian, reactionary, arrogant, sexist, and/or passé. This paper examines some causes of this decline within psychoanalysis itself as well as possibilities for reform.

The status of psychoanalysis as a science is in question, although Freud considered it as an empirical science, and modified his theories to fit new facts. In reality, however, transmission of psychoanalytic knowledge in the training analyst system has led to its perpetuation as an ideology, rather than a science, and to the formation of oligarchies in the structure of psychoanalytic organizations and some institutes.

The practice of suppressing dissent began with Freud, who distanced or expelled many dissident analysts, including Jung, Tausk, and Groddeck, as well as Adler, Reik, and later, Ferenczi and Wilhelm Reich, which some see as evidence of an authoritarian personality. Interestingly, Freud responded to his critics with new ideas and creative work, including *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and did some of his best work in response to challenges.

To guarantee that quality control would continue without him, Freud founded the IPA in 1910. After the Nuremberg meeting of 1910, initiates were asked to take on faith a closed system based on the Oedipus complex and libido theory. A conflict had developed between psychoanalysis seen as art and science, and as ideology.

We see here at work the “Iron Law of Oligarchy,” a political theory developed by sociologist Robert Michels in 1911 to describe the tendency of a democratic organization to become controlled by a small group of leaders autonomous of the majority of members. This mentality was seen in the APsaA reorganization of 1946, when the Board of Professional Standards (BoPS) was established as the central educational committee, a powerful autonomous clique thriving even now. A two-thirds majority is required to overturn BoPS bylaws, and when challenged, BoPS has even been known to seek support from the courts.

Over the years BoPS’s control over the training and certification protocols at APsaA institutes has excluded “dissidents” and enforced orthodoxy and conformity. Since 1946, BoPS has functioned as a “state within a state,” and has administered the test for certification of training analysts as a measure of compliance and political correctness, more than competence.

A second example of the Iron Law of Oligarchy comes from my own experience at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, where Ruth Eissler included the “real” analysts at the expense of anyone who disagreed. In 1973, the so-called Brenner amendment, which proposed that members of the executive committee could be nominated from the floor, lost by one vote short of a two-third majority, an example of the oligarchic

structure of NYPSI. Other challenges resulted in no real change, and NYPSI is now struggling to stay afloat, both financially and as an educational enterprise.

Psychoanalysis is nothing if not an exploratory endeavor, and it thrives in an open environment. Psychoanalytic theory becomes ideology when exploration, testing, and challenge are suppressed.

There are many analysts for whom psychoanalysis is neither ideology or theology, but an intellectually stimulating and emotionally rewarding human and humane endeavor, where convention is enlivened by creative challenge, and innovation is disciplined by tradition. In that form, it is too valuable to lose. It is time for us to step back and reclaim our citizenship in the larger intellectual world of curiosity, creativity, and freedom.

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As psychoanalysis limps through the first quarter of the twenty-first century, it is struggling to define itself to an increasingly uncomprehending, and sometimes hostile, world of legislators, insurance companies, for-profit hospitals, and grant-starved universities. The technocrats feel that psychoanalysis is not sufficiently scientific and therefore unquantifiable. In economic terms its expense is unjustified. The humanists worry that it's too prescriptive. Between the turf wars and schisms, sometimes psychoanalysis looks more like a religion than anything else, a label that it would itself reject with horror.

Why should we care how our field is defined? Because psychoanalysis is in crisis. Its prestige has plummeted, as well as its economic viability and even its population. There are fewer analytic candidates and fewer analytic patients in some places, less insurance coverage, less presence in departments of psychiatry, and less prestige among the traditional academic disciplines. Analysts are getting older, and there are fewer and fewer young ones to replace us. A once-fascinated public now distrusts psychoanalysis as unscientific, authoritarian, deluded, reactionary, trite, arrogant, sexist, and/or passé. But we know its value, and want to restore its health and reclaim for it the respect it once compelled. To do that we have to be able to explain ourselves in ways that make sense to other people and to ourselves, but we can't seem to do it. Why? What are the obstacles? What is inherent in psychoanalysis that we seem to be so powerless to halt its decline?

Science

First, let me get some non-answers out of the way, particularly as to the forces of medicine and money, who maintain that psychoanalysis isn't scientific enough to be taken seriously. People have been fighting about whether psychoanalysis is a science for decades, and there are plenty of arguments on both sides. The nay-sayers claim that:

- 1) The subject of psychoanalysis (the unconscious) is not reducible to its anatomy, like for example, the brain or the neuroendocrine system, and can't be sufficiently explored with physics and chemistry.

2) The development of psychoanalysis cannot be understood or replicated independently from its founder's personality, since many of Freud's discoveries are referable only to decisive moments in his own self-analysis (Roustang 1976). There is no parallel to this in, say, Watson and Crick's discovery of the double helix.

3) It cannot hope to live up to the methodological specifications of the so-called "exact" sciences, and even the "inexact," or non-quantitative ones still require public verification and testing.

The opponents make a simple counter-argument: that psychoanalysis is unique, even among the "human sciences," due to the utter privacy of its investigations and the nonreproducibility of its purely individual results, and that it therefore has to be taken on its own terms. This is a different kind of science, they argue, and it stands or falls by different measures.

I don't think this problem is going to be resolved anytime soon. I will look at these issues in a bit more detail, however, for reasons that will soon become clear.

For instance, it is possible and useful to keep some of the formational attitudes of psychoanalysis in mind without getting tangled up in methodological minutiae. When Freud spoke of psychoanalysis as an empirical science, he was pragmatic about it. He knew that a science modifies its hypotheses when they do not fit the empirical data. Recognizing that our understanding would never be complete, he set an example of keeping close to the facts and standing always ready to correct or modify his theories. Brenner did the same, first elevating the structural model, and then demolishing it. Self-

psychology came out of Kohut's dissatisfaction with the way current theory accounted for narcissistic phenomena, and the way current practice treated them.

My own belief is that one definition of science is the repeated formulation of new hypotheses in search of better explanations of observed data. It doesn't matter whether the particulars of any specific hypothesis eventually prove right or wrong. This searching quality is important to psychoanalysis, and as I will show, we do ourselves no favors when we suppress it.

