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A Response to Shmuel Erlich's 'Issues of "Grey" Psychoanalytic Training'
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Shmuel Erlich's statement must be viewed in the context of the 'Final Education Motion', unanimously approved by the IPA Board of Representatives on 26 July 2005. By this decision, the discussion of 'minimal' versus 'optimal' training regulations was put on a new level.

Erlich wonders whether the primary aspiration of the IPA is to *increase the number* of psychoanalysts within its ranks, or to safeguard and uphold *high standards* of psychoanalysis. Although these two intentions are not mutually exclusive, they can and do create serious conflicts. Many conflicts have resulted from the formidable expansion of psychoanalysis. The acceptance of pluralism is a very recent development within the IPA. Sandler's definition, that psychoanalysis is what psychoanalysts do, is a pragmatic one. His addition, that this applies only to analysts trained within IPA-recognized institutes, cannot be upheld today.

To call the many institutes outside the IPA 'grey' is disparaging. I seriously doubt that most of the training institutes recognized by the IPA provide an education that fulfils Freud's legacy in our time. There has been serious criticism of the standards of IPA training institutes for decades. The present crisis of psychoanalysis is mainly homemade and is a consequence of serious educational shortcomings, especially in the realm of research. One significant result of these shortcomings is the lack of reliable criteria to evaluate psychoanalytic competence.

From 1999 onwards, some, principally Latin American, psychoanalytical societies started an initiative to change the 'minimal standards' into 'optimal standards', requesting that constituent societies of the IPA should be allowed to reduce the number of sessions of training analysis from 4–5 to three sessions each week. This issue is now at the centre of a world-wide discussion within the IPA.

In response, the DPV Central Training Committee expressed their unanimous and firm conviction that the future of psychoanalysis can only be secured by maintaining the IPA's present 'minimal' standard of four sessions of training analysis each week (see Brodbeck 2005). Thus the acquisition of psychoanalytical competence is made dependent on the frequency of sessions.

I wonder about two things here: (1) the idealization of the training standards of the IPA and (2) the unique role ascribed to the training analysis for the development of a comprehensive psychoanalytic competence.

Many analysts do not share the opinion of the DPV representatives about the high standards of training in the IPA. J. Levy, editor of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, has written:

I am convinced of the need to overhaul an antiquated psychoanalytic educational system ... [which] is largely uninspiring, uninviting, prohibitively expensive, frequently infantilizing and rife with conflict of interest among participants ... (2004: 8)

This is not a new viewpoint. Since Balint's critical papers (1948, 1954), many colleagues have requested reforms. When I wrote 'Training analysis and psychoanalytic education: proposals for reform' (1993), there were about 150 references altogether, an indication that the topic of reform has been a consistent concern in the IPA (see also Thomä and Kächele, 1999; Kächele and Thomä, 2000). Changes of the training system have been advocated in discussions and papers for years – with no consequence in reality.

For too long, the opportunity was missed to introduce proper psychoanalytic research methods into the curriculum. The 'hallowed tripartite model' (Wallerstein, 1993: 175) – training analysis, supervision and courses – remained unchanged for half a century.

It is very strange to make the most private part of the training – namely the personal analysis, its frequency and duration – the main source of the professional competence and attitude. Before any correlation can be established between them, competence should be independently evaluated. A violinist is solely evaluated on performance, not on the time it took him or her to master it. Otto Kernberg (1996, 2000) requested a similar evaluation for our profession. The implied criteria for the evaluation of candidates should be made explicit; yet, for decades, defining criteria to evaluate psychoanalytic competence has been neglected. Tuckett's pioneering attempt to investigate analytic competence empirically was published only as recently as 2005.

From our history, we know that many analysts with a high reputation in the professional community have not had a long, high-frequency personal analysis. Most members of the first and second post-war generation of German analysts had a brief training analysis. I had a short analytically oriented psychotherapy in the late 1940s with the only IPA psychoanalyst living in West Germany – Felix Schottlaender. This therapy, and my work at the Heidelberg Psychosomatic University Hospital was my initial training. During a stay in London in 1962, a deepening of my self-knowledge experienced definitely as a therapy with M. Balint amounted to about 230 sessions, five times a week.

