LOS ANGELES PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY

DISSENSION IN RETROSPECT--(THE SPLIT)

by

Albert Kandelin, M. D.

February 10, 1963

Committee for the History of the Society

Dissension in Retrospect--(The Split)

by Albert Kandelin, M. D.

In the institutions of men there come times of dissension, when the integrity based upon truth and high principles becomes tested by passions, resistances, and other evidences of neurotic conflict. Resolution of dissension by working through of resistances helps to preserve these institutions. But often resistance prevails and what follows is the political maneuvering for control or power and subsequently the destruction or division of the whole. Such a split occurred in 1950 among the psychoanalysts of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society, following several years of strife and struggle. In my view of the history of this group at this time, twelve years later, the Split stands out as one of the conspicuous landmarks on the screen of the history of psychoanalysis in California.

Unity follows leadership, and Dr. Ernst Lewy has pointed out in some historical notes relating to events prior to the Split how the group lost in brief succession its two principal leaders only a short time after the official organization and founding of the Society. As a matter of fact, the death of Otto Fenichel on January 22, 1946, occurred just a few weeks before the official founding date of the Society. His death was sudden, unexpected, and premature, since he was only forty-eight years of age. He was an internationally prominent psychoanalyst, who had been in residence in Los Angeles since 1938. In addition to his professional and scientific eminence, Dr. Lewy points out how his personality was particularly suited for the role of leadership in a group of people of very different competence, background, and aims. He was an excellent judge of character yet always capable of maintaining a tolerant, guiding, and integrating attitude to persons of these varied types.

Ernst Simmel came to Los Angeles in 1934, and in the following year was the principal founder and first President of the first psychoanalytic organization, the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Study Group. From his early years in California Simmel was soon an energetic and effective leader of the psychoanalytic group, and after the death of Fenichel he was again in a leadership role. Although lacking in some of the qualities that made Fenichel so prominent as a teacher, scientist, and leader, Ernst Simmel was perhaps in some ways a more original individual. He had certain gifts for original thought on many unique and unusual aspects of psychic functioning.

There is frequent question regarding the personal relationship between Simmel and Fenichel, as if it were to be expected that between these two dynamic individuals there would arise friction and rivalry. Mrs. Frances Deri in an interview in 1963 described their different and individual qualities and stated that they complemented each other very well. Also to this point Dr. Ernst Lewy has written, "In spite of their both being prominent and both being leaders, I do not know of any personal rivalry, friction, or competing for position of first place having taken place between them ever." Therefore the deaths of these two men, each an organizer and leader, deprived the psychoanalysts of their principal leaders, contributing heavily to the unfavorable climate leading up to the dissension and split.

Due to experience in Europe before migrating, Simmel wished again to found in California a psychoanalytic sanitarium, which would have enabled him to resume his important experience and experimentation with hospitalization using psychoanalytic principles. With Ernst Lewy and E. Lippett, and earlier with David Brunswick, a certain amount of investigation was carried out, trying to locate a suitable facility for such a sanitarium. Unfortunately he never succeeded with

this proposed project. Also, well before the war, plans were made for the raising of funds and founding of a psychoanalytic institute; likewise, this plan did not succeed; it was only in 1946 that the Society and Institute were founded.

Preceding his death, November 11, 1947, Simmel was a sick man for several years time. He suffered severely from attacks of angina pectoris; but in spite of his illness, he was still full of plans and original ideas and had considerable initiative in the completion of the structure of the organization. Life became increasingly difficult for him, and the burdens of his position and office certainly undermined his health and contributed to his death in a premature way. It was under Simmel's leadership that the original Education Committee developed as follows: at the organizing meeting of the Society, February 22, 1946, Simmel, already a training analyst in Europe and Ernst Lewy, already a training analyst in Topeka from 1941 on, were supplemented by the appointments of Tidd, Romm, and Albert Slutsky. These five constituted the first Education Committee. Slutsky died in November, 1946; and in the same year Grotjahn and Miller were appointed as training analysts, followed in January, 1947, by Brunswick and Greenson. At this same January meeting, Greenson and Grotjahn were elected to the Education Committee.