Psychoanalysis is also a science in the pride it takes in its predictive power. Its primary postulate is the principle of psychic determinism, which is used both to explain the past and predict the future. (I am reminded of the patient who told Selma Freiberg that she was good at “backwards future talking.”) On the other hand, many have asserted that psychoanalytic evidence “can be so manipulated as to escape refutation no matter what facts are adduced.” (Nagel 1959, cited in Slochower 1964, p. 165) Harry Slochower in his study of psychoanalysis as science and art makes the interesting point that Freud himself considered this a serious lack, at least when applied to other people's convictions. Since religious doctrines can be neither proven nor refuted, Freud said in *The Future of an Illusion*, that their "reality value" cannot be judged. (Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, Anchor Books, New York, 1964.)

So while we can respect Freud's scientific sensitivity and aspirations, we must also acknowledge that psychoanalysis is in some ways undeniably unlike other sciences, including even the other human sciences. Its subject is the intangible unconscious, and its tool is the relationship between two human beings. Each analyst/analysand pair is unique, making it very difficult to generalize from the interaction between the observer and the

observed. Replication is not possible, and validation is possible only in limited ways -- for instance, tape recorded sessions—and on different terms. Furthermore, psychoanalysis looks not at static states, but at complex processes determined by multiple variables. Under those circumstances, immaculate perception is impossible, and so is immaculate conception. Objectivity in psychoanalysis is always tempered by subjectivity, and the knower always influences the known. Affect is at play as much as reason. Exact science is neutral. Psychoanalysis is not.

We can finesse some other aspects of the debate by recognizing that psychoanalysis is not a monolith, and it's good to remind ourselves of this occasionally, too. Psychoanalysis is at once a theory of development, a theory of psychopathology, a theory of how the mind works, and a theory of therapeutic process and cure. Each of these theories is based on different assumptions and offers different propositions with different degrees of validity, and different levels of abstraction (cf. Waelder).

As Marshall Edelson says, “A science is defined as an approach that formulates conjectures about certain kinds of entities or processes and it uses a sound methodology to establish the scientific credibility of [add missing word?].” In considering the status of psychoanalysis as a science, therefore, we have to define the entities or processes that it formulates conjectures about. According to Edelson (PI 6:575–600), the domain of psychoanalysis is the investigation and treatment of disorders that are “expressions in conscious mental life of causal interrelations among unconscious mental states,” in other words, the determinants of neurotic misery. This is a very narrow definition; Edelson explicitly leaves out causal relations between conscious mental states and environmental stimuli or action. The aim of analysis is to fill causal gaps, and so make comprehensible

the intentional mental states that the analyst has been unable to understand.

Psychoanalysis can be considered scientific to the extent that its methodology addresses these matters.

But scientific data require public verification, and psychoanalysis as a private and nonreproducible endeavor is as yet unable to meet these criteria; do recordings of case histories and supervisions count, or documentation of pre-verbal development through the study of child psychology? Testing for reproducibility and replicability is another standard that psychoanalysis has not yet met. There is a growing literature in which psychoanalytic propositions are being tested empirically and have passed the test. But the jury is still out. Most of us can cite case histories of our own that seem to fill causal gaps in our patients' experiences and symptomology; I know I can. But for some that's not "proof."

In 1964, Harry Slochower produced an intelligent and nuanced attempt to define the nature of psychoanalysis. Slochower acknowledges Freud's scientific cast of mind -- his training as a scientist and his passionate interest in "truth," his constant modification of his theories as new data challenged them, and his attention to predictive power. He comes ultimately to the conclusion that psychoanalysis is an applied science that "deals with a qualitatively different subject matter" than other fields of study, and therefore should not be held to their standards (Slochower, 1964) In support, he cites Aristotle's epigram that "It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits." (Slochower 1964).

But resolving the fine points of this ancient argument, in whatever direction, will not solve our problem with the rest of the world. In fact, Murray L. Wax, Emeritus Professor

of Anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis and visiting faculty at the St. Louis Psychoanalytic Institute, after carefully challenging a series of important critiques and important defenses of the “science” of psychoanalysis, comes to the conclusion that its current crisis will not be resolved by attempts to court the “authority and rewards” of the biomedical world with mindless adherence to fetishistic views of science. “In its essence,” he concludes, “psychoanalysis is a normative discipline with strong ethical and aesthetic aspects. It can only heal itself when it is prepared to confront these realities.” (Wax, 1995)

“During the century since the inception of psychoanalysis, philosopher critics have assailed its unscientific character and proposed remedial strategies. Customarily, they focus on Freud, accepting his vision of psychoanalysis as a biomedical science. In arguing abstractly for greater rigor in the handling of clinical data, they . . . fail to deal concretely with the clinical inadequacies and errors of Freud and his disciples, while simultaneously ignoring the great transformations since that early era. Consequently, they do not perceive that their remedial strategies for psychoanalysis are premised on faulty logic and an erroneous image of productive science; nor do they perceive the grounds on which psychoanalytic progress has been occurring (or failing to occur). The result is that they misdirect attention from those areas of psychoanalysis that badly need reformative measures” (Wax 1995).

I will return to the reformative measures shortly.

Art

If the lack of scientific credentials isn't the problem, what is? Psychoanalysis isn't only a science, at least not in its applied form. This is a less contested issue than the science one; psychoanalysis has always been accepted to some degree as an art – perhaps especially as an art. “As a practice, psychoanalysis is more than a science, and primarily an art,” Slochower says. “Applied psychoanalysis, like art, cannot and should not be a pure science. . . . The decisive act in its approach is an act of the imagination. Its function is rather to serve as a link between science and art.”

The view of psychoanalytic practice as art is analogous to, and shares much with, traditional views of the art of medicine. It takes into account all the judgments and other ineffables that psychoanalysts and physicians take into account in treating their patients. Both psychoanalysts and physicians look beyond theory and data to experience and intuition when they make treatment decisions. After all, as Slochower points out, the strict bifurcation of science and art is a modern construct, and he offers Leonardo da Vinci as an example.

