



# The specificities of the French psychoanalysis

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## The French model of psychoanalysis

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### INTRODUCTION

The expression « French model » refers both to the cure method as practiced in France, and to the French model of training to become a psychoanalyst.

**The method used in France** is still referred to the classic standard cure with the fundamental rule highlighting the psychic functionings induced by it in each of the protagonists, the free association and the evenly suspended attention. At the end of his life, Freud announced the rule made of two proposals: « Complete candor on one side and strict discretion on the other ».

This method finds its greatest efficiency within a specific protocol: at least 3 sessions per week, couch-armchair setting, fixed duration of sessions of 45 minutes minimum, payment provided by the analysand, all in a « protected » space from the incentives emanating from sensory perception, to the benefit of the language enunciation of everything that comes to the analysand's consciousness, both verbal contents, affects and body feelings.

The fundamental rule uses a paradox; it prescribes a freedom of expression that reveals a lack to express, but above all, a « beyond » the words is experienced through them.

This beyond requires a specific psychic work carried out by the « après-coup » process including a period of regression like in the dream work.

**Concerning the 3 IPA's official training models**, there is currently a lot of discussions within the IPA about the training models inducing some changes in the historical Eitingon model (1925). The decision to allow the number of sessions per week from 3 to 5 triggered storms that are the subject of considerable debates. As the enlargement was extended to 3 sessions, the French model was questioned, implicitly accused of having contaminated the historical model downwards.

In fact, a much more general reflection could focus on their internal coherence and their flexibility of application and evolution.

However, we will focus on the French model, without trying to compare it with Eitingon's model, but rather question its foundations by recalling the historical and conflicting circumstances of its birth. It is the result of a double confrontational conflict with the Eitingon model on the one hand and with other models used since then in Lacanian societies, on the other hand. This conflict was at the center of the splits of 1953 for the SPP, and 1964 for the birth of the APF.

Let's start with a few historical points, then with a reminder of the criteria that constitute the French model with their concrete applications, and finally with some theoretical reflections resulting from the consideration of the criteria supported by Lacan.

## **A FEW WORDS OF HISTORY**

The practice of psychoanalysis was introduced in France in 1920 by Eugénie Sokolnicka. Freud's thinking was already known through various disciplines: medicine, arts, philosophy etc. Then, it was Rudolph Loewenstein, trained at the Institute of Psychoanalysis in Berlin, who allowed the development of the young SPP founded in 1926.

Before the Second World War, the training model used by the SPP was the Berlin one promoted by Eitingon. After the war, the Paris Psychoanalytical Society, which was totally dispersed, reorganized. The rules concerning the practice of psychoanalysis are then the same as those adopted before the war.

But a very pragmatic new parameter comes into play: a strong demand for analysis and training. The post-war « Baby-boom », combined with the limited number of training analysts, concretely raises the question of the teaching of psychoanalysis and the training of new analysts, as well as that of the organization of a training institute, with the choices that this implies between a certain number of options: independence or rapprochement with the university, practical modalities of the training course, etc.

This high demand is at the origin of the practice of 4 sessions, and of the training psychoanalysis with three sessions per week, forty-five minutes duration each. These criteria were extended to individual supervisions. And then, for the same reasons, the formula of collective supervisions was invented with the same principles.

The main objective was to train a larger number of analysts in a much shorter period of time.

It was in this context that Lacan also promoted short sessions, to be distinguished from the introduction of his scansion technic.

The framework of four sessions per week is gradually being accepted by the IPA and the possibility of three sessions is tacitly accepted for personal psychoanalysis and supervised treatment.

Thus, the French model appeared first for pragmatic reasons and not for theoretical reasons. In the background take place the disaster of war, the disappearance of the SPP, and of course the death of Freud whose grief was masked by the torments of war.

In 1953, under the aegis of Marie Bonaparte, the Paris Institute of Psychoanalysis was reopened. Major conflicts between Daniel Lagache and Sacha Nacht caused the 1953 split. This split was not the immediate consequence of the three sessions per week, nor that of the short sessions, nor of the scansion technique as practiced by Lacan. Daniel Lagache was a university professor who proposed a program close to the university models while Sacha Nacht wished, on the other hand, an independent institute promoting another model considered too medical by his opponents, but supported by Marie Bonaparte because more specifically psychoanalytic.