In the year of '47 Simmel suffered two disappointments, the first being replaced as President of the Society after a one-year term of office; and this occurred in June, when May Romm was elected to the office. Simmel was relegated to Honorary President.

Dr. David Brunswick has reminisced about the events of July 7, 1947, pertaining to an election meeting of the Education Committee. At that time there was a total of nine training analysts, but only six were members of the Committee. At the meeting another member was to be elected to bring the number up to seven as directed by the Constitution. Previous to this the Chairman had power of appointment, but presumably by this time the By-Laws had been amended to accomplish this by election. Available for this position of seventh member were the three training analysts, Mrs. Deri, Milton Miller, and David Brunswick. Dr. Brunswick recalls phoning Dr. Miller, suggesting that the two of them defer to Mrs. Deri, who was their senior and more experienced as an analyst and psychoanalytic teacher, and that the two of them should forego membership on the Committee and insure Mrs. Deri's election. Miller disagreed to this and confessed that he, himself, would like to be a member of the Committee. Brunswick was shocked and stated later that he was unaware of the tensions and the developing split and failed to confide in any of his friends. At the meeting the procedure adopted was to make the election by secret ballot, and each training analyst listed his choice for seven members of the Committee. On the first ballot all the incumbent members (Simmel, Lewy, Greenson, Grotjahn, Romm, and Tidd) received nine votes each; and there were four for Deri, four for Miller, and one for Brunswick. This last was Mrs. Deri's vote because she did not vote for herself. Because of the tie it was necessary to have a second ballot to elect the seventh member, voting between Mrs. Deri and Dr. Miller. Again, she failed to vote for herself; and the outcome was five to four in favor of Miller; and he became the seventh member of the Committee.

Now the seven members of the Committee were to elect a Chairman. Grotjahn nominated Dr. Lewy, saying that inasmuch that Simmel had been ill, he should be spared, and inasmuch as Dr. Lewy had been functioning as Acting Chairman, he should be officially elected. This motion was seconded in spite of disagreement voiced by

Lewy and Greenson; and Greenson nominated Simmel, which was seconded. Lewy definitely did not want to run against Simmel, but there was separate discussion at this time where it was recognized that if Lewy withdrew, Grotjahn would be nominated and possibly win. So Dr. Lewy did not withdraw; and the seven Committee members voted, with Lewy being elected four to three. Certainly Simmel voted for himself, and also Lewy voted for Simmel. Brunswick points out that if Mrs. Deri had voted for herself as a member of the Education Committee, she would have been in a position to have the balance of power which would have insured the election of Simmel.

Simmel was hurt and depressed by the frustrating course of affairs and confided as much to his friends. After his many years of labor in the psychoanalytic field as a teacher and organizer, he had within the course of a month been replaced as President of the Society, which he was so largely responsible for founding; and then against his wishes in the matter replaced as Chairman of the Education Committee. After a lifetime of active and energetic teaching, organizing and research, this was indeed an humiliating course of events for him, because in spite of his failing health he continued with many plans for further development of the organization.

Therefore by '47 and '48 the Education Committee was definitely divided into two principal factions, with perhaps Dr. Tidd standing in a neutral position. Society affairs, as described by Dr. Lewy in some of his reminiscences, seemed to function smoothly as far as one could judge from outside appearances. The smaller faction in the Education Committee consisted of Grotjahn, Miller, and Romm; and in Dr. Lewy's opinion, the main controversy soon precipitated around the question of training procedures. Under the influence of the late Otto Fenichel it had been thought necessary to make candidates firmly acquainted with the concepts and techniques of classical analysis. It was thought best by this so-called classical group that more recent techniques of psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapy be put aside for later stages of training. This position was shared and supported by Brunswick, Deri, Greenson, Lewy, and Simmel; and opposed to it were Grotjahn, Miller, and Romm, who felt it was proper to teach more immediately in the curriculum the theory and technique of certain modifications first propounded by Franz Alexander and his co-workers in Chicago. Vivid in the memory of a good number of us is a meeting held August 31, 1945, at the School for Nursery Years, which was then located at 512 North Rossmore, where Dr. Alexander was the principal speaker, describing some of his newer theories and practices. On that occasion Dr. Fenichel lucidly and bluntly told the speaker that he was confusing the issue by including his new brief technique in the category of psychoanalysis. I recall that Dr. Alexander was quite angry because he was confronted by not only Fenichel but Simmel and others, all respected and eminent in the psychoanalytic field.

