



Mikhail Reshetnikov¹

Russian Psychoanalysis: What Should We Learn from the West and What Had We Better Avoid?

**(On professional
boundaries and identity
in psychoanalysis)**

“Success does not consist in never making mistakes, but in never making the same one a second time”.

G.B. Shaw

INTRODUCTION

Systemic crisis of psychoanalysis is often being talked (more rarely, written) about at the West for last two decades². It seems strange and quite

¹ Professor Mikhail Reshetnikov, M.D., Ph.D., rector of East-European Psychoanalytic Institute, Saint-Petersburg, President of National Psychoanalytic Federation (Russia). E-mail: rector@oedipus.ru; <http://www.oedipus.ru>.

² Arlow J. Some Dilemmas in Psychoanalytic Education. — *Jorn. of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. — 1972, # 20, pp. 556–566; Bergmann D. The Historical Roots of Psychoanalytic Orthodoxy. — *Intern. Journ. of Psychoanalysis*. — 1997, # 78, pp. 69–86; Thomä H. On the Devaluation of the Eitingon-Freud Model of Psychoanalytic Education. — *Intern. Journ. of Psychoanalysis*, 2000, # 81, pp. 806–807 и др.

remote for us, because we have been having a psychoanalytic boom in Russia for second decade. However, we had better try to understand the far-away crisis in order to avoid such problems in future.

This paper has already been presented at National Psychoanalytic Federation of (NPF) Summer School in 2003 at stand, but that time I was not certain that the material, based upon a book by doctor Cezar Gatza-Guerrer³, the member of International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), has been elaborated enough. I am still uncertain, but after reading a number of papers about IPA activity in Russia (“Psychological newspaper” № 3—4, 2004) I have understood that my generation of psychoanalytically orientated specialists won’t witness the end of this discussion; so I dare to share those reflections with professional community.

Let us, first of all, try to emphasize the most important contemporary problems and view our professional sphere with objectivity, which is not distorted by our love to psychoanalysis.

PROBLEM OF ROOTS

In retrospective we cannot help admitting that psychoanalysis contains since its birth a kind of ambiguity and even vagueness, for it is not clear yet, what is it — a science, a trend of science, a profession, a specialty or a movement?

Psychoanalysis as a science

If it is a science, what should be its position in the system of sciences? This is not an idle question, for Western psychoanalysis is still uncertain: what field of science does it belong to? There is a famous early saying by Freud that psychoanalysis is something between psychology and medicine. During last century psychoanalysis has been widely implicated in psychology, philosophy, literal and art criticism, as well as in psychiatry and psychotherapy in general, but its position in the system of sciences is still unclear.

³ Gatza-Guerrero C. The Organizational and Educational Crisis in Psychoanalysis: Contemporary Challenges. 2000. — 516 pp. There is a manuscript in EEPI Library.

As we know, the status of science requires certain methodical apparatus and systematic research as well as new trend's orientation towards joining the system of academic knowledge and academic education; but one group of psychoanalysts consistently avoids it, and other carefully discusses: "Do we really need it?" However, we have noticed that Joseph Sandler's obituary stressed his role in the fact that psychoanalysis has come to British universities. We do know that psychoanalysis has its own methodical apparatus, but there are very few systematic research on its basis⁴ (in Russia we have known in this field of academic practice works of Horst Kaehele and Helmut Thomä⁵ only).

There are many problems in this sphere, indeed. We can objectively agree that Freud rightly pointed the position of psychoanalysis in the system of sciences, because the essence of psychoanalytic practice is naturally connected with psychology and medicine, that is, psychiatry, or to put more correctly, with psychotherapy which is humanitarian field common for these two disciplines. But even now we meet orthodox opinion that psychoanalysis is not the same as psychotherapy. Thus difficult question arises: what is it, then?