Certainly its own inventor and founder made clear that psychoanalysis was a treatment before it was a science. Freud used the term first to refer to his therapeutic method; only later did it become the name he applied to the new study of unconscious mental processes. Bowlby distinguished later between the science of psychoanalytic psychology and the art of psychoanalytic practice. Loewald (JAPA 23, p. 277-299) too believed that science and art are not as far apart from one another as Freud and his scientific age liked to assume; he saw art and science as closely related but different facets of the activity of the human mind. Psychoanalytic technique could be seen as the art of applying psychoanalytic knowledge and the psychoanalytic method to a particular

clinical case. The science of psychoanalysis aims to increase knowledge about how the mind works; psychoanalytic treatment, or the art of psychoanalysis, aims to improve the health of the patient's psychic life.

Loewald considers psychoanalytic technique an art also because the transference and transference neurosis can be viewed as a dramatic play—an action sequence that remains under the formative influence of the original action but is still a unique creation of the psychoanalytic process. He writes,

Viewed as a dramatic play the transference neurosis is a fantasy creation woven from memories and imaginative elaborations of present activity to present actuality being the psychoanalytic situation, the relationship of patient and analyst. The transference according to Loewald is a fantasy, make believe, an illusion, a play, which is first recognized conjointly. The analyst is the director of the play and the analyst and analysand are the coauthors. And the patient casts the analyst in the roles of various coauthors. Psychoanalysis as an ideology reflects the idea of psychoanalysis as a movement, which Freud and his early collaborators took seriously. (reference?)

Loewald puts it this way: “They had larger aims and vistas, namely to influence and change the outlook and behavior of a whole era in regard to the relationship and balance between rational and instinctual life and between fantasy and objective reality.”

But there is more to transference and transference neurosis than fantasy. There is also history and narrative. There is psychic reality and external reality, and of course narrative truth and historical truth. We can construct a line of reference—history to narrative to fantasy—to characterize human experience in life and in the therapeutic situation. And another dimension binary has to do with what is objective and what is subjective. This of course has to do with childhood experience, what is experienced and what is remembered. For the child there is fantasy, play, and actual life experience. Is the

so-called good hour an indication of the analyst's art? Do we judge it as we would a good patient or a good novel or a good poem or symphony?

Psychoanalysis might in fact do better as an art than a science; the art world retains the right to make judgments about quality while still striving for plurality rather than uniformity, an issue about which I'll have much more to say in a moment.

Furthermore, artists live in a world of other artists, art critics, and the canon of art history, where authority comes from the capacity to make aesthetic and conceptual judgments, not the power to ostracize and punish, which has too often been the case in medicine and, especially, psychoanalysis. Strenger suggests that to see psychoanalysis as an art makes it easier for analysts to maintain a pluralistic self-perspective.

Ideology and Oligarchy

“The training analyst system contributes to the trans-generational transmission of psychoanalysis as an ideology rather than a science, and to the perpetuation of educational oligarchies in psychoanalytic organizations and some institutes.”

- Arnold Richards

If psychoanalysis can reasonably lay claim to citizenship in two important cultural domains, then, why are we so deeply distrusted in the world? More important, why is APsaA rapidly losing its status even among analysts themselves? I suggest that the problem lies in the fineness of the line between conviction and ideology.

Psychoanalysis is complex, arduous, and emotionally taxing work; so is the process by which we learn how to do it. As we have seen, it progresses—as all clinical sciences do—by means of theoretical and technical refinements and revisions that augur

not only increasingly accurate understandings, but also the possibility of more effective and expeditious work. The pressure to make the long and intense psychoanalytic process easier, less ambiguous, or less fraught with anxiety presents a constant temptation to students, educators, and practicing analysts. There is always a tension in psychoanalysis, therefore—sometimes creative, sometimes not—between tradition and innovation, between received wisdom and new revelations. The disciplines that accrue over years of accumulated experience should be valued; they provide a firm and comforting foundation for the practice of any technical competence, and it is important to transmit them carefully. They must not be watered down for reasons of expedience. On the other hand, as we have just seen, once science has lost the flexibility to innovate it stops being science, and art without originality soon petrifies into something that is no longer art at all.

I have said before that the shadow of the founder falls over the organization. I was referring to A.A. Brill and the long struggle over lay analysis in the APsA. But Freud's shadow was the first one to fall. As Fleck has made clear, all scientific facts have social, cultural, historical, psychological, and personal determinants, and the apparent "facts" of psychoanalysis are no exceptions.

For reasons perhaps more personal than scientific, Freud believed that psychoanalysis had to be protected from "dissidents," whom he relentlessly distanced, either by exclusion or by expulsion (Roustang, *Dirge Mastery: Discipleship from Freud to Lacan*). The fates of Jung, Tausk and Groddeck are mentioned explicitly by Roustang, and we could add to that list Adler and Reik. Ferenczi and Wilhelm Reich were extruded later, as Anna Freud and Ernest Jones followed in their mentor's footsteps. And there

have been many, many others since then, including two entire institutes (the William Alanson White and the American Institute of Psychoanalysis) when APsaA reorganized itself in 1946, and Karen Horney and her fellow neo-Freudian culturalists a few years later. I bring up that history to make clear not only that this tradition of expulsion and suppression has been going on for a long time, but also that it has managed to perpetuate itself consistently from generation to generation. How does it maintain such strength? In this too we can see the shadow of the founder.

Freud established a group to guarantee that this work of quality control (as he saw it) would continue without him. It was he who guided the organization and purpose of the IPA, establishing at its founding in 1910 a chief (ein Oberhaupt) who would become the leader upon his death. And the business of leadership, Freud made clear, was to decide when to say: “All this nonsense has nothing to do with analysis, this is not analysis.”

(Freud’s *History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, cited in Roustang, p. 12)

Roustang in *Dire Mastery* has elaborated at length on the quality and implications of Freud’s authoritarianism, relating his personality and the group style he fostered to the broader standing of psychoanalysis as a science. More recently Robert Holt has done something similar, considering Freud in the context of Adorno’s authoritarian personality. We can see these abstractions concretely in the workings of the groups that he established.

