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A HISTORY OF THE PSYCHOANALYTIC MOVEMENT IN THE
LOS ANGELES AREA AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

by T. Bornstein

Before the arrival in Los Angeles late in 1927 of Thomas J. Libbin and his wife, Margrit Tobler Libbin, now Margrit Munk, there had been a few psychoanalysts in Southern California, some who were members of the American Psychoanalytic Association and some doing psychotherapy, calling themselves psychoanalysts. Nothing is known about their training. These included Josephine Jackson, M. D., in Pasadena; Anita Muehl, M. D., in San Diego; and E. J. Kempf, M. D., and G. V. Hamilton, M. D., in Santa Barbara--the latter two as successive private psychiatrists to a wealthy patient in Santa Barbara. There was, however, no organized psychoanalytic movement or development. To be sure, door and window signs, such as, "Come in, do it now," could be seen in various sections of the Los Angeles area offering "Psychoanalysis, readings \$3 (or \$5)." But this, though it was a State licensed profession, belonged of course in the category of fortune telling or astrology or the like. There was also a Mrs. Wilshire, an eclectic but mainly Jungian analyst, who apparently attempted serious therapy.

Thomas and Margrit Libbin had been psychoanalyzed in Vienna, she by Willi Hoffer, he by Bernfeld, Wilhelm Reich, and Federn; and they had attended courses in the Institute there. In fact, Thomas Libbin had a certificate from the Vienna Institute signed by Freud as well as letters or certificates signed by Jung and Adler, with whom he had studied in prior years. The Libbins practiced Freudian psychoanalysis in Los Angeles seriously and sincerely; and they formed a Psychoanalytic Study Group, which later, after Simmel's arrival in 1934, became "officially" the Psychoanalytic Study Group of Los Angeles. The Study Group met once a month, and case material and theoretical papers and reviews were presented by its members and sometimes guests from elsewhere. Among the original or early members of the Study Group were

Arthur R. Timme, M. D., a Los Angeles psychiatrist; Glen Myers, M. D., owner and chief psychiatrist of Compton Sanitarium and various members of his staff; Paul S. Epstein, Professor of Theoretical Physics at California Institute of Technology, who had been psychoanalyzed in Zurich and understood psychoanalysis and was scientifically interested; Richard C. Tolman, also a Professor of Physics at California Institute of Technology, whose scientific interest in analysis was sincere and whose modestly stated claim that he had analyzed himself to a considerable degree could perhaps be accepted, for he was that kind of person, a genius like Freud of very fine character; his wife, Ruth S. Tolman, student of psychology, who later got her Ph. D. from the University of California (Berkeley) and went into clinical psychology, becoming a leading figure in training in that field; Eugene Ziskind, M. D., a now well-known neuropsychiatrist, who at almost every meeting demanded proof of the existence of the unconscious--Ruth Tolman named him Rezistkind--(and he was not invited to retain his membership when the Study Group became officially reorganized by Simmel); and lastly there was Donald Wilson, a clinical psychologist who had worked with convicts in Leavenworth Prision and later wrote the best seller, "My Six Convicts"--he also did not retain membership in the Study Group.

David Brunswick, Ph. D., arrived in Los Angeles at the end of August, 1930. He had had training in Vienna. Mrs. Ruth Tolman introduced him to the Study Group in the fall of 1930, and he became a regular member. He started private practice in January, 1931.

The Study Group continued, and there was some contact as a group and individually with physicians who knew about psychoanalysis and were receptive to it. Marjorie Rosenfeld, now Marjorie Leonard, returned to Los Angeles in 1932, having had training in Berlin. She joined ^{the} ~~our~~ Study Group and also went into analytic practice. In 1933 Estelle Levy arrived from Vienna, where she had been trained and had been made a member. All these practicing analysts knew that there was much more to be

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learned, and most of them felt that the psychoanalytic movement in California needed to be organized and integrated into the medical world as it was elsewhere in the United States.

