

Symposium for the 100th Year of the Swiss Psychoanalysis Society: Theme

Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis

The centennial of our society is a time for celebration of a symbolic existence and journey. The centennial is the time to explore a history, a memory, and also a tradition, and come back to the past by exploring the different figures through whom this past existed and still exists today.

Psychoanalysis, since its beginnings, in relation to its history and history in general, has long been ambivalent and problematic. Freud sought to establish a new science, a new practice, and a new tradition, offering a historic representation of them as they were being established. It could be said that he wished to not only make science, but also history (cf. his 1914 text, "The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement"). Freudian psychoanalysis, since its beginnings and its first writings, has had a unique interaction with itself and its past, its archives, and its roots: as it continues to create itself, it adopts an official history that is still being written. The question of opening these archives speaks to its difficult relationship with historical analysis.

Psychoanalysis was built passionately, audaciously, divisively, and sometimes contradictorily, at the crossroads of the history, culture, and politics surrounding Freud as well as his followers and detractors. There were as many fields of study as there were dilemmas, as many alliances as there were wars. Its history had often been written from the inside, by the psychoanalysts themselves (E. Jones, for example), particularly because the historical aspects are at the heart of the analytic work and thus of its method and scientific particularity. A sort of official history of psychoanalysis emerged, both laudatory and militant, which established, biographically, even hagiographically, the figures of men (and women, less so) that contributed to the development of psychoanalysis. Stepping out of this self-referential circle involved a shift in focus away from its particularism and a multidisciplinary inquiry into the institutional history of psychoanalysis, the history and composition of its subsidiaries and its orthodox and heterodox traditions, and the great works from differing groups and schools of thought that coexist in the world and in Switzerland in harmony and in conflict. This was the work completed almost a half-century ago by Henri Ellenberger, a Canadian psychiatrist of Swiss origin, analyzed by O. Pfister, who happily reflected on the plural and contradictory contexts of the emergence and establishment of psychoanalysis by investigating its origins and its controversial archives, extending further than its seminal texts and orthodox constructions. Integrating therein numerous researchers outside of the domain of psychoanalysis, this perspective repositioned the history of psychoanalytic ideas in their intellectual, social, and political environments, and revealed psychoanalysis to be not only a system of ideas but also an institution and a system of contextualized practices.

Switzerland in its unique position as a European hub - multicultural, multilingual, protective of its regional qualities, in a precarious balance between its boundaries and its diversity - was a test site for the challenges that psychoanalysis faced throughout its history. The many key players in the field who shaped its path also made their contributions to the lively re-writing of this history, which is still under construction.

The prehistory of the SSPsa was based on the meeting of Freud, the director of the Burghölzli Eugen Bleuler and C. G. Jung, as well as on the interest that many Swiss held in the unconscious, namely in

Freudian concepts (T. Flournoy, E. Claparède in Geneva, etc.) These premises were laid out in a dynamic climate and led to the foundation of the “Gesellschaft für Freudsche Forschungen” (1907, Bleuler), and then to the foundation of the “Ortsgruppe Zürich” of the “Internationale Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung” (IPV/IPA) (1910, Binswanger) and to the election of Jung as the first president of the IPA in 1910.

After conflict arose between Freud and Jung (1914), the Swiss who did not follow Jung founded the “Swiss Psychoanalysis Society” (SSPsa) (E. Oberholzer, M. Gincburg, O. Pfister, H. Rorschach, H. Zulliger, etc.) in Zurich on March 21, 1919 - under the skeptic watch of the IPA representatives of the time (E. Jones, H. Sachs, O. Rank). The Psychoanalytic Society of Geneva (E. Claparède, R. De Saussure, C. Odier, H. Flournoy, J. Piaget, S. Spielrein, etc.) was created in Geneva in 1920. It was never acknowledged by the IPA, and it died out shortly thereafter. Several figures from Romandy joined the SSPsa (R. De Saussure, C. Odier, H. Flournoy).

The first nine years of the SSPsa (under E. Oberholzer, 1919-1928) were full of conflict. After the departure of E. Oberholzer, who had founded a “Swiss Society of Medical Psychoanalysis” with other doctors who were strongly against the idea of lay analysis, relations with the IPA became more relaxed under the leadership of P. Sarasin. This change led the IPA to entrust to the Swiss Society the International Congress of 1934 (Lucerne) and of 1949 (Zurich; the first congress after the second World War, the Holocaust, and the death of Freud).

In 1977, in a political conflict about training, the “Psychoanalytic Seminary of Zurich” was excluded from the SSPsa. The Society today unites many regional training centers in different parts of the country and different linguistic regions. More than a retrospective commemoration, we have chosen to open the dialogue between the issues brought up by the history of psychoanalysis and its unique figures in Switzerland.

More than just a retrospective commemoration, we have decided to open up the dialogue about the issues that the history of psychoanalysis and its particular figures in Switzerland raise. We want to center this jubilee around two themes: borders and legacies.

The first day is devoted to the matter of borders, which mirrors the dilemma of the limit: coming and going, and maintaining one's identity (Switzerland, as a hub). The second day focuses on the theme of the legacy that sheds light equally on the culture of transmission as well as that of refusal (“Les enfants terribles”) - the legacy that one inherits or passes on.

In the movement of historians who both situate psychoanalysis in the corpus of knowledge and study its creative potential, issues, and limits, we have invited two key speakers (G. Makari and E. Falzedar) who will be discussed and whose topics will be explored during round-table discussions made up of specialists of different horizons in the Swiss and European scene.

This is the dialogue to which we invite you.

For the Commission of the Centennial of the SSPsa, Lito Panayotopoulos, April 2019

Translated from the French by Benji Muskal