# Commodified Reason in the Neo-Liberal University Discourse: Thoughts for the Times on the Teaching of Psychoanalysis in Universities

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In the Autumn of 1918, just weeks before the official end of World War I, a large group of medical students at the University of Budapest petitioned the rector of the University for the inclusion of psychoanalysis into their academic curriculum, and for the appointment of Sándor Ferenczi, the recently elected President of the International Psycho-Analytical Association (IPA), to the newly created Chair (Harmat 1988: 71; Erős 2011*a*, 2019).[1] Ferenczi first informed Freud of the fact that he had been approached by medical students about the possibility of his teaching psychoanalysis at the University in a letter dated 25 October 1918, in which he also asked for the matter not to be made public in order to avoid 'unedifying discussions about the principles of ψα [*sic*]' (Falzeder, Brabant & Giampieri-Deutsch 1996: 303-4). Nonetheless, socio-political turmoil in Hungary following the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, paired with strong opposition to the proposal of integrating psychoanalysis into medical degree courses from the ultra-conservative Hungarian Ministry of Education, eventually resulted in Freud agreeing to compose a short position statement on the vexed issue of the relationship between psychoanalysis and university education. The text was first published in Hungarian in the medical weekly *Gyógyászat* (Therapy) on 30 March 1919, some six weeks before Ferenczi was officially appointed under Béla Kun's Hungarian Soviet Republic (the Hungarian Republic of Councils) to the world's

[1] On Ferenczi's election and term of office as President of the IPA, which was not without controversy, so much so that it was effectively repressed from the organisation's institutional memory until the mid-1990s, see Bonomi (1999: 507-10).

first Professorship in Psychoanalysis (Mészáros 1998: 208; Erős 2010, 2011*a*, 2011*b*; Pizarro Obaid 2018).[2]

To the best of my knowledge, Freud's letter to the Hungarians is the only written document in which he engaged explicitly with the question concerning the relationship between psychoanalysis and the 'Academy'. For all I know, it is the one and only occasion on which Freud expressed himself publicly, and in no uncertain terms, about whether psychoanalysis should be recognized academically, as a distinct subject of study, in Higher Education Institutions (HEI).[3] Freud approached the issue from two different angles: from the perspective of psychoanalysis and from that of the university. Viewed from the angle of psychoanalysis, he was adamant that psychoanalytic training does not need to rely on the university system in order to maintain itself. Although psychoanalysts may welcome the integration of psychoanalysis into the university curriculum, the academic teaching of psychoanalysis is in a sense superfluous, or at

[2] The German text of Freud's memorandum appeared for the first time in 1969 in the journal *Das Argument*, and was subsequently included in the *Nachtragsband* to Freud's *Gesammelte Werke* (Freud 1969, 1987). However, this text is a German translation by Anna Freud of the English translation by James Strachey of the Hungarian translation by Ferenczi of Freud's original text. The original was deemed lost until it was discovered, as a letter to Lajos Lévy (the editor of *Gyógyászat*), by Michael Schröter amongst the papers of Max Eitingon, which are preserved in the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem. Schröter has also convincingly demonstrated that Freud's statement did not just serve the purpose of endorsing Ferenczi's appointment, but was part of a broader appeal by prominent academics and scholars to reform medical training programmes at Hungarian universities. Rather than relying on Strachey's translation, which is already a 'third-hand' rendition of the original document, I will use my own English version of Freud's manuscript, a transcription of which can be found in Schröter (2009, 2017). For all the political wrangling leading up to it, Ferenczi's academic tenure was extremely short-lived, because on 2 August 1919, just one day after the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, his post was declared null and void again (Harmat 1988: 76; Erős 2010). At the risk of stating the obvious, I should perhaps also remind the reader, here, that Freud's own academic appointment at the University of Vienna was not in psychoanalysis, but in neuropathology, and that despite his Professorship he was never a full member of the Faculty of Medicine, which relieved him of the obligation to offer regular lectures to students, but which also deprived him of the power to influence decision making strategies. See, in this respect, Gicklhorn & Gicklhorn (1960), Eissler (1966) and Jones (1953: 340-41).

[3] In a lecture presented in 2010 on the occasion of the centenary of the IPA, the former IPA president Cláudio Laks Eizirik opined: 'Despite his ambivalent position *vis-à-vis* the University, which embraced him with everything but open arms and where he was never given the opportunity to become a Full Professor, Freud generally relayed the view that the University was hugely significant for the development of his new science and that psychoanalysis should be represented there, since the University has always been the place for creative, critical and independent thinking and research in all areas of knowledge' (Laks Eizirik 2011: 286). When formulating this statement, the author did not refer to Freud's letter to the Hungarians which, as we shall see, evinces a rather different stance, nor to any other source materials, yet this does not necessarily imply that the position attributed to Freud here is by definition wrong or questionable. If nothing else, Laks Eizirik's formulation leaves us with the task of articulating Freud's views on the University carefully and comprehensively, over and above his 1919 position paper, which falls beyond the scope of this essay. Here and elsewhere, translations from foreign-language materials are mine unless otherwise noted.

least not a pre-requisite when it comes to ensuring that students of psychoanalysis receive the instruction necessary for becoming qualified practitioners. In sum, Freud posited that candidates may easily acquire theoretical knowledge about the discipline from studying the literature, from attending psychoanalytic conferences, and from interacting with established members of psychoanalytic organisations. As to the equally important practical experience, this is what they would be able to derive from their own analysis, and from conducting their own clinical work under the supervision of recognized psychoanalysts. Freud's programmatic statement would leave a lasting imprint on psychoanalytic training programmes for many years to come:

