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The Danger of Encounters with the Other (Analytic Positions) and in the Training of the Next Generation of Psychoanalysts

It has been recognized for some time that it would be beneficial for psychoanalysis to have understanding and dialogue among the different psychoanalytic positions. If psychoanalysis is to thrive, the apparent protective escape into intra-positional and intrainstitutional domains and the concomitant sense of fear and danger attached to interpositional and inter-institutional encounters bears exploration.

Contemporary psychoanalysis is comprised of different analytic positions, with each position represented institutionally. Within individual institutes perspective of choice is taught either exclusively or with the greatest depth and clarity. While the different psychoanalytic positions derive from a common origin and appear to use many of the same theoretical and technical concepts, there is inadequate inter-positional understanding. This arises in part due to the same theoretical and technical terms being used in the psychoanalytic languages of varying perspectives with different meanings and conceptualizations attached.

In a world in which medication and short term therapies currently dominate, psychoanalysis would gain strength and greater depth of meaning through inter-positional understanding, dialogue and compassion. One approach to these goals makes use of the recently emerging psychoanalytic concept of metaphoric process as the basis through which to articulate the similarities and differences between the analytic positions. A framework which makes fundamental use of metaphoric processes for these purposes will be described in this presentation.

The discussion in this paper will also address the felt dangers attached to an open, compassionate inter-institutional, inter-positional approach; the ruptures which result from the escape into attempts at fortification of univalent analytic positions; and, the potential exploration of the underlying desire for inter-institutional, inter-positional encounters. The potential effects on psychoanalytic education, practice and theory of making use of a common language and meeting place for the different analytic positions will be explored.

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