



in: Clara Thompson, Interpersonelles (4)

Fromm persönlich, sein Buch mit US 4 Jesh-fert.

concerns itself with the way in which each of us comes to be possessed of a self which he esteems and cherishes, shelters from questioning and criticism, and expands by commendation, all without much regard to his objectively observable performances, which include contradictions and gross inconsistencies."⁹

More specifically, in his therapeutic approach as set forth in his *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry*, Sullivan was not particularly interested in the generalizations that a patient might offer about himself as a distinct, separate entity; he preferred to be informed as to what actually happened between the patient and other people: How was this patient actually living his life with others? He found that it was very difficult to get accurate statements on this point. He described these difficulties in terms of the distortions that the experience underwent in the person's perception of it and the distortions and lapses that existed in the communication of what had happened. Sullivan used the term "anxiety" in a very specific way to refer to the chief obstacle or disjunctive factor in human perception and communication. Anxiety, as he defined it, is the signal of a loss of one's self-respect, dignity, sense of value and worth. When this loss threatens, the person feels a tension that interferes with his ability even to notice that this tension is working. This, then, prevents him from recalling and communicating significant data that might otherwise be very useful. It even interferes with his noticing what is happening at the time.

Sullivan also described in this book a series of developmental stages, characterized by specific achievements in human relationships, in understanding, and in communication, that have their beginning in early infancy and progress through childhood and adolescence to adulthood.

Sullivan defined psychiatric cure, a term he rarely used, as an expansion of the self whereby the patient knows himself as the same person that he is with others. This has nothing to do with leading a richer life. That would involve what Sullivan called a social cure, which depends on the resources of the community as well as on the individual. Because of his emphasis on what was actually going on between people, between the significant persons in the patient's life as well as between the patient and the therapist, Sullivan had much more in common with the discipline of social psychology than he had with the traditional neurologically oriented neuropsychiatry.

The new thinking developed by Horney and Fromm during these years markedly resembled Sullivan's approach. Like him, they emphasized the self in the context of specific fields of culture, of specific kinds of human relatedness, and of particular patterns of interpersonal relation-

⁹ Harry Stack Sullivan, "Psychiatry: Introduction to the Study of Interpersonal Relations," *Psychiatry*, I (1938), 123.



ships. Fromm's contributions to Horkheimer's *Studien über Autorität und Familie*¹⁰ won him international esteem on its publication in 1936. In it he elaborated his theory of authority and the family in regard to cultural groups and demonstrated the errors in Freud's assumption of a primal Oedipus complex. His earlier paper, "Die Gesellschaftliche Bedingtheit der Psychoanalytischen Therapie,"¹¹ provided a valuable social appraisal of Freud's psychoanalytic concepts. Horney and later Kardiner, too, acknowledged their debt to Fromm's contributions of this period in their own pioneering works. In 1941 Fromm organized these ideas into a brilliant and profoundly influential book entitled, in the American edition, *Escape from Freedom*.¹²

Born and raised in Germany, Fromm had been an early student of Martin Buber's Hassidism and had later taken his doctorate in social psychology at the University of Heidelberg, where he had studied under Alfred Weber, the brother of Max Weber. Nurtured by the humanistic, socialist thought of Europe of the 1920's, Fromm has always acknowledged his debt to Hegel, Marx, and Max Weber. Like them, he saw the individual person as primarily a product of social history and economic structure. In this his thinking closely parallels that of Sullivan. But where Sullivan wrote as a clinician, interested in treating very sick people and trying to understand the difficulties and obstacles that were encountered in this undertaking, Fromm wrote as a social reformer, calling for social protest and social change.

When William Alanson White died in 1937, Sullivan left New York and returned to Washington to work with the group there. He tried to persuade Clara to return with him, but to his disappointment she was resolved to remain in New York. She had at an earlier time tried to analyze Sullivan but gave up when she found she could not overcome her awesome respect for him. It was not an easy decision for her to remain in New York while he went on to Washington.