> When psychoanalysis is adopted by academic education the psychoanalyst can only experience satisfaction, but he can dispense with the University without harm. He can find the theoretical instruction that he requires in the literature and in a more in-depth fashion at the meetings of the psychoanalytic organisations, and also through personal contact with older and more experienced members of these organisations. Apart from personal analysis [*Selbtsanalyse*], he will acquire practical experience from the treatment of clinical cases, which he will conduct under the direction [*Leitung*] and supervision [*Überwachung*] of a recognized analyst.
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> Schröter 2009: 603

Almost one hundred years after these lines were written, and despite fundamental changes to both psychoanalytic training and university education, it remains hard to disagree with Freud. In a sense, the very fact that, over the past century, the psychoanalytic profession has indeed been able to sustain itself without having to rely on the Academy is sufficient proof that Freud's point of view has retained its strength, and does not require any serious reconsideration.

Still, I believe that the peculiar relationship between psychoanalysis and the Academy as proposed by Freud in 1919, raises a number of important questions, which are as relevant and acute today as they were a hundred years ago. For one, taking the training of psychoanalysts outside the university system places a huge burden upon psychoanalytic organisations, their institutes and training programmes, insofar as it forces them to articulate and justify their own subject benchmarks and what, in

contemporary management-speak, one could call their ‘quality assurance procedures’. In this respect, the tumultuous history of psychoanalysis has shown that, onerous as the task may be, it is not at all impractical or inopportune for psychoanalytic organisations to develop their own rigorous training standards, yet seemingly impossible for psychoanalysts themselves to agree on what exactly these standards should be, and how they should be implemented.

Were I to single out one reason as to why the psychoanalytic organisation Freud founded in March 1910, notably upon the insistence of Ferenczi (Freud 1957[1914*d*]: 44), has splintered into hundreds of rivalrous psychoanalytic associations, then I would be less inclined to consider the wide variety of theoretical orientations than the ongoing divergence of opinion with regard to the concrete format psychoanalytic training should adopt.[4] More than anything else, this is the issue that prompted Lacan and some of his followers to leave the *Société psychanalytique de Paris* (SPP) in 1953 (Miller 1976). More than anything else, this is what emboldened the IPA to present their ultimatum to Lacan’s group in 1963, with the known consequence of his eventually being ‘excommunicated’ (Miller 1977). Matters of training also presided over subsequent splits in Lacan’s own *École freudienne de Paris* (EFP) (Roudinesco 1990: 443-77 & 633-77), and theoretical differences aside these issues lie at the heart of many an intra-institutional conflict in the world of psychoanalysis.

Whereas no one is likely to dispute Freud’s 1919 recommendation that psychoanalytic trainees should gain practical experience from their own analysis and from the supervised treatment of patients, the concrete implementation of this relatively simple guideline continues to divide the psychoanalytic community. Should there be a minimum criterion for the duration of a candidate’s own analysis, and if so what should it be? Should the frequency and the duration of the candidate’s analytic sessions be pre-established? Should a candidate be allocated a training-analyst by a training committee,

[4] The oldest, so-called ‘Eitingon-model’ of psychoanalytic training, consisting of formal theoretical and technical instruction, a prolonged ‘didactic’ analysis, and analytic supervision, which Freud outlined in his letter to the Hungarians, but which would not become formally adopted by the IPA until 1920, after the foundation of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute by Karl Abraham, Max Eitingon and Ernst Simmel, is currently one of three accepted training protocols in the IPA. Outside the IPA, numerous alternative frameworks have been developed, with many psychoanalytic training organizations trying to promote a more communal, libertarian system of training. On the history of the IPA, see Loewenberg and Thompson (2011: 1-5). On the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, see Brecht *et al.* (1985: 32-6) and Fuechtner (2011).

or should trainees be allowed to choose their own analyst? If the latter, should the analyst be a practitioner within the candidate's training organisation, or should the pool of qualified analysts be extended to all practicing psychoanalysts, irrespective of their affiliation and seniority? Should the training-analyst decide whether the candidate's analysis has sufficiently progressed for him or her to be inducted into the profession, or should this decision rest with the training committee? If the latter, which 'assessment criteria' should the training committee employ, other than the authorised record of completion of the candidate's analytic sessions? What happens if the training committee decides that a candidate is not (yet) qualified to work as a psychoanalyst? Should candidates be allowed to see patients (under supervision), and if so at what stage in their training analysis? Should patients be assigned to candidates, or are candidates at liberty to take on any patients who come to them? Should the training analysis *de facto* end when the candidate is admitted to the profession? If not, is it entirely up to the candidate to decide how long the training analysis should continue? How does an analyst become a training analyst and/or analytic supervisor? Is it purely based on the number of years she or he has practiced, or should an analyst apply to the training committee or another institutional body? If so, which criteria will this institutional body use in order to assess the analyst's application? How many hours of analytic supervision should a candidate complete? Should the candidate be given the freedom to choose his or her own supervisor? If so, should the supervisor belong to the organisation in which the candidate is training, or can he be chosen from a wider constituency of analytic supervisors? How will the supervisor evaluate the candidate's work? Is the supervisor expected to report back to the training committee, and if so what form should the supervisor's report take? And what about the theoretical components of the training-programme? Should psychoanalytic candidates sit exams, write essays, deliver presentations, participate in group-work, complete a dissertation? And then there is the even more vexed issue of entry criteria. If candidates are not to be selected on the basis of academic qualifications, what will the training committee be looking for? Which motivations for analytic training are deemed acceptable and which are deemed inadmissible? Should candidates be of a certain age, and have certain professional or other qualifications before they can be considered? Should people with a history of

mental illness or with a criminal record be *de facto* excluded from training? Should candidates be of good moral character?[5]