The official reasons for resignations and splits are therefore the training criteria with a war between several models, academic, medical, or centered on supervision. It is important to note that this is not a conflict between Eitingon's model and the French model.

This split led to the creation of the French Society of Psychoanalysis behind Daniel Lagache, who was quickly joined by Lacan and a small group of analysts from the SPP. It was then operated by Lacan and became Lacan's split with SPP and IPA. The dispute between models, which has been overshadowed, returns to the question of the variable duration of the sessions advocated by Lacan and by scansion, but not by the number of sessions.

In 1964, Jacques Lacan was dismissed from his position as a training analyst at the French Society of Psychoanalysis because of his scansion model. He left the SFP and created the École Freudienne de Paris (EFP) within which a model of validation of the quality of the analyst, named « the pass », will be developed. This second split led to the creation of the Association Psychanalytique de France (APF), which adopted the IPA's criteria for the practice and training.

In 1971, the APF abolished the training analysis and accepted the principle of testing all candidates regardless of their analyst.

The most essential point of this evolution was one of the two major criteria of the French model, the **radical sealing between personal analysis and training**. There is only one psychoanalysis, the personal analysis. This principle of sealing was extended in a nuanced way to the whole training. Rather, it is a **limitation of interference** between the different actors involved in the training.

At the same time, the reflection on training goes on outside official societies and gives rise to the creation of the 4th group which theorizes « the fourth analysis » related to supervision.

In 1994, the SPP abolished the obligation to follow a psychoanalysis with a « titulaire » (a full member with the functions of training analyst; a training member) in order to become a candidate. This is the « all couch » rule.

In 2004, when Daniel Widlöcher was President of the IPA, the minimum three sessions/week treatment model, used by the SPP and APF training institutes, was officially recognized by the IPA as a valid way to conduct an analysis and training.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FRENCH MODEL: « freedom » and separation of functions**

Let us leave aside the small differences existing between the SPP, the APF, the SPRF and other Societies (Belge, Swiss, Quebec etc.) using variants referred to the « French model ».

No complete French model has ever been described, except in terms of the criteria of « training analysis » and the training itself.

Two criteria are essential.

**1) Freedom**, a term which, by its double meaning, may have raised criticism of laxity. It is the dilemma between acquiring freedom through a long and tedious mentalization work or freeing oneself by discarding all that is unpleasant in order to escape this work. It is in fact the freedom of « free » association, the freedom to develop the identification process with the way of thinking required to be an analyst in sessions; which implies different conceptions of an ideal psychic functioning targeted by the cure.

**2) Separation of functions:** absolute tightness between personal analysis and training; and limitation of interference between those responsible for training.

### **Freedom:**

- Freedom in the choice of the analyst. Currently, the patient can undertake a psychoanalysis with any IPA psychoanalyst (SPP) or with an analyst of any obedience (APF) without the need for this analyst to be a training member.

- Freedom for the analyst to decide whether three or four sessions per week are more appropriate, and also to accept or refuse a particular patient.

- Freedom for the institution to accept or refuse the candidate (freedom of selection criteria, based in fact on this identification with a regressive way of thinking, sensitive to the unconscious)

- Freedom for Institutes to organize their training programs, seminars, working groups, individual and collective supervisions.

- Freedom concerning the moment when a candidate can request his entry into a Training Institute in order to start his training.

- Freedom in the choice of supervisors.
- Freedom in the choice of seminars, working groups, days, colloquia, congresses that candidates have to follow.

Of course, this freedom does not mean no incentive, quite the contrary, but incentive calls on the candidate's sense of responsibility and desire to learn, his curiosity, his personal journey involved in his choices.

