

Dear Community,

So much of what Jany and Paola have sent to us resonates strongly and painfully, but, in some ways, also hopeful-ly. Karim Dajani has spoken and written about how, in the history of psychoanalysis, attempts to foreground a social psychoanalysis have appeared, disappeared-- repeatedly suppressed by institutional power structures--and then re-appeared. The return of the repressed/suppressed. We are in a moment of its re-appearance, and I am grateful to have lived to see it! Not only has it re-appeared, but, judging from the kinds of concerns raised in the letters from the 30s and 40s, the current version of social psychoanalysis seems to me to be more powerful and intersectional than earlier versions, in that it is mindful not only of the suffering inflicted by capitalism, sexual repression, and impending fascism--the concerns of our forebears--but also of how all of these oppressions are inflected by racism, colonialism, heteronormativity, patriarchy. We would do well as a profession to be more mindful of our forebears' foregrounding of class as a most important intersectional category, one too often disappeared because of the uncomfortable position in which it puts so many of us (see Talia R. Weiner, *Billable Services and the "Therapeutic Fee": On the Work of Disavowal of Political Economy and its Re-emergence in Clinical Practice*). Class is disappeared, yet manifest, in so many subtle ways, for example, in the assumption that all who want to train are financially able to attend classes during the day.

Although, unlike Reich, I would not attribute the suffering that is caused by capitalism to its demand to repress a sexual drive—capitalism has been as good at commercializing sex drives as it was at repressing them--I do agree with the essence of Reich's 1932 statement: "Suffering comes from society, so we are in fact fully entitled to ask why it creates suffering, who has an interest in that. We must now prove that the "unmanageable destructive drives" to which human suffering is attributed are not biological, but rather social..." Reducing suffering to drives or disembedded family dynamics has made me often think that too much of what we do in psychoanalysis/psychotherapy simply creates healthier narcissists, people better able to fit into existing structures. Having advocated for a social psychoanalysis throughout my 40 years in this profession, I am hopeful mostly because I've recently found many, many more colleagues not only joining the struggle against replicating an oppressive status quo, but deepening the possibilities for transformation by offering decolonial and intersectional analyses. Colleagues on the left are challenging theories and practices in ways I have not seen—or, in truth, thought of-- before. This very Rundbriefe project of creating community and serving community stands as testament.

Unfortunately, the new ways have also provoked stronger institutional backlash than anything I've seen before, and, as it was for the Rundbriefe writers, that is very alarming. It seems to me that our institutions did better at "tolerating" and, eventually, incorporating feminist, gay, and lesbian critique than they have been able to do with issues of racism and classism. I've been alarmed by psychoanalytic conferences and talks I've heard that are explicitly "anti-woke," and that seem to equate what they call "left-wing authoritarianisms" with the incredibly dangerous right-wing authoritarianisms that people with actual power are inflicting on all of us, but especially on historically oppressed groups. I've shuddered at presentations that condemn identity politics in ways that legitimize expressions of transphobia and white dominance. I've become aware of how a backlash against antiracism efforts unmask, in new ways, how white-dominant power structures actually operate in many of our institutions. Even as we are trained to sit with people's discomfort without retaliating, we white analysts are finding it hard, without retaliating, to sit with the discomfort of being told that our institutions have and continue to cause harm. It is perhaps

especially hard to sit with this when our self-concept has long been that we are engaged in a practice of care, of doing good.

You ask, “who owns psychoanalysis?” This is a compelling question in this moment. The 2023 Division 39 meeting, *Our Beautiful Struggle*, was one of the very few psychoanalytic institutional spaces that have recently nurtured my hopes for change. At that meeting, the question of the possibilities for institutional change was very much alive. And the responses echoed what opposing sides of the Rundbriefe group struggled with before and after the Lucerne conference, i.e., Fenichel believing that the way toward change is to do good scientific work within existing institutions versus Reich’s wish to challenge the way the organizations do business. At the Division 39 meeting, several people argued that BIPoC clinicians (maybe together with white allies, maybe not) should form their own institutions and should actively boycott existing ones. Some even called for giving up licenses so as not to be servants of the state.

Before witnessing the depth of the backlash, I had thought that existing institutions could bear the calls for change. Having witnessed the backlash, however, especially as it unfolded in APsaA, I’m feeling deep down that many predominantly white institutions would be relieved, and perhaps even happy, if those demanding not just inclusion but a radical transformation of psychoanalytic theory, practice, and institutional power arrangements would just go away. So now I’d like to hear more from those advocating boycott about how they think it might work. In the case of Division 39, those demanding change did in fact go through a decade or so of working in Division governance and were then eventually voted into power. Again, not without backlash. But will that happen at most psychoanalytic institutions? Sometimes I think it’s the very fact that our institutions tend to function as all volunteer that stands in the way of change. Who can afford to volunteer massive amounts of unpaid time to these organizations? Another race/class issue!

It’s not for me to say what transformed institutions might look like. I have seen institutions that try to have few rules in hopes of being less hierarchical end up nonetheless with hierarchies, this time based in charisma rather than rules. But if I were to riff off Jany and Paola’s plea in favor of the fractal, their hopes that what we practice at a small scale can reverberate at the large scale, then I’d advocate becoming acquainted with what’s called “solidarity economy” initiatives. These lie outside of capitalist ways of operating, outside of labor versus capital. Decision-making members of solidarity economy initiatives, for example, workers’ cooperatives, are members of the communities they serve and create structures that serve their communities. The London-based Red Clinic is one such worker cooperative that could serve as a model. I think we have to imagine new structures as well as new theories, and if that’s what boycotting current institutions requires, so be it. I hear echoes of solidarity economy work in Jany and Paola’s statement that “much pain is inflicted by those in power to prevent those with less power from coming together, sharing experiences, and uniting to resist, and indeed that much healing emerges from that coming together in community.”

Psychoanalysis will undoubtedly survive, but in what form?

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