In some European countries, these pressing concerns, which refer less to how psychoanalysis is being transmitted than to how the transmission of psychoanalysis is guaranteed, have been 'resolved' via the introduction of a form of state regulation, which dictates and monitors the overall delivery of psychoanalytic training programmes, including entry qualifications, progression criteria and 'graduation' requirements. In countries where there is no state-controlled regulatory framework, such as the UK, professional bodies have stepped in to guarantee the quality and standards of training organisations, so that candidates who have completed their training in these accredited institutes can become officially registered with a professional council or association, and use this registration as a hallmark of quality. Needless to say, this does not imply that psychoanalytic training programmes operating outside this framework of accreditation are by definition suspect, nor that the psychoanalysts they produce are by definition 'wild practitioners', even less that those psychoanalysts who carry the hallmark of quality are invariably 'civilized' and reliable. Even though training and practicing under the aegis of a professional body may make it easier for practitioners to attract and sustain a steady stream of patients, this 'economic benefit' on the grounds of 'symbolic capital' is not guaranteed either, if only because psychoanalysts also have to compete for patients with a plethora of other mental health care providers, some of whom are generally regarded as more evidence-based and cost-effective.

The unintended corollaries of Freud's 1919 position statement have left the field of psychoanalysis hopelessly divided and seriously at risk of professional disintegration on account of its own internal inconsistencies. And so I think the time has come to

[5] All of these questions, and many more, featured high on Lacan's agenda during the years following the establishment of the *Société française de psychanalyse* (SFP) in 1953, partly because they served to justify the group's institutional existence, partly because they were also being debated within the IPA at the time. Whenever Lacan addressed them directly, often sarcastically and in a highly satirical vein, as in his 1953 'Rome Discourse' and in a 1956 paper commemorating the centenary of Freud's birth, it always proved easier for him to criticize the formalistic rules and pragmatic regulations in the IPA than to offer a workable alternative. Indeed, a genuine alternative would not be articulated until June 1964, after Lacan's 'excommunication' and with the creation of the EFP, yet if anything it resulted in more internal disagreements and another split. See Lacan (2006[1953]: 197-205; 2006[1956]: 385-406) and Roudinesco (1990: 470-7).

revisit the relationship between psychoanalysis and the Academy, and to review the possible benefits of a 'strategic partnership' between the two, in a way which would transcend the boundaries of the mainly theoretical delivery of psychoanalysis as a stand-alone Masters' programme or as part of the taught Undergraduate or Postgraduate provision in a relevant Higher Education degree course.[6] For sure, various objections could be raised against this type of initiative. First of all, the regulations governing the academic curriculum, with their emphasis on contact hours, learning outcomes, credits and degree classifications, would seem totally anathema to the required openness and flexibility of psychoanalytic training. Secondly, conventional academic assessment tools, such as examinations and essays, may be considered unsuitable or insufficient for evaluating a candidate's psychoanalytic knowledge, skills and experience. Third, the requirement for psychoanalytic candidates to pursue their own analysis and conduct clinical work under supervision might seem impossible to integrate into an academic curriculum.

Credible as these challenges may seem, I believe they are not particularly significant. The incommensurability between psychoanalysis and the Academy on the aforementioned grounds is definitely overstated. All the psychoanalytic training programmes outside the University system that I am familiar with already draw to some extent on the traditional academic format of lectures and seminars for the candidates' theoretical instruction. As such, the Academy has always already been present within psychoanalytic training institutions, and I think it is fair to say that, although lecture courses may be less regulated there in terms of aims and objectives, learning outcomes and assessments, the style and format of these lectures are not always vastly different from the way in which academic lecturers would deliver their teaching.[7] True,

[6] On the emergence and development of academic programmes in 'psychoanalytic studies' at UK universities until the mid-1990s, see Stanton & Reason (1996). Over the last twenty years, many of the programmes discussed in this book have been either closed down, or transformed into broader degrees in 'psycho-social studies', partly owing to staff turnover, yet mainly on account of the corporatisation of higher education, to which I shall return later on in this essay. As to the literature on psychoanalysis and the Academy, this is by no means as expansive as one may think. There are numerous books and papers on the challenges of teaching psychoanalysis, but relatively few in-depth analyses of the relation between psychoanalysis and the university as a social institution of higher education. Readers wishing to explore the issue further may start with Borgogno & Cassullo (2010), Borgogno (2011), Chaudhary et al. (2018), Ferraro (2008), Giampieri-Deutsch (2010), Kernberg (2011), Lackinger & Rössler-Schülein (2017), Laplanche (2004), Shengold (1979) and Wallerstein (2009, 2011).

[7] Between 1953 and 1963, Lacan delivered his weekly seminar under the auspices of the psychoanalytic training programme of the SFP at Sainte-Anne Hospital in Paris. Had he been asked to

psychoanalytic training organisations do not award degree classifications, and I cannot imagine what a 'second-class honours' psychoanalyst would look like, yet they do often rely on a core curriculum with a set number of contact hours between trainee and instructor, as well as annual progression criteria and an academic life-cycle, starting at the end of September and ending in June, spanning three or four years of part-time study. As to assessment tools, academic regulations are effectively much more flexible than what is generally assumed when it comes to evaluating students' performance on a given module or level of study. If anything, academic institutions value and support innovation in assessment, as long as it can be demonstrated that the chosen approach still allows for a robust evaluation of the students' performance with regard to the stated learning outcomes. It is not uncommon for university students to be assessed, wholly or in part, on the basis of presentations to other students, study diaries, class-participation, process notes, pieces of creative writing, and individually or collectively designed objects. Firmly embedded and distinctly convenient as the traditional examination or essay may be, these are by no means the only options in the academic's assessment toolkit, and academics are often rewarded for their dedication and inventiveness if they suggest feasible alternatives. Furthermore, psychoanalytic training institutions do not dispense with academic evaluation either, inasmuch as candidates generally have to do more than simply attend the lectures and seminars, and are routinely expected to produce one or more papers in order to progress to the next level of training.