By 1938 she was very much involved with her teaching at the New York Institute and with the strong rivalries and tensions that had developed there between two opposing factions—those who adhered to the early rigid formulations of the libido theory and those who accepted the new thinking developed by Karen Horney and Erich Fromm. She was devoted to Fromm, who later psychoanalyzed her, and she greatly admired Karen Horney for her penetrating observations and pithy style. Throughout the controversy, she was on their side.

During the spring of this year a momentous event occurred in her

¹⁰ *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, ed. M. Horkheimer (Paris: Alcan, 1936).

¹¹ *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, IV (1935).

¹² Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941).



personal life. She went one day with a friend to see an exhibit of the works of a new Hungarian artist, Henry Major, who had recently come to this country from Budapest. She fell in love with him and his work, and he fell in love with her. He was married and could not get a divorce. They began an affair that lasted for ten years until his death in 1948. In the summer following their meeting she bought a house in Provincetown, and he came to live with her there. She built a studio for him in the yard and introduced him to all her friends, many of whom came to him for painting lessons. Clara loved him deeply. She never complained about his prior involvement but accepted him as he was. At the age of forty-five she had found her mate, and she was wholly devoted to him.

Early in 1941 the group of analysts at the New York Institute who opposed the new thinking had grown powerful enough to dismiss Karen Horney as a training analyst there. She had previously been censured by not being allowed to teach beginning students. Her entire training function was limited to a seminar for advanced students. Many of the faculty and students were outraged by this blatant violation of academic freedom. Karen Horney resigned, and Clara Thompson and three other faculty members resigned with her in protest against the institute's action. That night the five of them marched jubilantly away from the institute, led by Clara singing one of her favorite hymns, "Go Down, Moses"—a hymn celebrating the liberation of the Jews from the tyranny of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

The following letter, explaining their position, was circulated in May 1941 to every member of the American Psychoanalytic Association:

Dear Colleague:

When five individuals, all members of a professional society, feel impelled, for reasons not of a personal nature, to resign their membership in that society, an explanation to their professional colleagues is an obligation upon them and a matter of fundamental importance to those interested in the profession.

The resignations are a response to a situation which constitutes a crisis in psychoanalytic education. Psychoanalysis is a young science, still in an experimental stage of its development, full of uncertainties, full of problems to which anything approaching final and conclusive answers is still to be sought. As in all sciences, the solutions of these problems are directly dependent upon more voluminous and keener observations, as well as upon further weighing and consideration of observations already made.

Education in any field consists in a passing on from an older to a younger generation of the truth that the older generation be-



lieves it has learned, as well as a bequeathing to the younger generation of the problems left unsolved by their elders. In psychoanalysis as it is today, we cannot afford to subject the younger generation to any dogmatism, we should not mislead it with the illusion of certainty, where none actually exists.

There are two antithetical attitudes toward psychoanalysis today. One of these is based upon the awareness that psychoanalysis is still in an experimental stage of its development. The other attitude regards psychoanalysis as having in many respects passed beyond this stage and holds that training in psychoanalysis should begin with the learning of certain concepts and technics which are, as they sometimes term it, "classical," and which represent psychoanalysis as they conceive it to have been handed down by Freud. No two of these "classicists" have precisely the same notions of what "classical" psychoanalysis is. But they seem to be agreed that something which passes under the name of "classical" psychoanalysis should be first inculcated in the student; and that after this certain "deviating" notions of psychoanalysis may be taught to the student, if he so elects.

The educational program which is based upon the conviction that psychoanalytic therapy—and therefore theory—is still in an experimental stage, and which, for want of a better term, might be called "non-classical" is considerably less crystallized than the "classical" one. Its advocates hold that the student at the beginning of his training in psychoanalysis may choose whether he will first be exposed to "classical" or to "deviating" or "non-classical" concepts. They likewise hold that the student who elects to be personally analyzed by a "non-classicist" should be taught "classical" concepts in the course of his training and that the student who chooses a "classical" type of personal analysis should learn "deviating" notions as a part of his later training.

