

LOS ANGELES PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY AND INSTITUTE

President's Address - Arthur Ourieff, M.D.

Annual Meeting, June 19, 1969

Colleagues and Guests,

It is with great pride and pleasure, and with a deep sense of responsibility and respect, that I assume the presidency of your Society/Institute. I hope that a year from now I may be as successful in turning over a stronger, healthier, more vigorous organization to the tutelage of Mel Mandel, as Norm has done to me. As you heard from Norm, and to paraphrase the new play, "Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles is alive and well and living in 1969!".

We are now entering the third year of the reformation! We have accomplished much and yet there is so much more to be accomplished - for psychoanalysis has not and does not and cannot stand still. I would like to take a less detailed, more general more philosophical and analytic approach to ourselves.

Norm has spoken of our organizational successes and failures. Our organization has grown to a size in which the feeling of a small close intimate family group has gone. In the ten years I have been a member of our society and institute, our numbers have almost doubled - from 73 to 132. Our faculty has increased from 24 to 69. We have been struck by the population explosion! What does this mean to our Society/Institute? It means, whether we like it or not, that we are no longer living in an era of the one room school house, but of necessity and choice, live in a sprawling psychoanalytic metropolis with all its complications and rewards. We may long for the good old simple days, but like everyone else in the world around us, we must strive instead to find ever more effective means of functioning as individuals within a larger organization - so that the organization and we, its life substance, may function to the fullest - for our own self realization as psychoanalysts, as well as to assure the future growth and prosperity of psychoanalysis.

There has been much criticism of our new "organization". We hear that the time spent on it would be better spent in the more creative scientific pursuits - that the "organization" does not make one a good psychoanalyst, nor does it provide necessarily for the development and training of good psychoanalysts. We make no such claim for it, nor does it take the place of being and providing good psychoanalysts. Being a competent analyst is a unique, personal, mystical, occupational experience, defined and understood by each of us in our own idiosyncratic manner. We know that it entails certain general themes - such as dedication to our patients, willingness to be emotionally available, honesty, integrity, empathy, etc. As a group we cannot honestly say that it is our ideas and theoretical approach that makes us "good analysts". We have been capable of facing this fact about ourselves. We can admit that it is more than our ideas and our theoretical approach. We can admit and recognize that large segments of our membership have major differences of opinion which threatened us with fragmentation. We avoided this. We have elected to stay together and work together. The great discoveries of Freud - the unconscious, transference, resistance, dream theory, etc. - these elements in which we all believe and with which we all work - these hold us together and make us into the group that requires the "organization". The organization protects us - holds us together - acts as a gestalt for all of us. Without it, we would fragment, go our separate ways, and the great and unrelenting force of psychoanalysis would be dissipated.

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An organization should be structured so as to mediate between the needs of its members and the needs of the community, much as we conceptualize the ego mediating between id and the external world, with the demands of psychoanalysis acting as the governing superego. The needs of our members for discussion of their ideas, for the expression of their creations, for an arena in which to be freely heard, our id so to speak, has become intense - and like the id, may contain dichotomous and even incompatible ideas. We have become a heterogeneous group. We are like our political parties. We all belong to the same party, but our beliefs vary so that we have minorities representing various regional viewpoints, so to speak; dissidents of various flavors, but with a large group of moderates, composed of subgroups of activists and disinterested members; all co-existing within the larger body. We are learning to live and flourish with this divergence and turn it in our favor. Our structure, our organizational ego, has proved flexible enough to swing with the tension - to maintain our synthesis and integrity despite the strains, and continue to allow us to develop, to work, to study, to find ways of integrating still further the divergences between us. The demands of psychoanalysis, our organizational superego, have kept us on the straight path. Very few of our members have been interested in diluting that which is central to analysis - intensive, emotional one to one treatment of our patients. We are a serious, involved dedicated group of workers struggling to find some new truth, some new verity in our arduous but satisfying work to add to the monumental gifts left to us by Freud. The flexibility and adaptability of our structure aids and abets us in this endeavor.