As to the requirement of analytic candidates undertaking their own analysis and conducting supervised treatment of clinical cases, this does not represent an insurmountable problem either. Many universities actively encourage students to undertake one or more work placements, not in the least because these integrated 'academic apprenticeships' are considered to enhance their employability. Universities also unapologetically use this component of the curriculum in their marketing and recruitment strategies, and they (correctly) believe it significantly increases their chances of improving their position in national league tables of graduate employment and higher education 'leavers' destinations' statistics. Universities have also found

present his seminar at a HEI, or had the psychoanalytic training programme been organised and overseen by an academic body, I am not convinced the style and format would have dramatically changed.

creative ways to assess students' achievements in this part of their degree course. For example, an undergraduate student in psychology undertaking a work placement with a pre-approved employer is commonly expected to submit an academic essay on a topic germane to the work environment as well as a reflective report on their personal and professional experience. Both pieces of work are graded 'pass' or 'fail', yet the latter option is rarely used, unless the student has failed to adhere to the terms and conditions of their (verbal or written) contract, has not complied with their key duties and responsibilities, or has broken university and/or employment regulations, including the 'law of the land', and is thus regarded as 'professionally unsuitable'. Students reading for a degree course in medicine or one of the allied health professions, and those studying for a higher professional doctorate, such as a Clinical Doctorate or a Doctorate of Public Health, are invariably required to undertake an extensive period of supervised work, which is rigorously assessed by a team of established professionals on the basis of both work performance and (if relevant) technical research skills and mainstream academic outputs (treatment protocols, clinical records, data analysis, case conferences etc.). It needs to be reiterated, however, that universities generally do not have a stated rule that each and every component of a degree course needs to be formally assessed. Although students may be required to demonstrate that they have completed all the core elements of their course before they can graduate, this does not imply that all of these elements were also individually assessed. A personal analysis might thus very well be included as an indispensable, core part of the academic training programme, without there being a need for this part of the course to be assessed separately.[8]

[8] Strange as it may sound to refer to the 'assessment' of someone's personal analysis, this is precisely what many psychoanalytic training organizations have struggled with since the principle was first formally introduced back in 1920. All psychoanalytic training institutions agree that a candidate's personal analysis is a non-negotiable part of the programme, and a necessary (if not sufficient) pre-condition for anyone gaining access to the psychoanalytic profession. Unfortunately, this is also where the agreement stops, and no one has ever come up with a truly watertight answer to the question as to how this personal analysis should be 'assessed' in terms of the candidates' progression through their training. In other words, although it is generally accepted that no one can become a psychoanalyst without having undertaken a personal analysis, no one has ever been able to capture what exactly this personal analysis should entail, much less how one can reliably know that it has indeed been properly undertaken and has given rise to what one may reasonably expect from a successful (training) analysis. In the absence of a solid qualitative criterion, and a commensurate 'assessment tool' for operationalizing this criterion, institutions routinely rely on secondary measures, such as the competence of the training analyst, the number of hours the candidate was in analysis, the candidate's 'record of attendance', the trainee's presentation of a reflective report on the analysis etc. Yet none of these measures adequately capture the quality, or even the 'mark' of the candidate's analytic experience as a training experience, whatever this quality may be.

In my view, none of the aforementioned objections to the full inclusion of psychoanalytic training in the Academy constitutes a major obstacle, because they largely concern practical issues that can be resolved under existing university statutes and ordinances, and within the confines of good academic governance. The various objections against psychoanalysis, as opposed to psychoanalytic studies, becoming more integrated into the academic system can thus be dismissed as irrelevant or inapplicable. In addition, the benefits of such a re-integration cannot be overestimated. Heeding Freud's proposed curriculum for a psychoanalytic training programme in his essay on lay-analysis, in which he advocated the teaching of such diverse subjects as biology, sociology, anatomy, mythology and literature, the Academy may offer many more opportunities for candidates to study these disciplines that any vocational training programme allows for (Freud 1955[1926*e*]: 246). Secondly, when it comes to guaranteeing the quality of training, the burden and responsibility would not just befall upon the psychoanalytic organisation, but would at least be a shared concern—accreditation bodies validating already established academic programmes rather than mere professional or vocational courses, complaints and litigation charges being investigated and addressed by the university's governance and legal office, and the academic 'imprint' in itself offering candidates an additional certificate of achievement. Third, since the theoretical instruction would be delivered by qualified lecturers and academic researchers, the quality of the teaching might be of a considerably higher standard than what is routinely encountered in non-academic vocational training programmes, which often struggle to find people who are willing and able to deliver the theoretical components of the course, or at least to maintain a teaching standard that is attuned to the requirements and the level of the degree course.