Thus while the "classicists" are very positive about what the beginning of psychoanalytic training should be and are willing to enforce this view where they have the power to do so—as in the case of the disqualification of Dr. Karen Horney as a training analyst of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute—the "non-classicists," realizing that any crystallization of this nature is in the present circumstances premature, are of the opinion that the decision should in each case be left to the individual student.

There can be no doubt that there is here drawn a real issue in psychoanalytic education: Shall policy in psychoanalytic training be decided upon the basis of the number of votes that can be



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mustered in favor of this or that theory; or shall we frankly admit that it is much too early to attempt a definitive decision of policy? There is no question in the minds of the undersigned that to choose the first of these alternatives will delay rather than accelerate progress, not only in psychoanalytic education but in psychoanalysis itself. Scientific issues cannot be decided by votes or by political power in any form: one would have thought that the experience of Galileo with the Church had determined this truth once and for all.

We have tried for many years now to combat this dogmatism in psychoanalytic education. Our efforts have increasingly met with frustration; the "classicists" within the New York Psychoanalytic Society and its Educational Committee have become more and more strongly entrenched in their dogmatism, and recent developments have convinced us of the impossibility of persuading them to take a more liberal attitude towards this issue.

We have therefore felt it essential for the future of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic education to dissociate ourselves from a professional organization a majority of whose members are under the impression that scientific issues may legitimately be decided through the possession of political power, and to create a new center for psychoanalytic work, devoted to truly liberal and scientific principles, in psychoanalytic training, investigation and discussion. We invite freely all those of our colleagues who are likewise devoted to such principles to join with us in this endeavor.

(signed)

Harmon S. Ephron
Karen Horney

Sarah R. Kelman
Bernard S. Robbins
Clara Thompson

In the months following their departure from the New York Institute this group, under the leadership of Karen Horney, formed a new organization, the American Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis, in which they were joined by a number of other analysts. William Silverberg was elected president and Clara Thompson vice-president. Erich Fromm, who had been helpful in planning its organization, was made an honorary member; he could not be given active membership as he did not have a medical degree. The purpose implied in the name of the new society was clearly stated in its constitution as follows:

The purpose of this Association shall be the study and the advancement of psychoanalytic science, originally developed by Sig-



mund Freud. It shall further be the purpose of this Association to encourage psychoanalytic investigation in accordance with scientific method and to promote the understanding of mental phenomena.

The Association has a twofold function: 1) to foster the training of psychiatrists in psychoanalytic therapy; 2) to disseminate to the community those elements in psychoanalysis which may be useful to it.

At the first scientific meeting of the association on September 24, 1941, its president, Dr. Silverberg, addressed himself tellingly to the subject of the right to dissent:

It is the unfortunate fact that the field of psychoanalysis has not been immune to this conflict, that groups have been found who have not hesitated to use power and force in the attempt to silence dissenters, who have had so little faith in the fundamental worth and dignity of other human beings that they have attempted to deny to their colleagues and fellow-searchers that freedom of thought and communication without which no valid science can exist.

. . . We represent as a group many divergencies, many differences of opinion, since the experience of each of us is bound to differ in one way or another. But we recognize that, no matter how fundamental such differences may be, no matter how wrong we may believe the other's facts or conclusions to be, we must respect him as a worker, so long as we are convinced his purpose is honest and sincere, and must therefore accord to him the same freedom which we expect him to accord to us.

By the fall of 1941 a new training institute, the American Institute of Psychoanalysis, had also been established. For the first year and a half everything went well in the new organization. Then the glow rapidly faded as serious friction developed between Karen Horney and Erich Fromm. Fromm, who had been given the same status at the new institute as Karen Horney and Clara Thompson, was enormously popular with the students as a lecturer and analyst, and it seemed to Karen Horney and others that he was dominating the institute. She and her followers were alarmed at this. Some were further concerned that his lack of formal medical training might prejudice their attempts to affiliate with the New York Medical School and the Flower-Fifth Avenue Hospital. At a meeting of the association held in the spring of 1943, the issue was brought to a vote, and the faction opposed to Fromm won out. Fromm's



