



Letter to the Editor

On: From Basle to Milan to Zurich: On psychoanalytic training

Dear Editor,

D. Bürgin's (2012) *Letter from Basle* contains information on the history of the 'Psychoanalytic Seminar Zurich' (PSZ) – namely on the reason why it became independent from the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis – that needs to be corrected. But first I have to say few words on my involvement with the PSZ, and in general on my cultural background and professional career both in Italy and in Switzerland. Some biographical information on my part is also important because, as I will explain, I was personally involved with a conflict between the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis and both the German (DPV) and Vienna (WPV) psychoanalytic associations. In this way I would like to complement Dr Bürgin's letter with some information so that the readers of this Journal can have a more complete picture of the history of psychoanalytic movement in these countries in the 1960s–70s. At the same time I would like to contribute to the long-standing discussion on controversial aspects of psychoanalytic training.

After medical school in Italy I was trained both in general and experimental psychology in Milan, and in 1957 I moved to Basle to work with Gaetano Benedetti (mentioned by Dr Bürgin) on his pioneering research in the psychotherapy of psychotic patients. We formed a group of colleagues with heterogeneous orientations. Members of this group were classical analysts, phenomenologists and *dasein*-analysts, Jungians, and also some pupils of Péter Szondi. I can mention Ludwig Binswanger Jr, Norman Elrod who had a Jungian orientation, Raymond Battagay who would later become an important researcher on group therapy, Leo Wurmser who would move to the US, Allan Johansson and Ajno Kärkäinen-Kilta from Finland; other Finnish analysts, in close collaboration with Benedetti, were Kauko Kaila and Martti Siirala, who greatly contributed to the study of family therapy in Zurich. From Germany, Walter Bräutigam was working with us, before going to the University of Heidelberg where he would hold the Chair of Psychiatry, and so on.

This was a university environment with a strong orientation to scientific research and interdisciplinary approach, and relatively uninfluenced by institutional affiliations. When I went back to Milan, I had no difficulty in continuing with such orientation, and in 1960 I founded a centre, directed by Benedetti, and a group called the 'Milan Group for the Advancement of Psychotherapy', made up of colleagues of diverse orientations (Freudians, Jungians, *dasein*-analysts, family therapists such as Mara Selvini Palazzoli), all expert in severe psychopathology. This group later took the name of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* [Psychotherapy, Humanities, and Social Sciences], which is also the title of a quarterly psychoanalytic journal I founded in 1967 (I am still editor of this journal together with Marianna

Bolko and Paolo Migone – all of us are independent of psychoanalytic associations, and Migone is also co-chair of the Rapaport–Klein Study Group, which is an autonomous group in the US, not affiliated to any institution). Our group is still active today, involved in the psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic training of mental health professionals both in the private and public sectors.

Given this cultural background – that, as I said, was characterized by a scientific approach free from pressures of institutional affiliations and within a interdisciplinary framework – our group in Milan took a specific position on psychoanalytic training characterized by the following three aspects.

Firstly, there was no ‘truth’ to transmit, but only a method in order to search for that truth.

Secondly, we believed that personal analysis and supervisions were very important aspects of training, as well as participation in small groups where trainees could read and discuss theoretical and clinical issues always with great attention to the historical development of psychoanalytic concepts.

Thirdly, we had much respect for those older colleagues who had acquired great experience and skills in psychoanalysis. In this regard, it should be considered that in those years in Europe many members of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) (such as Herbert Rosenfeld, Donald Meltzer, Marcelle Spirà, Salomon Resnik, Johannes Cremerius, Gaetano Benedetti, etc.) had begun to train – with personal analyses, supervisions and seminars – colleagues outside the formal training of IPA-affiliated institutes (the same phenomenon occurred in the US where many psychologists, before the lawsuit of the late 1980s, were trained outside the American Psychoanalytic Association). In other words, there was an open market of knowledge and competence, and we believed that each trainee was responsible for his/her own training process, given the possibility to buy the best competence and to plan his/her own educational curriculum without any need of recognition by an institution, whatever it may be. In other words, the role identity of the analyst had not to be passed on to a psychoanalytic institution. This is an important difference from traditional psychoanalytic associations, such as the Italian Psychoanalytic Society (SPI), that guarantee the role identity of their own members throughout their professional careers. The SPI, incidentally, during the 1960s was unable to train candidates because of inner conflicts among the four training analysts of the time, to the point that the IPA had to appoint a committee of the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis in order to supervise the SPI (see Parin, 1984; the three members of that committee were Paul Parin, Fritz Morgenthaler and Raymond de Saussure – Parin and Morgenthaler were close to our group and, as mentioned by Dr Bürgin, also belonged to the Psychoanalytic Seminar Zurich [PSZ]).