There is, however, another much more fundamental and much more intractable issue that may preclude a productive 'strategic partnership' between psychoanalysis and the Academy. It concerns the second angle of Freud's letter to the Hungarians, in which he addressed the question of the teaching of psychoanalysis in universities from the perspective of the university. In this respect, Freud started with a general observation:

> For the University, the question [of the teaching of psychoanalysis] is whether it is altogether prepared to acknowledge the significance of psychoanalysis for the

> training of physicians and scientists. If this is indeed the case, then the University can also no longer reject the safeguards for the teaching of psychoanalysis within its setting.
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> Schröter 2009: 603

The question as to whether psychoanalysis could or should be part of the Academy is thus also crucially conditioned by the Academy's willingness to accommodate psychoanalysis as an academic discipline. In an attempt to force the Academy's hand, Freud offered three reasons as to why this significance is not in doubt: 1. Teaching psychoanalysis to medical students will make physicians more skilled at recognizing the importance of mental factors in the aetiology and treatment of organic diseases; 2. Psychoanalysis should be an essential component of the academic training of psychiatrists, because it allows for a proper understanding of mental illness, in a field that is almost entirely reduced to description; 3. Because the method of psychoanalysis has yielded important results outside the clinical sphere, in the social sciences and the humanities, students in these disciplines also stand to benefit from its inclusion in the curriculum (Schröter 2009: 604-5).

A century after Freud formulated these arguments, their strength has not diminished, yet their value has progressively decreased, to the point where anyone rehearsing Freud's line of reasoning is probably at risk of being identified as a residual anachronism in the tower of contemporary scientific research. Irrespective of their area of specialisation, few 21st century medical doctors would accept that mental factors play an important role in human pathological processes, and those that do would no doubt gladly assuage the adverse impact of psychological influences either by prescribing psychotropic drugs, because it has allegedly been proven that most mental disorders originate in one or the other chemical imbalance in the human brain, or by initiating a course of cognitive behaviour therapy, because it is purportedly evidence-based and cost-effective. If, during Freud's lifetime, psychiatrists were already extremely wary of the highly speculative explanations psychoanalysis had come up with, their 21st century colleagues perceive the psychoanalyst as an astrologer amongst the astronomers, a creationist amongst the Darwinians, an alchemist amongst the biomedical scientists. To the extent that understanding mental disorders is on the psychiatric agenda, enlightenment is not expected to emanate from detailed

psychoanalytic case-formulations, but from the hugely sophisticated wonder that is the fMRI scanner, from genetic mapping, and from randomized controlled drug trials. And if the psychoanalytic understanding of mental disorders has been discredited, or replaced with measurably superior hypotheses, why should anyone working in the field of mental health care give credence to its clinical paradigm, which is not evidence-based, not cost-effective, time-consuming and labour-intensive? Just as people are free to seek help from crystal-healers, aromatherapists, osteopaths and acupuncturists, they are welcome to consult a psychoanalyst, spend oodles of cash on talking for years to a hoary spectral figure who is predominantly silent, and reap the psycho-social benefits from it, yet this does not imply that psychoanalysis should become part of an academic training programme in medicine or psychiatry. In sum, in this case it is not the Academy which is likely to veto the formal inclusion of psychoanalysis into the medical curriculum, but the medical *cum* psychiatric professions themselves, purely on account of their having signed up more than ever before to the naturalistic model of human development.

Away from the academic training programmes in medicine and its various sub-disciplines and specialisations, we should of course also contemplate the possibility of psychoanalysis being re-established as a professional training programme in the Academy under the format of a stand-alone course of study, whether as part of the social sciences or in the humanities.[9] Although in this case some resistance is to be expected from psychoanalysts themselves, who may disapprove of their vocational training programmes being absorbed wholly or in part by the Academy, as a totally unnecessary concession to an ideological state apparatus and a potentially pernicious loss of professional independence, I believe that here it is primarily the University itself which will show its teeth again.[10] For many years, I really wanted to believe that the

[9] In his letter to the Hungarians, Freud did not consider this option, which should not be interpreted as evidence of the fact that he wanted to reserve psychoanalytic training to medical doctors, but as a mere consequence of the purpose his position paper was serving, i.e. a justification for the teaching of psychoanalysis in an academic medical school.

[10] In the UK, quite a few training programmes in psychoanalysis or psychotherapy that operate outside the University system are still ‘validated’ by it, and whilst this is not a pre-requisite for the programme to be accredited by a professional body, such as the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy (UKCP), training committees often actively pursue this validation because it makes the programme more appealing to applicants, brings additional kudos, and potentially allows for disputes, appeals and complaints to be dealt with by a larger structure of governance.

profound and persistent academic suspicion towards psychoanalysis, at least in the Western world, had something to do with the controversial social status of Freud's theory and practice, or more insidiously with the fundamental disparity between the place and function of knowledge in the university discourse and its position in the discourse of the psychoanalyst, as Lacan outlined in his 1969-'70 seminar on the theory of the four discourses (Lacan 2007).[11] Indeed, the way in which the University traditionally promotes knowledge and understanding—as goods that can be taught, learnt and transferred—appears to be at odds with the psychoanalytic outlook on knowledge, as something that is intrinsically fractured and perennially open to revision.[12] However, after having functioned for quite some time within a psychoanalytic organisation, and after having witnessed for many years how quite a few psychoanalytic organisations operate with knowledge, I now believe that what Lacan designated as the 'discourse of the university'—even in its spectacular convergence with the neo-liberal imperatives of late capitalism, which favour cost-effectiveness, efficiency savings, business plans, SMART objectives, transparent measures of success, key performance indicators and student employability—is still less epistemically self-serving, and often more attuned to invention and innovation than many a psychoanalytic organisation.[13] It is arguably the case that academic research is no longer as free as it used to be, if only because academics are expected to tailor their projects to national research agendas, or to operationalize the themes identified by research councils and other funding bodies, in order to maximize their chances of success when applying for research grants (an excellent key performance indicator if

[11] I am too unfamiliar with the history and the operational principles of HEIs in Argentina and Brazil to comment on the reasons as to why psychoanalysis remains so prominent in their University system, both as a separate course of study and as an academic subject in the social sciences and the allied health professions. Outside these and other South American countries, the academic suspicion towards psychoanalysis is by no means restricted to the Anglo-American world, but has long since invaded many non-Anglophone universities in Scandinavia and Western Europe. Even in France, where psychoanalysis has been taught in almost all academic psychology departments since the early 1950s, and where some HEIs have offered full clinical training programmes in psychoanalysis since the early 1970s, psychoanalysis in the Academy is at risk of becoming extinct—the latest example being the announced closure of the Training and Research Unit (UFR) in Psychoanalytic Studies at Paris VII (Roudinesco 2019). For a historical survey of the disciplinary and institutional conflicts between psychoanalysis and academic psychology in France, see Ohayon (1999).

