

Fredric Perlman represents CIPS at Education conference

CIPS president Fredric Perlman presented the CIPS position on psychoanalytic education at the Future of Psychoanalytic Education conference on December 2, 2006. Participants on the "Roundtable" conference, chaired by Judith Logue, were asked to discuss standards for psychoanalytic education, cooperation between psychoanalytic organizations, and the boundaries of the psychoanalytic community. Dr. Perlman presented the following statement, endorsed by the CIPS Board of Directors:

Psychoanalytic Education: The view from CIPS

By Fredric Perlman

Our view of psychoanalytic education is conditioned by our vision of psychoanalysis as a profession. By profession, I mean an occupational group, performing work of a specialized nature, requiring a high level of expert knowledge that is, because of its legitimate complexity, a mystery to the lay public. The great sociologist T. H. Marshall once described professions as occupations to which the business norm of "caveat emptor" ("let the buyer beware") cannot apply — because the buyer cannot have the knowledge to beware — to judge the professional's knowledge, competence and skill. This is a problem for the consumer, who needs to trust the practitioner to use his services, as well for as the practitioner, who needs the consumer's trust to market his services.

Professions are social institutions formed to address this problem by setting up a social contract between an occupational group as a whole and the wider society. This contract requires the occupation to guarantee the competence of its members by setting up high standards for admission, training, and practice. In return, society grants social status, a protected title, a substantial measure of autonomy, and, ideally, an exclusive jurisdiction in the form of licensing laws.

We want psychoanalysis to be such a profession. Like NAAP, we would like to see training open to a wide spectrum of aspirants. Like the Consortium, we believe that professional education must be subject to standards that best guarantee the competence of its members. The Consortium has collectively negotiated such standards. We support these standards as minimal requirements for membership in the psychoanalytic community. NAAP promotes very different standards and therefore constitutes a different community. We are in a state of conflict. Each of these two communities seeks to establish a different social

contract, and therefore a different type of profession.

To us, the term 'psychoanalysis' has a historic and consensually established meaning, denoting a treatment characterized by depth and intensity, typically conducted at a high frequency of sessions by practitioners whose training includes high frequency personal analysis and control cases. NAAP has challenged this long-established meaning and in so doing, has conflated psychoanalysis with psychotherapy, confusing the public, and complicating our public relations.

If NAAP standards were guidelines for training and licensure in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, we would be allies. If NAAP had adopted Consortium-type standards for psychoanalytic education, we would be allies. But NAAP chose a different path and now we are in a conflictual, rather than a collaborative, relationship. This could have been avoided had NAAP adopted either of these two alternatives. Even now, NAAP can choose one of these alternatives now and the conflict will be over.

We've heard a lot today about freedom and creativity. Everyone in this hall values freedom and creativity. CIPS recognizes all schools of psychoanalytic thought. We actively promote pluralism and freedom by encouraging free and intimate dialogue within our institutes and through our national study groups and conferences.

We maintain, however, that education for a profession differs from education for the arts or for academia. Education for a profession is bound to a social contract. Like democracy, professional education is a marriage of freedom and responsibility, creativity and constraint, electives and imperatives. Passionate espousals of freedom, inclusivity, and egalitarianism without concomitant commitments to educational standards are, however appealing, contrary to the nature of professions. Professions are elite, excluding by definition those who don't meet standards set by the professional community. There is nothing inherently orthodox or antidemocratic about standards, as long as they are democratically established within a collective.

Whose standards shall prevail? In the end, society shall decide which social contract it endorses — through the marketplace and through state legislatures. For our part, we are resolved to protect psychoanalysis from absorption into the universe of psychotherapies by promoting creativity and freedom along with educational standards that are commensurate with our historic function and identity.