The divergence, or coexistence, if you will, has, I believe actually strengthened each and every one of us. The active debate, the open discussion, the intelligent challenges and responses, the very act of intensive exposure of all varieties of ideas, rather than stifling or hurting us, has allowed us to learn what we can, to take and use what proves useful, to reject that which proves false or useless, and the resultant thought and effort seems to have brought about an enriched vital theoretical and clinical approach. We are a lively and alert group, who have, I believe, more and more come to respect and be able to live with each other. Confrontation and bias appear less and less often. Dialogue, rather than revolution, has resulted.

This may be the most valuable long range reward of our reorganization. We have weathered well, so far, what could have become a real threat to our integrity and turned it to our advantage. Our professional, scientific, and interpersonal relationships within the society appear at this time to be healthy.

I would like now to turn to our Institute. Here, too, I believe we have a healthy state. It is still too early to fully evaluate the new curriculum - but it seems to be successful. At least the response of the candidates remains enthusiastic and excited.

I believe the new organizational plan is working well, despite rumors to the contrary. Our faculty has proved itself responsible to the tasks assigned. There is no apparent deterioration of the training and no apparent lessening of the surveillance of the training that has been brought to our attention. My general feeling is that we are in closer contact with our candidates than ever before. The levels of communication I believe can and will be improved as time goes on and we gain more experience.

We hope that the increase in number of faculty members and the increasing number of Analyzing Instructors will continue to grow. I personally believe that the full impact



of our training school reorganization will not be fully recognized until we have many more Analyzing Instructors so that the title, the prestige, the personal aggrandizement (or the significance of the absence of the title) will be absent - and the appointment will depend solely on one's interest in teaching and training. A suggestion has been made, and I find it intriguing, that a statement be included in the catalogue stating that authorization to conduct analysis of candidates does not signify endorsement of the analyst. It is the candidate's responsibility, as with any patient, to select a suitable analyst and to be analyzed. We shall have to do everything within our power to thwart the threat of constant regression, of constant attempts to return to the old. This process has already been operative. It must not be allowed to proceed. I hope that the increasing numbers of faculty and analyzing instructors will stay ahead of the increasing pressure to retrench. As President, I shall do my best to keep the avenues of communication between the Society and the Institute open and responsive to all qualified interested, and serious members.

During the coming year, I have the feeling that three areas of discussion may take place among the faculty - at least, I would encourage such debate. First; We should continue to discuss, primarily in the Curriculum Committee, with which I am most familiar, ideas of the future needs of analysts - what is to be required by analysts a few years from now. We are all so indelibly imprinted by our training, and it is so difficult to move beyond it, as Dr. Greenson's last paper showed, that we should strive to arrive at a training for the future. It is easy - very easy - to settle for what is familiar to us, and was offered to us - the old way, our way - but the future of psychoanalysis now resides not in us but in our students and in their training.

Secondly: I would like to hear a discussion of what our admission requirements should be. Again, this is directed to the future. At the moment, and I hope it continues, we are blessed with many applicants. There are 11 candidates finishing their first year. We already have a new class of at least 6, and this may increase. 10 others are on the accepted list. Should we attempt at least, and it is not easy nor necessarily right, to define the future analyst and should this, if we could do it, affect our selection process? For example, do we believe, or do we think it desirable, that psychoanalysis should remain rooted in private practice? And should the emphasis of our training be in that direction? There are other questions too - we may not be able to answer them, but I believe we should start asking them.

Thirdly: The possibility of broadening candidate's roles in the administration of the training school should be explored. Throughout the country, students are being asked to serve on various faculty committees of universities, medical schools, and other institutes. Considering the maturity, experience, and training of our candidates, I believe they should be invited to participate throughout our organization to the fullest possible measure.