Makari, considering developments in organized psychoanalysis after the Nuremberg meeting of March/April 1918, makes the important point. “Despite Freud’s efforts to build a psychology of inner life that conformed with science, the post-Nuremberg Freudians became more of a polemically driven interest group. . . . To enter

the group one had to accept not just principles of evidence, but also a conclusion that could not be fully proved.” This was libido theory, agreement with which had become a litmus test of loyalty. “The groundwork had been laid to turn Freud’s great synthesis into a monotonous, closed system of thought, and the Freudians seemed destined to become a tight-knit sect unified by their belief in their leader and an unknowable entity—not God, but a different Ding an Sich, the sexual unconscious.” (Makari pp. 296–297).

In other words, a conflict developed early on between psychoanalysis as science (and as art, too, we may suppose, since the litmus test of libido theory applied in both spheres), and psychoanalysis as ideology, almost a religion. In fact, the new field began to look like one of the two group structures Freud described in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, namely the church and the army. Schisms have proved as characteristic of psychoanalysis as of many religions or cults. (cf. Kirsner, *Unfree Associations*). It becomes “a fanatical sect blindly submissive to their leaders.” (Hoch, cited in, *Freud in History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, also cited by Roustang in *Dire Mastery*)

Note that even while libido theory and the Oedipus complex were being imposed by decree, and were acquiring the status of a shibboleth by which true disciples distinguished themselves from outsiders, Freud was responding to his critics. He introduced new ideas, produced important works (one being *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*), and revised his metapsychology with the structural theory. Far from destroying psychoanalysis, the challenges of Freud's critics were enlivening it.

Still, it is hard to argue from this story that little was lost by denouncing Jung, Adler, and Rank as heretics. The analysts of those days could think freely in the privacy

of their own minds, which was not being discouraged, consciously or otherwise, by institutional pressures for conformity. But that is precisely the danger we face when ideology and oligarchy intersect.

The Iron Law of Oligarchy is a political theory first developed by the German sociologist Robert Michels in his 1911 book, *Political Parts*. It holds that the tendency to oligarchy is inherent in every organization. “Whoever says organization, says oligarchy,” Michels wrote. The election of officials, however democratically, concentrates power in a small group at the top of the organization.

This concentration facilitates administrative efficiency and policy making. The elected officials, however, according to Michels, almost inevitably lose touch with the electorate. Although they start out as an open-ended alliance formed in response to the needs of the organization, they begin establishing structures that perpetuate their own power to their own ends. The International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education (IFPE) is an exception to Michels' law, which gives us some hope of eventually being able to challenge it. As far as I can tell, its governance structure is not hierarchical, nor is power concentrated in the hands of a self-perpetuating group. IFPE does not restrict membership with certification or accreditation requirements, but opens itself to anyone interested in psychoanalysis. It is the International Federation for Psychoanalytic Education, not for Psychoanalytic Standards. And I hope that its values will soon become the prevailing ones in more institutions.

The old us-versus-them mentality established itself on these shores almost as soon as psychoanalysis did. The rules were different here, but the method was the same: to circle the wagons and keep interlopers away from the campfire. After some early

skirmishes, many of them around the subject of non-medical analysis, Freud's exclusionary principle and the power to exercise it were institutionalized in the APsaA reorganization of 1946. The Board on Professional Standards (BoPS) was established as the central educational committee and keeper of the flame, a dual mission it has pursued so assiduously that it is only now, after almost seventy years, that William Alanson White has been invited into the fold. (The application of the American Institute of Psychoanalysis is still pending.)

Over the years BoPS has successfully used its control over the training and certification protocols at APsaA institutes to exclude the “dissidents” of the time, analysts and institutes that do not walk the walk, and talk the talk.

However, in so doing it has also been enforcing conformity. It is maintaining psychoanalysis not as an endeavor of creative investigation, in which all propositions are open to responsible reexamination, but as an ideology whose content is constantly vetted by BoPS's own centralized authority.

I will address the question of inevitability presently, but first I want to show what Michels' oligarchic processes look like in our field. I'll start with some examples of the Iron Law at work in APsaA, and then turn to my home institute, NYPSI. As I have noted, the most powerful oligarchy in American psychoanalysis is the Board on Professional Standards (BoPS), a committee which represents the 30 psychoanalytic institutes in APsaA. How often do our candidates for office run on platforms opposing the training analyst system and the certification requirement for training analyst (TA) appointment? And how often, once elected, do they abandon these aims under pressure from BoPS, the powerful autonomous clique that for decades has enforced the certification requirement

for TA appointment, and thus a system of self-perpetuating prerogative and privilege?

What is happening here?

Once elected, they decide to be part of the club which is in charge. Some history: Before 1946, psychoanalytic education was overseen by APsaA's Committee on Psychoanalytic Education (CPE). On that committee, every institute had a voice, all institutes were equal, and decisions about educational matters required unanimous consent. Institute autonomy was protected and maintained by this broad-based structure. In the 1946 reorganization of APsaA, however, the Board on Professional Standards replaced the CPE as the educational standard setting of the American Psychoanalytic Association and the body that decides who can become a member of the Association.

The received wisdom has generally been that the reorganization of APsaA, including the establishment of BoPS, was a response to the desire to replace institute autonomy with central national control of psychoanalytic education, that is, the training of psychoanalytic candidates under central/national control. But specifically, its purpose was to assure that Sandor Rado's new institute (the Columbia Center) would adhere to **the** four times/week rule of candidate analysis and control cases and that the William Alanson White Institute, which had a three times/week standard and was viewed as ideologically dissident, could also be excluded. Whatever the motive, the organization assured the hegemony of the BoPS training analyst oligarchy in APsaA. The chairs of the BoPS have traditionally functioned, and function to this day, as the leaders of a small group of training analyst fellows, who control the definition of psychoanalysis through the certification committees, and approval of the free-standing institutes—that is, essentially everything that defines the boundaries of psychoanalysis as a discipline and its

administrative functioning. A two-thirds majority is required to overturn a BoPS empowering bylaw, and BoPS, when challenged, has been known to seek support from the courts. That is a high hurdle, even for a majority of APsaA analysts and their elected representatives. Furthermore, for decades, with few exceptions, the elected officers of APsaA were training analysts. This gave BoPS great redemptive power over the elected governance of APsaA as well as over its own educational purview.