[12] For a detailed exposition of the peculiar status of knowledge in psychoanalysis, see Nobus & Quinn (2005).

[13] For the reader who is not *au fait* with SMART objectives, I am happy to disclose that these are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.

there ever was one). Yet knowledge-economic constraints aside, the academy is still a place where research is valued, where knowledge is questioned and advanced, and where new ideas and a spirit of discovery have a good chance of being fostered. When, in 1919, Freud outlined what a psychoanalyst needs, and how these needs could easily be met outside the university system, he forgot to mention one cardinal thing, notably that the psychoanalyst needs to learn to become a researcher—someone who is capable of questioning knowledge, someone who is prepared to unlearn, someone who can listen and observe from a position of ignorance.[14] Whatever may be said about the corporatisation of HEIs and the broader knowledge-economy in which they are embedded, universities generally still inspire critical thinking. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in psychoanalytic training institutions, where candidates are often merely expected to assimilate and regurgitate the knowledge of the masters, and critical thinking is actively discouraged, especially when the objects of critique are the *éminences grises* to whom the organisation has sold its soul.[15] The same is true for free speech, or whatever is left of this freedom after the legal restrictions have been ascertained. Corporatized and commodified, the Academy still prides itself on being a place where ideas can be debated, and where staff, students and members of the public can engage in open discussion on the widest range of topics of human interest, controversial and polemical as some of the ideas and their promoters may be.[16] Not so in psychoanalytic organisations, where certain ideas and some individuals are

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[14] Freud would articulate the convergence between psychoanalytic treatment and research most emphatically in his 1927 postscript to 'The Question of Lay Analysis', in which he stated: 'In psychoanalysis there has existed from the very first an inseparable bond between cure and research. Knowledge brought therapeutic success. It was impossible to treat a patient without learning something new; it was impossible to gain fresh insight without perceiving its beneficent results. Our analytic procedure is the only one in which this precious conjunction is assured' (Freud 1955[1927*a*]: 256).

[15] It is generally less problematic for candidates to criticize scholars and practitioners belonging to a rival organisation, or whose work falls outside the remit of psychoanalysis altogether, yet it is better still to remain silent about these figures, unless the masters have shown the way. Criticizing the masters themselves, however, is tantamount to signing one's professional death warrant or being formally excluded on the grounds of civil disobedience and gross moral turpitude, whereby a complimentary diagnosis of perversion is not at all infrequent.

[16] In the UK, the National Union of Students has a no-platform policy, which states that no proscribed person or organisation should be given a platform to speak at a university event. The Oxford Union and the Cambridge University Students' Union have distanced themselves from it, yet this has not stopped students from protesting against the hosting of certain speakers. Despite these protests and campaigns—a recent example being the attempt to bar Germaine Greer from speaking at the University of Cardiff on the grounds of her being a 'TERF' (trans-exclusionary radical feminist)—universities generally do not give in to no-platforming demands, unless they feel that the presence of a speaker on campus poses serious security risks.

implicitly, yet forcefully excluded from entering the cenacle, in most cases on account of the fact that they are heretical, i.e. not in accordance with the intellectual constitution and the doctrinal principles of the association.[17]

Before I am being accused of holding grossly outdated and terribly naïve views about the 21st century Academy, I should indicate that I do believe there is a massive, seemingly impregnable obstacle to the future of psychoanalysis as a stand-alone professional course of study in contemporary HEIs. It is the same obstacle that has been responsible for the arts and humanities being threatened with closure since the turn of the last century; the same obstacle that has radically transformed the aims of Higher Education and that has turned the Academy into a major tool of the gross national product. The obstacle is not always visible, and is often cleverly disguised by university managers underneath the latest managerial newspeak, yet it controls each and every aspect of the Academy, from the selection, recruitment and promotion of staff to the strategic review of academic disciplines, and from all policies governing the student life cycle to all procedures regulating research activities. Apart from teaching and research, which is what universities are expected to excel in, the obstacle also affects academic professional services to staff and students, such as human resources, student support and welfare, library services, health and safety, estates and infrastructure, staff development, accommodation and residences, and media services. It is called money.

Back in 1969, when Lacan introduced his theory of the four discourses, each of the four quadripartite formulae was designed to represent a specific type of social bond, yet only one coincided with an established social institution (Lacan 2007: 20-4).[18] Lacan was reluctant to name it at first, because he felt that it 'would create too many misunderstandings' (Lacan 2007: 21), but as his seminar unfolded he designated it as the discourse of the university, without therefore offering his audience much guidance as to how the relationship between the four terms in this particular structure should be understood. Of the four discourses Lacan presented and unpacked in 1969-'70, the

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[17] This practice of 'closing the ranks' is everything but new. After Lacan broke with the SPP in June 1953, he was prevented from speaking at the 18th congress of the IPA, which was held in London at the end of July that year. See Lacan (2006[1953]: 199).

