

31 A letter to Société Psychanalytique de Recherche et de Formation, Paris, France (2005)

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In France, the psychoanalytic landscape is surprisingly complex. Choosing the institute in which to train as a psychoanalyst leads you to confront a great diversity in training models. And that is not easy to make sense of! The candidate can choose between numerous psychoanalytic societies and schools. Only three of those societies belong to the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA): the Société Psychanalytique de Paris (SPP, Paris Psychoanalytical Society, 1926), the Association Française de Psychanalyse (APF, French Psychoanalytical Association, 1964) and the Société Psychanalytique de Recherche et de Formation (SPRF, Psychoanalytical Society for Research and Training, 2005). In a historically centralized country, most of these Institutes are located in Paris and offer their own variation of the IPA French model.

There are many other psychoanalytic societies. Most of them claim to be descending from the teachings of Lacan, to a greater or a lesser extent. They train a large number of psychoanalysts according to varied training paths, throughout the country.

Within the SPRF, training is following the IPA French model. It is structured around two consecutive individual supervisions, two clinical seminars lasting for two years each, and a range of courses and seminars that you can freely choose from, whereas the Eitingon model offers a scheduled series of seminars over a period of four or five years. It isn't an entirely individual process either, unlike with the Quatrième groupe (Fourth Group), which the SPRF split from. The SPRF is a rather young psychoanalytic Society and we don't have an Institute as such. However, for the sake of standardization, I have used the phrase "Dear Institute" throughout this letter.

The training process relies on a dual process of inputs by the society, and the necessary appropriation brought by the candidate in their individual approach. Two consecutive supervised cases must be approved by an evaluating group composed of teaching analysts selected at random. They focus on the way the presenting candidate appropriated the process of supervision. The supervisor also reports on that on their own. Once the two supervisions are approved, candidates have to write a theoretical and clinical text that will then be presented and discussed with an ad-hoc training committee in order to complete the training and qualify as a member.

I would like to thank warmly the editor who dared to imagine such a book, echoing Dear Candidate, which I had a fantastic time reading. This initiative demonstrates the ability to gather multiple candidates of various backgrounds for a brave and innovative project. It gives us the opportunity to present our thoughts on this topic, and deepen our gaze into our training in progress. Writing this contribution has been inspiring. I thought about the dozens of colleagues working on the same topic all around the globe, and I am eager to read what they came up with and to discover the diversity of our paths.

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So, why did I choose you, dear Institute, to train me?

When I decided to become an analyst, which was driven by my personal experience as an analyst, I knew very little about the psychoanalytic societies in France. At that time, in 2008, I came from a very different world, since I was working in the corporate sector, after a scientific postgraduate degree. I knew that I wanted to work in private practice as well as within a mental health institution, to carry on the kind of multidisciplinary teamwork that I had greatly appreciated in my professional life so far.

During my years studying psychology in college, I wandered around the open activities of various psychoanalytic societies that I was hearing about, without finding the right place. Choosing an

institute is a process in itself as well as a long-term decision, since you will stay with the same people long after the training is finished.

When I started practicing psychology, in the psychiatric department of a public hospital, I asked a colleague whose clinical skills I admired to refer me to a supervisor, in order to be supported for the first steps of my career. She directed me towards a teaching analyst at the SPRF, where she herself was in training.

During my encounters with that analyst, who then became the supervisor of my first case, the aim was to improve how I was analytically listening to the psychotic patients of the outpatient center, but also to reflect on *becoming an analyst*. Our initial exchange led to long and fruitful work regarding listening, setting, ethics, as well as the stakes of the various training models and psychoanalytic branches, all within the context of the history of psychoanalysis in France and other countries... This axis of research greatly enriched my training, which officially began two years later, when I applied to be a candidate at the SPRF.

My first steps with you, dear Institute, were somewhat intimidating, especially during seminars, which gathered members and candidates for theoretical and clinical presentations related to a yearly theme. Back then, the SPRF was a Study Group that later became a Component Society in 2015. The process of being recognized by the IPA was applying pressure on you as a young society that had to prove itself. Belonging to the IPA was an important issue for the founding members, who left the *Quatrième Groupe* following disagreements on the training process, which they believed to be too vague. Instead, they wanted to get closer to the international dynamic of the IPA. Obtaining the status of Component Society was an important institutional step, as well as a source of pride and relief.