### **Sealing and interference limitation:**

This freedom goes hand in hand with the fact that the personal analyst does not interfere in any way, at any time, in the training process. Psychoanalysis as individual treatment is clearly distinct and separate from training that supports the desire to become an analyst, a desire that can contain multiple latent meanings involving various unconscious desires evoked in session.

This has consequences: *an ethics of discretion* is required on the part of the candidate's analyst, and also extends to training, in particular to supervisions, which through counter-transference engages the candidate's personal analysis, past or present. Such limitation of interferences tries to prevent against a group mentality.

It is worth highlighting here how the French model evolved specifically. Several years of personal analysis are required (at least three) before starting the training. A few years ago, it was implicitly expected to attend the training after completing your personal analysis and having a private practice. Currently, often personal analysis continues while training is underway, which allows associations on the training as session materials. This is not simple but is preferable to insulation. From this point of view, the French model and the Eitingon model maintain points of contact; the separation of functions being increasingly respected by the institutes that have adopted the Eitingon model, since the abolition of "reporting". Nevertheless, in the Eitingon model, personal analysis, a very scheduled training and supervision remain interdependent.

### **An example: The concrete organization of French model in the SPP's Institutes (schematic presentation)**

- 1) Request to open a file (application) to become an "Analyst in training" (a "candidate" in other countries)

- 2) If the Institute's response is positive, appoint 3 training Analysts (commissioners) to conduct 3 preliminary interviews
- 3) The 3 interviews with the 3 Commissioners
- 4) Presentation of the 3 interviews to the training Commission (about 6 to 10 trainers) > Admission / Refusal / Adjournment.
- 5) Authorization to start supervisions and incentives to attend training seminars, congresses, etc.

Possible option (specially supervised training): request to wait one year to start the 2nd supervision with or without indication of first individual or collective supervision. In the case of the specially supervised training, the 1st supervisor comes to present the year of supervision to the training Commission which may or may not give its agreement for the second.

- 6) Request for the end of the course after agreement of the two supervisors, with a record of all seminars, colloquia and other activities during the training.
- 7) Interview with a coordinator to speak about the training, supervisions, seminars and specific activities, as well as about some possible difficulties encountered and (feedback reflections about training period).
- 8) End of training within the end of training Commission which brings together two different commissions (12 to 18 training members); with the two supervisors, admission commissioners and directors of the seminars attended: Validation / Non-validation with request to continue the training (3rd supervision for example, or continuation of one of them) or end of the training.

### **METAPSYCHOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW**

To approach our theoretical reflection, we will consider some correlations between models and psychological functioning:

- 1) From the point of view of **the transfer of authority and the idealizing transfer** active in analysis and training, the correlations with childhood and its reminiscences are obvious. Each model inherits and stimulates memories about school, learning, knowledge, authority and so on.
- 2) From the point of view of **training and transmission**, there is not a single model of teaching that is fully satisfactory, hence the desire to invent new ones, neglecting the

importance of the identification involved in transmission and its reference to heritage and mourning.

3) From the point of view of **treatment success**: no model can guarantee the success of analytical treatment, hence the hope that a change of model will overcome resistance.

4) From the point of view of the **adequacy of the models with psychic functioning**: according to their psychic organization, a model can be better used by this or that patient and candidate. Each model is driven by the desire to offer the patient the *Nebenmensch*, the other close human, the person who is well informed, the person who has the right answer, the good enough mother, the father as a support of the tender authority, allowing him to resume his psychological development. For some, the protocol with three sessions per week is in phase with neurotic patients, the one with more sessions per week is supposed to be better adapted to borderline organizations, while for others fewer sessions are then preferable, to cope with massive narcissistic and psychotic transferences.

5) From a **theoretical point of view: two points**

- It is the relationship to **continuity-discontinuity** that embodies the reflections resulting from the confrontation of the French and Eitingon models.
- the question of **temporality** and **superego** dominates the debates in France, with the passage from traumatic atemporality to the timelessness of the dynamic unconscious and to temporality marked by the renunciation engaged in the oedipal mourning that installs the superego.

In both cases, the reflection is back to the après-coup process.

