

Wynette Barton

## POWER IN TRAINING

Power in the analytic encounter and in training has been written about and discussed innumerable times, and not without important effect. Today's analysts are far more aware of the uses and misuses of power in our profession than were our predecessors. Still, to maintain and increase consciousness of the subtleties, seductions, justifications, and secret doors of power, we must continue to examine the subject.

If we can take a lesson from the many creation myths alluding to desires for dominance and control from the beginning, the conscious or unconscious quest for power is as old as humanity. Since we are unlikely to live without it, we must learn to coexist with its positive and negative poles, and this can only be done by continuing to explore its nature, or rather *our* nature and the ways we hide power, and hide from power, the ways we love it and hate it, and the ways we disguise it in order to pretend it doesn't exist.

The recent tsunami in Japan and the near-disaster with nuclear power plants gives us pause to consider the nature of power and our limitations in dealing with it. The threat of radioactive contamination didn't begin with the tsunami, and it didn't begin with the building of the power plant. Like any structure, like any invention, concept, organization or society, even like any act of nature, the actual beginning is too obscure to identify.

Perhaps the beginning came with the smashing of the first atom in the 1940s. Perhaps it came before that, when the study of modern physics entered the scene, or even long before that, when alchemists discovered the separation process of heating and evaporation. Maybe the use of nuclear power became inevitable when ancient peoples learned to manipulate nature by extracting iron from ore.

Human knowledge is cumulative, though we accumulate it slowly. As Eric Neumann pointed out in Depth Psychology and a New Ethic, we are slow to accept a new concept, and may even kill its messenger; but once

the new becomes the accepted, we cling to it tenaciously. Slowly we build, slowly we change, and sometimes it takes a tsunami to move us along the road to a new understanding.

In building the Japanese nuclear plants, precautions had been taken – not enough, obviously, because no one knows enough to foresee all the things that could possibly go wrong. Such is the nature of humans and human institutions. No matter how many rules are made and precautionary measures are set in place, it is impossible to cover every circumstance that could arise in the future.

Let's say, for the sake of discussion, that the plant could have been built on top of fifty feet of reinforced concrete covering a fifty mile radius, surrounded by a wall fifty feet wide rising up fifty feet above the ground. That would make it safer – not entirely safe, but safer. The cost in time, energy and money would be astronomical, and the inefficiency of getting from the periphery to the heart of the plant would discourage all but those with stoutest of hearts; but it would be safe(r).

The time finally comes when we must decide when something is simply too perilous to undertake; or we must plunge in with as much reason and faith as we can muster and take the chance of making a mistake. As analysts, we have plunged into the waters of training, and most of us have experienced a small tsunami or two, or at least some high waves. Those, plus fears of greater disasters in the future, have caused us to put precautionary measures in place, sometimes not enough, sometimes too many.

We as a society put great power in the hands of the Admissions Committee to determine who gets into training and who does not. Periodically we add new admissions rules and requirements, hoping to avoid costly (and often personally devastating) mistakes. We have yet to gain perfection.

In many ways, the admissions process is better than it once was. In my first stint on the admissions committee, we sat for infinite hours with applicants in interviews, if "interview" is the correct term. In retrospect, "inquisition" might be a more apt term. One applicant sat in a room full of committee members, all asking questions, not necessarily

in harmony. You can guess what an excruciating experience that was for the applicant, and it was not it a piece of cake for the committee either.

There were few rules for applications at that time. A living body with a Masters degree (in anything) and an application that arrived somewhere around the neighborhood of May 1 was granted an interview at the next general meeting in October. We interviewed people whose total experience with analysis was having read the first half of Dreams, Memories and Reflections. This is not an exaggeration.

One exuberant but penniless fellow, who had had two hours of analysis, *two hours*, had lost his job at a used furniture store and rather suddenly decided it would be a fine thing to make his living as an analyst. We sat grim-faced as he cheerfully explained his decision, ending with "Why not?"

Some of us cried after that interview.

What he did for us was to force us to put a few rules in place – just a few, not fifty feet of reinforced concrete, but a few rules to protect the innocent – and also to protect the Admissions Committee. The rules have grown, and grown, and grown, not only for admissions, but for every step along the way.

Occasionally I claim to be an anarchist. That is partly a joke, but not altogether. I abhor inflexible rules and have about the same opinion of them that was held by Franz Kafka, himself trained as a lawyer, when he wrote The Trial. Nevertheless, I recognize that rules are essential for any organization. Without rules, a society either degenerates into chaos, or a few people arbitrarily assume power and insert their own rules.

As we think about power, we must necessarily think about the power of rules, or rules as a form of power. In a democratic society, rules and laws are not only to avoid chaos. They are meant to curtail the power of the few, the strongest, the loudest of voice and opinion, and give equal protection and opportunity to the less powerful; but rules themselves can become oppressors. They can become THE power, overriding the common sense and good judgment of the rule-makers.

Recently an applicant was admitted to a pre-training seminar and within two months applied for a hardship leave of absence. His job presented many pressures, money was tight, and entering the fall seminar would be difficult. We in Texas were astounded. Why had he not considered this earlier, before he applied, before we had spent hours with his application, before seminars were planned to include his attendance?

