In Memory of Professor Sandler •••*

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Memories of Him When He Visited Korea

First of all, he was renowned for his good sense of humor. The people around him couldn’t help bursting out all the time. There was such a memorable occasion when I took a tour with Mr. and Mrs. Sandler to Mt. Sorak in Korea. At the breakfast table Mrs. Anne Marie Sandler said, “I couldn’t sleep at all last night because Joe kept making me laugh.” It was his habit to make light of things by making jokes, especially troubling things. He had injured his neck by taking down heavy bags from the airplane locker, and the pain increased if he lay his head on a pillow. For him, humor was the best defense and laughter was an effective painkiller.

He enjoyed meals no matter what food was served. In particular, he liked bean paste soup and kimchi, however hot it was. When we dropped in at a small restaurant in Yong-in folk village, he supposed that there were thousands of kinds of kimchi. I said no and told him that there were dozens, not thousands, of kinds of kimchi. Yet, he responded that each kimchi had its own taste from restaurant to restaurant. After a while, I agreed with him. In fact, the combination of spices can determine the taste of kimchi and the taste also changes depending on the degree of fermentation.

Prof. Sandler loved high-tech electrical appliances. He carried a compact tape recorder with him and recorded speeches and important things instead of making notes—for example, papers supposed to be sent to me, how to make Korean traditional tea, and instructions to give his secretary. He made international phone calls to give supervision on psychotherapy and recommended that I could also be supervised by him. In order to save the international call cost, he bought a special machine which made a high

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speed recording which could be played back slowly and surely to listen to. Ten years ago, when computers and the fax machines were not used widely, he was already using them comfortably. As he was elected chairman of the International Psychoanalytic Association, he had to handle lots of time-consuming jobs. Thanks to his expertise in using such devices, according to him, he could manage these jobs from home. I thought to myself, ‘Everyone has 24 hours a day. If these machines were used, much more work could be done in the same time. In this sense, it can be said that he lived a longer life than others.’ This led me to buy computer myself. How grateful I am to him!

Memories in London

It was in September, 1987 that I first met Prof. Sandler. I studied psychoanalytic theory under him and the first session was at his home at 35 Circus Road on a Tuesday. Dr. Dinora Pines arranged for me to meet him. For that, I'd like to thank her. It was a glorious day unlike the usual London weather. My first impression of Prof. Sandler was that he was very kind. He immediately attempted to make me feel comfortable as he knew that I was rather nervous. On the first day, he gave me two books entitled “The Patient and the Analyst” and “The Frame of References of Psychoanalysis.” That night, I dreamed that Charlton Heston, the movie star, presented me with the books. I always think of Mr. Heston as Moses in the movie, ‘he Ten Commandments, and I interpreted that Prof. Sandler was a Moses to me. I expected that Prof. Sandler would deliver the truth of psychoanalysis to me, just as Moses delivered the Ten Commandments of God to the people. Such an expectation was met. He was a wonderful teacher: he always answered my questions without hesitation; he explained the historical background and development of concepts ahead of the theory itself; and he introduced reference books and material to me. Later, his teaching method became the teaching method with which I taught my students. I was much impressed by his power of memory which allowed him to recite lists of referential materials. I realized that England was fortunate to have such a great scholar who possessed great knowledge as well as practical experience in a variety of patient cases. I hoped that I would be like him when I came back to Korea.

He said, “There is a few genius since Freud. But we have Heinz Kohut.” In those days Kohut was regarded as a heretic, so that his comment was somewhat shocking.

In late Autumn 1987, The Conference on Homosexuality was held at the Darwin Center at London College. He played the role of a moderator in the conference. At the
In Memory of Professor Sandler

A grey-haired man, who worked for the Hamstead Clinic, made a speech. Unfortunately, I can’t remember his name, but I clearly remember his words: “In terms of psychoanalysis, homosexuality is a kind of pathological behavior caused by the developmental fault of childhood.” There was a large audience in the hall and most of them were young. In the question and answer time, one female questioner who was seated at the front stood up. She attacked the speaker's assertion, and said that she intended to give a warning, not a question. The audience supported her and applauded loudly. Then, a woman who was in her fifties stood up with the permission of the moderator, appealed to the audience, and further contended that the speaker should be ashamed of his commentary. Her words were then followed by enthusiastic boos and hissing from the audience. Things in the hall were getting out of control. Finally, Prof. Sandler managed to quell the disturbance, and got the audience under control. When I met him the following day, he said that the situation had been dangerous and that he had barely managed to avoid total chaos. And he added, “Homosexuality has overwhelmed the States and Europe and it is coming to England.”

On Several Psychoanalytic Concepts

It was difficult for me to understand the meaning of the word, ‘representative’. He recommended that it could be interpreted as ‘image.’

I was confused with the concept of ‘projective identification’. He gave me an example to explain it: A mother expected her little son to be a doctor. Later, he became a doctor as his mother had wished. She was happy he had become what she had predicted. She projected her wish on to the son and steered him into becoming a doctor.

This case differed completely from simple projection. According to him, projective identification was a defense mechanism which could be found in normal people, and it was not pathological.

I learned that countertransference might occur through projective identification by reading his paper entitled “Countertransference and Role Responsiveness.”

Prof. Sandler presented me with the book, ‘The Harvard Lectures by Anna Freud’ which he wrote and edited. The lectures were given by Anna Freud in the 1960s and were recorded, then written into a book by Prof. Sandler. Although it was one of his most precious possessions, he gave it to me. I translated the book into Korean over a
period of 2 years.

The Last Day I Saw Him

In July 1997, I saw him in the lobby of a congress hall in Barcelona where the International Psychoanalytic Congress was held. He was very satisfied with the news that the Korean Psychoanalytic Group had a supervision group for the psychiatric residents. The project was undertaken according to the advice he gave to Korean group. Since then, dozens of psychiatric residents have been professionally trained by the members of our group every year. I didn’t know that it would be the last time I would see him. The fact that I can never see him again overwhelms me with sorrow.