I go back now to the PSZ. In 1969 I went to Zurich for a second analysis (with Fritz Morgenthaler; my first analysis was with Benedetti), and also Marianna Bolko, a member of our Milan group, went to Zurich for her analysis (with Paul Parin). As active participants of the PSZ, we witnessed the development of psychoanalysis in Zurich and, as I said, I want to

complete the information given by Dr Bürgin, not only from my point of view but also from my knowledge of the literature on this topic. For example, Dr Bürgin mentions only the contribution by Alex Moser but does not refer to the Special Issue No. 12/1993 of *Luzifer-Amor*, the journal on the history of psychoanalysis, which is entirely dedicated to the 'Psychoanalytic Seminar Zurich', and No. 43/2004 of the *Journal für Psychoanalyse*, official journal of the PSZ, where there are important articles on these issues.

When in Zurich in the late 1960s the phenomenon to which Dr Bürgin refers as 'democratization' started, with initiatives that led to the IPA counter-congresses of Rome in 1969 (Bolko and Rothschild, 2006) and of Vienna in 1971, almost all members of the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis in Zurich were supporting this movement (Paul Parin, Goldy Parin-Matthéy, Arno von Blarer, Fritz Morgenthaler, Emil Grütter, Alice Miller, Martha Eicke, Ulrich Moser, Fritz Meerwein, and many others). Only later, in the mid-1970s, Alice Miller, Martha Eicke, Ulrich Moser, and Fritz Meerwein, together with a minority that pre-existed (Alex Moser was part of this minority), expressed a different position. All of them, however, maintained their affiliation to the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis also after the split of the PSZ in 1977.

But what was exactly the characterization of the PSZ that led to the split from the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis? Dr Bürgin (2012, p. 1353) refers to issues of "democratization" and of "criticisms of the institutions" stemming from the "1968 movement", and also to "Marxist ideology" and to the influence of Platform International. For those who do not know this movement, it was founded in Zurich (the German name was *Plattform*) and, after the IPA congress of Vienna in 1971, it became the reference point of some Argentine analysts, such as Marie Langer, Emilio Rodrigué and others (see Rodrigué, 2007), who created a split form the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association (the Argentine name was *Plataforma*). The issues of "democratization" and other aspects mentioned by Dr Bürgin, although being part of the cultural atmosphere of those years, were not at all responsible of the fracture between the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis and the 'Psychoanalytic Seminar Zurich'. Marxism – or whatever political ideology, of any orientation – had nothing to do with the key aspect that determined the split. The split was due only to a scientific, cultural, theoretical and technical aspect of training implemented at the PSZ, an aspect that could not be accepted by the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis.

Namely, the Zurich psychiatrists and psychologists, members of the PSZ, declared they wanted to remain *Analytiker in Ausbildung* ['psychoanalysts in training', or 'life trainees', 'life students', so to speak]. In other words, they refused to graduate in psychoanalysis because they thought, on scientific and theoretical grounds, that psychoanalytic training is an endless process and that it is anti-psychoanalytic to terminate it. There is never an end-point that an analyst can reach, i.e. a psychoanalyst is always 'in training'. This is a very important theoretical point, with various implications. As in our group in Milan, in the PSZ the identity of the analyst does not rely on a psychoanalytic institution, and s/he is the only one responsible for her/his training. The analyst's identity is not 'subdued' to a

psychoanalytic institution. State or federal regulations are sufficient to guarantee the profession.

The issue behind the non-affiliation of the PSZ to the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis, then, is not simplistically related to a political ideology or to a generic quest for ‘democratization’, but to a much more important problem, namely the problem of the crisis of psychoanalytic training, starting with the so-called ‘Eitingon model’. As we know, in recent years, finally the IPA, with an enormous delay, became more sensitive to this crisis, and several articles have also been published in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (see, for example, Kernberg, 1996; Garza-Guerrero, 2004; and many other papers that would be too long to cite here). Several suggestions have been made; for example, Kernberg (2011, p. 465; 2012, p. 713) proposed the abolition of training analysis. Discussions have been going on for about a century and of course without a possibility of solving this debate since it is impossible to solve it if we rely on traditional conceptual categories.

