

CALIFORNIA'S FIRST PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY*

by

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In the last phase of his life, one of Freud's principal pre-occupations was with the lay analysis controversy. Is a medical degree desirable and even an essential qualification for the practice of psychoanalysis? The Ernest Jones biography of Freud reviews the events around this issue during and after Freud's lifetime and concludes by referring to it as "a central dilemma in the psychoanalytic movement, one for which no solution has yet been found".

California's first analysts were laymen. Located in Los Angeles were Thomas and Margrit Libbin (later Munk), Marjorie Leonard, Estelle Levy and David Brunswick. Led by Brunswick this group felt the need for strong leadership to develop a psychoanalytic community along lines familiar to them through their European training experiences and in harmony with developments on the American scene. This resulted in an invitation to Ernst Simmel, an early victim of the Nazi persecutions. He accepted and arrived in Los Angeles in 1934. His medical and psychoanalytic career in Germany had been distinguished and included participating in the founding of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute in 1920; in 1927 he established and operated for several years the famous Schloss Tegel, a sanatorium which pioneered in the use of psychoanalytic methods and attitudes in a hospital. Tegel was endorsed and favored by Freud.

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The Los Angeles Psychoanalytic ^{STUDY} Group was founded in 1935, California's first psychoanalytic organization; in this Simmel was the prime mover and became its first president. This group had no official relationship with the American Psychoanalytic Association nor was its membership restricted to the analysts. Its constitution made no mention of a medical qualification; several of its original members were intelligent and enlightened persons in professions apart from analysis, psychiatry or psychology. Essentially the one qualification was "sufficient knowledge and understanding of Freudian analysis". Especially excluded were "persons who attempt to practice psychoanalysis without training as prescribed by the Freudian School". This exclusion was timely, aimed at the considerable number of opportunists who proclaimed themselves analysts with little or no qualification. Within these guidelines the Study Group commenced a productive existence and attracted a growing membership. By 1940 new lay members included Frances Deri, Hanna Heilborn (later Fenichel), Christine Olden and Edgar Daniels. Also joining the group were the first physician analysts (after Simmel). From Europe came Otto Fenichel and the Haenels, Joachim and Irene. The earliest American trained physician analysts were Charles Tidd and May Romm.

The Study Group's activities, which included some training of analytic candidates, were sanctioned and under the official aegis of first the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute (founded 1930), and later the Topeka Institute (founded 1938). Topeka and Los Angeles had close links; Simmel, Fenichel and Tidd were charter members of Topeka. The Topeka jurisdiction over the California activities lasted until

1942, the date of founding of a first official society on the West Coast. (This was the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Society, given the name of the northern city although it included members from there and Los Angeles alike).

In other centers and in the national parent organization, medical members had assumed dominance and in a letter from Lawrence Kubie to Simmel in June 1938 this was pointed out and suggestions made about the course of development in Los Angeles. He said, "It is hard to transmit on paper the general spirit and atmosphere of a meeting (Council on Professional Training, American Psychoanalytic Association, June 2, 1938); but there was a feeling of warm and enthusiastic appreciation of the service which your group has been performing for psychoanalysis on the West Coast and a whole-hearted understanding of the special problems which confront you." Kubie held the position of secretary of the national organization and was referring to the "problems" created by the presence of the non-medical analysts in the California group. He went on to sketch out the national association's new policy in this matter: "When the time comes that closer affiliation between the Los Angeles Group and the American comes under consideration, certain difficulties such as these will have to be resolved. And it would probably make it much easier to eliminate such difficulties if no new laymen were accepted for training from now on. New Minimal Training Regulations are being adopted by all the constituent societies including a Resolution against the future training of laymen. You will notice that this is not unfairly retroactive." Thus official policy was clearly spelled out, but such a directive hardly solved the local problem of how to organize and advance from preliminary Study Group status to

an official Society status acceptable under the national rules. The position of laymen members in a medically dominated association remained to be defined. Robert Knight of the Topeka Society writing in September 1939 stated "we must work out some friendly association and supervision".