Since 1946, therefore, BoPS has functioned as a state within a state. Its insistence on absolute educational autonomy was so absolute that when APsaA's Board of Directors proposed a new procedure for appointed "national training analysts" in 2012, some BoPS leaders went to court asserting that the initiative violated the 1946 bylaw that established its authority. To the surprise (and chagrin) of many, their position was upheld by a judge and sustained in an appeal.

There had been two efforts to amend the bylaws to end the certification requirement for TA appointment. Both have failed. A supermajority is required for bylaw change, and this is central in maintaining oligarchic rule in APsaA and BoPS. In the last vote, 58 percent favored change, but this fell short of the needed two-thirds. These are not trivial bureaucratic issues. BoPS is an ideological oligarchy as well as an administrative one, and the certification requirement is central both to its ideology and to its power. The certification committee of BoPS is supposed to assess psychoanalytic competence. An applicant's passing or failure, however, has little to do with the outcome of the cases he or she presents. In fact, 50 percent of applicants fail the first time, but 95 percent pass subsequently with the same cases. It is analytic process that is assessed, and it is assessed according to BoPS's view of what analytic process is supposed to be. All of this suggests,

at least to observers wary of oligarchic systems, that the test measures compliance more than competence, and selects for psychoanalytic political correctness.

Certification is a requirement for TA appointment, which until recently was in turn a requirement for becoming a fellow of BoPS. This means that analytical correctness is also a requirement for becoming a fellow of BoPS. And so the self-perpetuation continues. BoPS fellows elect the chair of BoPS, who for many years appointed the nominating committee that would appoint his own successor. Although all thirty APsaA institutes are represented in BoPS, a high concentration of BoPS officers and committee chairs come from a small number of very conservative institutes that support the certification status quo and lobby actively against educational change. At one time in BoPS history, all the chairs of the major committees were members of a single institute, Downstate in Brooklyn; all of them had been appointed by the BoPS chair, who was a Downstate member himself. Even internally, BoPS functions more oligarchically than democratically. Last year, seven of its fellows, including the chair and the co-chair, initiated a court complaint against the APsaA Board of Directors without a vote of approval from a majority of the BoPS fellows themselves.

The latest development of BoPS's hegemony in APsaA is that the oligarchy has established voting rights on the APsaA Executive Committee, which makes policy decisions between the January and June Board of Directors meetings. The members of the executive committee, along with the president, the president-elect, the secretary, and the treasurer of APsaA are all elected by the entire membership. For years, the chair and co-chair of BoPS have been non-voting members, unless they are also councilors of the APsaA BOD. Until recently they have not been councilors, but recently they were

appointed (or elected) councilors by their respective societies. This does not bode well for democratic process and change in APsaA, because there are members of the Executive Committee who have not been elected by all the members of APsaA. BoPS theoretically maintains APsaA's prestige by defending the vigor of its standards and excluding interlopers that might attenuate them. But its unilateral rule has in fact had an opposite effect. As I said previously, APsaA is in crisis. Its members are aging; fewer than one-half still pay dues. The number of candidates in APsaA institutes is declining, which means fewer graduates, fewer new members, and fewer funds available for educational, professional, or institutional development. The Committee on New Institutes estimates that in the next five to ten years, a third of APsaA's institutes will have folded. One, PINE in Boston, has already been forced to merge with BPSI because it could not survive on its own, although a small number of PINE members are still trying to keep the center going and did not transfer to BPSI.

An infusion of new blood would help. That could happen if APsaA were to affiliate outside freestanding institutes. But BoPS is in no hurry to encourage that approach, either; it has spent more than ten years on evaluations of William Alanson White Institute and the American Institute of Psychoanalysis. William Alanson White Institute was approved recently, but has not yet agreed to accept APsaA's invitation. The American Institute of Psychoanalysis is still waiting.

I have said before that the 1946 reorganization was APsaA's Versailles. The new APsaA, like the 1919 treaty, attempted to impose central control with ill-advised power grabs, and the results have been disastrous. It gave BoPS centralized power at the expense of local institutes, enabled its policies of “disciplinary exclusion” (that is, the

rejection of lay analysts), and built in an educational oligarchy, that is, it does not account itself to the larger organization or even share its interests. In the decades since, the power of the BoPS oligarchic hegemony over APsaA has only grown stronger. Part of this may perhaps be attributed to Michels' Iron Law. But as we have seen, the history of psychoanalysis offers plenty of precedent for oligarchic control.

As I have mentioned previously, an organization can seldom escape the shadow of its founder. Freud's autocracy, so well described by Robert Holt, lives on in the authoritarian ethos of BoPS, of APsaA, and of many individual institutes as well. What are we to think of Freud's comment in a 1917 letter to Georg Groddeck that he considered his disciples members of a "savage horde"? Discipline was necessary, he thought, and he vested it in the IPA leadership, whose business was to be able to say definitively: "All this nonsense has nothing to do with analysis, this is not analysis." (Freud's *History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, cited in Roustang, p. 12) The resemblance to the functions and attitudes of BoPS in the United States is not hard to see.

Now let me turn to a second example of the Iron Law of Oligarchy, this one from my own experience at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. I began my training in 1964 and graduated in 1969, was appointed a training analyst, in 1982. The "procedure" at that time was that a potential TA was invited to a seminar in Ruth Eissler's living room, where Ruth held court with her closest associates, all training analysts. There was nothing shy about Ruth, either in her institute politics, or in her ideology. She made no bones about who counted as "real" psychoanalysts and who did not. The real analysts were her group the Europeans and their acolytes, some of whom were in the seminar. The "outs" were everyone else, especially Arlow, Brenner, Beres, and Calder (A, B2, and C,

we called them), all with allegiances primarily to the new world rather than the old, and often to the far left.

The “outs” never succeeded in becoming the “ins” in NYPSI. Eissler and her group ran the show, she was not open to anything that she considered dissent, and she shared her power only with colleagues who agreed. The “seminar,” therefore, was an opportunity for Eissler and her group to vet potential TAs for clinical and political correctness. (The title of the seminar I attended, believe it or not, was “Perversion.”)