Following the replacement of Simmel as Chairman, the minority group on the Committee attempted but failed to succeed in introducing certain newer techniques into the training methods. One of the issues was reduction in the intensity of the analysis by proposing a reduced frequency of analytic sessions. The minority identified themselves with the adjectives, "flexible," "scientific," and accused the majority of being, "orthodox," "rigid," and so forth. Therefore as early as 1945 the fundamental differences were beginning to become apparent and the differences, sometimes based on honest scientific convictions, soon became reinforced by intense and emotional prejudices; and in some instances this struggle for power and prestige appeared to overshadow the discord, which had begun relative to the principles of the proper standards of psychoanalytic teaching and training, and

even the ultimate conduct of psychoanalytic therapy.

Another basic issue was the question of the recognition of lay analysts. The Committee included qualified laymen on the majority side; and this issue was convenient for the dissident minority, all of whom were qualified medical analysts.

By early 1948 the tension was already perceptible on the national scene; and in a letter to Robert Knight, President of the national organization, dated January 5, 1948, Dr. Lewy refers to the local controversy and makes mention of the issue of lay analysts as well as difficulties in maintaining correct principles in the teaching of psychoanalysis. Reference is made by Lewy to tensions dating back to the time of the Society's organization and the fact that Simmel made certain mistakes in judgment in appointments which led to subsequent difficulties.

Subsequently, Dr. Lewy, as Chairman of the Education Committee, studied a plan which he later proposed with vigor to make it possible for the two dissenting groups to function within the confines of the same institution. This was based upon what he referred to as the London Plan, which was worked out at the London Institute at the time of a similar controversy between the followers of Anna Freud in one group and of Melanie Klein in another. In this plan certain basic courses were common for all candidates and then separate courses, especially in technique of child analysis, were given by each of the two dissident groups. Candidates elected one group or the other with which to be identified. Also Dr. Lewy corresponded with different people to get information about how controversial matters were handled elsewhere. Prior to this time there had been controversy and a split in Philadelphia, and this controversy and division was studied with the aim of trying to avoid some of the problems which they had gone through there. The London Plan was proposed later in 1950 by Dr. Lewy as his favored solution to avoid hardship to students and any interruption in their training. Essentially he proposed that the two factions organize into two separate sub-committees and each subgroup could operate its own training program. Miller and Romm felt this was not feasible and expressed opinions favoring a definite split which would result in the organization of a second institute.

In a final Education Committee meeting, February 13, 1950, the discussion was directed to details of how to form a second institute. Many difficulties were encountered due to the rules and regulations set down by the national organization. For one thing, an application for a new institute needed a minimum of four qualified training analysts and the dissident group had only three. This was solved by appointing Dr. Norman Levy a training analyst to bring the number of the dissident group to the required four; and at the same time Dr. Van der Heide was appointed training analyst; however, each of the new appointees for each of the two groups was without power to vote until the new institute was recognized. At this point the members of the existing institute were Lewy, Brunswick, Deri, Greenson, and Tidd; and the members of the new group being Miller, Romm, and Grotjahn.

By a gentlemen's agreement it was proposed to make the transitional period possible by maintaining the Education Committee with its existing members and officers until a new institute was officially recognized; but a separation into two institutes would take place immediately de facto if not de jure.