### ***Continuity-discontinuity:***

Psychoanalytical work must promote the efficiency of psychic operations required in presence and in absence of the analyst. With their three or four or five sessions per week, all the training models place the effects of the couple continuity-discontinuity at the very centre of the technique.

The French model would be expected to better respect the psychic discontinuity due to the absence and better elicit a two-step psychic functioning based on the specific dynamics of the après-coup, with its latency period between the two times.

The Anglo-Saxon model of five sessions per week would be expected to promote continuity that would protect the patient from the trauma of discontinuity.



Such a demarcation, based on a clear reality, between the models and the couple continuity-discontinuity, does not seem to be sustainable from a metapsychological point of view. However, an official recognition of the après-coup in French psychoanalysis, and its almost absence in the Anglo-Saxon one, reflects the analyst's different conceptions and listening to the session material. For some, it is understood as the traumatic « shock » expression of the compulsion of repetition, for others as the result of the après-coup process. If continuity is the desired and idealized goal, the après-coup effect will not be recognized; on the contrary, if discontinuity is privileged, the necessity for an illusion of continuity will be neglected.

We find overdetermination by the latent theoretical foundations involved in the analyst's listening, his conception of an ideal mental functioning. These theoretical conceptions seem to be the main benchmark for differentiation, however we must keep in mind that the analyst's mental functioning prevails over his implicit and explicit theories.

### **Temporality**

Thus, the question of temporality is targeted by Lacan's contributions, and gives them their relevance. While the context of reducing session time and the number of sessions for pragmatic reasons discussed above may have encouraged this call to make the duration and number of sessions fluctuate, it should be noted that this is always in the direction of a reduction.

On the metapsychological level, we can consider that Lacan's proposals seek a solution to a clinical aspect faced by any analyst, the regressive attraction involved in the repetition compulsion to which responds the painful working through (*durcharbeitung*).

Lacan perceives actually that regression and recollection can get bogged down in the compulsion of repetition. It is probably this painful aspect for the analyst, which makes him break the common rules, by introducing the reduction of session time and "scansion", i.e. a degree of violence having the value of an interpretative attempt by a traumatic act. This traumatic impact carries the hope of triggering within the session the processes engaged in libidinal co-excitation, and thus to generate an emergence of desire.

This proposal is obviously to be discussed with Lacanian colleagues who are keen to think about their practice.

For us, « scansion » is an invitation to think the interpretation. It must be (contained) in the interpretation. The asymmetry comes from this psychic act, not from the « Prince's will ». The interpretation must take into account the value of the scansion, to the benefit of the timelessness and timeliness of the couple. We grant to regression the hope of letting appear the feelings of lack, and we dedicate to interpretation the ability to free the psychic operations that respond to them. The challenge of our work, a challenge that is never certain, is to awaken the imperatives of mentalization.

Before stopping for debate, it should also be pointed out that changes in models generally are going in one and only way of a reduction in the number of sessions, the duration of the sessions, the duration of the analysis, etc. It started with Otto Rank and the « birth trauma », and gave rise to important comments from Freud. Beyond the legitimacy of this concern, this reductive tendency and the passion that accompanies it are presented as a clinical element. This tendency to decrease can be seen as an effect of the tendency to free oneself from the psychological work required by the presence-absence oscillation acted upon by the sessions, an oscillation that calls to mind the reminiscences of the presence-absence oscillation of the parents and therefore of the primary scene. It is a question of eliminating the endo-perceptions of lack by creating a materialized lack, a lack of session time, instead of the much more elusive one that reflects the powerlessness of the psyche to eliminate the traumatic dimension. A new discussion begins on the conceptions of an ideal psychic functioning, active in the analyst's counter-transference: is the cure at the service of the construction of feelings of continuity or the recognition of a fundamental discontinuity internal to the psyche.

Finally, on a pragmatic level, it should be noted that such a desire to reduce the duration of the analysis, the number of sessions and the duration of the sessions goes against the comfort required for the analyst's mental work. When defending these decreases, the analyst works against himself but especially against the analysis by depriving himself of this minimum of comfort. A counter-transferential phobia of the analytical situation is evident here.