[18] On the discourse as a social bond, see also Lacan (1981: 5).

university discourse received the least attention, despite the fact that Lacan had initially expressed his concern that its very name may lead to misunderstandings. Within the space of this essay, I cannot perform the task of glossing Lacan's discourse of the university *in extenso*, because this would require too much explication and elaboration.[19] Also, for the sake of my argument, it suffices that I concentrate on a small number of features of the formula, which can effectively be re-written as a logical sequence: $S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a \rightarrow \$$.

As Lacan conceived it fifty years ago, the discourse of the university is ruled by knowledge, or at least by a semblance of something approaching an 'epistemic narrative'. This is not the $S_1$, but the $S_2$ in the above sequence. However, knowledge in the place of the agency does not imply that knowledge is also an autonomous, self-regulating force. The driver and organiser of knowledge is situated outside its frame of reference, in what Lacan defined as the place of truth (Lacan 2007: 169). In the discourse of the university, this place of truth is occupied by a master signifier, $S_1$. At no given point during his seminar did Lacan explain what it means for $S_1$ to be in the place of truth, or what exactly this 'hidden' master signifier represents, yet the mere fact that it is held to control knowledge from the place of truth is tantamount to its only ever being 'half-said', as an extremely powerful yet surreptitious factor which is always 'at work' but which can never be fully identified in its concrete, discerning characteristics. As to the place and function of *a*, Lacan clarified, notably in an exchange with students on the steps of the Panthéon in Paris, that in the university discourse this *a* represents the exploited, who generally go by the name of students (Lacan 2007: 147-8). The *$*, then, is what falls out of the discourse, both in the sense of 'result' and as 'residue' or 'waste product', and which cannot be recuperated into its production process. Although Lacan did not spend much time on this *$* in the university discourse either, *$* operating in the place of product-loss could be interpreted here as the (largely unintended) fabrication of a radical deficiency, which may express itself in a multitude of 'symptoms', ranging from frustration and disappointment to anger and resentment.

[19] Apart from Lacan's own seminar, readers interested in studying the university discourse in the context of the structure and applications of Lacan's discourse theory may benefit from Quackelbeen & Verhaeghe (1984), Quackelbeen (1994), Verhaeghe (1995), Boucher (2006), Tomšič (2015: 199-229) and Klepec (2016).

Were Lacan to have delivered his seminar in 2019, I do not believe that he would have had to worry all that much about being misunderstood when he laid out the terms and conditions of the university discourse. Indeed, I would even go so far as to claim that his designation of the aforementioned sequence of terms would have been grasped instantly by his 21st century audience. In 1969, in the aftermath of the student revolts and in the wake of a new French government initiative to reform Higher Education, it may have been difficult for people to see what Lacan was talking about when he presented the university discourse. Fifty years down the line, it is blatantly obvious.[20] According to many a contemporary university's vision and mission statement, it is driven by the ambition to transmit and advance knowledge and understanding in its areas of specialisation, yet it does not require great acumen to acknowledge that this laudable cause is but a clever ruse, or a mere semblance of what really drives the system, an elusive yet mighty $S_1$ called money. The upshot of money functioning in the place of truth in the university discourse is that knowledge (reason) itself becomes commodified, and that the difference between good (acceptable) and bad (unacceptable) knowledge is no longer based on an evaluation of its intrinsic qualities, but on an assessment of its monetary value, i.e. the extent to which it is capable of generating income.[21] Research institutes are marketable revenue centres, academic disciplines are profitable educational service areas, academic papers are lucrative research outputs, and universities are incubators of economic growth.[22] Students are

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[20] And it could not have been more obvious from the English edition of Lacan's seminar, in which the two constitutive 'operators' of the four discourses—of impossibility and impotence—have been consistently replaced with the euro-symbol €throughout the book. This volume was also the last in the series of Lacan seminars in English translation published by W. W. Norton & Company, for monetary reasons . . .

[21] In an academic career spanning almost thirty years, I have been told on more than one occasion that my papers, like this one here, are totally worthless, because they are not published in journals with high-impact factors and are unlikely to generate research grant income on account of their discordance with research council agendas. Since books do not have impact factors, they should not be pursued at all. Chapters in books are equally meritless, and researchers agreeing to submit an essay for inclusion in an edited collection have stupidly missed a valuable opportunity for seeing their work appear in a trusted, high-impact academic journal.

[22] It is also in this sense that we should understand the university's keenness to see their research centres being endowed with a catchy, marketable name, preferably derived as a memorable acronym from its alleged areas of research, like the Centre for Research into Infant Behaviour (CRIB). It took me a while to realise, but now I finally understand why my proposals to set up a Centre for Research into Applied Psychoanalysis and a Centre for User-friendly New Technologies were never taken forward. . .

educational service users recruited from a competitive pool of customers who, as consumers of higher education, are being fooled into believing that they are in the driver's seat as proper 'partners in education' (PIEs), but who are unwittingly commodified and exploited as aspiring, economically productive workers. Universities like to say that they are entirely focused on the 'student experience' and that 'student satisfaction' is increasing year on year, yet apart from this being another excellent marketing tool, the 'student experience' also feeds into a national student survey and a teaching evaluation framework, which in turn inform league tables and university rankings, and thus institutional reputation and measures of excellence, which may affect student recruitment, tuition fees and, when all is said and done, the annual balance sheet.[23] Students themselves increasingly identify as consumers of a higher education service who have the right to apply Value for Money principles when it comes to evaluating the quality of the education they receive, yet in reality they do not understand that by entering the university discourse and participating in its structure they have already been commodified as the economic benefactors of the institution's 'educational gains' (formerly known as 'learning outcomes'). Whether students eventually come to acknowledge that they spent three or four years being exploited by an institution promising 'higher education' but in reality primarily imbuing them with transferable skills ready for the job-market probably does not make much of a difference with regard to the net result of the educational equation: a painfully negative bank balance, long years of crushing student debt, little or no confidence in one's knowledge base (which never seems to have been addressed or developed anyway) and lingering questions as to why those student years passed so quickly and what purpose they really served other than filling the financial coffers of the university.

