

## **Psychoanalysis Never Developed in an "Average Expectable Environment"** **John S. Kafka, M.D.**

This conference deals with the analyst at work. The emphasis is on clinical work but analysts are also working as teachers in, and developers of psychoanalytic institutions and as students, researchers and theoreticians of the human mind.

Neither clinical psychoanalysis, nor psychoanalytic training, nor psychoanalytic theory building ever existed in an *average expectable environment*. Psychoanalysis was borne during the stormy beginnings of *modernity* in Vienna near the beginning of the twentieth century. Our history shows that interest in psychoanalysis and the growth of analytic movements are connected to rapid social and political change. During such times individual needs for psychoanalysis and some degree of flexibility in social and political structures coincide. Such favorable conditions often exist when autocratic regimes crumble. Germany after Hitler can serve as an example.

More recently, however, many Western analysts have been concerned with a *crisis in psychoanalysis* in their own countries. Some manifestations of this crisis are a smaller number of patients and candidates, fewer academic appointments of psychoanalysts and a lowering of the analysts' prestige. Some Western analysts were particularly troubled by a lack of response to their personal enthusiasm for psychoanalysis at home. It is not surprising that at a time of crisis of analysis in the West, Eastern Europe, a vast region alive with enthusiasm for psychoanalysis began to attract the interest of some Western analysts. While the changes are different, the depth and the speed of change in Eastern Europe since the fall of the iron curtain come close to those seen at the very birth of psychoanalysis. My point is that the absence of an *average expectable environment* in Eastern Europe has provided, and continues to provide favorable conditions for the development of psychoanalysis. The wish for contact with this energizing atmosphere was one of the factors that motivated some Western analysts to work and teach in the "East." Family roots were also a factor for some.

Han Groen-Prakken and I became co-chairs of the IPA's East European Committee in 1988, but at first our committee did not receive much support because of the belief in some quarters that prevailing circumstances in much of Eastern Europe would cripple efforts to develop psychoanalysis. Most of our work was delayed until 1990. Anybody eager to work in Eastern Europe obviously did not believe the myth that analysis could only prosper only in an *average expectable environment*, (I will call it AAE from now on) a phrase often referring to a more or less steady bourgeois Western societal structure. This myth, however, has often contributed to skepticism concerning the viability of psychoanalysis outside some early and specific centers, Vienna, Berlin and perhaps Budapest. Freud himself was not absolutely opposed to some experimental modifications of analytic techniques in different cultures, for instance India, and he was never a die-hard opponent of some "psychoanalytic adventurism." Freud could be called, however an *equal opportunity skeptic*. In an unsigned *Rundbrief*, an IPA circular letter from 1923, the IPA secretary (I believe it was Otto Rank) writes something like this: "The Professor says we should accept the group in Moscow. For one thing, we might be able to at least have some control over them. Of

course some members of the group are quite terrible, both personally and professionally, but they cannot possibly be worse than the people in New York.” (Incidentally, as a trustee of the Freud archives at the Library of Congress in Washington, I want to call your attention to the fact that almost the whole archives are now accessible. Trustees cannot write first about this material because they should not exploit their position that affords them first access to declassified material. Even Freud Scholarship does not exist in an AAE because newly available and so far untranslated material promises some startling developments in this field.

To return to Han, our committees and myself, in order to start work in the "East" (including but not limited to Russia), but we also had to react against attempts to get us involved in any political power or "turf" issues, such as an IPA versus "Europe" competition. The fact that Han Groen-Prakken was also during some time president of the EPF and the first chair of the EPF's East European Committee was a strong defense against possible divisiveness. Many decisions were taken in joint EFF - IFA Committee meetings.

We had to collect information about ongoing and unreported activities of Western analysts in the East, and learned that an increasing number of Western analysts visited budding analytic groups, consulted on clinical cases and presented clinical or theoretical papers. These visits were generally appreciated, but their usefulness was sometimes limited because the locations chosen and the timing of the visits were often chosen by analysts more for their own touristic preferences than for educational psychoanalytic needs. A visitor's latest sophisticated analytic paper was sometimes not the best choice for a beginning group. Polite reception was sometimes misunderstood as wish for deeper and prolonged contact and some Western input was experienced as too controlling and sometimes as patronising. Many "Westerners" who were used to fairly open mutual expressions of criticism were also confused by the absence or paucity of feed-back, a relic of the old political regime. Occasionally we had to pass on to the visiting analysts some information that could only have been gathered locally, for instance that their close contact with politically tainted, but influential individuals who could assemble a large audience for the visitor's presentation, would be harmful to the young psychoanalytically oriented group.

