Memories of Dr Elliott Jaques

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ABSTRACT

Elliott Jaques studied medicine, and later became a major in the Canadian Army. He acted as a liaison officer with the Psychiatric Division of the British Army under Brigadier JR Rees, and in this role he made contact with psychoanalysts who worked in the British Army. Several of these officers, along with Jaques and myself, trained as psychoanalysts. Jaques was one of the founder members of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. In 1961 Jaques was elected as Scientific Secretary of the British Psychoanalytic Society. In 1965 he was appointed Professor and Head of the School of Social Sciences at Brunel University. In 1967 he asked me to work as a part-time senior lecturer in the School. Jaques was a prolific writer and became known to organizations world-wide. He was a consultant to a number of institutions, and later to governments, including the Pentagon. In 1980 he left London for the USA.

Key words: British Psychoanalytic Society, Brunel University, Elliott Jaques, John Rickman, JR Rees, Tavistock Institute of Human Relations

I was asked to write about some of my memories of Elliott Jaques as he and I were students together between 1946 and 1950. I am assuming that readers will have read the obituaries in national newspapers, but I wish to describe some of Elliott’s contributions to the British Psycho-Analytical Society and to social and industrial research in the UK, as this is what I know about as we often worked together.

Pearl King (BA (Hons) Psych) started her professional life working as an industrial and social psychologist, before training as a psychoanalyst. She finally became a member, and a training and supervising psychoanalyst of the British Psycho-Analytical Society. Pearl King was elected Honorary Secretary of the International Psychoanalytical Association from 1957 to 1961; later she was elected the first non-medical President of the British Psycho-Analytical Society and Institute. In 1984 she became Honorary Archivist of the British Psycho-Analytical Society and co-editor, with Riccardo Steiner, of The Freud/Klein Controversies 1941–1945. In 2003, she edited No Ordinary Psychoanalyst: The Exceptional Contributions of John Rickman, which contains her biography of John Rickman. In 2005 she published a selection of her own clinical papers under the title, Time Present and Time Past. In 1992 Pearl King received the Sigourney Award for “outstanding contributions to psychoanalysis.”

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Elliott Jaques was born on January 18, 1917 in Toronto, Canada, and he died in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on March 8, 2003, aged 86. He obtained a degree in psychology from the University of Toronto. He then moved to the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in the USA where he obtained a medical degree before completing his doctorate in social relations at Harvard University. Jaques became a major in the Canadian Army Medical Corps during World War II, and eventually he acted as a liaison officer with the Psychiatric Division of the British Army, under Brigadier JR Rees, who had previously been the head of the pre-war Tavistock Clinic. It was in this role that Elliott made contact with psychoanalysts such as John Rickman and Adrian Stephen, who had worked under JR Rees in the British Army, along with other officers, such as ATM Wilson, WR Bion, JD Sutherland, and Harold Bridger, all of whom were impressed by John Rickman’s psychoanalytic approach to social problems.

After these officers left the British Army they applied to train as psychoanalysts at the Institute. Elliott Jaques and I also applied to train there. Elliott went to Melanie Klein as his training analyst and I went to John Rickman. About 20 students were accepted for training in that year – 1946.

Elliott Jaques was one of the founder members of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, which was concerned to do research and to help institutions in difficulties, while the Tavistock Clinic worked with adult patients, under JD Sutherland, and with families, under John Bowlby.

In 1948 Elliott Jaques, as a member of the Tavistock Institute, and with the help of a research team, made an “in-depth” study of the Glacier Metal Company, working alongside its “Works Council” as well as with its management. The findings of this research were published in 1951 as *The Changing Culture of a Factory* (Jaques, 1951), and became a classic text embodying a new approach to social research. In 1948 I also joined the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, and worked on another research project concerned with “The transmission of ‘Good’ practice from one firm or situation to another.” I worked with ATM Wilson (Tommy) on ways of passing to other firms what we had learned from the “Glacier Project” by arranging specially designed conferences.

Elliott was elected as an associate member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society in 1950, and he was a member of the first Associate Members’ Committee of the Society. Following his paper on “The Hatred of Convention,” (Jaques, 1952) Jaques was elected as a Full Member of the Society in 1952.

Having worked with Tavistock Publications to produce his first book, it must have been Elliott’s interest in publications that led to his being appointed as Honorary Secretary of the Klein Trust when it was formed in 1955, with Melanie Klein as Chair. Jaques held this position for many years. Later, he worked with Melanie Klein preparing some of her manuscripts for publication. When *Narrative of a Child Analysis* (Klein, 1961) was published, Klein wrote, “I am very much indebted to Dr Elliott Jaques for taking the great trouble to go
carefully through the whole manuscript. He has made a number of helpful suggestions as well as some comments which I found very stimulating” (Klein, 1961, p. 5).

In 1955 the Council of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, at Michael Balint’s suggestion, invited Elliott to attend the committee that had been set up to amend the rules of the Society.

In 1956, the centenary of Freud's birth, the Society, under the presidency of Sylvia Payne, gave a series of six lectures entitled “Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought” in Friends House as a tribute to Freud. Jaques gave a lecture entitled “Psychoanalysis and the Current Economic Crisis” (Jaques, 1958), in which he traced out some of the unconscious factors that lead to social troubles when they are unrecognized. Elliott’s paper is still relevant today!