There is a wish to "return" psychoanalysis to its medical background. For example, attempts are taken to base the core psychoanalytic ideas in natural sciences, although even psychiatry gradually loses interest to this approach. Consistent preference by some analytical societies of medical candidates is another sign of such "re-medicalization" of psychoanalysis, although it's a question, whether our patients' problems are mostly psychiatric ones. However, the general tendency is clear: if two or three decades ago admission of a psychologist by some Western psychoanalytic societies was an exception, now it's an ordinary event. More and more specialists agree that psychotherapy in general and psychoanalysis as one of its trends (although the fact is rarely accepted) are specialties (or even

⁴ Luborsky E. The Era of Measures of Transference: The CCRT and Other Measures. In co-authors with Shapiro T. and Emde R. (Ed.). — Research in Psychoanalysis: Process, Development, Outcome. — Madison-Connecticut: Intern. Universities Press, 1995.

⁵ Кэхеле Х., Томе Г. Современный психоанализ: Исследования. Пер. с нем. и общ. ред. А.В. Казанской. — СПб.: Восточно-Европейский Институт Психоанализа. — 2001. — 304 с.

professions) equally available for psychologists and for medical doctors, of course, after long additional theoretical and practical education.

On profession

What difference does it make — specialty or profession?

Profession is a special type of labour activity of theoretically educated and practically skilled person, a way of positioning himself in the manpower market and earning a living. From this perspective psychoanalysis is a profession.

Specialty is a narrower field of activity in the limits of profession. For instance, my profession is medical doctor, and my specialty is psychotherapist. In Russia we have included psychoanalysis from the beginning into the list of main directions of psychotherapy, thus we view it as a psychotherapeutic specialty. In Western model, as we have mentioned, psychoanalysis often separates itself from psychotherapy and even stands in opposition to it. We can recall the famous warning against mixing “pure gold of psychoanalysis with copper of psychotherapy”.

Some specialists still maintain this (orthodox) view. However, it is impossible not to admit that psychoanalysis is inseparably implicated into all modern methods of psychotherapy, which in turn took (and still takes) many of its main concepts, methodical approaches, ethical principles, etc. Recently the chief Russian psychotherapist professor B. D. Karvasarsky said that a psychotherapist couldn't do without basic psychoanalytical knowledge. In Russia it is generally accepted. But traditional “reluctance” of psychoanalysis to cooperate with other approaches has changed very little. It can be understood as an attempt to maintain high level of professional identity, but we cannot help noticing the underlying fear of loosing this identity, which, it seems to me, has become a sort of long-standing fetish. Some possible causes of this situation I will try to clarify below.

Everyone agrees that there are different sub-specialties in psychotherapy. Behavioural psychotherapist will certainly agree that gestalt-therapist is his colleague, but their discussion of clinical cases would hardly be productive: the difference in theoretical and methodical approaches as well as in techniques is huge. However, they will have a lot

of common themes to discuss, in particular, general problems of psychotherapy as a profession.

Are there sub-specialties in psychoanalysis? I think, there are. In particular, it's child psychoanalysis and group psychoanalysis, as well as applied psychoanalysis (in which we include all varieties of psychoanalytic paradigm applied to pedagogic, sociology, political sciences, philosophy, cultural studies, etc.). For a part of Western psychoanalysis rejection of applied analysis is quite typical. We try to avoid this, although we can't help noticing that applied approaches in absence of professional training and serious therapeutic practice sometimes are prone to over-simplifications. But this is not a general rule — there are brilliant researches by non-analyzed analysts (and there are vast amount of historical examples: the first wave of Freud's followers looks much more brilliant than their well-analyzed "descendants"). I intentionally suspend discussion of such "sub-specialties" as Jungian, Kleinian, Lacanian and others; I will talk about them later.

Psychoanalysis as a movement

Concept of "movement" is similar to the concept of "party", that is, organization united by shared political, social or ideological views. To join a movement one has to come through a special rite of passage and unconditionally share ideas proclaimed by the organization or its leader (Freud clearly formulates these principles and their totalitarian manipulative aspects in "Mass psychology..."). Movements in certain aspects are similar to religions or schools of thought (for instance, stoics or agnostics), for their formation and functioning is inseparably connected to phenomena of belief in some (usually unshakable) postulates.