I have sometimes been asked for more details about the real issues at stake pertaining to the Split. I have seen some notes relative to the Education Committee

meeting, February 2, 1950, which will answer to some measure some of these questions. At this meeting Dr. Lewy stated that the rift had existed for a long time, partly due to very serious scientific differences and partly due to personal factors. The work of the Committee had been done under constant strain and hampered by discord and there was no point in denying that to a large extent a rift existed. Therefore some solution should be found not only for the benefit of the members of the Committee but also for the benefit of the students. He proposed that openly and frankly the existence of this rift be acknowledged. This led up to his proposal of a plan similar to that which had been accomplished in London, and he considered that this was the only and best practical solution for the difficult problem at hand.

Dr. Romm felt that in the controversy criticism had come from one side only and not from both sides and furthermore stated that Dr. Greenson was the spokesman of the critical group. To this Dr. Lewy replied that the criticism had been bilateral and that very definitely his group had been accused of being rigid, orthodox, inflexible, closed-minded to so-called recent advances. Dr. Greenson continued on the subject of criticism by saying that he had taken opportunities to express differences of opinion he had on certain points of view which were being taught during the seminars. Also he said that he had requested, regarding controversial issues, that clear statements be made about what a person felt was basic and what he felt was experimental. He said he had been puzzled by some of the teachings in the seminars and in disagreement with some of it. Dr. Lewy observed that certainly there were basic theoretical, controversial issues and wanted as much as possible to eliminate personal questions and sensitivities. To this Dr. Tidd felt it was impossible to separate the two and also added that the personal differences appeared to be more important in this controversy than the theoretical ones. Dr. Miller observed that in any organization there should be room for differences of opinion; however, in this group there was a sharp demarcation, one group versus another. He felt there were many critical attitudes prevalent which made it difficult for him to foster some of his ideas and said it was impossible in this atmosphere and that as far as he was concerned, there was only one real solution available, and that was a complete split. Dr. Greenson stated his belief in the right of everybody to question and doubt any given scientific theory but also added that one must clearly differentiate hypothesis and experiment from what up until now has seemed to be the closest approximation to facts. He felt that certain of our members had used new ideas which were experimental as if they were proven facts. As the discussion continued, the possibility of the London Plan was reviewed and gradually rejected as the solution for the problems in Los Angeles. Drs. Miller and Romm particularly continued to emphasize the necessity for a second or separate institute.

At a meeting of February 13, 1950, peace prevailed and the decision of the Split seemed to be well established, which made it possible to proceed with administrative plans to complete such a change. As mentioned above, it involved the appointment of Dr. Norman Levy as training analyst for the dissident group, balanced by the appointment of Dr. Van der Heide as training analyst to join the majority group. The question of voting privileges for the two new appointees was handled by a gentlemen's agreement, which meant that each would be without power to vote until recognition of the new institute. At a meeting of February 16, 1950, the whole matter of the Education Committee's proceedings was presented to the membership of the Psychoanalytic Society. Dr. Lewy reported on the recent difficulties and how he had proposed the solution of the London Plan and that the resulting decision had been in favor of a complete split. Discussion was heated about the

