

Final Analysis: Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson pp 212, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. \$18.95

Review by: Gerald J. Gargiulo

Jeffrey Masson, whose *The Assault on Truth* brought him to national prominence, has finished his last dialogue - verging on a diatribe with official psychoanalysis. In this book he remembers, with much anger, his whirlwind experiences from being a professor of Sanskrit in Toronto, Canada to his training at the Toronto Psychoanalytic, to his personal friendships with Kurt Eissler and Anna Freud. In this abbreviated autobiography, from 1970 to 1980, we are witness to some of the most negative aspects of official psychoanalysis; we are not, however, made aware of any of its positive aspects. Some of Dr. Masson's observations are unassailable; his conclusions, when not suffering from serious flaws in logic, are consistently self-justifying and naive, if not outright ignorant.

Dr. Masson is quite right, I believe, in pointing out the antianalytic practice, operative in many of the International Psychoanalytical Association (I.P.A.) approved institutes, of having the personal analyst report back to the institute on the suitability of the candidate. The possible misuse of power entailed in this practice, the potential violation of confidentiality, as well as the inhibition of free-association, should be obvious to all. That it is not obvious is simply bewildering. Secondly, although it is impossible to judge the validity of Dr. Masson's account of his five day a week, five year analysis, if the reader discounts fifty percent of Dr. Masson's remembrances, one is left with an appalling picture of what might have occurred. Dr. Masson remembers, with the help of some notes, his analysis as consisting of his analyst intruding with his personal opinions into just about everything-particularly about other analysts. He would apparently start sessions at whatever time he pleased, as well as answer the phone with such frequency as to be insulting in a normal social visit, not to mention an analytic session. There is no mention of any quiet periods in the analysis, no encountering unconscious defense operations; some acknowledgment that dream interpretation was productive, but no indication as to how and certainly no indication that either analyst or patient got below a rather intellectualized/confrontive experience. If any transference was experienced, or possibly resolved, the reader is uninformed-quite a strange route for a psychoanalytic odyssey.

What is clear is that Dr. Masson, as he acknowledges at times, is not only unsuited for clinical work-he has no clinical sense whatsoever. He shows no understanding of what Freud alludes to as free-floating attention of one unconscious listening to another and certainly no cross-identificatory empathy with patients. For a man who claims to read Widely in the field, he seems to have missed the many volumes of Theodor Reik, Donald

Winnicott, as well as many other contemporary authors who address these issues. Finally, his misunderstanding of such basic topics as countertransference is puzzling. Dr. Masson seems to think that countertransference is some kind of narcissistic ploy, on the part of the analyst, to perpetuate an analytic propensity of blaming the patient. In his explanation the analyst is not responsible for feeling what he feels; it is the patient who is responsible for making him feel that way. Countertransference is, in fact, a means of understanding the patient's communication through the analyst's self-reflective awareness; it is another example of Freud's understanding that man's discourse is not limited to words but extends to unconscious emotional communications. Was Dr. Masson never exposed to the concept

of the analyst who is him/herself the analyzing instrument? Was he never taught that the role of theory is to help the practitioner organize his intellectual understanding and emotional reactions, and not to pigeonhole the patient? Could Dr. Masson's education be this sorely lacking? If psychoanalytic diagnosis is either psychiatric claptrap or blaming the patient, as Dr. Masson indicates, then, again, one can only wonder either as to Dr. Masson's capacity to understand complex topics or, finally, his good will.

That there are many psychoanalytic priests preaching dogma and establishing rituals is an unfortunate by-product of this strange and unique field. Dr. Masson justifiably criticizes the extremes of obsessive-compulsive rigidity, as well as the disregard for ethical standards when he countered them. He shows no awareness, however, of what most analysts are trying to do with their professional commitments and dismisses their therapeutic efforts as ineffective. Dr. Masson's conclusions, based on the singularity of his psychoanalytic experience, are about the whole field of psychoanalysis-of what every analyst can or cannot do -a puzzling jump in logic and a gross misrepresentation. Even within "official" psychoanalysis, as evidenced by IPA recognition, there are many tributaries, many different theoretical and operative models, studying the unconscious. For a person of Dr. Masson's broad-based intellectual/academic knowledge not to be critically aware of this, borders on the unbelievable.

Finally, Dr. Masson addresses his leaving psychoanalysis, his findings and conclusions as to why Freud abandoned the seduction theory, and his encounter with some dedicated psychoanalysts, notably Kurt Eissler and Anna Freud. Readers familiar with his *The Assault on Truth* will no doubt have some interest in the events surrounding Dr. Masson's dismissal from the Freud Archives and dismissal from various psychoanalytic organizations. While one can be sympathetic with Dr. Masson's outrage at what he experienced as political retaliation and ostracizing, one is nevertheless puzzled, again, by Dr. Masson's comprehension of this aspect of psychoanalytic understanding-i.e., oedipal fantasies and seduction realities. Analysts today recognize that where there has been actual seduction the oedipal complex is made much more painful and difficult to resolve. Whether or not there has been actual sexual abuse, however, does not invalidate the developmental task understood by the term oedipal complex. "Desire has a rendezvous with authority" in the philosopher Paul Ricoeur's words; sexual seduction is a tragic derailment from that experience. That Freud made the decision to concentrate on the intrapsychic oedipal model was, ultimately, a decision based on his personal analysis as well as scientific judgment. The oedipal complex model attempts to give some grounding to man's pervasive sexuality and murderous competitive rage. In reading the simplicity of Dr. Masson's statements, one has to remind oneself that this was an analyst trained in the 1970s. Did Dr. Masson actually meet analysts who had no capacity to ever recognize reality factors? Is Jeffrey Masson the only honest one among us?

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