We are so used to the term "psychoanalytic movement" that we don't even ask ourselves: why isn't there chemical or physical movement, or, closer to us, psychiatric movement? But psychoanalytic movement does exist. It's not just a tribute to existing stereotypes, but also a contradiction of contemporary psychoanalysis, for movement is always beyond the limits of a science. It always has its indisputable truths, its "gurus", "apostles" and preachers as well as renegades and even traitors. It's appropriate to mention here Jung, Lacan, Reich or even Ferenczi. Coming back to the

notion of sub-specialty we can explain that these trends are almost indiscriminate in respect of their methodology, method and technique, thus they cannot claim self-sufficiency; they rather have to be viewed as belonging to one specialty, that is psychoanalysis. In any case, my long-standing contacts with representatives of all these directions became reciprocal and human as soon as we stopped ideological debates “What X. said to Y. and what was Y’s answer” and began to avoid question “Who is the most nice and beautiful of all”. Even militant lacanians, previously stated that they were “the only true analysts” appeared to be quite adequate interlocutors as soon as we began to speak about practice.

But this openness for contacts with representatives of different⁶ trends in psychoanalysis is an achievement of recent years, and it’s not generally accepted yet (it is a rule in our National Federation of Psychoanalysis and in some new psychoanalytic associations in Europe). What to representatives of orthodox schools, recently I have been surprised when a well-known member of presidium at one of psychoanalytical congresses in Russia said about another eminent Western specialist: “Why should we listen to this Reichian man?”. This reminded me of an old phrase: “What can a person with such nose tell us?”

It’s not a secret that when you talk to an analyst from “conservative” association, his second (or even first) question would be the following: Whom were you analyzed by and what association your analyst belonged to? If it’s not the same with your interlocutor’s, he would be interested neither in your qualification, nor in your experience.

I think that independent psychoanalysts appeared at the West became a form of “protest behavior”. It’s strange that they haven’t established their own association, although the notion “independent” might require the absence of such.

⁶ That doesn’t mean “all trends”, of course, there is a lot of profanation, but some long-standing valid trends do exist.

ON PSYCHOANALYTIC INSTITUTES

There is another contradiction, quite specific one. The principal question is: what is typical (Western) psychoanalytic institute and why is it misunderstood in Russia?

In Russia institute is an organization for higher education with concrete educational programs; graduates get special qualification and diploma approved or accredited by state. Before the October revolution there were many universities in Russia and very few institutes, the most famous of which was Smolny Institute — the secondary school for women.

Then Lenin's minister Lunacharsky suggested to established many institutes, which at first were analogues of vocational training schools for poorly educated then proletarian youth; decades later they became analogues of Western universities, but usually they were “mono-profiled” (medical, economical, technical etc.).

There are very few educational organizations named “institute” at the West. Educational centers are mostly universities. We misperceive most of western psychoanalytic institutes because of our soviet stereotypes; they aren't in fact educational organizations for higher education, they are closer to original meaning of the term “institution”, that is, a form of organization for social activity and relationships. Thus, most of Western psychoanalytic institutes are not institutes in our sense of word, with regular programs of teaching, with tests and exams, licenses for educational activity, accredited specialties, approved diplomas, etc. They are social organizations similar to our associations and their educational centers. That's why most of Western psychoanalytic institutes don't give diplomas; they include their graduates in a list or register of specialists validated only by this particular association; they resemble to some degree a kind of confessional institutions.

Our German colleagues Horst Kaechele and Helmut Thomä⁷ wrote aptly about predominance of psychoanalytic institutes, so I won't repeat

⁷ Томе Г., Кэхеле Х. Меморандум о реформе психоаналитического образования. — Восточно-Европейский Институт Психоанализа: Журнал “Вестник психоанализа” № 1. — 2000. — стр. 44–51.

this again. Vladimir Granov wrote about it too; he asked why psychoanalytic institutes appeared to be “a mountain”, and our theoretical concepts “a mouse”⁸?. It is still a “delicate question”.