Let us consider, for example, the IPA rule of four sessions per week, which is always mixed with political and economical issues. The German Psychoanalytic Association (DPV) had difficulties in training candidates because German law allowed reimbursement for only three sessions per week and a maximum of 150 sessions (so that candidates were tempted to apply to the other German Psychoanalytic Society, the DPG, a society that only much later, in 2001, under Kernberg’s presidency, became part of the IPA). For this reason, during Sandler’s presidency, the DPV requested the IPA the permission to train with three sessions per week, but this permission was denied. If the phenomenon of ‘psychoanalytic process’ cannot occur at three times a week, it is not easy to explain why in France it indeed occurs; theoretical explanations are put aside and the term ‘French model’ is used in order to simply avoid open conflict with the French (in other words, an important theoretical problem is solved with an opportunistic compromise). The same could be said of the ‘Uruguayan model’.

Going back to Switzerland, the embarrassment created by those analysts who had decided to remain ‘psychoanalysts in training’ was solved by a rule according to which a candidate at 40 years old had to decide whether s/he wanted to remain in training or to graduate, and if s/he chose to remain in training s/he was considered out of the institution forever. Dr Masciangelo (mentioned by Dr Bürgin) – who incidentally does not live in Switzerland but in Campione d’Italia (on the border of Switzerland) – approved this deliberation.

I want to complete the history of psychoanalysis in Switzerland by mentioning another episode, which is related to the PSZ and involves the cancellation of the IXth Congress of German-speaking Psychoanalysts which was supposed to be held in Interlaken on 7–12 April 1974. The PSZ was in charge of the organization of this congress, and the program committee decided to include a round table with Berthold Rothschild (*Analytiker in Ausbildung*, i.e. a ‘psychoanalyst in training’ of the PSZ) and me, among others. But the German (DPV) and Vienna (WPV) psychoanalytic associations objected to this decision because the tradition was that only members of psychoanalytic societies could talk at these meetings (although this was

not a written rule), so that the names of Rothschild and myself had to be dropped. The PSZ assembly was in favour of following this tradition, but an unexpected event occurred: Ehebald (of Hamburg) had written a letter to Meerwein (at the time president of the PSZ) saying that another analyst in the program had also to be dropped, namely Djeff Teuns (full member of the Dutch Psychoanalytic Association), who, according to him, was a “dangerous anarchist”. Through Lilian Berna Simmons, this letter went to Marianna Bolko, who read it at the assembly of the PSZ, which immediately reacted polemically because it could not accept that someone had to be prohibited from talking only on the basis of his political ideas (we should consider that freedom of opinion is much valued in Switzerland). On the wave of this reaction, the program committee decided that Rothschild and I should also be included in the program. This decision created a conflict between the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis and both the German and Vienna psychoanalytic associations, to the point where the congress was cancelled.

Meerwein’s letter was not published in Switzerland because it was considered a private communication, but was published in Italy (it appeared in issue no. 4/1975 of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* [Editorial Board of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*, 1973, pp. 30–1]). Alex Moser learned of this publication and accused Arno von Blarer (a member both of the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis and of the PSZ) of having been instrumental in this Italian publication. However, this letter, that had also been copied to Wolfgang Loch (Tübingen) and Harald Leupold-Löwenthal (Vienna), was not exactly a private communication since it was written on the stationery of the Hamburg Institute of Psychoanalysis.

Issue no. 12/1993 of *Luzifer-Amor* published the minutes of a meeting of the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis, held on 8 June 1977, at the buffet of the Zurich train station where it was declared that the training rules of the PSZ were not acceptable, and that Paul Parin (who had been president of the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis) should stop being part of the governing board of the PSZ. Furthermore, the PSZ was given a deadline in order to change its training rules. This deadline was not respected, and the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis changed the door’s lock of the PSZ, which moved to a new location where it continued autonomously its own activities. Now the PSZ has more than 400 members, regularly publishes the *Journal für Psychoanalyse*, and produces many publications (a list is in the appendix of issue no. 12/1993 of *Luzifer-Amor*).

I hope the information I have given can help the readers of this Journal to have a more complete picture of the history of psychoanalytic movement in these European countries, and also of controversial aspects of the age-old problem of psychoanalytic training. In the interest of historical research, and of psychoanalysis itself, no aspects of the history of psychoanalytic movement should be ‘repressed’.

P.S. As far as concerns the dissemination of psychoanalytic culture, in the late 1950s and early 1960s I founded several book series that published about 400 books (the majority of them were Italian translations of classics of psychoanalysis, psychiatry and psychology) that constituted the

backbone for the training of some generations of Italian psychoanalysts and mental health professionals, at a time when the university system in Italy was not ready to teach psychoanalysis (which in this country was not yet popular), and psychiatry was not separated from neurology. One of these book series, edited by Benedetti and myself, was founded in 1959 and published by Feltrinelli in Milan; another book series started in 1964 published by Boringhieri in Turin (Boringhieri translated, among other things, all Freud's works into Italian).

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