Pressures were increasing to organize in California an official organization to qualify as a constituent society of the national group. Simmel acknowledged the problem of the lay analyst membership in a memorandum June 1940 referring to the "particular situation of the psychoanalytic movement in California. Ill feeling exists against the acceptance of lay analysts as ordinary members". He said some feared the creation of a loophole providing admission of lay analysts rejected elsewhere, or the possibility lay members would outnumber the physician members, or the presence of lay members inviting conflict with medical authorities. He proposed a society be organized by qualified physician analysts in accordance with specified national regulations and added that such a society could accept laymen adequately trained or in training prior to June 1938. Also, he proposed a system of supervision of the lay analysts by physician members aimed at eliminating conflict with medical authorities or critical attitudes from medical analysts.

Until an official society could form and be recognized, the jurisdiction over California affairs resided with the Topeka Society. From that source came pressure in January 1941 and Robert Knight wrote, "it becomes more apparent to us here that the best eventual solution will be for you to form a society of your own in California. It is becoming increasingly impractical to direct or supervise psychoanalytic

activities in California from this distance. It would be possible for a California Society to deal more adequately with the lay problems. I have no doubt the authorities of the A.P.A. taking into consideration the specific circumstances in California, and the role the non-medical analysts have played in the movement will have no objections against their later admittance, particularly if we accept voluntarily the restrictions I have proposed. I refer especially to those of standing before June 1938".

Somewhat later than in Los Angeles, analysts had established themselves in San Francisco, and now joined their southern colleagues in deliberations concerning a new psychoanalytic organization. There the situation was different; a non-medical analyst, Siegfried Bernfeld, was the recognized leader of the analytic movement. Already distinguished on the continent before his American migration, he had a reputation of being an outstanding teacher and a creative scientific worker. Moreover he was said to be very well accepted by the local medical profession. His colleagues were unwilling to participate in any plan which would disturb Bernfeld's standing. William Barrett was quoted as saying "we would prefer no society at all to one which would put Bernfeld in a secondary status". His colleague Jacob Kasanin wrote the opinion of the San Francisco group in January 1941, "it seems then that it would be more rational to include as Charter Members both medical men and lay analysts who are qualified for admission to the Society. We definitely wish to have laymen". Later in the year Bernfeld wrote to Simmel, "The California Society should have unambiguously a medical character. Non-physicians will have to renounce many of their rights... but one can hardly feel as belonging to the Society if one were

deprived of the rights to influence the selection (of candidates) and the policies of committees guiding training and teaching".

In a letter to Kubie (February 12, 1941) Simmel mentioned opposition to admission of non-physician analysts by some who feared recrimination from the national authorities, a fear he himself considered groundless. In this view he was supported by Kubie who summarized as follows. "I do not think it is possible to ask the Council on Professional Training of the A.P.A. to pass on any individual layman. This has purposely been left in the hands of the individual societies... the A.P.A. has never had any specific jurisdiction in the matter. The basic principle is the autonomy of the individual societies, limited only by the minimal standards and by the resolution with regard to the future training of laymen. If your constitution is clear on these points none could imagine any doubt of the acceptability of the California group".

Reporting to Karl Menninger (April 1, 1941) Simmel wrote in apology, "I am sorry we Californians will continue to be a burden for some time to come. The circumstances in California are such that the local analysts are not yet sufficiently mature to govern themselves. We are still in adolescence and that is as you know, an awkward age. Just give us one more year to get a grip on ourselves and in the meantime please continue to guide and advise us". In specific reference to the lay controversy he added, "the lay analysts realize that the main difficulty in granting them the recognition they deserve lies in their great numbers. It would be unfair to both the lay analysts and the psychoanalytic movement in California to found a society with a tendency of ignoring the lay analysts. If such a stand were ever

taken, both Bernfeld and myself would withdraw immediately from the psychoanalytic movement here". He felt the problem relating to lay members could be taken care of through a gentlemen's agreement, implying they would forego charter membership, even ordinary membership, but without sacrificing their status and privileges as qualified analysts.

In June 1941 Robert Knight as president of the Topeka Society appointed a committee to investigate the factors involved in forming a California Society and proposed to come to Los Angeles in August to chair its first meeting. In a reply, Simmel focused upon the central problem - the integration of the lay analysts into the new organization. He recognized the new national rule against further training of laymen but equally insisted upon the rights of those non-physician analysts who were trained before June 1938. He considered it a special situation in California, with laymen making a majority. He proposed a category of membership for them differing from those of ordinary membership, and urged they have voting rights and even charter membership. However, he recognized some compromises may become necessary.