Given the commodification of both knowledge and its recipients in the current neo-liberal university discourse, which fits Lacan's 1969 formula like a glove and much better than its historical equivalent, I should admit that psychoanalysis (as a theoretical paradigm and *a fortiori* as a clinical protocol for the treatment of a wide range of mental health issues) is extremely unlikely to survive and thrive in an academic structure

[23] In the UK, the majority of universities have charitable status, which means that they are *de facto* and *de jure* not-for-profit, yet all the academic institutions I have ever worked in nonetheless try to ensure that the annual budget shows a good surplus, which is not only favourable in terms of the university's financial sustainability, but also in terms of the vice-chancellor's annual salary.

which, more than ever before, is controlled by the filthy lucre, because it is bound to be regarded as unviable, which in this case is but a synonym for unprofitable.[24] And much as I would like, it is difficult to formulate a counter-argument to this, unless I would rehearse the (entirely justified) response that universities should not just accommodate and support the profitable subjects (the so-called STEM subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), that they should start reconsidering the intrinsic value of intellectual inquiry, and that a genuinely democratic society needs psychoanalysis, much like it needs the arts and humanities—indeed, that the primary goal of a HEI should be to contribute to the formation and development of 'good citizenship', as defined by a versatile ability to care for oneself and others against the background of a firmly embedded set of ethical principles.[25] Yet for all this doom and gloom—and I do not for a moment accept that universities may change, and will eventually come to realise that the money-signifier is not nearly as important as they think it is—we should not ignore the fact that psychoanalysis is still widely taught, either as a method or as a body of knowledge in its own right, in what is left of the human and social sciences, and in the arts and humanities.

This 'unofficial' academic presence of psychoanalysis, as an almost clandestine body of knowledge which shapes and informs a wide range of subjects, reflects the third of Freud's three-partite exposition of how universities may stand to benefit (if not in financial, at least in educational terms) from the inclusion of psychoanalysis in the academic curriculum: students reading for a degree course in what is routinely referred to as the 'liberal arts' may gain tremendously from the way in which psychoanalysis has crucially contributed to our understanding of socio-political processes, human relations, psycho-social phenomena such as religion and spirituality, and everything that falls under the banner of 'products of the human creative imagination'. Here, psychoanalysis is by definition restricted to its implementation as an 'applied science',

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[24] After having operated quite successfully for almost thirty years, my university decided to close down a Masters' Programme in Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Society, allegedly because it did not attract the (randomly imposed) institutional minimum of eighteen full-time students per annum, yet in reality because my 'resources' would have to be re-directed towards the exponential expansion of undergraduate students—the latter bringing in more cash than postgraduate students, because their tuition fees are higher and their course of study is longer.

[25] For excellent elaborations of this argument and much more, see Bok (2003), Kirp (2003), Washburn (2005), Donoghue (2008), Nussbaum (2010), Giroux (2014), Brown (2015: 175-200), Di Leo (2017) and Collini (2012; 2017).

and is likely to play a secondary role in the students' chosen degree course, yet its shadowy presence has the distinct advantage of leaving it less exposed, and potentially less vulnerable to academic scrutiny by the institutional champions of 'educational excellence'. I firmly believe that from this particular position, psychoanalysis, or rather those teaching and researching it, should join hands with the emerging discipline of 'critical university studies' which, if it has not been properly recognized by the un-self-critical proponents of the money-driven university discourse, definitely requires a multitude of trans-disciplinary voices to challenge the ongoing commodification of reason and the gradual enclosure of the intellectual commons.[26] My proposal, here, is not for the creation of a new strategic partnership between psychoanalysis and the Academy, but rather for the articulation of a mutually beneficial 'underground alliance' between psychoanalysis and the intellectual movement that has taken the ongoing commodification of reason in the neo-liberal university discourse as its prime target. Psychoanalysis may not be exceptionally self-critical, yet it is sufficiently critical of other discourses for it to have an important role to play in the exposition of the university system as a perfidious social bond, much like Lacan demonstrated in his 1969-'70 seminar. In addition, given the fact that a substantial segment of psychoanalytic training outside the University still draws on academic principles, practices and procedures, this alliance between psychoanalysis and critical university studies may effectively embolden psychoanalysts to review their own training standards, to consider the extent to which their own institutional discourse is indebted to and imperilled by the trials and tribulations of the university discourse and, most importantly, to debate the value and the place of creative, critical and independent thinking within their organisation. In other words, I believe that the alliance between psychoanalysis and critical university studies may be beneficial institutionally and theoretically, as a means to protect the presence of psychoanalytic knowledge in the Academy, but may also offer a new opportunity for vocational psychoanalytic training programmes that operate outside the University system to evaluate their internal politics, to gauge their own (implicit) commodification, to test their institutional values and to re-articulate the touchstones of psychoanalytic training. Psychoanalysis may not need the University, then, to sustain itself, but it may take advantage from the rise of

[26] For a fine survey of the history and current status of critical university studies, see Williams (2018).

critical university studies to newly reflect upon the series of obdurate questions about the concrete implementation of a psychoanalytic training programme, which have loomed large over the social and professional sustainability of psychoanalysis ever since Freud wrote his letter to the Hungarians.

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