

# The Principle of Supervision in the School

Drafted by the Action Committee

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This document seeks to initiate and participate in a policy debate at the heart of the international community constituted by the *School One*. It has a precise conceptual frame, the formation [i.e. training T.N.] of analysts in the Schools of the WAP, and an explicit policy framework: the Delegate General's diagnosis of the effects brought about by the desegregative logic introduced by the deregulation of the practice and the decision to establish a policy that opposes it from this moment forth.

## 1. Policy versus Regulation [*Politique versus régulation*]

The principle of supervision must be situated among the principles that support the foundation of School One and upon which it is based in order to fulfil its purpose.

Like Freud, Jacques Lacan included supervision as part of the practice and doctrine of pure psychoanalysis. Yet, the question of the connection between the School and the analyst's formation is not merely a technical one, since it is a question of the structure that articulates: an analyst; his formation (analysis, supervision and teaching); and the guarantees of formation (the titles of AMS and AS) awarded by the School.

In 1964, Lacan considered the School's responsibility to be implicated from the moment a subject enters analysis, in view of the consequences that this entrance entails. He says it unequivocally: "the École, at whatever moment the subject enters into analysis, must place that fact into the balance with the responsibility that it cannot refuse its consequences".<sup>1</sup>

In the same way, judging that the rules relating to supervision which already existed in the institutes of the IPA rested upon political, bureaucratic and prejudicial factors (in itself reason enough to violate the established rules), Lacan did not propose a new set of regulations - thereby showing that there is a difference between regulation and policy.

The School does not draw up any rules, however it must have a policy of analytic supervision. This policy includes the duty not only to evaluate the demand for supervision by analysts in formation and the practice of supervising them, but also and above all the evaluation of the effects and results of this practice among the members of the analytic community of the School, as an experience. The

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Lacan, "The Founding Act", trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment* (London & New York: Norton, 1990) p. 101.

Action Committee considers the implementation of this policy to be an ethical duty of the School.

Currently, in the Lacanian oriented Schools of the WAP, rules about supervision cannot be broken for the simple reason that no statutory rules exist in this regard. But it can be observed that no policy of supervision exists either. It is a question of defining a policy that is not linked to a rule; such is the wager we must make given the current situation of the Schools.

In “The Founding Act”, the supervision of analysts in formation is one of the three subsections of the *Section for Pure Psychoanalysis* that Jacques Lacan inaugurates with this act. This should act as a counterbalance to the deviations that abuse Lacan’s fundamental principle that “the psychoanalyst derives his authorisation only from himself”.<sup>2</sup>

In today’s global context, that of the School One, but also of a world in which deregulation has grown to a degree never seen before in various domains, we must establish a policy for supervision which remains faithful to the ethics of psychoanalysis, so as not to misjudge (as is the case with IPA style regulation) not only the ethics we apply, but also the principles with which we operate in our practice.

It is a matter of principle to re-establish the perspective of supervision within the Schools as one of the tools with which to counter the levelling tendency and preserve pure psychoanalysis.

## **2. Formation and its Guarantee**

The School, for the best reasons put forward by J. Lacan when he founded the EFP, does not regulate the practice of supervision, nor does it establish a list of analyst-supervisors, these are designated on the basis of the demand addressed to them.

Without making it obligatory, the School must offer the possibility of a “qualified” supervision to whoever demands it.

Supervision, as part of the formation, is a responsibility that each person must assume for themselves and a risk in so far as they are in psychoanalysis and have assumed their own practice within the experience of the School. One can only do without supervision on condition that one learns how to make use of it.

In making institutional prudence fall on the side of an ethical duty rather than on the side of rules, the School and the practice of supervising analysts in formation remain linked: “the School can guarantee the analyst’s relationship to the formation that it provides (...). It can and hence must.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School”, trans. Russell Grigg, *Analysis* 6 (1995), pp. 1-13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

However, in practice there is a paradox with respect to formation: the School is committed to providing a formation, which it guarantees when the case arises, yet it is not very clear how it delivers the formation that it guarantees.

No institutional mechanism or authority is informed about or oversees the progress of this practice. Only the Guarantee Commissions take the regular practice of supervision into account as a criterion for awarding the title of AMS, on the basis of "*a posteriori*" effects that provide sufficient guarantee of a person's formation. At the time of admission, the Guarantee Commission emphasises this theme, with a view to evaluating the state of formation of the person wishing to become part of the School.

In the intervening time, which is precisely the time of formation, the School has no direct influence on this crucial point.

Is the indifference that most schools have shown towards this question up 'till now necessarily linked to an absence of institutional rules?

Of course, this theme has been taken up by the Guarantee Commissions of various Schools and also by members who are preoccupied with this state of affairs, but whatever observations they make, reiterated over and over again, they have not been able to stir the membership enough to initiate an institutional debate or a change of direction in this regard.

