

The QUESTION OF LAY ANALYSIS SIXTY-SIX YEARS LATER

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Sixty-six years after Freud wrote his small text on lay analysis we are, in America at least, finally, if not definitively, putting the question to rest. Putting it to rest, however, does not mean letting it be. For although we have established the right, as well as the possibility, of non-medically trained persons to both practice and enrich psychoanalysis, there are still some significant end battles to be won. I do not need to belabor the issue by speaking to the fact of some psychologists, particularly in New York State, wanting, not too long ago, to take up the fallen mantle from physicians, and with a sense of loyalty to the profession that excluded them for so long, entertain a re-edition of the old fight, now against non-psychologists practicing psychoanalysis. When this issue has been finally settled there may be, I suspect, some remaining difficulties with other groups who, seemingly unaware of the mechanism of identification with the aggressor, will undoubtedly find new reasons why only they should practice this profession.

You will no doubt have noticed a mild polemical tone to my introductory remarks. I have, in doing this, tried to capture Freud's manner of discussing the question of non-medically trained practitioners engaged in this humanistic science that was his brainchild. He is repeatedly dismissive toward medical practitioners, while simultaneously recognizing the value of basic physiology courses, combined with knowledge of the biology of sexuality. He appreciates the need for

medical diagnosis in certain difficult cases while foregoing the linear cause and effect biological model that doctors, of necessity, must learn. That Freud is enraptured by his own theories of the mind, dismissing both Jung and Adler out of hand, was, we now recognize, a serious shortcoming. And in making the Oedipal complex the fulcrum of a correctly trained psychoanalyst, he inadvertently (?) closed off other more primal childhood experiences from contributing to our understanding of human development and existence.

I will shortly summarize Freud's theoretical arguments in favor of lay analysis; I am well aware, as we all are, that today we have many psychoanalytic models of human development available to us. All of which proves, minimally, that he found the right continent and pointed in the right direction. Today we have more routes. Besides neurotic conflicts, we address the range of borderline pathologies, schizoid phenomena and narcissistic conflicts. Should this change Freud's evaluation of the non-medical practitioner? Despite the theoretical, geographical and professional growth of psychoanalysis - an indication that we are still alive behind the couch - Freud's arguments, as advanced in this text, still prevail. And they are applicable not only as a statement of desire, or possibility, but of fact.

There are, as we all know, many "lay" analysts practicing in the world today. And while we all appreciate the need for professionalism and integrity in our training, issues that need perennial attention, any exclusionary policy will have to withstand the force of Freud's cogent arguments. Nothing in our continuous studies, these past sixty-six years, has proved Freud wrong in his thesis.

When Freud addresses the issue as to who can study psychoanalysis he does so with a broad brush: social workers and psychologists, philosophers, historians as well as theologians; even women, Freud notes, of no academic background but of outstanding life experience and exceptional personality. Clearly Freud had a different science in mind than our Western culture was accustomed to. Freud argues that if such people have trustworthiness, a quality which transcends academic credentials, and if they have a personal analysis and complete a course of studies, at the time of his written, a two year period, they can, under supervision of an older analyst, practice this science and thus be “laymen” no longer. In providing the models of transference and counter-transference psychoanalysis offers the possibility of correcting any abuse of authority inherent in a relationship where a “healthy” physician heals a “sick” patient.

It is interesting to note that although most training in psychoanalytic institutes today lasts considerably longer than two years, not all of them, at least in the Freudian institutes, encompass the courses that Freud suggests. Courses, that is, in mythology, the history of ideas, basic physiology and anatomy. In fact, without a fair knowledge of western mythological and/or religious symbols Freud questions whether one can “hear” the unconscious of another at all. Many Freudian institutes, in America at least, have concentrated on conveying a body of clinical technique. In doing so, however, they are in danger of passing on uninventive and/or stereotypical procedures, at the expense of a continuous creative re-discovery of this humanistic science. Along with trustworthiness, (p.244) an analyst must have, Freud notes, “much skill,

patience, calm and self-abnegation” (p.227). Academic degrees do not seem to guarantee such qualities.

Freud speaks of his psychoanalysts as secular pastoral workers, part of a psychoanalytic army, which was to conquer mankind’s neurotic terrain. He hoped that his new science would heal the splits in the ego caused by childhood repression. Thus burdened humanity would be better equipped to enter adulthood with more energy and with a liberated as well as integrated experience of desire.

Freud specifies that an analytic patient is not like a medical patient in that neurosis is a result of un-integrated desire due to ignorance, splitting and repression, rather than physical abnormalities or infectious diseases. The “doctor,” therefore, for these ‘illnesses of the ego’ has to address early conflicts and repression. He must possess psychoanalytic knowledge as well as tact in order to bring the repressed to consciousness. One needs, Freud argues, no medical certification for such a task. Freud bolsters his polemic by stating that for a doctor to engage in such a treatment, without psychoanalytic training, is to practice quackery. Furthermore since interpretation then, as now, is normative as the primary tool for effecting of therapeutic change, one must understand that this new science could not be a derivative of medicine or of academic psychology. It is, rather, a new model of therapeutic intervention based on the power of words to sustain, as well as to foster, our understanding of our human potential.