Before the influence of the training analysis on professional competence can be studied, the latter must be evaluated. Yet the training analysis, as the most private part of professional competence, lies outside of formal investigations. Recently I argued for granting the training analysis a special, completely private space outside of any institutional power and knowledge:

... candidates should have the liberty to decide about issues regarding their analysis – which is to be an absolutely private matter – from beginning to end. Training analyses of any length and frequency would thus no longer be an issue ... The evaluation of candidates' professional quality would no longer be tied to the judgments about their personality and its modification in therapy. It is insufficient to abolish the unethical reporting system that clearly violates the analyst's duty to maintain confidentiality. The discretion is absolutely necessary to protect the therapeutic space that training analyses have not had so far. (Thomä, 2005a: 219)

This 'liberation' from strict, externally defined rules is based on the trust I have for the honesty of training analysts and candidates. This could be misused, but the present possible distortion of the aims of the training analysis is probably worse. If candidates are patients, they should have a right to negotiate the frequency of sessions. I have never argued against a deep, dense and long analysis, but I strongly oppose an unsubstantiated, probably false justification for it. It is a widespread belief that only an analysis of 4–5 sessions a week, which explores the candidates' psychotic levels, enables therapists to make use of countertransference in order to psychoanalyse very ill patients. This argument makes clinical competence completely dependent on

the goal of the training analysis according to a very controversial hypothesis, namely the psychotic core. It is unethical to request that a candidate undergo a 'supertherapy' (Balint), based on a dubious concept, as a prerequisite for his or her profession.

The dilemma of the training analysis derives from a confusion between therapeutic goals and professional qualifications. It cannot be the business of educational institutions to make qualifications dependent upon the diagnosis of the person. I agree with Kernberg (2000) when he writes that 'candidates with narcissistic character pathology, for example, may require more than two or three years of personal analysis ...' However, I strongly reject the notion that a training committee is either competent to diagnose the pathology of a candidate or justified in doing so. Nor is it entitled to request a 'psychoanalytic purification' (Freud, 1912: 12) with regard to the countertransference in the Freudian or in the – opposite – post-Kleinian sense.

The DPV statement argues that the density of the therapeutic relationship allows 'the world at large to acknowledge the specificity of psychoanalysis and its fundamental difference to other psychotherapy methods' (see Brodbeck 2005). But the public and the scientific community are not interested in the frequency and duration of the training analysis. Prospective patients are interested in the therapeutic effectiveness of the method, while the scientific community is interested in the truth of psychoanalytic theories.

Finally, the analysts of DPV Central Training Committee:

... urgently request the members of the Board of Representatives ... To adhere to the present 'minimal training' standards; to be open to initiatives that allow new training models to be tested alongside research projects to ensure that training with new aims leads to an evident and unmistakable specifically psychoanalytical competency; To make every effort to organize a far-reaching inter-regional discussion of these models and initiatives so as to regain a clear and standardized understanding among the IPA members of the specificity of psychoanalysis. (Brodbeck 2005)

I would be the last person to reject research, but I doubt whether such a complicated process–outcome design would be feasible. Professional competence would first

have to be evaluated, which, in itself, would be a very important task (see Thomă, 2005b).

It seems, that the recent decision of the IPA to acknowledge three training models – the Eitingon, the French and the Uruguayan – stabilizes the situation as it is, i.e. without changing the various and different fundamental short-comings. There is a tendency in the IPA to leave everything as it is. In addition there is a discrepancy in some of the propositions of the IPA. How can one test new models while at the same time adhering to the old models, which allegedly are the only ones securing psychoanalytic competence and identity? Indeed, it might be that this is an area where our knowledge is sufficient to alter the training programs. Fifty years of critical discussions of the unbalanced training system have led to a firm enough knowledge to realize changes *now*. Well-founded propositions for reforms have been made for decades. It is high time to realize them.

I dare to interpret the inconsistencies in the discussion about minimal standards: to stick to 'minimal standards' defined by an open-ended, seemingly aimless training analysis at a frequency of at least four times a week would furnish a *quantitative measure* of what true, 'strict', 'non-tendentious' psychoanalysis is about. Sandler and Dreher (1996) called this aimless analysing a self-deception. In the era of psychoanalytic pluralism, even extreme subjectivism, such a self-deception would re-establish the lost unity of the 'movement', while excluding thousands of psychoanalysts trained outside the IPA from being true analysts. It is much easier to define numbers than to investigate qualitative differences between analysts of any provenance. If a number is equated with the highest possible standard, Freud's (1921: 102. 1930: 113) 'narcissism of small differences' sets in and destroys family ties. Accepting a flexible handling of the frequency of sessions for candidates brings about a self-experience which reflects the contemporary practice of all analysts within and outside the IPA.

To secure the future of psychoanalysis, everything should be done to support the far-sighted politics of the IPA towards integration of psychoanalytic schools and their members excluded from the mainstream in the course of our history. Shmuel Erlich's and the analogous statement of the DPV do not facilitate reaching that aim, to say the least.

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