In Russia we intend to legalize of psychoanalysis as a trend of modern psychology and psychotherapy, and we have heard that at the West it is perceived as a threat of “state-dependent” psychoanalysis. What does it mean? It means that state (that is, its employee) will become an “expert” empowered to certify candidates. Is there such a danger? Yes, there is. Can we escape it? Yes, we can. And we have been doing it. We have state-accredited diploma, but everybody who apply to the status of specialist can achieve it only by means of public accreditation. Formal state accreditation as remnant of our totalitarian past still exists, but National Psychoanalytic Federation together with Professional Psychotherapeutic League repeatedly suggests eliminating other ways of accreditation. So we act at the service of establishing “state-free”, not “state-dependent” psychoanalysis. But we have been doing it in the limits of law.

An attempt of some psychoanalytic societies to separate themselves decisively from the sphere of law resembles “separation of Church from State”; that leads us to conclusion about confessional elements in contemporary psychoanalytic movement.

In general we can agree that essential questions for contemporary psychoanalysis, both Western and Russian, are: validity of psychoanalysis as a science, organizational and methodical model of its functioning as a profession, including such aspects as education, certification and accreditation of specialists (in accordance with each state’s laws and laws of European Community).

Psychoanalytic ecumenism and syncretism

We should probably agree with doctor Cezar Gatz-Guerrero’s opinion (2000) that in most of Western psychoanalytic institutes “the monastery model” of education prevails, which combines therapeutic and up-breeding aims and goals. This author notices that in such institutes

⁸ Гранов В. Filiations: Будущее Эдипова комплекса / Пер. с фр. — Санкт-Петербург: Восточно-Европейский Институт Психоанализа. — 2001. — 344 с.

“collective regressive phenomena” is re-created, which includes rigid, almost paranoid, devotion to particular psychoanalytic doctrine, strengthened by “religious nature of such institutes’ administrative structure”. Meanwhile in some leading Western institutions there are no systematic educational programs. By the way, Otto Kernberg has already pointed at the same shortcomings of psychoanalytic institutes (1993)⁹.

There is another specific feature of existing educational model, that is (more and more unsuccessful) attempt to maintain psychoanalytical ecumenism (doctrinal unity of different schools) and educational syncretism (inseparable connection between therapeutic and up-breeding processes) as well as hopeless attempt to monopolize psychoanalytic movement under the aegis of an international organization. Again, as a result of professional society’s protest behaviour, new associations and federations were established in Europe that declare and fulfil qualitatively different principles of their organization and activity, in particular: membership is based on candidates’ acceptance of psychoanalytic theory in general (not the “only true” understanding of it) and their work with transference and resistance. I have no doubts that future will show their effectiveness.

Simultaneously the opposite process takes place. The prominent component of contemporary Western psychoanalytic ecumenism is constant maintenance of specific myths, in particular, there would always be glorification of one’s group (organization) in contrast to all others, which are analogues of “disbelieves”; in result, some orthodox psychoanalytic schools resemble totalitarian sects.

I have already seen at a psychoanalytic school’s forum that someone’s ideas associated with another school would be immediately rejected with such amazing simplicity that there is no hope for discussion at all. In fact, here we meet a kind of religious dogma: “How can we discuss something contradictory to the true belief?!”. Any renegades from a psychoanalytic society would be at least disapproved by it. In Russia we are immanently open for any contacts and have deep respect to corporate ethics (but not dogmas) of every psychoanalytic trend and organization, but at the same

⁹ Kernberg O.F. The Current Status of Psychoanalysis. — Journ. of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 1993, # 41, pp. 45–62.

time we generally agree that everyone who accepts psychoanalytic paradigm, who works with transference and resistance and fulfils the standards of professional training, could belong to psychoanalytic society. Now we widen this position, for someone who accepts psychoanalytic paradigm may not want to practice, thus to pass through a long training process. Certainly, it results in “overproduction” of psychoanalytically oriented specialists; in Russia there are more than a thousand such specialists, but only about 100 of them fulfilled the standards and have their own practice. I am certain that in future proportion (10 to 1) will be the same.