Freud, in this text, (p.226) outlines his structural theory of the mind, id, ego, superego, in order to establish his procedures as a definitive ally of the ego functions; moderating, by way of understanding, the

instinctually which characterizes the id and the guilt which inhabits the superego.

Freud simplifies the complexity of psychic conflict with his two famous principles of “pleasure” and of “reality”. And although to speak of pleasurable satisfactions (p.201), as the goal of ego negotiations is somewhat simplistic it is, nevertheless a powerful operative in human existence. Furthering and fostering the autonomous and synthetic functions of the ego is as important today as it was over half a century ago. Today, however, one might attempt to do this with more of an eye on the relational dimensions of a patient’s life. “Our whole technique is directed to this aim,” Freud writes, (of restoring) the ego, free from its restrictions, (and in) command over the id which it lost owing to early repression”. (p.205) How much more strength does Freud’s arguments offer when we understand the analyst’s tasks today as addressing not only the very nature of mind but the titanic issues involved in the consolidation of becoming a person. Anyone familiar with the writings of the English object relations school, addressing schizoid patients, knows that the skills needed by an analyst encompass the sensitivity of a poet, the intellectual range of a philosopher, the discipline of a researcher, the patience of a medieval cathedral builder, the loyalty of a faithful dog and the humor of one who has learned, repeatedly, not to take him/herself too seriously. All these qualities, we know today, make an effective psychoanalyst. Freud’s new psychoanalytic salvation army (p.250), “his band of helpers for combating the neuroses of civilization” has more to do with the science of language and literature than the study of ligaments, aptitude or personality test evaluations, or unreflective advice.

Freud limits his discussion to the psychoneurosis; his core concept of transference is presented to show that the psychoanalyst's skill in understanding and interpreting is not related, or dependent upon, the possession of a medical degree. He notes that (the patient) "is reproducing (his old defensive actions) tangibly, as though it were actually happening, instead of remembering"(p.226) Thus psychoanalysts are, we could say, midwives of memory and as such they need to know man's cultural heritage, the language through which human beings organize experience, much more than his skeletal structure.

Near the end of his short treatise, Freud presents a rather democratic argument, somewhat in the tradition of *laissez-faire* capitalism, namely that of the open marketplace as the final determinant of whom patients will respect and to whom they will entrust their care. For a man who was not particularly in love with humanity and who distrusted the populace, this is a strong commitment. While we may not be quite so sanguine today, given the proliferation of therapeutic approaches facing the unsuspecting public, we can, within our own institutes, follow Freud's prescriptions and train whoever has the intellectual capacity, the ethical integrity and personal competency.

Finally Freud notes that many of his followers differ from his position on lay analysis; he simply disagrees with them. Actually he politely suggests that medical doctors might be suffering from competitive feelings with their non-medical colleagues. One might muse, now that the conflict seems over, whether the issue was more one of a narcissistic nature rather than simply sibling competition. Even though Freud was grossly misinformed and therefore critical of American lay

analysts, (p.258) he was, nevertheless, not deterred from his position. He likened the position of his medical followers in America to the process of repression and suggested, rather obviously, that training people was a better course, and much more psychoanalytic, than excluding and/or condemning them.

It was as we all know, only the use of a confrontational technique, the lawsuit, rather than Freud's interpretative one, which achieved the present status of recognition for non-medical analysts. That Freud was lied to by his American medical analysts, who claimed that there was a New York State law banning non-medical analysts, is, sadly, a black spot in our collective history. That Freud's own anti-American sentiments were not enough to dissuade him from what he most firmly believed in, should be, for us, a powerful instructive in our own understanding of the science he founded.

Summarizing Freud's arguments one can clearly say that he did not wish to make psychoanalysis subordinate to any other profession. Rather his call was to foster its professional integrity by enriching its training and by creating in the minds of those who practiced this science an identity as psychoanalysts. Once one has undergone a personal psychoanalysis, received theoretical and practical training and studied with a senior analyst, one is a psychoanalyst. This, in Freud's opinion, is the achievement of being, we could say, a "noun" rather than an adjective. We are not, consequently, psychoanalytic social workers, psychoanalytic psychologists, or psychoanalytic physicians. We are simply psychoanalysts, helped and informed by our previous studies but not defined by them. This, Freud implies, is solid enough ground for us to

stand on. We might add, today, that our fight is not to let insurance companies, or academic colleagues, compromise that ground.

I believe that is the “vision” which Freud offers in this text. I use the word “vision” advisedly. Whether it will have continued meaning for us will depend upon our hearing, our understanding and our capacity to respect the knowledge which has been passed down to us and which we also have an obligation to create. Such a noble task should take precedence over whatever background credentials or personal prejudices we may bring to it.

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