When the Nazis began to persecute and displace the analysts in Germany in 1933, the Los Angeles psychoanalysts saw a chance to invite one of the analytic teachers for further training and leadership. David Brunswick thought of Simmel, whom he had met and liked at Tegel, Berlin, in the spring of 1930; and both Franz Alexander and Hanns Sachs endorsed him most enthusiastically. Simmel was invited on May 8, 1933, to come to Los Angeles. Only Thomas Libbin was opposed; he felt that if physicians were invited they would eventually oppose the Group and betray them as lay analysts, relegate them to a back seat, or even "put them out of business." The Group didn't believe it or were willing to take the risk for the real gain involved, and Dr. Brunswick wrote to Simmel on behalf of the Group. He accepted the invitation (in preference to one from Topeka); and on April 27, 1934, after considerable vicissitudes, he arrived in Los Angeles with his wife and two-year-old boy.

Simmel took hold with considerable energy in the task of leading and developing our Study Group (in spite of A. A. Brill's admonition to him "not to have anything to do with the lay analysts out there"); and in the summer of 1935 it was formally organized as the Psychoanalytic Study Group of Los Angeles, with by-laws, dues, and officers. Simmel was President; Dr. Timme, Honorary President; Mrs. Libbin, Secretary-Treasurer; and a few of the others, Councilors. Soon after Dr. Simmel's arrival, the practising analysts had the opportunity with him for supervision of their work and for seminars; and a few took the opportunity to extend with him their own personal analyses. In the summer of 1935 Mrs. Frances Deri (formerly of Berlin) arrived from Prague in response to the invitation from Dr. Simmel and the Group so that another supervising and teaching analyst was added. She had been an important aid to Simmel at the Tegel Sanatorium. In turn, Mrs. Deri, with the backing of the

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Group, invited Otto Fenichel, who arrived in the spring of 1938; and the nucleus for a future institute was complete.

Indeed, the Los Angeles Study Group was the embryo of an institute; but it had to pass through a number of stages before an official institute could be organized and recognized and split! During Simmel's first year, the monthly meetings continued with some case discussions and some reviews of classical and recent analytic literature. After formal organization, there came more branching out and more frequent meetings--literature seminar for the general membership, case reports and discussions for the practising analysts; and Dr. Simmel made contact with teachers and social workers in the community and organized an Education Seminar and a Social Workers' Seminar. Simmel arranged it that all these activities were loosely under the aegis of the Chicago Institute and later of the Topeka Institute, when it was founded, through successive affiliation of the Study Group with those two Institutes.

Simmel reached out northward in California in spreading and consolidating the psychoanalytic movement. He invited the headmaster of a boys' private school near Santa Barbara to join our Education Seminar. He got to know Judge Atwell Westwick of the Superior Court in Santa Barbara, to whom Dr. Brunswick had earlier sent the books by Aichhorn and by Alexander and Staub, and did some highly successful consultation work for him on a few cases of young delinquents. Judge Westwick's interest in psychoanalysis was thoroughly kindled and has not waned up to the present, in spite of a catastrophe of the psychoanalytic movement in Santa Barbara that will be mentioned later. *in 1941 - Recommended Hugo Staub.*

A nucleus for psychoanalysis was getting started in San Francisco a little later in the 1930's. It seems that Bernfeld was the catalyzer there. Berliner and Anna Maenchen had preceded him to San Francisco; and a little later came Windholz with his great energy, fine teaching ability, and considerable influence among physicians. Simmel and others of the Los Angeles Group were in touch with the San

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Franciscans; and Simmel was the prime mover in starting the semi-annual joint meetings of the California psychoanalysts, which have come down to the present as the annual joint meetings of the West Coast Psychoanalytic Societies (San Francisco, Seattle Training Center, and the two Societies in Los Angeles).