I quickly got involved in theoretical seminars and a clinical seminar, while progressing into the first supervision. I had so much to learn with so many questions arising in me. Would I be able to go through this long training? How to prioritize my readings? Sometimes, in order to help me understand specific points, my supervisor drew parallels with his own patients. I remember that when I was leaving his practice, I sometimes still did not clearly see what he wanted me to understand even though I was feeling an unconscious resonance. It often made sense afterwards and sometimes following a significant delay. Dear Institute, I am so grateful for this thought-provoking experience that continues to help me in my daily practice. When my first supervised case was approved after five years, I remember realizing how much I had grown. This step was an encouragement and gave me the impulse to take a role of IPSO. I also became more active in my training. For example, I was struggling to find group supervision regarding my practice involving psychotic patients, which was also the case for a colleague of mine. We ended up running a study group on psychosis together.

When the Covid-19 pandemic started in March 2020, training moved online. In-person encounters were suddenly impossible due to the lockdown put in place by the French government, like in many other countries. Relationships within the SPRF analytic community were strained by not being together before, after, and during seminars. We didn't have those informal moments during which we could talk among ourselves, even though we needed it even more than usual. Luckily, dear Institute, you created support groups to give us some space to share feelings and try to figure out

what was happening in the world and in our own lives. Each group set its online meeting frequency and the way it was run. This was very helpful during those first few months. At the same time, new opportunities were created to attend online seminars and conferences across continents, making me feel as if unexpected doors were opening. Some candidates from our Institute also decided to gather in the same place to watch the 2021 European Psychoanalytical Federation (EPF) conference together. I remember this moment as a unique opportunity to spend some good time together. It helped us to wait for the next in-person conference in Vienna.

Video conferences and phone sessions took a major place in my analytic life at that time. I switched to sessions over the phone as an analysand, a supervisee, and both in clinic and private practice. I think that it was of great interest to experience phone sessions as an analysand. It helped me figure out what this unusual setting was inducing on both sides, whereas remote analysis was until then a big taboo for French psychoanalysts. In supervision, I sometimes felt lonely being far from my supervisor's place, but there were also surprising moments of increased intimacy, despite the distance. I was relieved when supervision could finally take place in-person again.

Since my second supervision is now finished, dear Institute, it seems to me that supervisions are at the heart of my training process. In addition to a focus on transference and countertransference, maintaining the frame and formulating interpretations, there is also a focus on my own transfer on the supervision and the institution. This makes supervision a rich thinking space. I also find it fruitful that both candidate and supervisor can share their own thoughts with the evaluating group. This process has been established as an attempt to limit the effects of alienation during supervision, even if it cannot accomplish that goal on its own. Candidates can also meet two teaching analysts dedicated to help one get out of a dead end during the training process. We can encounter them during group meetings and individual appointments, an initiative that is often taken by candidates approaching an important or challenging step during training. This opportunity is used by some of us, while others do not think to or dare to do it.

Any psychoanalytic society faces institutional issues and may be threatened by the insidious risks of subjection and alienation throughout the training process. The study of this concern was pioneered by the *Quatrième Groupe*. Our society has tried to pay attention to that concern in order to avoid falling back into a pattern of violence flowing from the previous generations of analysts to the next. Nevertheless, dear Institute, there is no perfect solution to avoid these underlying risks. Our numbers are still small enough to enable us to gather members and candidates in one room for group discussion. Those meetings, held once or twice a year, can be tense and frustrating, but allow for valuable group work by both candidates and members, similar to an institutional meeting. This task will always remain incomplete, but it is deeply useful, and I believe it to be a real strength of our institution.

Throughout my training, I have had mixed feelings regarding your size, dear Institute. With a current average of 20 members and 30 candidates, training takes place in an atmosphere of collegiality which means a lot to us. It offers individual space for everyone and a valuable diversity of theoretical and clinical orientations, despite a limited number of teaching analysts and seminars. We are supposed to complete our training by exploring outside of its bounds. I gradually

understood that I shouldn't only rely on the SPRF. Instead, it functions as a set of foundations, aiming at being a *good enough* institution.

