

SIMMEL, THE ORGANIZER

by

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Dr. Tidd, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I first met Ernst Simmel at his psychoanalytic sanitarium at Schloss Tegel when I was in Berlin in the spring of 1930. He impressed me as a very friendly man, with dignity and a great deal of energy, and very intelligent. I then heard him present a paper on drug addiction at a meeting of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society, and my first impressions were further confirmed. I was impressed, too, by the psychoanalytic sanitarium at Tegel, of which Dr. Simmel was the founder and the director.

Early in 1933, after Hitler and the Nazis had begun their persecutions, it soon appeared quite possible that Germany's resulting tragic loss of outstanding scientific men might become America's gain. A small group of us, psychoanalysts practicing in Los Angeles, the nucleus of the Psychoanalytic Study Group, decided to invite one of the German psychoanalysts to settle here to help us learn more and to help bring order and organization

into the psychoanalytic field in Los Angeles. I thought at once of Simmel. Franz Alexander in Chicago enthusiastically endorsed my choice; and in an answer to a letter of inquiry from Professor Paul Epstein, Hanns Sachs, already in Boston, decisively backed up our choice of Simmel, declaring that he was an outstanding leader as well as a psychoanalyst and teacher of the first rank, and detailing for us his numerous achievements in organization and leadership.

So we invited Dr. Simmel, and after the usual vicissitudes of escape from the Nazis and trouble over the United States immigration visa, he and his wife and their two-year-old son arrived in Los Angeles the end of April, 1934; and from that time I counted him among my friends. We were never disappointed in Dr. Simmel's abilities; and he organized for us and led our Psychoanalytic Study Group and then also, when the time was ripe, the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Society, the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society, and the Los Angeles Institute for Psychoanalysis. We must blame ourselves, I believe, for the fact that he was not able to found here two other organizations: a psychoanalytic clinic and a psychoanalytic sanitarium, both much needed and both dear to his heart.

For Ernst Simmel was indeed an outstanding organizer and leader. I shall try now to give an account, somewhat in detail, of his achievements as an organizer in the field of psychoanalysis, both in Germany and here.

Extrapolating backwards, I felt sure that Simmel had been one of the founders of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society. However, in Freud's History of the Psychoanalytic Movement I learned that the Berlin Society was founded in 1910. Dr. Simmel graduated in medicine in 1909, and though his doctor's thesis was on "The Etiology of Dementia Praecox", he was in 1910 not yet a psychoanalyst. And that is the reason why he was not the founder of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society! It was Karl Abraham, of course, who was the moving force there.

However, Simmel was early interested in psychoanalysis, and his hypnotic work on war neuroses during the First World War confirmed his belief in the validity of the Freudian psychology. He emerged after the War as a member of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society, and in 1919-1920 with Dr. Max Eitingon was co-founder of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, which was both a free clinic and a training school, and was the very first of the psychoanalytic training institutes. In founding a clinic, Eitingon and Simmel were following a hint given by Freud in his address at the Budapest Congress in 1918, 'The Ways of Psychoanalytic Therapy'; and Simmel was instrumental in establishing the first curriculum for training in psychoanalysis and in establishing some of the important methods in training--namely, supervised analysis and case seminars. Simmel remained with Eitingon co-director of the clinic till 1927, when his energies

were turned to the sanitarium at Tegel. During the first three years of the training school (1920-23), Abraham, Eitingon and Simmel were co-directors of training, and from then on Simmel remained on a training committee of six or seven which directed the training.

In 1927, Simmel founded the Psychoanalytic Sanitarium at Schloss-Tegel, near Berlin, and remained its medical director till 1931, when it was forced to close because of the economic depression. This was again a pioneering enterprise of Dr. Simmel's, the first psychoanalytic sanitarium, in which he not only introduced psychoanalytic treatment of somatic illnesses, addictions, sexual offenders, schizophrenic borderline cases and other psychoses, but also saw to it that nursing and occupational therapy were carried out with psychoanalytic insight and aims. Dr. Karl Menninger has stated that the principles of the psychoanalytic organization of the Menninger Clinic derived from the work in the Tegel Sanitarium as published in Simmel's paper on 'Psychoanalytic Treatment in the Hospital' (in Int. Journal, 1928-1929). As I have said, we must regret that we were unable to forge an opportunity for Dr. Simmel to found another psychoanalytic sanitarium here.