With Knight presiding, the organizing meeting was held in Los Angeles, August 23, 1941. The committee appointed by Knight consisted of himself, plus Tidd, Simmel and Fenichel from Los Angeles, Berliner and Kamm from San Francisco. A report of the meeting begins with a discussion of the possibility of forming two societies, one in each city. This was rejected in favor of a common society. Simmel proposed accredited membership without voting privileges for non-physician analysts, and after discussion this was accepted. Rejected by a vote of three to one was his further proposal of regular membership for

distinguished non-medical analysts. (In this vote Knight and Fenichel abstained.) In a general way the relative acceptance of the lay group appeared to be a satisfactory compromise and in accord with statements Simmel had solicited from them before the meeting. Bernfeld's response to Simmel I have quoted above. Other non-physician analysts had responded in essentially the same terms.

It would be a pleasure to say that at this point the establishment of a California Society was almost completed, and that the constitution as drawn up by the organizing committee at its August meeting was shortly approved and subsequently ratified by the national body. Unfortunately, new problems and frustrations arose, delaying still further the birth of a new organization. And the new problems again involved the layman issue.

In 1941 psychoanalytic practice in California came under the scrutiny of the State Board of Medical Examiners, probably resulting from the activities of a number of marginal practitioners, people with little or poor training. Simmel himself underwent an investigation, but his practice was never interrupted. As a physician with foreign birth and education he was not admissible to California licensure on a convenient basis. In these times of trial much support and advice came to Simmel from colleagues elsewhere, especially Knight and Menninger in Topeka.

As the result of the State Board's investigation, even though inconclusive and not a certain threat, several of the physician analysts had serious reservations about participating in the organizational procedures. They advised a policy of consulting the State Board on the issue of the proposed accredited membership for the lay

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analysts, hoping thus to insure the security of the new society. Simmel felt this wrong and thought it better to proceed without such consultation; he anticipated the Board would never interfere in the practice of an accredited and qualified analyst, medical or layman, and in this view he was supported on a national level. However, the support of three Los Angeles physician analysts was lost at this point. Knight and Menninger remained eager to get the California group organized and emerged as peace makers. Knight mentioned "conflicting loyalties and affiliations". Menninger advised concession and compromises and urged the formation of a society along the lines proposed in August. In spite of their efforts, the controversy defied solution and the new year, 1942, saw the problems still unsolved.

In the spring of 1942 a list of ten physician analysts was formed, meeting the charter requirements of the national regulations. Apart from the three who abstained the list included every qualified medical analyst in California plus one each from Seattle and Tucson. The three in Los Angeles who abstained from charter formation were, May Romm, Charles Tidd and Joachim Haenel; in this way they expressed dissatisfaction with the handling of the lay problem. After its formation Romm and Tidd shortly joined the new society.

The charter list had six from San Francisco, Barrett, Berliner, Kamm, Kasanin, MacFarlane and Windholz. From Los Angeles were Fenichel and Simmel. Orr of Seattle and Gero of Tucson completed the ten charter members. In about January 1942 the San Francisco members had assumed the initiative, now inviting their Los Angeles colleagues to join them, using the constitution drafted the previous August. During earlier planning the name California Psychoanalytic Society was

envisioned, but at this point it was replaced by a new label, the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Society. Simmel preferred the first for sake of unity, but conceded there were reasons to name it for San Francisco, beyond the fact the charter list was heavily weighted from that end. These reasons included avoidance of confusion if in the future a separate society were formed in Los Angeles, as indeed did occur four years later. Also with the San Francisco name it was felt the influence of potential opposition in Los Angeles would be minimized in the matter of the lay controversy.

In May 1942 Simmel attended the national meeting in Boston to present the application of the California analysts, presenting the proposed constitution as drafted in August 1941. The proposed category of accredited membership for lay analysts was not acceptable, otherwise there was no objection and the application was favored, eventually being ratified by the other constituent societies. Thus the attempt to include provision of accredited lay membership in a nationally ratified constitution failed. However, the new society was free to solve their problems in their own fashion, within the limitations imposed by the minimal standards provision of the American Psychoanalytic Association pertaining to lay analysts trained prior to 1938, and reserving training thereafter to physicians. In Los Angeles as well as in other centers, older and qualified lay analysts have retained their status in their communities by holding membership in their local societies under some category such as Accredited, Affiliate, Special or Honorary, distinct from Active or Regular membership for which the medical qualification is a requisite. Apart from a few exceptions, membership in the national parent organization is reserved for those who hold Active or Regular membership in their local societies.

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