

CRISIS IN AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYSIS: A CALL TO ACTION

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Introduction

The Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies (CIPS) of the United States wishes to alert its American psychoanalysts to a developing crisis in the United States that threatens the future of psychoanalysis our country. A small group of practitioners, identifying themselves as "psychoanalysts", have mounted a successful effort promote themselves as the representatives of American psychoanalysts to governmental and legislative bodies. This group is actively lobbying to establish a new profession of psychoanalysis, independent of traditional mental health professions. The group is called the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis, or NAAP. NAAP has already achieved its goals in three states, including New York, and is presently working in California. We believe that NAAP's efforts pose a threat to psychoanalysis as we know it.

The National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis was formed in 1972 for the purpose of uniting a wide spectrum of practitioners identifying themselves as "psychoanalysts" in a common effort to establish psychoanalysis as a separate and autonomous profession. Twenty American institutes joined in the founding of NAAP, including institutes with very diverse theoretical commitments (for example, Adlerian, Jungian, and so-called "modern psychoanalytic" schools of thought), and varying ideas about what constitutes psychoanalysis (such as one session per week). Together, the organizers of NAAP developed criteria for the certification of analysts and established the American Board of Examiners in Psychoanalysis (ABEP) to certify practitioners meeting those criteria as "psychoanalysts." None of the founding institutes adhered to the standards of the American Psychoanalytic or International Psychoanalytic Associations, and most were far outside the mainstream of organized American psychoanalysis. The criteria for certification were minimal by IPA standards and NAAP's membership began to grow. Today, NAAP represents over 1,000

members, about 800 of whom are NAAP-certified as psychoanalysts.

Although NAAP is modest in size, it has acquired a rich treasury which enables the organization wield a level of influence that is disproportionate to its numbers. NAAP has secured passage of licensing laws for the regulation of psychoanalysis in three states: Vermont, New Jersey, and, most recently, New York. The new laws establish psychoanalysis as an "entry level" profession, independent of any other mental health profession, licensed by the state, and subject to state regulatory authorities. These laws follow NAAP standards for psychoanalytic training and certification. They establish very minimal educational requirements for attaining a license as a psychoanalyst. The New York State law, for instance, specifies that coursework in a psychoanalytic institute shall be comparable to that required for a master's degree. Moreover, this law requires only fifteen hundred hours of supervised practice (not necessarily in the conduct of psychoanalysis), one hundred and fifty hours of supervision, and three hundred hours of personal analysis. There are no standards regarding the frequency of sessions. Insofar as the new law requires no prior mental health training or experience, these standards define the total clinical training required for practice as a "licensed psychoanalyst."

THE DANGER TO PSYCHOANALYSIS

NAAP's mission is twofold: first, to establish psychoanalysis as a separate and autonomous profession and, second, to unify all the diverse practitioners who identify themselves as "psychoanalysts" under the rubric of one professional organization. Many mainstream psychoanalysts, including many members of the IPS, support these two goals. Unfortunately, however, we find that NAAP is achieving its objectives by radically lowering educational standards and requirements for certification. NAAP standards are so low, in fact, that the New York State law requires that "licensed psychoanalysts" seek medical oversight when treating obsessional illness or other severe disorders.

As a result of the new licensing laws, practitioners certified under NAAP standards will share a professional license with mainstream analysts trained and certified

under IPA or similar standards. How will the public tell us all apart? This confusion of professional identities poses a danger to the public as well as to mainstream psychoanalysts. Prospective patients who are drawn to psychoanalytic treatment by its prestige and scientific achievements, including our growing body of outcome studies, may confuse our capabilities with those of the newly licensed "psychoanalysts." Other prospective patients, who know little about psychoanalysis, will view an "official" state license as an assurance of competence, inspiring a level of trust that may not be warranted. The newly licensed psychoanalysts will surely benefit from the successful practices of traditional analysts, but how will we be affected by their practices? Whatever their impact upon the reputation of psychoanalysis, we will be affected by it unless we differentiate ourselves from those who share our title but not our standards.

