

## **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

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### **THE PSYCHOANALYTIC PROCESS AND INTERIORITY: INHERENT CHALLENGES AND RESISTANCES**

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We have spent the last day and a half discussing questions and thoughts that arose in response to the theme of the conference: 'Confronting the Challenges to Psychoanalysis.' It has been a stimulating, rich, and rewarding experience to which I will add a few remarks as we bring this conference to a close. I will present to you my reflections, deliberately phrased descriptively. I will not present to you a scientific paper. Instead, I will seek to give expression to the spirit of psychoanalytic inquiry and dialogue as I see them.

Many years ago a teacher from whom I learned much told me, "When questions and challenges arise, go back to basics. Ask, 'Where did I start out from? What was essential in the starting point; what is essential in the questions?'" That directive, 'Go back to basics,' has served me repeatedly in the years since then. And, as I began my reflections about challenges to psychoanalytic thinking and to the psychoanalytic endeavor, I found myself, again, hearing my teacher's words.

Hence, I start with the question: What is basic to the psychoanalytic endeavor? What did the psychoanalytic pioneers set out to do? Confronted with persons with distressing symptoms that they did not consider to be of biological origin, they explored the patient's inner world; they sought causes within the person. Their explorations of the patient's inner world led to descriptions of psychological processes that occurred outside awareness, to the formulation of an extensive theory of unconscious processes, of those unconscious processes' effects on consciousness and on the formation and functioning of personality. Their explorations further led to articulation of an extensive description of practice about how to reach those dynamics and how to bring them to consciousness. Psychoanalysis emerged as a theory of the unconscious and its influence in human life and as a theory of clinical practice centered around those unconscious dynamics.

The new theory was deliberately placed in the sphere of science, which bestowed respectability. However, the contributions of the humanistic tradition (the arts-especially literature, history, the study of religions, philosophy, and mythology) to the work of the psychoanalytic pioneers were extensive and were acknowledged freely. When Freud was addressed as the discoverer of the unconscious when he was awarded the Goethe Prize in 1930, he rejected that title and referred to the poets, storytellers, and thinkers of earlier generations. It is from Greek drama, from Oedipus Rex, that a central dynamic in psychoanalytic theory was named.

To the pioneers, the literary tradition was a profound source of knowledge about human nature, conflicts, dilemmas, struggles and attempts at resolution, a source of knowledge of great influence on developing theory- actually of greater influence than the scientific knowledge about personality at the time. The process of inner exploration, which we now call the psychoanalytic process, is related to the tradition of the age-old, human quest for inner knowledge, for inner truth, for coherence between inner dynamics and outer life. Freud's self-analysis, Jung's self-analysis, and the analytic explorations of their co-workers and the first analysands: Were they processes for seeking inner knowledge and better understanding of self? Were they treatment for troubling states of mind? Were they research into human nature? I see them as searches for inner understanding, for coherence

in one's life. Those processes yielded treatment for psychological troubles, and they yielded knowledge about human nature.

The psychoanalytic engagement is, fundamentally, a process of exploring conscious and unconscious spheres. It is a verbal process and occurs within the interpersonal context of the analytic dyad, with the primary purpose of exploring and understanding the inner world of the person seeking to know, of the analysand. It is a process that yields understanding and that leads to an inner standpoint from which a person leads her life; it leads to a position of interior orientation, a position of interiority. Such a process leading to a stance of interiority can provide treatment for disturbances resulting from conflict or developmental deficits or trauma. The stance of interiority can also provide a greater sense of coherence and congruence in life. Attainment of such a sense of coherence gives benefits beyond the relief from disturbance.

Theorists on human nature, on human development and functioning hold differing views of what one might find in such an exploration. They also hold differing views on how to explore productively. I will not address the content of theoretical perspectives. I focus today on dynamics and process, not on content of what is encountered nor on the specifics of the process.

Full engagement in inner exploration requires motivation, commitment, perseverance, and courage. The most immediate motivator is typically distressing disturbance: We enter the analytic process because we are troubled. Yet a more basic search for knowledge, a desire to understand oneself must accompany that immediate motivator. Both perseverance and courage are essential. What one encounters during this process covers a wide area and contains much that is shadowy, dark, hard, unpleasant, troublesome, and scary. But one also encounters that which is pleasing, caring, resolving, soothing, and healing. The outcome of the process is attainment of an interior standpoint; this stance of interiority brings an inner demand, so to speak, to live by the understanding that 2 derives from the process. As the person follows the awareness and demands of the interior position, she will move away from a routinized, conventional, collective point of view. She may find herself at odds with her environment.