At that time, training analysts were appointed by the Education Committee, who were nominated by the Education Committee and elected by the faculty. In 1973, the so-called “Brenner amendment” proposed that members of the nominating committee for the TA Appointment Committee could be nominated by the faculty, from the floor and not just by the Educational Committee. The result was an institute-wide fight. I have several old memories of the faculty meeting in which the battle took place. Kurt Eissler spoke against the amendment, announcing that he was a liberal in national politics.

The Brenner Amendment also proposed that nominations be accepted from the floor to institutes’ Executive Committees, which ruled on training analyst appointments. The system that maintained the ruling oligarchy was justified by the need for academic freedom, and Margolis justified the system as representing an alumni-faculty divide.

The Brenner Amendment was a direct challenge to the system by which the ruling oligarchy maintained its power. It lost by one vote, 166 for and 101 against, one vote short of the necessary two-thirds majority. A year later it failed again, with 156 for and 101 against. The battle over the Brenner Amendment is a perfect snapshot of the

oligarchic structure of NYPSI in the 1970s. One group of about 30 TAs and non-TAs, that is, about a third of the Institute, ran the place. Group two, made up of thirteen TAs who were supported by two-thirds of the Institute membership, was systematically excluded by the ruling clique. But there were not quite enough of them to make up the supermajority that could change things.

The so-called George Gross insurrection in the 80s did result in a defeat for oligarchy, at least for a while. And I was there. According to NYPSI bylaws, TA appointments by the Education Committee had to be approved by the Institute's Board of Trustees. This approval was generally provided pro forma. But in this instance two members had been nominated, I and one other. And the Board of Trustees voted to approve only me. This resulted in another firestorm, and this time a committee was appointed to recommend a new system of TA appointment. The committee's recommendations included the possibility of self-nomination, and also the right of prospective TAs to make case presentations to faculty members from the Institute or from other APsaA institutes. The new procedure was adopted and there was a subsequent restructuring of the organization with a single board of directors for both the Society and Institute.

On paper this did make the Institute look more democratic and more participatory, but there still was a small group calling the shots. The only difference was that now it was the Education Committee. Although the members of the Education Committee are elected, concern about losing patient referrals or teaching appointments tends to discourage dissent and maintain the status quo. So does the apathy of the faculty out-group and the organizational savvy of the in-group, and the election process also serve to

maintain the status quo. Many of the current in-group now are the analysands of those who were the out-group then. Through their apathy, the out-group contributes to the maintenance of oligarchy. Doug Kirsner has written in his book *Unfree Associations* about the system of psychoanalytic appointment that he calls “tapping,” which is prevalent at the NYPSI and several other institutes. The oligarchs tap the young analysts who will be their successors. Much of the conflict, and all of the splits, in the APsaA psychoanalytic institutes have been caused by the tapping training-analyst appointment system. Self-nomination and case presentation does not prevent applicants who are not politically correct from being rejected for one reason or another by the Education Committee TA appointment committee.

The result has been a crisis much like the one at APsaA. When I was in training, the New York Psychoanalytic was a very prestigious institute. As Kirsner said, “To be a leader in the New York Institute conferred immense power and distinction, not only within psychoanalysis but also within psychiatry and the general culture.” This of course is no longer the case. Janet Malcolm's article for the *New Yorker* in 1984 raised unsettling questions in many people's minds, and her subsequent book about Aaron Green and others didn't help. Ellen Willis's story in *New York* magazine wasn't complimentary either. The Golden Age of psychoanalysis had definitely lost its luster. And it hasn't gotten any better. Like many other APsaA institutes—like APsaA itself—NYPSI is now struggling to stay afloat, both financially and as an educational enterprise.

How do we see this happening? Well, the year I applied for training there were 35 applicants. Thirteen were accepted. Now there are fewer than half a dozen applicants a

year and almost all are accepted. When I trained, the faculty were important contributors to the theoretical development of psychoanalysis. This is no longer true, and there are murmurs that the current ethos values neither scholarship nor intellect. Kirsner, for example, describes at some length a system based on what he calls “anointment,” as opposed to merit. Kirsner suggests that those who published less were more likely to be anointed than those who published more; but the contention was that the anointed had superior analytic clinical skill, which is I think is debatable. They may walk the orthodox walk and talk the orthodox talk, but that does not assure clinical wisdom or good clinical judgment.

One well-known precedent for this situation is the authoritarian structure of Freud’s original psychoanalytic movement, which is perhaps best illustrated in the intrigues over the Communist Party USA. As for the second, perhaps more surprising, influence, I have gone to some trouble recently to demonstrate and document the striking similarities between the organization of BoPS and of American Communism, which is controlled by a few on top, policy decisions following the rule of democratic centralism and exclusion of dissidents. Certainly BoPS’s view of Horney had much in common with the CPUSA’s view of Trotsky. Many of the most influential analysts of the ‘30s and ‘40s, Greenson, Arlow, Brenner, Rangell, and Galenson, among others, were members of, or sympathetic to the CPUSA. Three, including Arlow, eventually became chairs of BoPS. Robert Knight, a central figure in 1946, was called the Red Knight by his close friend Mike Allison. The Freudian inner circle and the radical left analysts were oligarchs in practice, if not in principle, and they brought their oligarchy into their analytic politics.

They also shared a belief that they possessed the truth, and a sense of omnipotence about what to do with it. It was they who owned the correct view of psychoanalysis as theory and as treatment. It is worth noting that the 1946 reorganizers (unlike the IFPE!) were more interested in standards than in education. In fact, BoPS's procedural manual, like Freud's vision of the IPA, is mostly a list of prohibitions, of thou-shalt-nots. Seventy years later, that mindset still prevails, and has led to stalemate and stagnation in the APsaA educational enterprise, at least on the national level. Fortunately, some institutes have defied the bylaws and the BoPS rules, for example by appointing uncertified training analysts. I believe that other institutes will do the same in time, as a matter of survival.