I still think that a psychoanalytic approach to groups and institutions would be useful for all of us, especially those working within teams. A familiarity with these concepts would also enable us to understand more precisely group dynamics in the Institute. During EPF conferences, I am therefore particularly interested in presentations on institutions, as well as in some exciting workshops, among which "Workshop on the Specificity of Psychoanalytical Treatment Today" and the "Large Group", the latter capturing the broader scope of societal history and dynamics.

Due to our size, dear Institute, we also share an underlying concern about our long-term development. Despite the huge work done since 2005 to give shape to our society, the SPRF still has little visibility and is barely represented in universities and conferences. This makes it sometimes difficult to attract new candidates for training. The generation of founding members, who were all experienced analysts in 2005, are gradually passing the baton. Some growth would better distribute the institutional work and the investment in the local and international scientific community.

Our society is however attracting candidates who are interested in its multicultural and international aspects, and in a shared responsibility regarding a rigorous and flexible training, without the need to belong to a long-established society. Some of us speak multiple languages, some have multicultural backgrounds, and some have even lived abroad. Unlike most candidates in other French societies, we are significantly involved in international events organized by IPSO.

IPSO is adding so much to my training journey! This is why I decided to take part in this book, so I could share my experiences.

We aim to introduce IPSO to new candidates as soon as they join us, dear Institute, so that they benefit from this dynamic from the start of their training. Members also warmly encourage candidates to get involved with IPSO, despite the fact that most of them, who trained outside the IPA, did not have this opportunity during their own training.

IPSO brings people together in many ways. The clinical study group I have been a part of for three years is one of my best psychoanalytical experiences! This unique space allows close friendships to grow between people living all over the globe. Those friendships provide invaluable support, especially regarding doubts and inhibitions about our supervised cases, questions and excitement about writing and presenting at conferences, as well as new perspectives and new goals once we become members. We also discuss how societal and political events occurring in our respective countries and around the world affect us, as analysts and citizens.

In addition to international connections, IPSO facilitates relationships and initiatives between candidates belonging to the three French societies, such as working together to organize international scientific IPSO events in Paris.

IPSO also strengthens the bonds between candidates from our own Institute by giving us the opportunity to live exciting moments abroad that create lasting memories throughout a training period that can last for a long time within the French model.

In the French model, training takes place at a less intensive pace than in the Eitingon model, as well as in a more individualized way. Our fellow candidates following the Eitingon model start out younger, they have not been in analysis for as long, and they become members more quickly than us. That latter point can sometimes awaken envy within us, with similar feelings towards the college student atmosphere of the cohort. However, we do appreciate the separation between our personal analysis and our training, as well as the freedom we are granted when it comes to picking our lectures and seminars.

In our training process, the five to eight years usually needed for the two supervisions to be approved are followed by the highly transformative last part of the training: writing and presenting a theoretical and clinical paper. This phase which I have just entered, dear Institute, is often experienced as a solitary and initiatory in-between. The process of writing is arduous for some of us: pleasure, pain, even torture . . . All kinds of fantasies surround writing and presenting. At that stage, some candidates find it useful to share their struggles and help each other within an informal group of peers.

Becoming a member is at stake, which induces an identity adjustment that spares no one. It can take years for some people to get beyond that point, and some never even succeed. Their two supervised cases are approved, but they do not become members, when candidates from some other IPA societies qualify as associate members as soon as their second supervised case is approved. The risk inherent in this system, underlined in our lively discussions on this subject, would be to remain an associate member, which would prevent one from taking a mutative step in being an analyst and becoming more involved in their respective society.

So, dear Institute, what is gained and what is lost by becoming a member? Beyond personal stakes, the institutional stakes vary from one society to the next. In some of the older societies, recent members are not engaged much, or they struggle to find ways to get involved, since the older, established generations seem to leave no empty spots. In our case, becoming a member means getting your voice heard and quickly being expected to contribute. This perspective might add more mixed feelings. Will I be able to say goodbye to my candidate status, to IPSO, and find how to take part in my own way as a member in the institutional life and in the psychoanalytic community?

Thank you, my dear Institute, and thank you also to the previous generations who, one after another, contributed to the transmission of psychoanalysis. Let's hope that we will be able, in our turn, to train the next generations, taking into account the unprecedented challenges of our time.

— Muriel Gayet