The process of exploration, the development of interiority, is energized by striving for development, the human sense of being curious, of wanting to know and to explore. At the same time it goes counter to the basic conservatism of human nature; it goes counter to the pull of stasis, the pull toward sameness that is typically human. Intrapsychically, then, the person seeking exploration is in a paradoxical position, pulled between opposites-pulled toward exploration by striving to know and develop, and pulled toward the status quo by a tendency to stay the same. Beyond experiencing this intrapsychic paradox, the person may face an external dilemma: Interiority will put the person at odds with her environment wherever the environment values the collective, the conventional. Interiority is generally not valued in institutionalized, dogmatic, structured, defined systems with a well-established sense of right, of wrong, of the workable.

The process of inner exploration, the development of interiority, then, inevitably faces

resistances from within (the pull toward stasis) and from without (the pull toward collective conformity), resistances that are part and parcel of the endeavor.

That which pertains to the individual process of exploration also pertains to the field that values and offers it. The psychoanalytic enterprise as a field engenders and encounters the same resistances found in individual engagement. Where the individual faces opposing pulls, namely the pull to know and to change versus the pull to stay the same, the psychoanalytic enterprise as a whole analogously faces opposing pulls: the pull to extend, to deepen its knowledge and practice versus the pull to remain within the stability of what we know. Orthodoxies seek the stability of knowing, revisers/extenders of theory and practice follow the pull to know differently, additionally. Being true to the process of exploration and internal orientation calls for looking beyond established theory and practice, for searching in the unknown. There is naturally so much that is unknown, and new developments will and must emerge. Questions and uncertainties challenge us toward exploration unless we succumb to the pull of the security of what we already know. Desire to know and commitment to exploration can compel us to explore and can energize us in the process.

In the early years of psychoanalysis, the institutional climate did not support full exploration of theory. Dogmatism, counter to the spirit of exploration, reigned in many places. Such institutional pull toward sameness engenders resistance to the psychoanalytic process. In the early years, extenders and revisers were generally expelled or they left inhospitable environments. There has been a shift toward more open debate in many institutes and especially in our journals. Extenders and revisers are no longer routinely ejected. Diversity of questions and exploration is present. Diverse theories are contained within the analytic field.

Challenges arising outside the field come from various directions, ranging from the societal stance that seeks the stability of sameness and that challenges self-exploration, to those that arise from related fields which look at the phenomena of human life from a different angle or through a different lens. The latter challenges stimulate the ongoing process of exploration as they can extend and deepen, focus or refocus, direct or redirect our explorations. Even when they reach us in dismissive or attacking form, they can serve us well to the extent to which we seriously consider and explore them.

Challenges and questions from within or outside the field are part of the process on two levels: fundamentally, questions always belong to exploration; beyond that, they express human paradox, opposing tendencies in us—the striving to know and the striving to stay the same. We are typically receptive to searching, forward-moving questions, to the ones that are a fundamental part of the process. Questions of the second type, reflecting the paradox of the endeavor, give us more trouble; they present a basic resistance to the process.

Challenges and questions must be taken seriously. They are part of the process of the personal search as well as of the field as a whole. They require that we refine, extend, deepen our knowledge, look in additional directions and with a lens that has been

refocused or with a different lens. They require that we seek to understand resistances to the process when we think those are their source. If we want to be true to the spirit of exploration, we cannot dismiss any of them, but we must engage with them in a spirit of exploration. When we strive to live, think, and work from a fundamental commitment to explore and to seek understanding from this commitment to an interior perspective, then we are forever engaged in looking, thinking, and differentiating. The quick answer is no longer available to us. How we wish, at times, we could go back to an easier position where we know and are certain!

Let me refer briefly to points discussed at this conference in presentations I attended and relate them to the thoughts I am presenting. Yesterday Barnaby Barratt spoke of tensions that affect contemporary psychoanalysis as it is "torn between modern and post-modern ambitions." He sees the history of psychoanalytic thinking as testimony 'to its paradoxical location as both a nostalgic endorsement of the modern episteme and a radical harbinger of post-modern discourse." This paradox is an integral aspect of the human condition, an expression of opposing forces in motivation-the push toward development and evolution, on one side; the pull toward stasis on the other. Agreeing with Barnaby Barratt, I would say that commitment to inner exploration, where everything is open to question, can and may lead beyond the positivist stance. Barnaby Barratt sees "free associative interrogation of consciousness" as the radical step away from the modern episteme. We need to ask: What are other, additional means that can lead us away, that can shake up the old way of knowing-on the level of personal knowing and on the level of knowing as a field? Let us explore narrative knowing, attention to text, and nonverbal media such as expression through paint or clay.

