



## Foreword in Green “Interpersonal Psychoanalysis”

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I have known Clara Thompson over a period of many years as a colleague, friend, and administrator. She played an important role in the development of psychoanalysis in the United States because the needs of psychoanalysis and her personal qualities complemented each other in a remarkable way.

Psychoanalysis, which is a theoretical system of dynamic psychology and at the same time a therapy for mental disorders, has had a peculiar` fate. Instead of remaining a scientific discipline and a therapeutic art, it developed a „movement.“ The apparent reasons for this development were:

(1) The need to establish standards of training for those who wanted to become psychoanalysts. This was a particular problem for psychoanalysis, in contrast to medicine for instance, because universities refused to offer such training; thus private training centers had to be established, and they had to develop their own standards and training methods.

(2) The problem became aggravated by the general hostility against psychoanalysis current among most professionals until the late twenties combined with the tendencies of some psychoanalysts to make concessions to the currents of public opinion by softening and emasculating Freud’s theory. For these reasons Freud and his early disciples felt compelled to establish not only strict criteria for training, but also to lay down rules concerning the legitimate application of the terms „psychoanalysis“ and „psychoanalyst.“ In addition, and less explicitly, Freud and some of his pupils had aims which transcended theory and therapy. Freud was propelled by a sense of a mission to give man full knowledge of himself and thus to realize the aims of Enlightenment philosophy in a more profound and penetrating way.<sup>1</sup>

Such motivations for the formation of a psychoanalytic movement are understandable; however, they implied grave dangers. Once one tries to determine what is „legitimate“ in theory, there are individuals and groups who are empowered to lay down the rules. This in turn leads to the formation of a bureaucracy in charge of the development of theory and therapy {VI} which tends to become a power apparatus precisely because

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<sup>1</sup> For the details of this thought cf. Erich Fromm, *Sigmund Freud’s Mission* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).



it controls not only theory and therapy but the professional existence of those who practice psychoanalysis.

This is what happened to the psychoanalytic movement, with the result that a bureaucratic and often fanatical spirit took hold of the leadership of the movement, which tended to exclude psychoanalysts who held divergent or critical opinions. As a result, various groups of analysts declined to accept this situation and formed independent training groups and societies of their own. In this, and in other similar situations, the danger exists that in turn the leaders of such opposition groups develop into bureaucrats and show the same fanaticism which they previously combated. If this danger is to be avoided, very special personalities are needed.

Clara Thompson was one of these rare persons who could take a leading role in the formation of an independent psychoanalytic group and continue to guide it. She was a thoroughly independent person, averse to rules and principles with which she did not agree; at the same time she did not endow her own theoretical principles with a halo that would make her fight all others. But while she was *never a* fanatic or one to intimidate others, it was one of her remarkable characteristics that she could not be intimidated. She acted according to her convictions, and she stood by her friends. No threat or bribery could move her to change her position. This integrity within and loyalty to friends made it possible for others to trust her and rely on her. She was a person with fine appreciation of theory and, at the same time, with excellent common sense. But beyond all this, she was a warm, devoted, and nurturant person. When she began to guide the William Alanson White Institute, she did so with a deep concern for her students and colleagues, with great patience, and with remarkable modesty. All these qualities made it possible for her to lead the institute without ever permitting it to become the center of a „school“ in which one special theory was taught as the right and orthodox one.

This spirit, so characteristic of her, was also characteristic of her great teacher, Sándor Ferenczi. A gifted and brilliant analyst, he, too, was always ready to listen seriously to opinions that differed from his own. Clara Thompson continued his tradition, and it may be said without exaggeration that this objectivity, tolerance, and concern made it possible for the William Alanson White Institute to grow as an independent psychoanalytic institute and to avoid bureaucratic restrictions or fanatical claims that it represented the „one and true“ theory.

This volume will impress the reader with the same qualities in the theoretical writings of Clara Thompson which I have tried to describe as characteristic of her personality.