While welcoming the educational contributions from individuals and psychoanalytic societies, we also had to react against some competing attempts to "colonize" the East by psychoanalytic missionaries representing *exclusive* ideological or national psychoanalytic orientations (Kleinian, Ego-Psychological, French, German, etc.) Today most *orientations* are well represented in summer schools and seminars and East European candidates may well be exposed to a broader perspective than many candidates in the West.

As you know the greatest challenge to our educational project was, of course, the absence or dearth of local analysts, analytic teachers and individuals ready to function as training analysts. In some locations one or several heroic underground analyst had kept some analytic tradition alive. But usually they had also been isolated and cut off from decades of developments in psychoanalysis. Sometimes these persons still idealized an old myth of an AEE (average expectable environment.) While "heroic underground analysts" were invited to participate in the new educational effort, it was important, but sometimes difficult to combine diplomatically respect for the

achievement of keeping analysis alive *and* recognizing limitations resulting from this isolation.

The absence of training analysts, the presence of well educated eager potential analytic candidates, many of whom had already become sophisticated *connoisseurs* of psychoanalysis, presented us with the challenge of inventing an unconventional *laboratory of psychoanalytic education* that we had to sell as an experiment to the IPA and the EPF. Two steps were essential for the development of this educational program. The implementation of these steps demanded a great amount of work from committees of the EPF, the IPA and East European colleagues. In brief, the steps were:

- 1) Rigorous evaluation of individuals on the basis of their knowledge and performance and relative neglect of the usually specified pathways that led to their level of knowledge and functioning.
- 2) Organization of the *shuttle* and *condensed* training-analysis arrangements, partly in response to the fact that some who had their training in the West, chose to remain abroad.

Over the years, *ad hoc* ways of operating evolved into guidelines and more or less flexible requirements and regulations. They formed the basis of the ever more clearly formulated standards and regulations of the *Han Groen-Prakken Institute* established to function as the educational institution wherever study groups do not yet exist. Now there is a newly recognized Czech Component Society, a Belgrade Provisional Society, a Polish Provisional Society, a Romanian Study Group and a Croatian Study Group. One of the greatest idealizing *myths* about psychoanalytic organizations would be that they ever function in a stable peaceful manner. Vaclav Mikota has written that he saw a clear connection between the violent in-fighting within the Prague group after psychoanalysis was no longer threatened by the suppressive political regime on the one hand, and the earlier artificial forced cohesion that was necessary for survival. He even questions if the price paid for the underground survival was not too high. Might the group have been better off to start from a new beginning, rather to try to build on what was salvaged.? The stakes may have been higher in some "Eastern" locations, but the infighting and splitting of psychoanalytic groups when they are not threatened by particularly vicious external circumstances is familiar everywhere in the real and not *mythical* average expectable environment.

Finally I want to emphasize to what extent, basic, clinical and applied psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory do not operate in a stable "AEE" (average expectable environment,) but are profoundly, although sometimes slowly, altered by new scientific developments. Freud used the science, the apparatuses and the engineering of his day to construct his models of the mind, the hydraulic model, for instance and the magic writing pad. He was familiar with Einstein's relativity theory and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, but warned against the premature and simplistic use of these developments in analytic theory building. We cannot neglect, and neither would Freud if he were alive today, some non-reductionistic neurobiological advances, complexity and chaos theory, new approaches to the study of consciousness, nor the discovery of spoken languages that seem to be "primary process" languages. I also speculate that today Freud would not ignore Heisenberg's pertinence to psychoanalysis. "Uncertainty" is an inaccurate translation. The German word *unbestimmt* means "indeterminate," but also refers to what does not have a *Stimme*, a voice. We are not uncertain about the world in this context, but the world is

not fixed, a concept much closer to psychoanalysis that names and gives voice to the idea and the affect. The list of new paradigms and findings pertinent to psychoanalysis could go on and on. Psychoanalysis can so well accommodate the widening and accelerating explorations precisely because it is an inherently open system. As the "Freudian" slip already illustrates, the theoretical possibility always exists that what had seemed accidental may be "meaningful" and vice-versa, and that this series is never closed.

We have to be careful not to be stuck in Vienna's *old* modernity in our contacts with the newly developing groups in the East for they are developing in a world open to the new post-modern "*modernity*". Is any of this pertinent to clinical psychoanalysis? In subtle ways, I believe, it is. In every session we implicitly explore individual epistemology, how the individual *knows*. And how the analysand and the analyst *know*, can never be disconnected from the current knowledge that surrounds us. Andre Green writes about *le temps eclate*, the sparkling explosion of meaning in the psychoanalytic moment. This resonates, I believe with the theory of some cosmologists who have replaced the search for what happened in the ever shorter time before "the big bang. " with the hypothesis that the big bang of the creative moment is always *now* .. Psychoanalysis too exists in the ever new now and never in an average expectable environment.