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privileges of training the students were rescinded, and his teaching was limited to nontechnical courses. Ostensibly, this seemed very much like the action that had been taken against Karen Horney herself at the New York Institute only a short time before. Clara and her students and associates rallied around Erich Fromm and left the American Institute of Psychoanalysis.¹³

In 1943 the William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation reorganized its Washington School of Psychiatry to include the group that had resigned from the New York Institute. By the fall of that year, under the leadership of Clara Thompson, Erich Fromm, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Harry Stack Sullivan, and Janet and David Rioch, a New York branch of the Washington School had been established with Clara Thompson as its executive director. The curriculum set up for the training of psychoanalysts here, as in the Washington school, integrated psychoanalysis with anthropology, political science, and social psychology. As in the Washington school also, a similarly integrated curriculum was provided for teachers, social workers, ministers, and others who needed the insight and understanding that this kind of training would give them in the performance of their professional functions.

The period that followed was a deeply satisfying one for Clara Thompson both in her personal and in her professional life. She experienced a sense of deep fulfillment in these years—fulfillment in her love of Henry Major, fulfillment in her work as a teacher and healer, and fulfillment in her own vision of herself as one of a dedicated band bringing a kind of intellectual salvation to the “heathen” both within and without the American Psychoanalytic Association. Most of each year was spent in New York. She worked all day, every day of the week, even seeing patients on Sunday mornings, and in the evenings she taught or met to discuss matters with her colleagues. On Sunday afternoons she held open house at her apartment on 83rd Street and relaxed for a few brief hours with devoted friends and colleagues, most of them psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts. The atmosphere of these weekly gatherings was easy and friendly. Most of the guests knew one another, and there was no pressure on anyone to contribute anything or to be entertaining or clever. Clara allowed herself the privilege of being quiet when she felt like it and of saying whatever came to her mind when she chose, and she allowed everyone else the same privilege she gave herself. The

¹³ Janet Rioch, Leopold Rosanes, Ben Weininger, Harry Stack Sullivan, George Goldman, Edward S. Tauber, Meyer Maskin, Marjorie Jarvis, and Ernest Hadley all resigned in protest against this action. Many other members of the association who were in military service and not able to be present at the meeting also joined in this protest.



warmth of her feeling for the group enveloped them, for she was very demonstrative with those of whom she was fond.

As the size of the school increased, the administrative work increased also. Clara, who disliked organizational detail, turned over as much of it as she could to her secretary and to other faculty members. In spite of this, however, her leadership became more and more central and powerful because of her overwhelming commitment, her zeal, her energy, and the time that she gave to it; for this was her life.

By 1945 there was a sizable enrollment, and more organization was required. The issue of lay analysis came up again as the discussion was reopened on the kind of training that should be provided for psychologists. One of her medical colleagues, a training analyst in the New York division of the Washington school, wrote to her with some apprehension, inquiring about a rumor he had heard that the Washington school was going to start training lay analysts. Clara replied as follows:

I think I must have given you the impression that the Washington School was planning to start training lay analysts in a kind of irresponsible way. As far as I know the matter has not gone very far yet. There is some agitation in the Army for some more adequate training of lay therapists. This is the starting point. We have been thinking that some standardization of what might be considered adequate training for a nonmedical therapist might be a way of making some sense out of the present completely irresponsible set-up. We would certainly not start it in a big way and there would be very definite standards for preanalytic training. To answer your first objection, we would certainly insist on working out some way whereby they could get psychiatric experience in hospitals. It is not impossible that such an arrangement with some hospitals could be worked out. We have that in mind. As to the terminology of doctor-patient, etc., well we would probably give it another name. Psychoanalysis, it seems to me, is becoming thought of less and less as therapy since so many patients today are not really sick in any usual sense.

The second point—what effect it will have on the training of medical men—I am sure David Rioch will give plenty of thought to for he, more than any of the rest of us, is interested in establishing the school with good academic standing. Whether other psychoanalytic institutes recognize our work, I think, is of less importance since I think we would consider some of their standards questionable.

I think you are knocking down a straw man in your third point.

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