In my view, this stance has not served APsaA well. Authoritarian institutional attitudes are anathema to any educational process. To transmit psychoanalysis as dogma is to betray its own most profound identity, as well as to guarantee stagnation. Worse, theologies are notoriously subject to sectarianism and schism, which we have seen again and again in American psychoanalysis.

Authoritarianism is the root of oligarchy, and as we have seen, psychoanalysis comes by its authoritarianism honestly, thanks to the ideological (often nearly theological) absolutism of Freud. This has made for a climate in which other authoritarians feel comfortable and flourish, in which dissent is too often systematically suppressed, and from which creative thinkers frequently choose to flee. It is still the case that the Education Committee nominates the committee that appoints the Training Analysts, who then get elected to the EC. The chair of the EC appoints the chair and the members of all the Institute committees—among them, Admissions, Curriculum, and

Progression. The chair of the EC also appoints the members of the Instructor's Executive Committee, who interview and accept analysts invited to apply to become training analysts.

The Education Committee's argument that it must be autonomous of the membership of the society is strongly reminiscent of BoPS's argument about the need for autonomy from the membership of APsaA. Both are self-perpetuating committees, structured such that they are answerable to no authority but themselves, and exercise considerable power over the larger organization's elected leadership. The BoPS 1976 site visit of the NYPI committee also concluded that there was a self-perpetuating hierarchy ruling the Institute.

So what of the Iron Law? Are self-perpetuating cliques and hierarchies inevitable in psychoanalytic institutes? I don't think they are. But we need to be aware of how the law works, and to take deliberate steps to counter what is clearly a powerful trend. Above all, we must keep in mind that the law can be effectively challenged only through an open nominating process and open elections. This is increasingly rare in American psychoanalysis. NYPSI now has a director, for example, but the director is neither nominated nor elected. The director is *chosen* by a nominating committee. The committee's members are elected, but that is where the democratic process stops. Last spring some of us, alarmed by the implications of an increasingly closed system, made a considerable effort to elect a nominating committee that would entertain alternatives to self-perpetuating oligarchy. But rather than choosing a director with a more open view of governance, or even reappointing the previous director, the committee appointed a third

candidate who many of us feel is just as identified (or *more* identified) with the ruling oligarchy than his predecessor.

The great sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset once said that three questions from his socialist youth motivated much of the work for which he later became known. He wondered why revolutions against tyranny so often devolve into totalitarianism. He wondered why socialist movements abandon the policies that would further their goals. And he wondered why the United States, alone among industrialized countries, never developed a major socialist party. Michels' book, he said, gave him insight into the power of oligarchic tendencies and their relevance to his first two questions. Having recognized this, he realized on his own that a two-party system is an insufficient counterforce against them. It too easily marginalizes effective challengers as “third-party candidates,” or co-opts them into the (oligarchic) party structure.

This is why the governors, independent of their constituencies, are so dangerous, and why psychoanalytic institutes must seek out and cling to the greatest possible openness and accountability. Psychoanalysis is a demanding business. The educational process is long and taxing. It is difficult enough to sustain creativity under such burdensome circumstances. To sustain it in the context of rigid and authoritarian institutions is well-nigh impossible. Psychoanalysis is nothing if not an exploratory endeavor; transmission as an ideology guarantees stultification, and encourages the sectarianism and schismatics that have haunted psychoanalysis from the beginning.

The result of BoPS policies of exclusion and “analytical correctness” can be seen all too clearly in the waning influence of APsA itself. As mentioned previously, its members are getting older; this year, there are fewer members who still pay dues (1400)

than members who don't. And there are fewer and fewer young analysts to replace them. While APsaA's own institutes struggle bootlessly to maintain candidate market share, some non-APsaA institutes are burgeoning.

Worse, what candidates we do have are being trained in an unyielding and inflexible atmosphere that can only diminish creativity and inculcate rigidity in the new generation of analysts. I want to emphasize here Roustang's point that Freud's disagreements with his disciples stimulated some of his own most important contributions, among them *Totem and Taboo* and *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (Jung), *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety* (Rank) and *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (Ferenczi). His own development supports the view that ideological diversity is (potentially at least) as creative as it is destructive.

As we have seen, Robert Michels asserted in 1911 that a democratic organization will eventually come to be controlled by a small group of leaders who are autonomous of the majority of the members, the "Iron Law of Oligarchy." The aim of oligarchy is not the advancement of the organization, but the preservation of its own prerogatives and privileges. We can see Michels' law at work in the increasingly unaccountable and self-serving actions of BoPS. And in that recognition we can also begin to see the answer to our question about how one of the least attractive and productive aspects of Freud's personality has managed to perpetuate itself for so long, to the detriment of his greatest creation.

When communities must ingratiate themselves with self-perpetuating and autonomous oligarchies, self-determination is undermined in many ways. There is pressure to conform and the resulting loss of independent thinking. Free and open

discussion is hampered, and overall initiative declines. We have seen it happen in our institutes. It is time to stop it, lest the Iron Law prove unbreakable after all.

It has been widely argued that without its intensely concentrated original leadership, the young psychoanalysis might not have survived, let alone prospered. But like children, movements grow up. And like children, they do not necessarily thrive in maturity under the strict constraints that protected their earliest years. Certainly the narrow navel-gazing of the founding years is not serving psychoanalysis well today.

It has cut us off from the respect of our academic and medical colleagues. It encourages our members, and perhaps worse, our potential members, to rebuff us in favor of organizations that are less fearful of diversity and more open to democratic process.

Some will argue, I know, that modern psychoanalysis doesn't bear much resemblance to the IPA of the old days, especially given the absence of a single powerful leader like Freud. And in fact I think that the IPA has come a long way. It has adopted three different models for acceptable analytic training: Eitingon, French and Uruguayan models include some flexibility about the training analyst requirement. It is harder for oligarchy to flourish in a broader and more inclusive climate. But APsaA and its educational arm have remained closer to the early days of purges and exclusions. In fact the motivation behind the reorganization of APsaA in 1946, as I see it, was the need to assure that such the ideological touchstone of four-times-per-week analytic frequency would not be challenged; hence the exclusion of groups who understood the frequency issue as a practical consideration as opposed to an article of faith.