During the next two years I was Honorary Secretary of both the Society and the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA), of which William Gillespie was the new President. We returned from the Copenhagen IPA Congress in 1959 having agreed to produce a draft of a new Constitution for the IPA. William Gillespie appointed a London committee composed of Anna Freud, Willi Hoffer, Sylvia Payne, and Elliott Jaques, to help with this task. In practice Elliott and I did most of the work, and I still have the drafts that he and I produced. When our term of office ended, the draft of the new statutes was taken over, in 1961, by Maxwell Gitelson and Elizabeth Zetzel until the Stockholm Congress in 1963. I was asked to propose it to the IPA business meeting and, after some opposition from delegates of the American Psychoanalytic Association, the meeting voted to accept the new IPA Constitution.

Meanwhile, in 1961, Elliott Jaques was elected as Scientific Secretary of the British Society. He and many of his colleagues in the British Psycho-Analytical Society were concerned that there was not more participation by ordinary members in the scientific discussions in the Society. These were colleagues who were known in other professional situations to have no difficulty in taking part in scientific discussions. But, mostly, they sat in silence during our scientific meetings! Jaques wondered if they would be more able to contribute if, for example, they were part of smaller discussion groups.

After much discussion on the Council, Elliott was permitted to arrange five experimental scientific events, once a month for five months. The Council also agreed to hold a business meeting of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, to which associate members would be invited, on May 30, 1962, to assess the helpfulness of these experimental meetings. It was hoped that the five experimental meetings would explore new methods of conducting our scientific discussions. The five experimental meetings were as follows.

- February 7, 1962: three simultaneous group discussions on: psychoanalytic treatment of psychosis (Chair, Dr John Klauber); child psychoanalysis (Chair, Dr Tom Main); research in psychoanalysis (Chair, Miss Pearl King).
March 7, 1962: symposium on the aims of psychoanalytic treatment (Chair, Dr W Hoffer; participants, Dr H Segal, Dr JD Sutherland, Dr DW Winnicott).

April 4, 1962: three simultaneous clinical seminars: “A severe obsession” (Dr LH Rubenstein); “A case of impotence (Dr A Limentani); “The treatment of a 10-year-old boy (Mrs M Harris).

May 16, 1962: a question/discussion panel (Chair, Dr WH Gillespie; participants, Dr M Balint, Dr W Hoffer, Dr H Rosenfeld).

June 20, 1962: symposium on the psychoanalytic treatment of adolescents (Chair, Dr W Hoffer; participants, Dr P Heiman, Miss I Hellman, Dr D Meltzer).

The general view of the members and associate members at the business meeting on May 30 was that a combination of various types of meeting was called for: plenary meetings and formal discussion for the presentation of theoretical and systematic findings; smaller group meetings, especially for clinical discussions; and symposia for the exploration of clinical and theoretical issues.

There were two important results from this series of experimental meetings. One was an increase in the numbers of people offering to read papers to the Society, and the other was a sudden interest in research (see King, 2000). Four research groups were started, which were supported by many colleagues. After his period as Scientific Secretary, Jaques was elected as an ordinary member of the Council for three years, during which time I also was on the Council as Deputy President. In 1965, Elliott published his own most well-known paper, entitled “Death and the Mid-Life Crisis” (Jaques, 1965). This paper has been of great help to many people.

Meanwhile Jaques had been building up the School of Social Sciences in Brunel University, and, in 1965, he was given the professorship of the School and of its Research Institute of Organizational Studies. In 1967 Elliott asked me to work with him as a senior lecturer (part-time) in the School of Social Sciences, which ran “sandwich” courses and was closely linked with industry. This I did, and I gave several courses on industrial management, social and developmental psychology, and the history of psychology.

Elliott was developing his consultative skills, and he emphasized the importance to an institution of having a clear organizational structure so that each person knew to whom they were responsible and who was responsible to them. When the Institute realized the importance of his approach, Jaques was called in by the Institute to work out a proper structure for the executive and secretarial staff, which facilitated their relationship with the officers whom they “served.” A member of the staff of the Institute told me that they were grateful to Jaques, for many years, for sorting out their roles.

Elliott wrote more than 20 books, including the Time-Span Hand-Book (Jaques, 1964), Work, Creativity, and Social Justice (Jaques, 1970), A General
Theory of Bureaucracy (Jaques, 1976), and Requisite Organization (Jaques, 1996). He worked as a consultant to many companies and organizations throughout Europe, Australia, and America. Jaques was a consultant to a number of institutions such as the Church of England and, later, to governments, in relation to their armed forces, including the American Pentagon. In 1982 he was presented with the Joint Staff Certificate of Appreciation by General Colin Powell for his “outstanding contributions in the field of military leadership theory and instruction to all of the service department of the United States.”

Elliott traveled widely in his work as a consultant, and he seldom visited Mansfield House, the home of the British Psycho-Analytical Society until 2000, so that most more recent members of the Society would not have known him. In 1982 he left London and settled in the USA – firstly in Arlington, Virginia, and then in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where he died on March 8, 2003. I enjoyed the times that Elliott and I worked together, I think that “we sparked off each other!” I have been grateful for the opportunity to remember those times again.

REFERENCES


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