Regarding Eduardo Martinez Luque's presentation, I will address two issues. He speaks of the fundamental role of the analyst's analysis, the foundation for the analyst's relation to the unconscious and lifelong encounter with her own resistances, especially those that are supported by the culture. I certainly agree with Eduardo Martinez Luque. We cannot engage with analysands in a process of exploring the inner world with all it contains, encountering in the process all the affects and resistances engendered by the process-we cannot do that unless we have undertaken such a process ourselves. While the specifics of each process vary greatly, the dynamic of encountering unconscious forces is fundamental.

Martinez Luque also stresses the necessity to follow that which emerges from exploring the unconscious despite resistances arising from id, ego, and superego. To know, affirm, and follow desire may lead us beyond father and culture to face and tolerate the anxieties of overcoming the supports of father and culture. Going toward the interior and living from the interior stance may demand patricide and bring anxieties and guilt. Ed Robins (in his discussion of Martinez Luque's paper) stressed the necessity of going through the guilt that comes with stepping outside the established order. Filial piety should not restrain our exploration.

I wholeheartedly agree with these points and look forward to ongoing dialogue about where the intrinsic spirit of psychoanalytic exploration will lead us.

What are the implications for our educational tasks? What does the analyst need to know to take on the task of work with persons seeking to explore the inner world? How do we prepare analysts for that task? The foundation of the analyst's preparation is, of course, the analyst's personal analysis in which she has personal experience exploring her inner world, an intensive and extensive exploration that leads her to knowledge (to the extent possible) of the inner world and to integration of that knowledge with how she lives. Educators of analysts must evaluate the level of exploration undertaken and the level of personal integration attained. The hardest task involves assessment of personal development, of the encounter with the unconscious, and of personal integration.

No one in our field questions the necessity of an intensive personal analysis. The differences amongst us center around questions about what constitutes an adequate level of intensity. Since we have no effective means of assessing intensity as such, we address the issue by external criteria about the occurrence of sessions such as regularity, frequency, length of time over which they take place, and total numbers—all factors which contribute to the intensity of the process, but, of course, these factors do not guarantee that an intense experience occurs. Beyond setting minimal and essential external criteria, we must assess whether an intensive and extensive inner process is occurring or has occurred by looking for manifestations in personality development, stance, and functioning.

Evaluation committees and faculty participating in evaluation know the difficulty of that task only too well. Yet, it must be undertaken! An extensive exploration of her inner world and integration of that process constitute the sine qua non for a future analyst. A most important outcome of the initial exploration (before and during training) is a commitment to exploration for a lifetime. The form of the lifelong exploration will be different from the original and primary analytic process. It can be ongoing self-analysis. It can be self-analysis interspersed with periods of dyadic analysis. In some form, however, inner exploration has to be ongoing throughout the analyst's life.

What knowledge (theoretical and clinical) does the analyst need to engage in work with her analysand in a process of inner exploration? Again, her knowledge has to be extensive, and she has to have a lifelong commitment to extending that knowledge. The list of what has to become known is inexhaustible. Candidate and analyst alike will never acquire the knowledge they need, but they must seek it. It is necessary to seek: knowledge about human nature and life, conflicts and dilemmas, illness and health, the ways we hurt and damage ourselves and the ways we can heal and repair; knowledge about the culture and society in which we live and about cultures and societies of other regions and eras; knowledge about body, intellect and thought, affect and emotion, spirit and soul; knowledge about how human beings think, explore, come to understand the world both inner and outer; knowledge about how humans construct and deconstruct, create and recreate their world on numerous levels of experience.

Yes, candidates and analysts need to have much knowledge. Most important, however, is that we realize how little we know of that which can be known. While we will forever be

limited in our knowledge of the known, we nonetheless need to continue approaching the unknown. Beyond this, we need to examine and question what we know on several levels. We must separate fact from inference; we have to remain wary of the danger of mixing or confusing these two.