To this day, the chairs of the BoPS function as the leaders of a small cabal of Training Analyst/Fellows who control educational policies in psychoanalysis, the criteria

(including the definition of psychoanalysis) used by certification committees, eligibility requirements for training analysts, and approval of free-standing institutes. The BoPS oligarchy is self-perpetuating.

The oligarchic intent of BoPS, as well as its oligarchic power, cannot be denied since the Board of Directors' 2013 challenge to this system. Remember that the Board of Directors represents all APsaA members, who were not happy and wanted a change. But a group of BoPS Fellows went to court to oppose the challenge on the grounds that the 1946 bylaws vested them with absolute educational autonomy. Their position was affirmed by a judge and upheld on appeal. Thus the BoPS oligarchy liberated itself from the organization that had originally empowered it; the fact that a majority of APsaA members and their elected representatives objected to the system did not move BoPS to consider amending it. Perpetuation of its own power took precedence over the needs of the organization as a whole.

This attitude obviously does not bode well for democracy in APsaA, the oldest psychoanalytic institution in the U.S. But it doesn't bode well for APsaA, either, including, ultimately, the oligarchy at the heart of it. Some APsaA institutes are now so unattractive to potential (dues-paying) candidates that it is estimated by the COI, Committee on Institutes, that within ten years one-third of APsaA institutes will have failed.

A science becomes an ideology when it insists on allegiance to claims beyond those established by the science. The upside, and the temptation, of ideology is that membership in a narrowly focused, energized group can be exciting and gratifying. The

downside is that ideology depends on narrow focus, and so encourages conformity and discourages dissent.

Psychoanalysis itself recognizes this in its clinical practice, at least up to a point; that is why to convey explicitly religious or political ideology is a no-no in treatment. But conveying psychoanalytic ideology is an equal, if less frequently acknowledged, danger, because it diminishes the analyst's and the analysand's freedom to explore. Fleck and Mannheim, and the other students of the sociology of knowledge have made it clear that all knowledge is influenced by social, historical, cultural, personal, and psychological factors. But that does not give us license to abuse these factors. On the contrary, we need to be aware of them precisely so as to be able to minimize their potential distortive impact.

Where is the line, then between psychoanalysis as a way of understanding (whether it be scientific, artistic, philosophical, or just intellectual) and psychoanalysis as ideology? In my view, psychoanalytic theory begins to look like ideology when exploration, testing, and challenge are suppressed. Certainly psychoanalysis as practice comes close to ideology when the analyst attempts to indoctrinate the patient with foreordained assumptions at the expense of mutual exploration. Yet if these foreordained assumptions have been imposed by his training on the analyst himself, what choice does he have? To complicate matters further, “wild” analysis may equally be a kind of indoctrination. Freud warned against both, but it has been my experience that some psychoanalysts have such a strong belief in the truth of what they believe to be psychoanalytic givens—whether the conventional ones or the wild ones—that they demand agreement about them from their patients.

Melitta Sperling, for example, seems to have been so convinced that psychosomatic illnesses were caused by specific intrapsychic conflicts that she interpreted according to that conviction rather than the associations of her analysands. I remember her explanation to an ulcerative colitis patient of his bloody diarrhea: He was ingesting his mother and turning her into shit. Psychoanalysis stops being a method of investigation when the analyst is more interested in transmitting his own ideas and conflicts than in exploring the analysand's.

But as the Sperling example clearly illustrates, you can't preclude this kind of thing even by the most orthodox training in the world. On the contrary, pressure for orthodoxy, by suppressing critical thinking, may paradoxically encourage “wild” excursions. If we want to be careful, responsible, and responsive analysts, we must turn a skeptical eye upon our own ideas as well as those of others, at the same time that we keep vested interests from invisibly imposing their ideologies on us for the sake of their own perpetuation.

I want to end on a more hopeful and positive note about the future of psychoanalysis. There are many analysts for whom psychoanalysis is neither ideology or theology, but rather an intellectually stimulating and emotionally rewarding endeavor—a human and humane endeavor, in which convention is enlivened by creative challenge and innovation is disciplined by tradition. And in that form it is too valuable to lose. I once co-produced a *60 Minutes* segment on psychoanalysis in which Charles Brenner was asked, “What does psychoanalysis offer?” “It can be a matter of life and death,” Brenner replied.

That being so, it matters a great deal that we rescue it from its decline and install it again as an important instrument for the relief of pain. Does it really matter if psychoanalysis is a science? An art? A philosophy? A world view? Not much, in my view, intriguing though those questions may be. What does matter is that the line between science (or art, or philosophy, or weltanschauung) and ideology is such a very fine one. As the history of psychoanalysis has shown us over and over again, we cross it at grave danger to ourselves and our field. All ideologies give rise to dissension, and we need to heal dissension now—both the dissension from without and the dissension among ourselves. Yet until we make careful note of where the line between theory and ideology lies, we are at constant risk of ending up on the wrong side.

Psychoanalysis in this country has seen one ideological war after another, and it has survived them, although not always gracefully. But we can't go on this way. If we continue to hide from the scrutiny of outsiders, they will continue to distrust us. Furthermore, ideology is inextricably associated with oligarchy, and the power of oligarchy in American psychoanalysis is growing. It is extraordinary that BoPS should have turned to the courts before its own community over a matter of governance. No wonder psychoanalysis is treated more and more by potential patients, colleagues, and students like an unpleasant and not-quite-kosher cult.

We have to challenge this kind of thinking if we are to take back our role as thinkers and healers, inspired by the radical independence of Freud's thought. We can't do that as ideologues, however, because ideology is never independent. Furthermore, oligarchy owns ideology. Science, art, and philosophy are capacious and welcoming houses; all kinds of thought have been welcomed and sheltered beneath their broad roofs.

Ideology, however, is by definition exclusionary; it establishes acceptable ways of thinking and uses narrowly centralized power structures to enforce them. This is why it lends itself more readily to oligarchic rule than to democratic process. Oligarchy and ideology are two sides of a self-perpetuating coin. They are not healthy for democracy, and they are not healthy for psychoanalysis. It is time to step back and reclaim our citizenship in the larger intellectual world of curiosity, creativity, and freedom.

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