The California joint meetings go back to 1939 (perhaps even to the fall of 1938--^{may} spring 1938 was the American Psychoanalytic Association meeting in San Francisco). At one such meeting in April, 1940, in Ojai, Simmel gathered the Los Angeles Group together and launched the Psychoanalytic Institute Foundation of Los Angeles for the purpose of making ambitious plans for an Institute and collecting funds for it. This early bid for an institute never got anywhere; it was blocked by the increasing importance of the World War.

The first headquarters and meeting place of the Study Group had been the house of the Libbins. After the formal organization in 1935, the headquarters were at Dr. Simmel's home or office, with some meetings also at the homes of other early members. In 1940 a nursery school applying psychoanalytic psychology, the School for Nursery Years, was founded with the help and encouragement of the Study Group. The Study Group agreed to pay part of the rental of a house for the Nursery School and in turn received the evening use of large downstairs rooms as lecture and meeting hall and an upstairs room as library and seminar room. So this house at 512 North Rossmore Avenue was the first quasi-independent headquarters of the Study Group. We early began to build up a psychoanalytic library, part of which is now incorporated into the library of the Los Angeles Institute and part was donated to the School for Nursery Years when the Study Group ceased to exist as a separate organization. When the Nursery School was able to build its own building in 1945, the Study Group continued to use the School as headquarters, library space, and meeting place, continuing to pay the school a rental.

This is now the place to mention certain mistakes of Simmel's in his judgment

of individuals, one of which may have contributed its bit to the later development of the split in the Los Angeles Institute. Not long after Simmel's arrival, there turned up in Los Angeles an American psychologist who had recently got his Ph. D. in Vienna and been analyzed there by Bernfeld, from whom he had a very laudatory letter. He was starting his practice of analysis in Los Angeles and wished to join the Study Group. Simmel accepted this Dr. A. (not the true initial) at once and made him a member of the Group, encouraging him to present a paper. In his paper Simmel thought he recognized some plagiarisms--direct quotations from psychoanalytic literature presented as Dr. A.'s own writing. When Simmel found the literature in question, he confronted Dr. A., who readily confessed. Dr. A. was demoted to associate member, becoming a member later. Eventually, Simmel referred Dr. A. for further personal analysis to Irene Haenel not long before her terminal illness. Under the influence of this gravely ill analyst, Dr. A. resigned from the Study Group in the most rude and vituperative manner. He has since presented an apology, and is not at present in Los Angeles.

Simmel's invitation to Joachim and Irene Haenel in 1940 turned out to be a mistake in judgment, too. They broke with him for reasons unknown, in spite of much he had done for them; and Joachim Haenel, though he lives and works in Los Angeles, has remained a member of the Topeka Society and never tried to join either of the Los Angeles groups; a little bit of split!

Lay Education!

But long before this, back in the early days, Simmel had accepted a real crook into the organization, Dr. Louis Montgomery, so called, of New York. This man claimed to be a trained psychoanalyst and presented an interesting case discussion. He was elected a member of the Study Group. Simmel did not write to New York to inquire about this man, who had presented to Simmel his certificate of membership in the New York County Medical Association which on investigation later turned out to be a forgery. The man had forged his own first name on some other Montgomery's certificate.

Louis Montgomery began to act up in a somewhat manic way. One day in a bantering mood he said to Mrs. Deri, "I am the best analyst in Los Angeles." She replied, "Well, you may think that, but I think I am the best analyst on Plymouth Boulevard." Mrs. Deri and Montgomery were the ones who had their offices on Plymouth Boulevard, a few blocks apart. But the "pay-off" came when Montgomery started to train someone to do psychoanalysis by hiding this person in a closet to listen in on the analysis of a patient whom Dr. Simmel had referred. The patient somehow found out about this; and it was reported to Simmel, who then made his inquiries to New York. He turned up quite an unsavory story, including proof of forgery of the certificate. It had been discovered that he had worked as a beautician in downtown Los Angeles. Montgomery escaped on a plane with his "wife" who wasn't his wife.