We have to remember that our theories and theorizing are products of the human mind. While theories contribute immensely to our understanding and enable us to see the universal behind the individual, they also are limited and they limit us. Seeing through the lens of any theory gives a specific focus and clarifies what is within that perspective, but it also eliminates from view what is not within the range of that lens. Theories provide a perspective, a point of view from which I view and understand human life. To see more fully, I have to change position, move to a different spot and look from there—and I will see differently, additionally. Diverse theories complement and supplement each other. They do not make each other wrong; they provide additional views. It is harder to teach candidates to see from diverse perspectives than to look mostly from one point of view, but it is also a rewarding task. It gives a fuller view of human life and living.

We have to look at the assumptions from where we theorize, at metatheory. We have to examine the assumptions underlying our theories as much as we examine the assumptions underlying personal life. Theory and metatheory are two sides of the same coin, as Stephen Mitchell so aptly states (1993). They arise out of each other, affect each other; they need to be seen and understood as the duet that they are and sing.

One can dismiss metatheoretical concerns as "just philosophy," detached from and irrelevant to clinical practice. Yet, the analyst's philosophical framework of beliefs unquestionably enters the consulting room with her and affects her work, her way of listening, of understanding, of formulating her understanding, of expressing her understanding. The analyst is not neutral and cannot function as if she were. She must be aware of her assumptions and beliefs. She can and, hopefully, will avoid imposing them. Philosophical stance and theoretical perspective enter into countertransference as much as personal history, affective reactions, psychological blind spots. Unfortunately, their role and effect have not received attention commensurate to their influence. That state, fortunately, is changing toward more discussions about the shaping effects of the paradigm in which our theorizing is based, be that scientific positivism, phenomenology, constructivism, the hermeneutic perspective, social constructivism, or pragmatism.

It is in the area of articulation and reckoning with philosophical assumptions where psychoanalysis can be fruitfully enriched through dialogue with thinkers in related fields: literature, philosophy, history of ideas, hermeneutics. At this conference Alan Stein explored the application of chaos theory to the dynamics of natural phenomena and related that way of understanding to the psychoanalytic process. (I had originally intended to include in my remarks my view of contributions from the literary tradition, but I found that what I wanted to present did not fit into the space allotted to my remarks.)

Yes, the knowledge which a candidate (the analyst-to-be) and an analyst need is vast. We

can only expect to be engaged as fully as possible in seeking it, aware of our limitations in acquiring it, aware of our resistances to what it demands of us, and aware of the challenge that it poses in our careers. Analysis is certainly laden with challenges posed by exploration and laden with resistances to that process. It is remarkable that we are indeed engaged in analytic practice and that we are able to teach our candidates to become analysts.

I have spoken of basics in psychoanalytic engagement as I see it today. I have not spoken of differences evident in psychoanalytic theory throughout history and in the present era. Differences are there and must be seen as such. Various philosophical and theoretical positions are mutually exclusive and cannot be held simultaneously. Each position provides a perspective for additional ways of understanding. I do not think the knowledge base in our field warrants certainty about a right or wrong view. I doubt such certainty is attainable in a field that deals with understanding complexities and subtleties of human life. I do think we know a fair amount about human life, which we understand in ways that are additional to the knowledge of the psychoanalytic pioneers. Certainty on the analytic right and "anything goes" on the analytic left constitute extremes which I cannot accept. Hence I move in the territory between those positions, committed to exploration.

Responding to a fourteen-year-old boy, the son of an analyst, who had written to her asking for advice about preparing himself to become an analyst, Anna Freud wrote:

If you want to be a real psychoanalyst you have to have a great love of the truth, scientific truth as well as personal truth, and you have to place this appreciation of truth higher than any discomfort at meeting unpleasant facts, whether they belong to the world outside or to your own inner person.

Further, I think that a psychoanalyst should have interests ... beyond the limits of the medical field ... in facts that belong to sociology, religion, literature, [and] history. . . . [Otherwise] his outlook on. . . his patient will remain too narrow. . . .

You ought to be a great reader and become acquainted with the literature of many countries and cultures. In great literary figures you will find people who know at least as much of human nature as the psychiatrists and psychologists try to do (quoted in Kohut, 1978, p. 479).

Anna Freud's letter speaks in its simplicity to central issues in psychoanalytic practice: the commitment to inner exploration, which must stand against resistances; the need to have a broad, deep knowledge base so that the outlook on the psychoanalytic process can be equally broad and deep. Yes, we have to have 'a great love of the truth,' and we have 'to place this appreciation of truth higher than any discomfort at meeting unpleasant facts.' I will close with a wish for all of us: a wish for an increasing love of exploration, for strength and courage to hold it higher than our resistances, and for the companionship of poets, writers, thinkers who contribute to our knowledge of what it means to be human. '

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