Our problem is not unprecedented. In the early years of the last century, the reputation of psychoanalysis was persistently undermined by the activities of charlatans and incompetent practitioners calling themselves "psychoanalysts." Ernest Jones cited an English publishing company marketing a short correspondence course in psychoanalysis, and promising its students a lucrative income. In the 1920's, the activities of "quacks calling themselves psychoanalysts" prompted a New York civic leader to call for the licensing of psychoanalysts. Freud was well aware that the status and prestige earned by psychoanalysts could be exploited by ill-trained practitioners for their own ends. He understood that it was necessary to establish adequate standards for training and practice, and to differentiate trained psychoanalysts from others who merely identify themselves as such. The International Psychoanalytic Association was formed to make such a differentiation possible (see Freud on "Wild Analysis" and the "History of the Psychoanalytic Movement").

PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A PROFESSION

Freud grasped the importance of standards and credentialing as a means of protecting the public as well as the future prospects for psychoanalysis. His common sense understanding is supported by a sociological analysis of the structure and functions of professions in an industrialized society. When any occupational group

develops a specialized technique that is based upon an abstract body of knowledge, it is natural for it to develop the structure of a profession. This process includes the establishment of professional training programs, the creation of professional associations, the promulgation of standards for training and certification, the promotion of recognizable credential, the development of an ethical code along with the means to enforce it, and, often, the pursuit of social protections in the form of a license. These attributes are widely recognized by sociologists as the defining features of a profession.

Professionalization serves both the occupational group as well as the public. The professionalizing group possesses a specialized skill of social value, but this skill is based upon an abstract body of knowledge that is a mystery to the laity. The prospective client cannot measure a practitioner's competence, assess the suitability of a proposed professional service, or even judge the skill with which it has been performed after it has been rendered. As the sociologist T.H. Marshall observed, professions are occupations in which the prevailing business norm of "caveat emptor" ("let the buyer beware") cannot apply.

This vulnerability militates against the needs of both the buyer, who cannot beware, and against the expert, who cannot market his service without the buyer's trust. Both the prospective client as well as the practitioner need a social mechanism that will enable the client to trust the practitioner's claims to competence and good will. The social structure of a profession serves this function by situating the transactions between practitioners and their clients within a wider set of collective arrangements developed between the profession and the society as a whole.

These arrangements form a "corporate bargain" between the occupational group and the society as a whole. The profession establishes high educational standards and admission requirements, exacting standards for practice, and a strict code of professional ethics, and guarantees to police its own membership to ensure that all its members meet the established standards. The profession as a whole certifies its members to the public so that the public can identify them (differentiate them from others) by reference to their professional credentials. The containing community reciprocates by granting the professional a legal monopoly,

usually reinforced by licensing laws, and by affording the profession the right to autonomous, self-regulated practice, free from the interference of lay control. Professions typically protect these special privileges by enforcing adherence to stricter and more rigorous educational and ethical regulations than those required by the wider community.

The establishment and maintenance of this corporate bargain is the essence of professional status. Professional status is never a matter of individual competence or expertise. No matter how exceptional one's expertise or moral integrity, a practitioner is only a professional by virtue of membership in a profession. Professional status is thus fundamentally a collective rather than an individual status and it is inextricably dependent upon the functioning of the profession in society.

THE CONFEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETIES PLANS FOR ACTION

We now face a crisis of great potential consequence. It is important that we unite and forge a strategy to establish a more professional structure to protect both the public and the profession. The Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies has formulated a two-track strategy.

First, we intend to work within our own states to influence the course of legislative and regulatory actions. In California and elsewhere, we must act to promote the enactment of licensing laws that are more responsible than those advocated by NAAP. In New York, we must act to influence the implementation of the new law by securing representation to state regulatory authorities.

Second, we must act to differentiate ourselves from the growing number of practitioners who call themselves "psychoanalysts" and who will soon be licensed as such. We propose to create one or more credentials to establish a differentiated group of psychoanalysts.

The IPA was established to promote such a differentiation. Unfortunately, there is no IPA credential or other designation that is recognizable to the public. The IPS is now working to alert the IPA about our situation and

seeking their active participation in creating a recognizable credential that all IPA psychoanalysts can employ in representing themselves to the public. The IPA has recently generated a credential certifying child and adolescent analysts of the IPA. It is reasonable to assume that similar certification can be provided for all IPA analysts. Such a credential will represent its holders to the public as psychoanalysts who meet IPA standards for training and practice.