PROBLEM OF FILIATION

Filiation (in original sense of the term, that is, admitting of fatherhood or illegal children) is another anachronistic problem of some part of Western psychoanalysis, that Vladimir Granov very delicately (almost without criticism) wrote about.

What does it mean? If you want to join an orthodox psychoanalytic institution, nobody would be interested in your theoretical education and practical qualification, in your experience and effectiveness of your scientific and professional activity. The main question will be your loyalty to the organization, and then, who were your analyst and your supervisor?

They should both be members of group or school, which you apply for membership. It resembles ordain or christening. For example, if you were “christened” by International Association of Analytical Psychology (IAAP that is, Jungians) you have no chance to be admitted as “true believer” by International Psychoanalytic Organization (IPA). This is obvious anachronism. In our organization (NFP) some specialists had analysis with Freudian, some with Jungian or Reichian specialists; they are able to work together, and their effectiveness doesn’t depend on where and by whom they were “christened”.

Education or work of penance?

I would like to return back to the topic of psychoanalytic “education and work of penance”, which has been mentioned in previous chapter.

There is another specific aspect — “admission to christening”. In most of contemporary Western schools before the long procedure of candidate’s “ordain” he would be repeatedly (although indirectly) tested in respect of his loyalty to the organization, and only then they would invite you... not to study, only to have personal analysis and simultaneously read the papers admitted as “canonical” by this school. After many years (usually, 5–7) in result of this education in combination with personal analysis you would get, as Cezar Gatza-Guerrero aptly puts it, “as-if-certification”, that is, you would be included in the list of specialists of public organization.

For example, in 1990 (later data weren’t available for me) 2\3 from 28 psychoanalytic institutes in USA gave their graduates “internal” (that is, admitted nowhere except a particular institute) certificates. Only 1\3 from these institutes have a system of control for theoretical knowledge and diploma.

There is another specific detail of Western psychoanalytical education. Our patients come to us with their problems, and we treat them for months, sometimes for years. But if you come to psychoanalytic institution, your treatment would always take many years. Thus, some specialists ask: “Is it true that a candidate is always sicker than any other patient?”. It’s not an idle question. Is it possible that it is true? Maybe we had better change names of our societies to “therapeutic societies of former patients”?

For example, average duration of education in psychoanalytical institutes in USA is 8,5 years, but some candidates study for 10 or even 15 years. Is it a matter of capacities? Or the absence of system? Or maybe something else? Considering the fact that goals of personal training are clearly formulated long ago, it is something else. Candidates from Russia (shuttle-analysands) were educated in accelerated way, twice faster in average. Almost all “canons” of personal training and setting were violated. I will tell more about it, but the main task was obvious: not to violate the canon of filiation.

Taking in account the uncertain status of graduates and the length of their “work of penance”, we won’t be surprised that the average number of students in American psychoanalytic institutes decreased three times since 1960 and is about 24 student per institute (if we measure to our

system, where one year is one course, and divide it to 8 years, then each institute accepts 3 persons per year). This is certainly a crisis. Manpower resources are absent.

Compare it with our East European Institute of Psychoanalysis in St-Petersburg that accepts about 100–150 students per year including students from Western countries. When we ask them why do they prefer our Institute, they answer: “First of all, it is 10–20 times cheaper. Second, we have tried to study in Western institutes already, there wasn’t any system of education. Third, you give us diploma of psychologist with psychoanalytic specialization by Russian Health Ministry, we would easily approve it on the West, and it’s enough for professional activity, we can become psychotherapists with psychoanalytical orientation”. Of course, they flatter us and exaggerate a bit. They might join a society afterwards and would be less independent. But probably it won’t be an orthodox society.

