In these pages...

This Special Issue of *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, dedicated to Charles Rycroft, aims to offer our readers thoughts both on the origins and vicissitudes of the psychoanalytic vocation, and on the nature and development of the identity of the psychoanalyst. The psychoanalytic vocation and the identity of the psychoanalyst are, after all, the central themes of Rycroft's paper, "Why Analysts Need Their Patients' Transferences", originally published in 1993, which opens this Special Issue and also acts as a shared thread running through the reflections of the colleagues invited to make their contributions.

"What makes certain people aspire to become psychoanalysts?" and "Why do some of those who become psychoanalysts succeed in acquiring their own personal voice, while others have to relinquish theirs in favour of other people's who are considered more powerful and authoritative?" are substantially two of the questions that the papers presented here try to answer. All these papers examine from several angles the psychological and institutional factors that are involved in the process of professional growth of those aspiring to become psychoanalysts and also, resulting from this aspiration, the various forms of introjection depending on the psychoanalytic environments that the analyst has frequented and where he or she has trained.

Another of the main issues addressed in these pages concerns the problem of what constitutes "dissidence" and "dissent" in psychoanalysis (Haynal, 2001) and, in particular, the question of whether it is inevitable that every analyst becomes a "dissident" when he or she reaches complete maturity in training, no longer feeling the need to "hunt with the pack" (Freud, 1921, p. 85), a need that we know inevitably characterises the first periods of growth. It is a fact of life that psychoanalysis has evolved (and continues to do so) over time and that the generations that followed Freud experienced it and conceived it in a way that was at least somewhat different to that of its founder and first pioneers. It is also natural that this required not only the individual but also the entire community to undergo the long, inevitable and, I would add, physiological process of "working through their losses"; losses resulting from the separation and detachment from Freud and other predecessors.

All the contributions that are collected here reflect precisely on these themes discussing both what is original in Rycroft's ideas and how these are strongly linked not only to the scientific-training context that he grew up in, but also to those particular life experiences, which, in his case, drove him to become involved in the specific scientific interests "for" psychoanalysis and "within" psychoanalysis.

Ultimately, what emerges in this Special Issue is a cross-section of our history, in particular a small fragment of British psychoanalytic history, probably unnoticed by most, which on one side brings a "journey companion" back onto the scene (Borgogno, 1999, 2007) inviting us to read and get to know his brilliant books, and on the other invites us all—and it is for this reason that we have dedicated this issue of our journal to Rycroft—to generally rethink psychoanalysis and our difficult profession. Rycroft's personal hardships within the British Psychoanalytical Society can in fact be useful, Martin S. Bergmann (2004) has recently stated, when he re-evaluated the figure. With the help of our reconnecting with Charles Rycroft, we shed a sharper light on the themes of vocation, identity and on our sense of belonging to the psychoanalytic groups we are part of, which can result either in a solid attachment to them or in disaffection towards the group, and in certain cases possibly leading to complete disappointment with psychoanalysis itself.

But, in brief, who was Rycroft (1914–1998)? To answer this, following Bergmann whom I quoted above (2004, pp. 249–250), I will refer back to the Freud Museum website that provides this information on him:

Charles Rycroft was a significant figure in the modern history of psychoanalysis. Best known for his *Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, his ideas and interests ranged widely between philosophy, biology, history and art. He criticised the rigidity of psychoanalytic formulations and the institutionalisation of psychoanalysis, resigning from the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1968.

In the early 1960s, Rycroft passionately argued that the theoretical ideal of "rationality" proposed by ego psychology alienates human adults from the creative springs of inner communication and emotion. His work on dreams and symbolism stressed the essentially positive function of these "flights of the imagination", and in doing so he posited new ways of thinking about psychic development. As a humane and perceptive clinician, Rycroft focused on the nature of language and preconscious communication in the analytic encounter. His books include *Imagination and Reality* (1968a), *Anxiety and Neurosis* (1968b), *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (1968c), *Innocence of Dreams* (1979), *Psychoanalysis and Beyond* (1985), and *Viewpoints* (1991).

Rycroft argued against the "tyranny of psychic determinism", as he called it. He did not regard psychoanalysis as a causal theory but as a theory of meaning,

and he offered interpretations and ideas in a questioning, tentative way—non-dogmatic yet carrying authority and authenticity. Indeed he devalued interpretations as the curative factor in therapy.

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