constitutionality of the decision by the Committee, and Drs. Futterman, Briehl, and Frumkes expressed the opinion that this was another instance of autocratic behavior on the part of the Education Committee. Dr. Miller, Dr. Greenson, and Dr. Romm all defended the decision of the Committee and stated that the whole matter had been discussed thoroughly and the resulting decision was the result of a great deal of deliberation. There was much discussion regarding the status of the candidates and whether or not their training was in any way jeopardized by the proposed Split. Dr. Frumkes was dissatisfied with the decision and felt that it should be arrived at only after a more democratic procedure and even proposed that the decision of the Committee should be rescinded. The question of the possible formation of another society was discussed. It was pointed out that a new institute could be made around the application of four training analysts and that a society required the application of ten qualified members. Suggestions were made by several members that the Constitution and By-Laws be amended in order to avoid a split, the attempt being made to arrive at a possible compromise which would solve the problems at hand. Dr. Futterman made a motion to the effect that a revision of the By-Laws be made and tried out for a year before any decisions to the effect of a split be made. Dr. Frumkes seconded the motion, which was then defeated by a vote of 19 against 2. In a statement dated February 16, 1950, the following was addressed to the candidates regarding the formation of another psychoanalytic institute. "The members of the Education Committee have agreed that a change in the structure and formation of the Education Committee and Institute is necessary. This decision was reached after much thoughtful contemplation and discussion, since all realized the seriousness of this move. The best solution to the many problems seems to be the formation of another institute. This decision has been made because of the fact that scientific differences of opinion have existed for some time, and it is felt that this plan will facilitate the teaching and training of candidates who may choose to receive their psychoanalytic training from either group or both. When the organization plans for another institute are completed, more details and information will be given to the candidates. When this plan for two institutes has been carried through, those candidates trained in either institute will, upon satisfactory completion of their work, be eligible for acceptance as members of The American Psychoanalytic Association." An interesting aftermath was a candidates' meeting on March 3, 1950. At this meeting the old group presented a statement, which was read, summarizing the reasons for the Split, and presented a summary of the scientific differences, as well as mentioning the existence of emotional factors. The scientific differences included the following factors: 1) the analysis of the infantile neurosis as being essential to achieving structural change, 2) the primacy of the libido theory in reference to the instinctual development of man, 3) the necessity of consistent interpretation of the transference phenomena, 4) the opinion that working through required a high frequency of analytic sessions and often analyses of long duration, 5) an emphasis on the personal analysis as being the single most important part of a candidate's training, 6) a statement about the responsibility regarding basic fundamental principles and the responsibility to present innovations in technique as such, until they have been proved to be in accordance with the basic principles of dynamic processes. To quote briefly from the statement: "It is our opinion that each member of the other group disagrees with one or more points which we consider basic. Working together for three-and-one-half years has failed to diminish the disagreement on principles.....It was therefore reluctantly agreed that only the formation of a new institute would make it possible to maintain the high standards of psychoanalytic teaching and practice."

"The question of personal and emotional factors as the basis for the separation

has been frequently raised. There is no doubt that personality factors are interwoven with the scientific differences, which does add to the incompatibility; nevertheless, it must be recognized whatever their origin, the differences of opinion about fundamental issues are essential and warrant a change in the structure and function of the Educational Committee and Institute. It is believed that the formation of two separate institutes will make possible a more cordial scientific atmosphere, since it will do away with much of the latent hostility that existed until now."

At the candidates' meeting mentioned above, Dr. Grotjahn and Dr. Miller spoke for the dissident or new group.

On May 11, 1950, Dr. Greenson prepared a memorandum addressed to Dr. Lewy summarizing the situation as of that date. He stated that three members had applied to the Board on Professional Standards for recognition as a new institute, and had been instructed to commence operation as a separate organization, but without official independent autonomy until they had been investigated and approved. Meanwhile, the official authority would continue with the Executive Committee of the Los Angeles Institute during the transitional period of organizing and obtaining official recognition by the new and separate institute. The terms of the temporary operational agreement recognized the formation of a second society and a proposed new institute. This proposal recognized the privilege of the new society's members on the Educational Committee to appoint teachers and conduct courses, the aim being on the part of all to continue the undisturbed execution of the training program.

Thus ended a period of controversy, dissension, and strife, with roots extending back to events as far as ten and more years before the final solution. Scientific controversy, human passion, unresolved neurotic conflict, and ambition for power all played their part in the events which finally culminated in the solution as I have sketched it out in this narrative. There are many details which can be added from the personal reminiscing of indiviudals who were involved and participated.

Recorded on tape in the home of Dr. Albert Kandelin

First transcript by Jean Kameon
Final transcript by Jean Kameon