Let us return to the essence of previous passage. In Western psychoanalytic institute unity of therapeutic, educational and indirect up-breeding tasks is obligatory (with unclear duration of education and resulting qualification). If you haven’t had your own treatment, you won’t be accepted to an institute, no matter how strong is your desire to study psychoanalysis! We can say slightly exaggerating that it is a kind of “forceful treatment” for a person who only wanted to acquire an education and a profession! In Soviet times there was a practice of forceful treatment, even combined with acquiring some vocational skills, but only for alcoholics. Even for them such totalitarian model doesn’t exist any more.

In addition, my Western colleagues frequently notice (they asked me not to mention their names, which is an important sign itself) that psychoanalytical education requires non-critical acceptance of knowledge of “a group of initiated authors”, “canonical books” or “special schools”, and any step beyond these limits is disapproved. There is neither discussion, nor even studying of other concepts and other psychoanalytic schools. Magazines and books by other psychoanalytic societies are not forbidden, of course, but they are not ordered for libraries, not recom-

mended for study and, in general, not read at all (indeed, “why should true Muslim believer read Christian magazine?”).

Such concept as interdisciplinary approach to psychopathology is very rarely met with. As we know, C. G. Jung compared quite seriously personal analysis with initiation. We can’t deny that such elements exist in any profession, but they shouldn’t become its core essence.

Idealization and dictate

Most of psychoanalytic societies, in spite of obvious imperatives of XXI century, make consistent effort for idealization of anachronistic model of psychoanalytical education; in result, these societies are prone to dogmatic transmission of knowledge (in the limits of particular school only) and keeping traditional educational system, combined with less and less successful attempts of an international society to dominate over national associations and individual members. As former soviet people we know this model pretty well — it is like Communist Party and so-called “social camp”. And we know better than others how it ends...

These attempts to reanimate psychoanalysis as a world-wide movement of “initiated” and at the same time to maintain it’s status as a unique profession are utopian (like communist utopia), but this attitude still determines the inertia in changes of most psychoanalytic institutions’ activity.

However, as we’ve mentioned, these ideas are being revised now, which is manifested in establishment of new international psychoanalytic societies and associations based on quite different principles.

Problem of self-isolation

The distinct negative factor is persistent tendency of psychoanalysis towards self-isolation, including isolation from academic science and even its closest sectors such as psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry. Here we see the manifestation of the same stereotype: how can a movement pretending to be exclusive cooperate with science?

In result psychoanalysis developed its own terminology, which is not understood outside our professional audience; we have tradition of verbal

sophistication and indirect tendency to confessional isolation. In result most of our books and papers are read by our specialists only. In contrast to Freud and his followers, we rarely condescend to share our knowledge (expressed at understandable language) with wider (or at least wider professional) audience. We almost haven't systematic research (or, as we mentioned, they are very few). So we return to Otto Kernberg's statement (1986¹⁰, 1993) that students and teachers of traditional psychoanalytic institutes are involved in a "monastery" model or model of vocational training school. In Russia we consistently avoid such model. But we also have the tendency to self-isolation. However, when psychoanalytically orientated specialists condescend to share their ideas with wider professional audience, it accept them with respect and attention. Especially when it is done in a gifted manner. Maybe one of our best achievements in Russia is implication of psychoanalysis in contemporary philosophy, where Freud, Jung or Lacan are mentioned as often as Hegel, Weber or Derrida.

Problem of self-isolation of psychoanalysis have also another consequence: psychoanalytic ideas (including the most genius ones) were repeatedly taken, accepted or rejected or even distorted outside of psychoanalysis while it maintained its silent self-isolation.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND CULTURE

Psychoanalysis has become a cultural phenomenon, and we are indebted for that to Freud and his followers who could write about complicated topics in a simple manner understandable for every educated person. Even their mistakes are charming as a piece of arts. In contrast to classic works, some modern essays are full of such leaps of thought that even specialists can't understand what has author meant, except that "he had a case" and "what a skilled therapist he was with his brilliant interpretations". The content of treatment is touched upon in such papers only slightly, just to illustrate author's ideas, hypotheses or reflections.

¹⁰ Kernberg O.F. Institutional Problems of Psychoanalytic Education. — Journ. of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 1986, # 34, pp. 799–834.