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Psychoanalysis in a world of accelerating transformation

We are living in a complex world and a time of paradigmatic shifts in a variety of fields.

We observe changes in many areas – geo-political, economic, social, political – which drastically affect the balance of peace in the world and our sense of security. Global warming affects our sense of responsibility for our future, and the exponential evolution of technology and artificial intelligence is blurring more and more the border between external and internal reality.

With the Covid pandemic, the basic sense of security in human life and relationships has been shaken and the sense of fear has further increased in the population since the war began in Ukraine in February 2022.

Since Freud, psychoanalysis has evolved – enriched by different currents of thoughts – resulting in diversity and complexity. The result is a vast epistemological field radiating from core concepts such as psychic space (intrapsychic, interpsychic), the unconscious and psychosexuality.

In the face of the described global evolution, we, psychoanalysts, are exposed to our tools of clinical and theoretical understanding being questioned, not least with the criticism that they are becoming insufficient.

It seems necessary to us, as international psychoanalysts, to be concerned about the place of psychoanalysis in a changing world.

These questions (clinical and theoretical) are a serious challenge, which does not imply ‘throwing out the baby with the bathwater’ but requires careful, methodological study. We need to be aware of the latest discoveries in different scientific fields (neuroscience, artificial intelligence, physics, linguistics, social sciences, history, philosophy) as well as the changes in the ever-accelerating culture in which we live (such as, for example, new families or new professions).

We want to have a binocular view: both into the structures of the IPA and out of the IPA into society. The previous boards have deployed considerable energy to develop and enrich opportunities to strengthen relationships among IPA members.

We will continue to emphasize relationships and communication to allow members to share clinical and theoretical experience in the vast international field of the IPA.

Many divergences are present within the IPA, and we are deeply convinced that the discussion of theoretical, clinical, and political aspects can only be constructive by respecting cultural differences between and inside the regions of the IPA. Only mutual respect and an ethical approach to each other,

including acknowledgement of different cultures of psychoanalytic training and experience, will maintain the unity and coherence of our highly appreciated international association.

Our program will address different axes:

1. Communication-Information-Transparency

Regarding the internal structure of IPA, a fundamental axis is to continue to strengthen links within the different regions and their members in order to increase the sense of belonging to a community of psychoanalysts throughout the world.

We want to continue the President Meeting Process (PMP) which was started by H. Wolfe and A. Prengler, to increase the exchange of all IPA societies in the world with the IPA Board and vice versa of the Board with all IPA members. We emphasize listening.

Scientific communication is essential to our community: webinars and conferences on current clinical issues, social references and interdisciplinary exchange will be continued.

The possibility for societies to share their scientific events remotely and directly with other members from different societies allows bridging between all IPA members.

Transparency about the functioning of the IPA and its finances is also essential. Continuing current practices, we want to publish reports, topics of ongoing discussions, and share more of the work done by the many existing think tanks. There are several IPA working groups working in similar areas. For the sake of transparency, but also for potential cost reduction, we will try to bring them together instead of keeping them apart. This position is closely linked to the transparency of the IPA's involvement in the environment. Reducing flights and alternating online and in-person meetings for committees will reduce costs.

Finally, we intend to strengthen the bonds between IPA and IPSO in a more transversal mode. This could increase the feeling of recognition but also the commitment to the current and future activities of young psychoanalysts in our societies.

Regarding the world outside the IPA: we consider it very important to continue to increase the presence of psychoanalysis in society. Through outreach, we intend to “extend our hand” to other professions and the public to continue to highlight the richness of psychoanalytic thought and cultural theory that can help study certain movements occurring in society (reactions to pandemics, increasing nationalism, violence, racism, antisemitism, suffering in companies, reappearance of war...).

Another aim is to strengthen the connections between psychoanalysis and university. We need more visibility of psychoanalysis among the young generation to remain generative.

2. Tele-Analysis and Training

Important controversies have risen concerning tele-analysis and training, especially intensified since the generalization of this practice due to the covid pandemic.

Fundamentally, we see the psychoanalytic method as intimately linked to the meeting of two persons in a room where the evolving therapeutic process is co-created by both analysand and analyst. Their emotional experiences are shaped by psychic and bodily movements.

Nevertheless, following the widespread experience of tele-analysis during the pandemic years, we see the importance of continuing clinical and theoretical research on the specificities of tele-analysis. We promote a cross-cultural scientific dialogue as is traditional in IPA as in any scientific field. We look forward to the report of the second Task Force, which will follow up on the first report on Remote Analysis in Training published in 2021.

Time is needed to conceptualize the specificities of the online setting. We must better identify the gains and losses of this method while emphasizing an ethical stance of dialogue to gain knowledge on fundamental questions: Does tele-analysis allow the unconscious to unfold? Or in other words, does it take another shape?

The experience of in-person meetings between analysand and analyst is crucial. It cannot be abandoned, but at the same time the reality of the field where candidates are geographically distant from a training institute and a training analyst cannot be ignored, neither the evolution of society. Training and education are in constant balance between new discoveries and foundational pillars. A new balance is important to find.

In the recent history of psychoanalytic training, shuttle analysis – a non ‘classical frame’ even if we find similarities with Freud’s practice with his overseas patients – has allowed many candidates to access training and has also increased the reach of psychoanalysis in the world.

As a first step, we could imagine an umbrella training program including tele-analysis (with moments of in-person experience as well, in order not to evict sensorial bodily experiences), shuttle analysis, and in-person analysis. We would also encourage the different regional training models (Eitingon/French/Uruguayan model) to continue to gather and share their experience.

Whenever possible, we emphasize an in-person training including in the program the study of virtual reality, neuroscience and current scientific research.

3. IPA and the regions: Umbrella of the regions

In addition to its spread in the Western world with its specific cultures in Latin America, North America and Europe, psychoanalysis is increasingly reaching the Asia-Pacific region. These four regions form a broad umbrella that IPA can keep stretched and connected. We want to strengthen the clinical and theoretical dialogue among colleagues in all regions, including their regional conferences of FEPAL, APsaA, NAPsaC, EPF and Asia Pacific, despite historical and cultural differences.

4. Child Psychoanalysis

Children are the future of mankind. Psychoanalysis has not only taken care of the infantile in adult analyses but has developed more and more forms of treatment for infants, children and adolescents with severe psychic conflicts, situations of risks, troubles and even despair.

Given our world’s complex transformations in the 21st century, it is essential to give everyone special attention.

The increasing influence of technology and virtual reality opens a new field of questions. New families issued from medical reproductive techniques and gender diversity are much more present themes than in the past. Nowadays we see infants born during the covid epidemic whose first relationships are marked by distance, a sort of artificial reality: do they see human faces, or masks? We can ask ourselves many questions: are we facing new pathologies or gaps in our theoretical tools?

All these issues are important for the future of our children, but also for our culture and society. Thus, a more obvious integration of child analysis into psychoanalytic training is essential, according to the Integrated Training Track in psychoanalytic education.

5. Addressing political questions

How to deal with political crises, especially in situations of war and dictatorship?

Psychoanalysis, committed to human values but also aware of man's destructive potential, must always stand on the side of democratic and human values. We see a basic problem: we cannot act as a political party, but we cannot always remain silent either. Our main aim is not to remain silent, but to remain prudent, because we must also protect colleagues who are in danger.

If elected, we will highly honor our offices.

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