I would like to talk to you about politics within our organization. Politics has a bad name among us. We tend to scoff and even ridicule it, but I believe this is wrong. Not so long ago emotions and ambitions were openly apparent in our Society. There was clamor for advancement, honour, and recognition - not only in the areas of scientific creativity and productivity - but in the sense of personal recognition and political success within a closed system. If I may develop a metaphor, we were organized along a star system with the concomitant intensity of ambition and reward revealing itself.



We shall always have our stars - our members of exceptional ability and brilliance. We need them and revere them, for they represent our truest creativity. But now, we are more like a repertory company - with the major parts being passed around. Like many repertory theaters, we can strive for excellence, or we can drift toward mediocrity. A great deal depends on those who serve in the major roles at a particular time. We have a large pool of talented, well trained, eager, and dedicated members who can either rise to the occasion or not. Our stars can and do function well within the group. In theater, such a great talent as Laurence Olivier functions and continues to develop in a repertory company and great talents are as easily born from repertory companies as from other sources.

Without the rewards of the star system, what is to develop our leadership? The Society, particularly the presidency, was designed to be the political arm of our group where personal ambition and leadership ability would be focused, so the rest of the organization could function primarily on a professional level. We did away with a nominating committee and made it necessary for those who wanted to run for office to run by actively soliciting the support of their friends and colleagues. It was interesting that this year the majority of your Board of Directors ran for office unopposed.

Now, why is this so? Norm Atkins suggests that it may be because of the decentralization of function - that no one group knows what is going on. I agree that that may be part of the picture - but there is more to it. In the pre-reformation days, the vast majority of members were less involved and knew even less of what was going on. The Co-ordinating Council and the Board of Directors have a pretty good idea of what the various committees are doing.

No, more significantly, I believe, is this switch to a repertory company. Our rewards now come from work well done, from responsibilities well carried out in whatever task we seek. Now that the tasks are open to all who aspire to them and they all require work - the glamour, the honour, the personal ambition has lost its flavour.

We can see this among the youth of the country too, who are turning more and more to service oriented careers, rather than to the careers that offer material success.

And yet, we need competent leadership, and, in the long run, I believe that we will do better to have a competitive election than a non-competitive one. Otherwise, those who are dissatisfied, rather than airing their views and working for what they believe, will begin to turn away from us, to drift away, to feel they have no place - and the loss will be all of ours.

But my personal feelings in this area run deeper. I believe that psychoanalysis needs to develop spokesmen - statesmen, if you wish - who, rooted in a firm constituency of professional excellence, can speak for psychoanalysis on national, international, and political issues. I don't think this will happen quickly - if it happens at all - but I believe that it is a necessary development. Perhaps because of our general belittlement of politics, we have neglected these areas. We function, discuss, work diligently within our local and national groups. Our national leadership, which has been well supplied from our own ranks, has primarily functioned within psychoanalytic organizations. We need now representatives to the broader group. Psychoanalysts are not as represented on national policy groups as we should be. For example, there are insufficient analysts participating in the research decisions of NIMH. Psychoanalysts do not seem able to





obtain funds for research within our field. I believe that this is because we have not developed leadership that is able to explore and interpret psychoanalysis accurately and usefully in such agencies. The dedication to our patients in our offices, the years of experience that are necessary to our professional maturation, and, our general lack of interest and appreciation of this important political area all contribute to this lack.

The coming year should provide opportunity to further explore the role of psychoanalysis in the community. It is important to explore and expose those areas in which psychoanalysis, with our unique knowledge of mental functioning, can make a contribution to a much wider audience than our relatively few patients. It is difficult for us to function as analysts outside our offices. We must experiment with a wide variety of programs and techniques, in order to gain the experience necessary to convey our points of views to workers in other disciplines. Toward this end, we hope that those of our committees which interface with the community, in a broad sense, will be encouraged to be active.

In closing, I am looking forward to a lively and productive year, and I want to remind you that just as the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, the shortest distance between two minds is a straight line of communication.

AO:tf