We were not only astounded, we were too astounded to act rationally; however, we had a rule. We had made the rule several years before for a candidate who had been in training for some time and fell into extreme financial problems. She was putting a child through college, had already sold her car and was considering selling her home in order to continue training when her roof began to leak and had to be replaced. The rule at that time was that trainees had to pay full tuition every year, present or absent, to hold a place in the seminar. The object was to avoid having people drop in and out at whim. Instructors had to be paid regardless of the number of participants, and we wanted trainees to understand that their obligations to the ongoing seminar were to be taken seriously.

Now came our trainee who was not acting on whim, but faced dire necessity. We might have simply exempted her from the rule that year because of circumstances, but no, the rule is that one does not break the rules. Someone else might hear of this rule-breaking and decide to break the rule later, and what could we say? We therefore established another rule, this one stating that a seminar member in severe financial difficulty may take a hardship leave of absence without paying dues or fees for the seminar.

When the brand new applicant, armed with a set of our rules, asked for a last-minute hardship leave of absence without ever having been present, we were hoisted on our own petard. We granted his leave and were able to recoup without too much damage, but I noticed that I was quite annoyed at him, which I hope to not to take out on him when and if he returns; and I was also annoyed at the rule and at myself. Why

had I not taken more care with the wording when the rule was established? I've lived a long time; I know better.

Could we have thought of every eventuality when writing the hardship leave rule? Probably not. We might have written it better, but not perfectly. Once a rule is written and in place, it becomes a powerful, unyielding master -- unless the slaves revolt and refuse to follow it. What happens then? Does the rule become that there are no rules? Or will every rule be subject to the whim of the moment?

There may be an answer, though not an easy one, to this either-or question. If so, we must find it together. Our rules are part of the Society's container for training. They are not THE container, let us not forget, but they are a part of the container. The container is made up of many elements: the body of analysts, our non-tangible ethical obligation to train in the best way we can, the body of candidates, our meetings together, the exams and supervision and whatever guidance we can offer, the bond of eros that develops when people work hard together, and yes, the rules.

The Inter-Regional Society has done better than most organizations of its size in not being captured by the power of rules. As we get bigger, this becomes harder to accomplish. The more people involved, the less intimate the group; the less intimate we are, the less trust we are likely to have for individuals and individual judgments. That's when rules start multiplying.

When we were a small and exceedingly poverty-stricken organization, few, if any, analysts were paid for anything. Xerox copies, stamps, and phone calls were reimbursed. Plane fares were paid for the Executive Committee's annual meeting, where members usually bunked up at someone's house. When the Society didn't have enough money to pay the meeting's hotel bill in San Antonio, it went on my credit card until dues came in three months later. Those were not the good old days; they were just the old days, and I, for one, had just as soon not return to them. Still, they shouldn't be dismissed, as there are several things we can learn from them.

Many more people are paid for their time and work now, either in actual money or in hotel rooms, plane fares, meals, or contracted work done to complete a member's job. In one way it seems more equitable for the entire society to share our collective burden this way, but of course it isn't really equitable. Who decides what job is awarded what compensation? Are monetary rewards made for time? Stress? Experience? Skill? How desperately we need the job done? So far we have given the matter little thought, or at least little discussion. We have not, to my knowledge, pondered the implications of what payment or not payment means, muted though the meaning might be, or where the current trend might lead. Instead, we have made rules, sometimes too quickly.

Where money changes hands, a ghost of power is often lurking somewhere behind a curtain. Does a person who is paid for a job have a subtle power that a volunteer does not have? Does the Society expect more from one who is paid compared to one who is not paid, and thus, perhaps unconsciously, expect to have more control – more power – over one who is paid than it has over a volunteer? Or might we feel we have *less* control if someone is paid to do a job?

Analysts, I've noticed, don't like to talk about money very much. It is as if we, as a collective body, find the subject too mundane to discuss except in abstraction. Then let us ponder it first in abstraction. What does it mean when we make rules about paying some members for their work and not paying others? What does it mean when we make rules about subsidizing training, or not subsidizing it? It is easy to let rules become our mindless masters, and we follow obediently.

We are not the final result of human history; we are one part of it as it rolls along. What we do today becomes a part of what tomorrow will be. The rules we make and live by color the cloth of time, and in that way we have far more power – and our rules have more power – than we may regularly recognize.

What rules did we inherit from our own training that we now pass along to candidates, rules that they will in turn pass long to those they train? We have the power to look power in the eye, to ask it

penetrating questions, to move it in a new direction. Like it or not, want it or not, we are a part of the greater history of Jungian thought, and of analytic training, and we are in the process of producing the future.

I don't like that job. I don't want it, didn't apply for it and never dreamed I'd have it. It scares me. How about you? I would quit, but there's no way to escape, because quitting becomes part of the rolling history too.

The rules say that I have a certain amount of time to deliver this paper, and that time is finished. Ruled by rules as I am, though still a part-time anarchist, I will now stop.