There is a silence around the question of supervision and we must consider this a problem for the School – for the following reasons.

a) Supervision has a necessary relationship with analysis for the purposes of formation and its practice does not escape that "almost bureaucratic regularity" that supports psychoanalysis.

b) While analysis is terminable, the formation of an analyst can be considered to be interminable, like the desire of the analyst that animates it. That this desire has no common measure does not prevent each one from persevering to sustain it to contribute to the common cause.

c) It is part of the guarantee offered by the School for the purposes of formation. The titles of AMS and AS do not in themselves guarantee that the practice of supervision is animated by the "ever restless desire" inherent in psychoanalytic practice.

d) It is a way of declining the desire of the analyst, in the grammatical sense of the term, in its dual aspects: the desire of the analyst in formation and the formation of the desire of the analyst, since it is to be produced.

e) When offering its members the possibility of declaring their practice, the School is not making a neutral offer – it requires a commitment. The fact that the School does not prejudge, qualify, or guarantee this practice, does not free the

person making such a declaration from the ethical dimension that it implies and from which it acquires its performative weight.

f) "Supervision has no value if it limits itself to regulating the relation that analysts in formation have to their patients. Supervision is worth nothing unless it is pursued beyond this to encompass their relation to psychoanalysis" (J. A. Miller in *El Banquete de los Analistas*).

g) The principle that a psychoanalyst derives his authorization only from himself does not mean that the psychoanalytic effects, which are constant in our practice, remain outside supervision.

The fact that the question of supervision produces institutional impasses is something that needs to be debated at the present time and the results of this should be evaluated with the experience of the School in mind, in order to bring its doctrine, practice and ethics to light.

### **3. The Current State of Supervision**

"It is something quite different from supervising a 'case': a subject (I underline this word) is exceeded by his act, which is nothing, but if he exceeds his act then it creates the incapacity that we see flowering in the garden of psychoanalysts".<sup>4</sup>

A survey of the Schools of the WAP reveals a regular, widespread and discreet use of supervision, over many years, with one or several supervisors at different times, in which the difficulties of day-to-day practice are discussed, together with the long-term follow-up of the case.

Yet, there is a certain consensus of opinion that admits that, to a large extent, this practice occurs in an irregular way. It is used more frequently for case emergencies and/or moments of subjective crisis on the part of the person asking for supervision, than because of the conviction that it has a necessary relation with psychoanalytic formation, the desire to know and what, in each person, should lead one to wish to verify the orientation of one's practice.

Time and time again, supervision reveals the confusion that frequently arises between psychoanalysis and psychotherapy for those who are beginning their formation.

Supervision also provides the means with which to detect a slippage towards psychotherapy in those who claim to be practicing psychoanalysis. This slippage seems to indicate a difficulty, whose immediate consequence is that the practitioner conforms to rules that he or she does not understand, which reduces supervision to the level of a technical exercise, rather than a properly analytic supervision.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Lacan, "Discourse à l'École freudienne de Paris", *Autres Écrits*, (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 266.

Supervision is neither just the search for a technical solution, nor the adjustment of tactics, but also a means of verifying the strategy and position of the practitioner in relation to the transference as well as the policy that allows the logic of the treatment to be extracted. We can thus acknowledge that there is a risk of sliding from analytic into psychotherapeutic supervision.

It has also been observed that the members who have been practicing for longest use supervision sporadically and others stop at a certain moment of their formation. This shows that there is a structural problem regarding the position of the analyst and the desire to know, which has sometimes been studied but must be looked into again.

We are seeing more and more frequent demands for off-the-shelf supervisions, where it is a question of finding a solution for a critical moment in the treatment; a continuous switching of supervisors; demands for “specialist” supervisors (for working with children, adolescents, psychosis, anorexia, etc.); and “political” supervisions, supposedly offering certain institutional advantages, are also being sought.

#### **4. A New Dynamic**

Brought to the fore in the work initiated within the framework of the School One, the debate about the practice of supervision is, as J.-A. Miller has indicated, well on the way towards answering the necessity of “formulating a theory of formation which takes the pass into account, but does not unilaterally situate formation solely on the side of the pass.

In order to reinstate the practice of supervision in our vast community and within the aforementioned framework, it is not a question of drawing up procedures to watch over it, but of promoting it for what it is: the continuous commentary, by the analyst, of his or her act. It is a tool that the practitioner has at his disposal in order to verify the particular approach to the real obtained through psychoanalysis, as well as a possible place in which to verify the efficacy of psychoanalysis.

It is a question of instilling a new dynamic for the formation of analysts in the Schools of the WAP. Rather than imposing new rules, it is a question of “organising contingency”,<sup>5</sup> to engage the Schools in the reasoned and general practice of the encounter. The treatment, the cartel, teaching and supervision are devices designed to catch the spark of the cause postulated by psychoanalysis. It is a matter of establishing the appropriate relation between the barred Other and the assertion of guarantees deduced from it, making use of the barred Other to reform the structure as a whole.

It is about actively producing the means with which “to rouse the libido towards the practice of supervision” (J.-A. Miller) and, at the same time, not allowing any lightening of the demands which must fall upon the practitioners of psychoanalysis for as long as they are engaged in it.

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Laurent, 1<sup>st</sup> Conversation of Paris, “L’École respire mal”, October 1997.

It is a matter of engaging and channelling in each of us the discipline that being in psychoanalysis requires, while at the same time preserving the fact that supervision creates a space in which an effect of surprise, a subjective effect, can occur, which no imposition of standards should petrify.

With a view to ensuring and maintaining the constant “drive” force<sup>6</sup> that psychoanalytic discourse actively engages, examining and updating the function of supervision will help to consolidate the “interdependence of guarantees” [*solidarité des garanties*]<sup>7</sup> of which the School One is part.

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<sup>6</sup> The words Sigmund Freud used in Budapest, 1918.

<sup>7</sup> J.-A. Miller, *La Lettre Mensuelle de l’ECF* n° 112, September, 1992.