

Stefano Bolognini

TOWARDS A “QUADRIPARTITE MODEL”?

The IPA training models are officially based on a tripartite model: personal analysis, supervision and seminars.

This short note is devoted to a possible further development, which seems to be ‘in the air’. It would consist of adding – conceptually at least – a fourth element that is essential to the future training of analysts: the acquisition of the ability to work together with colleagues and to become an integral part of scientific exchange activities and institutional life, as a permanent constitutive function of the psychoanalytic identity.

As regards the single individual, it is increasingly recognized that psychoanalysts must not be isolated professionals, at the risk of progressive loss of theoretical and clinical knowledge. Psychoanalysis is in constant evolution and there is no reason why the concept of “permanent training”, which is accepted in all fields of professional disciplines, should not apply to psychoanalysts as well.

More specifically, though, the exposure – over the years – to the dangers of unconscious contamination from the transference projections of their patients, who so often would like them to be omnipotent, increases the risk of an isolated analyst turning into a local ‘guru’. Institutional exchanges allow for not only scientific updating but also and above all the recognition of our own limitations, through constant comparison with our colleagues.

There are other factors at the root of these considerations.

One positive factor is that a number of contemporary analysts are increasingly interested in sharing their professional experience through working groups. This is demonstrated by the growing success of WPs and WGs at the various Congresses, where groups of 10-15 colleagues work together intensively for one or two days to discuss papers or clinical materials, with specific methodologies and continuity in terms of the composition of the group.

These analysts have shown their appreciation for, and skill in making the most of, the small group dimension, which lifts the individual out of isolation and allows all participants to take an active part in the shared work.

The group dynamic also offers analysts the opportunity to gain insight into the working methods of colleagues from different backgrounds, to emerge from cultural self-referentiality and return to their own familiar work environment, having changed in some way.

One negative factor, which motivates us to consider a possible fourth element of analytic training, is the growing awareness of the historical difficulties experienced by analysts living together in organized and structured institutional settings.

The continual splitting of psychoanalytic societies is the clearest demonstration of this phenomenon, which is almost ubiquitous and shows that, without adequate training and experience in these matters, this situation will continue along its natural course.

The usual oedipal rivalry, both generational and fraternal, and personal narcissistic intolerances find fertile ground in settings that – despite individual analysis – recur with unrelenting and lacerating frequency. The phenomenon seems to affect all areas of the IPA world.

This is why the IPA Board recently approved the constitution of a new Task Force on Institutional Issues, specifically dedicated to the scientific study of this institutional problem and to providing support for societies, if requested.

Naturally, we do not expect to be able to eradicate narcissistic issues and conflicts, working through this area during training, but we can expect that some increased awareness of this phenomenon can considerably improve the internal individual and group attitude of future analysts towards these dangers.

Another negative factor that leads us to hypothesize a fourth training pillar originates from the fact (constant over time and geographical distribution) that many psychoanalysts have a relatively limited participation in scientific and administrative meetings at various levels (Institutes or Centres, national societies, regional federations, IPA).

I remember a meeting of around forty rather despondent Scientific Secretaries / Program Chairs from all over the world at the IPA Congress in Barcelona (1997), in which one finding clearly emerged: in each society, the percentage of average attendance at scientific meetings fluctuated between 25% and 30% of the membership. Over the years since then, I have heard these percentages of participation confirmed by many psychoanalytical institutions.

This finding was matched by the equally ubiquitous phenomenon of colleagues who, once they have obtained the qualification of IPA Member, disappear almost entirely, as if the title of psychoanalyst is seen as a noble title that, acquired ‘once and for all’, does not require a long-term collegial training. This also seems to be a universal and serious phenomenon.

In these many cases, there is a danger that, by consulting the Roster, colleagues who live in different areas direct patients towards psychoanalysts on the sole basis of their IPA member status, even though some of them may not have attended refresher courses or exchanges or shared work with colleagues for years.

Finally, another danger should also be mentioned, one that is less dramatic but insidious nevertheless: that analysts, after qualifying, close themselves off in a devotional and familistic ‘claustrum’ limited to a small reference group (most often, as we know, following a previous supervisor rather than their own personal analyst), to defend themselves against contact with the more complex reality that is psychoanalysis today, so international and so polyphonic.

In this way, the analyst is presented with the possibility/difficulty of emerging from an institutional transference of a strictly familial kind, to open themselves up to the equivalents of secondary school, workplaces outside the family and socio-cultural life in a wider sense.

Ultimately, there are many good reasons to reflect on this often-inadequate aspect of training: the lack of attention – or sufficient attention – to ‘post-training’ and the value of continuous scientific, administrative, institutional and community participation. The opportunities for group collaboration during training are often limited to attending seminars at the Institute with fellow colleagues. There is usually no opportunity for teaching or increasing awareness with regard to

the social pathology phenomena that afflict our societies, just as much as they afflict other professional communities.

In the case of psychoanalysts, who are destined to coexist with one another (hopefully in a fertile and fruitful way!) and combine their internal reality with the external reality of their institutions, I believe that the time has come to start thinking in terms of “quadripartite” training, to accustom analysts to cultivating collegiality as a useful and necessary dimension