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Other mistakes in judgment were made such as the selection of Hugo Staub as an analyst to settle in Santa Barbara in 1941. It was a natural choice to make because of Judge Westwick's interests; but Staub turned out to be personally unreliable, and the whole thing ended in a blow-up with Staub's retreat to New York in 1942, where he died not long after. So whether Staub's character was undermined by illness or whether he had always been unreliable is not known. There was also Simmel's flirting with another problematic character, Dr. Rudolf von Urbant^{S/}chitsch, formerly of Vienna, for his help in the founding of an Institute. Simmel recognized von Urbantchitsch's unreliability but thought that it might nevertheless be valuable to have him enlist the aid of a wealthy Los Angeles patient of his. The at present unfortunate Alfred Stern, who had helped greatly in the founding of the Chicago Institute, happened to be out here at the time and sat in on some of this. In this connection Stern evidenced more wisdom than he has recently, according to the new reports. Of Simmel's reasoning concerning von Urbant^{S/}chitsch, Alfred Stern remarked to one of the Group, "That merely shows that psychoanalysts can also rationalize." Fortunately, the contact with von Urbant^{S/}chitsch had no consequences.

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Despite Simmel's mistakes of one kind or another, which certainly have left some influences on the psychoanalytic situation and training of today in Los Angeles, he built vigorously and in the main well; and he was responsible for the coming of Mrs. Deri and Otto Fenichel, whose influence was certainly of the best.

It is time now to trace the evolution from Study Group to full-fledged Institute. The first psychiatrist to have part of his training in Los Angeles was Dr. Charles ^{W.}Tidd. In the mid-thirties he started his training analysis with Simmel, first under the aegis of Chicago, later under Topeka. He continued and mainly concluded his training in Topeka, except for some supervised work in Los Angeles after his return here in the later thirties. Two residents at Compton Sanitarium, Robert Newhouse and Albert Kandelin, were gradually trained in psychoanalysis here under Topeka auspices at first. Psychiatric education, itself, in Los Angeles was at that time of very doubtful character, dominated by the neurologists at both the then existing medical schools here (University of Southern California and College of Medical Evangelists).

With the coming of the World War, there was a sufficient number of qualified medical psychoanalysts in Los Angeles and San Francisco to form a Psychoanalytic Society; and the number of young psychiatrists in and near these cities, both in and out of the Army, desiring psychoanalytic training warranted thoughts of starting an independent institute. California psychoanalysts had been among the Charter Members of the Topeka Society, and the California medical analysts were now members of Topeka. Simmel and his supporters in both cities included in the By-Laws for the new Society ^{accord. to pamphlets} a provision for Accredited Membership for the qualified non-medical psychoanalysts, giving them full rights in the Society. The Accredited Membership idea was vigorously fought by some at the Boston meeting of the American in 1942. ₄₋₁₁₋₄₄

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Not a long time after this, Dr. May Romm arrived in Los Angeles to settle and work out here. She duly came to see Dr. Simmel and to join the Study Group. But Simmel remembered painfully l'affaire Montgomery. Again, however, he did not simply communicate quietly with New York to assuage his new found doubts. Instead he bluntly asked Dr. Romm for her credentials! She was quite offended, told him he could of course find out about her by writing to the New York Society. I'm sure he apologized, and also wrote the inquiry. But I have always entertained the impression that this occurrence was a seed for the later development of the 'rebellion' against Simmel in the second year of our Institute, and later the split. It didn't help either when at a Study group meeting in an argumentative discussion with Dr. Romm, Fenichel referred to her as Mrs. Romm. I think this is the custom in German in referring to lady doctors; but the feelings about the gap between physicians and lay analysts was here too strong. I must report, however, that later on Fenichel and May Romm got along together very well. It has been said that if Fenichel had lived, there would not have been a split.

