

1948  
January 5, 1948  
9629 Brighton way, Suite 208  
Beverly Hills, California

Robert P. Knight, M.D.  
Austen Riggs Foundation, Inc.  
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

Dear Bob:

This is not an official answer to your recent letter, but a very personal and confidential letter.

Perhaps you have an idea of what our local situation is like now, perhaps you have not. I know from Simmel that even at the time when he was still alive, much to the dislike of some people out here, that you viewed the situation with some concern even then. You can imagine that since Simmel's death, everything is worse. It is symptomatic for this state of affairs that my friends and I recently were defeated in the attempt to get the Los Angeles Society to agree to the appointment of Hanna Fenichel as a training analyst. The final outcome of this is perhaps not quite definite yet as we have written to the American Psychoanalytic Association for an interpretation of the pertinent passages of the regulations. But even if the opinion of the American Psychoanalytic Association should coincide with that of my friends and myself, the issue will probably have to be fought over some more in terms of the question of lay analysts. There is a strong group of analysts here who are quite rabid on this point, in my opinion, more out of unsolved personal problems than out of great competence and concern about and the correct and effective teaching of psychoanalysis.

I am also anxious for you and others to know that my friends and I do not feel that we are well represented by some of our official representatives and do not want the entire group to be judged according by those whose opinion and esteem we value. I regret very much that I was not able to attend the midwinter meeting as I wanted to.

Our present situation here is bad because we are at this time and for some time to come, hopelessly outnumbered.

The trouble really started at the time when our local group was in the process of being organized. Simmel, himself, made some basic mistakes, some of which he later admitted and deeply regretted and heavily suffered for. I am sure that everyone who knows what went on also knows that Simmel's fight to keep a straight course and to correct previous mistakes and the means used in this fight brought his illness to a fatal outcome much sooner than expected and than necessary.



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It is our hope that as time goes on and some of the younger people who are well trained and trustworthy will be eligible for membership, the tide will turn.

It is in connection with this particular point that I want to tell you my personal opinion about Dr. Charles Sarlin of Tucson, Arizona, whose acceptance for membership in the American Psychoanalytic Association has been delayed. From my personal knowledge of his training record, the opinion of Slutsky and others about him and from my personal contact and talks with him, I am convinced that he is well trained, has a very excellent understanding of psychoanalysis in its every aspect, including technique, and that he would be a most desirable member. I am very glad that we have him as a member in our local Society, especially from the previously mentioned point of view. If you feel at all that you can rely on this conviction of mine, I would greatly appreciate it if you threw the weight of your opinion and personal influence into the scale in favor of his acceptance.

I am sadly aware of the fact that what I wrote you today must sound very much like a repetition of what went on a few years ago in New York. However, this is the way things are. I hope we shall be able to improve them in the not too distant future in a way that is in the best interest of psychoanalysis.

I am amazed at your capacity for working. I don't see how you manage to take on a new big position, reorganize the staff of your new place, as you seem to do and, in addition, have time and strength enough to attend to the duties of a national organization. More power to you. As far as I am concerned, I am quite fed up with the unpleasantnesses of my side-job as chairman of the Education Committee and am thinking of a way to get out of it in order to confine myself to what I always have wanted most, namely, to take care of my patients in the best way possible, to keep studying and to put occasionally an interesting idea on paper.

With my best regards,

Cordially,

ERNST LEWY

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