And now we turn to Simmel's organizing activities in America, specifically in California. In September, 1935, he formally organized the Psychoanalytic Study Group of Los

Angeles, with printed By-laws and a membership of psychoanalysts, psychiatrists and psychologists. Dr. Simmel was, of course, chosen as its President. Besides monthly scientific meetings, we had a literature seminar and case seminars, and Dr. Simmel founded and led a Social Workers' Seminar and an Education Seminar for teachers. A psychoanalytic library was one adjunct of the Study Group founded and inspired by Dr. Simmel.

He was the official representative of the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, later of the Topeka Institute, for the purpose of carrying out training of psychiatrists in psychoanalysis in California. The Study Group activities provided a part of that training. Dr. Simmel invited Mrs. Deri to come here from Prague in 1935, and she was followed here in 1938 by our much-mourned Otto Fenichel, so that Simmel had worthy lieutenants to carry on with him teaching and training activities.

Meanwhile the number of psychoanalysts both here and in San Francisco gradually was increasing, partly from immigration from abroad, partly through migration from other parts of the United States, and in part through the training activities of Simmel and the other training analysts in both the California cities. The Los Angeles and the San Francisco analysts met each other in a body in San Francisco in the spring of 1938, when the American Psychiatric and Psychoanalytic Associations had their annual meetings there. And on a week-end in April,

1940, through Simmel's instigation and planning, we held at Ojai the first of the semi-annual meetings of the California Psychoanalysts. Since then the analysts of San Francisco and of Los Angeles have met together twice a year, in the spring in San Francisco, in the fall in Los Angeles; and this excellent custom, begun through Dr. Simmel's initiative, has continued up to the present in the semi-annual joint meetings of the Los Angeles and the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Societies.

For, by the end of 1941, the number of medical psychoanalysts in the two California cities had become sufficient for the organizing of a Psychoanalytic Society as a constituent society of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Again Ernst Simmel was the leader in this organizing activity, and the San Francisco Society was formed, taking its name from the northern city because a majority of the charter members resided there. Naturally Simmel was elected as the first president of the new society.

And history repeated itself again when, after the war, early in 1946, the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society could be founded. Once more Simmel was the chief organizer and the first president of the new society.

We must not forget that when the School for Nursery Years, a nursery school with psychoanalytic psychology as its basis, was founded here in 1940 with the aid and encouragement

of the Psychoanalytic Study Group, Dr. Simmel was one of the chief encouragers and one of the three incorporators, the original Board of Directors. He remained on the Board of Directors up to the time of his death.

Finally there is the Los Angeles Institute for Psychoanalysis. As far back as 1939, Dr. Simmel was urging the founding of a Psychoanalytic Institute which should comprise not only training facilities, but also a free clinic, a psychoanalytic sanitarium, opportunities for research, and eventually the inclusion of activities in all the fields of applied psychoanalysis. A number of us came together to try to help in his plan; and we must ourselves take the major part of the blame for the fact that the plan was not realized in 1939 and 40, and again in the year preceding Simmel's death. However, a beginning was made in 1946 in that the Los Angeles Institute for Psychoanalysis was founded and incorporated and its Training School was put into operation, so that the training of psychiatrists in psychoanalytic theory and practice is going on intensively and extensively in Los Angeles in these important post-war years. Again Ernst Simmel was the inspirer and the mainspring in the organizing activities and was the director of training until his severe illness curtailed his activity. He was ably aided in organizing and operating the Training School by a large part of the membership of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society.

Indeed I have not meant to imply that Ernst Simmel performed his many feats of organization all by himself. He had willing and able helpers in San Francisco and Los Angeles as well as in Germany, and in Berlin the leadership was surely shared with Abraham and with Eitingon, as it was also to some extent shared in California with Fenichel and others here and in San Francisco. But Simmel really had qualities of leadership that were outstanding, just as Hanns Sachs assured us when we thought of inviting Simmel here.

And that brings me to the very last portion of my talk. What are we to do now when we have lost Ernst Simmel and his leadership in the flesh? The answer is always the same. We want to continue to follow the spirit of his leadership, to identify ourselves with him in his constructive plans. When I saw him, fortunately, two days before he died, he was still, and energetically, full of his plans for a really comprehensive Institute. I think we should strive to realize such an Institute as Ernst Simmel envisaged, such an Institute as every Freudian psychoanalyst would be proud of. And we should show that, as Simmel always liked to phrase it, we can still cooperate and collaborate with each other in working for that aim. That is how I would want to take leave of my friend and teacher and leader, Ernst Simmel, in the flesh, and still keep the active memory of what he did for us and for psychoanalysis.