



*History of Psychiatry*, 16(1): 000–000 Copyright © 2005 SAGE Publications  
(London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi) www.sagepublications.com  
[200503] DOI: 10.1177/0957154X05046166

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## William Menninger and American psychoanalysis, 1946–48

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*In the aftermath of World War II, a struggle ensued over the direction of American psychoanalysis. Led by William Menninger, who reluctantly assumed the presidency of the American Psychoanalytic Association in 1946, a cohort of American-born psychoanalysts sought to make their profession more responsive to other medical practitioners and the general public. Insisting that divisive theoretical debates should be relegated to the past, these psychoanalysts promoted a medicalized, Americanized and popularized version of psychoanalysis that deliberately blurred the distinction between psychiatry and psychoanalysis. They were opposed by a group of more orthodox psychoanalysts, including many émigrés, who viewed their efforts as undermining psychoanalysis from within.*

**Keywords:** *Cold War; history; mental health; psychiatry; psychoanalysis; William Menninger; World War II*

I often hear that psycho-analysis is very popular in the United States and that it does not come up against the same stubborn resistance there as it does in Europe. My satisfaction over this is, however, clouded by several circumstances. It seems to me that the popularity of the name of psycho-analysis in America signifies neither a friendly attitude to the thing itself nor any specially wide or deep knowledge of it.

Sigmund Freud (1930)

In August 1945 the refugee analyst Otto Fenichel wrote to an Argentinean doctor who planned to visit the USA in order to study its psychoanalytic

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institutes. 'Do not expect to learn too much about how to organize psychoanalytic training,' Fenichel warned. '... It is not easy to explain why, but, in accordance with the developmental trends of psychoanalysis in this country, some of them begin to doubt the most basic principles of psychoanalytic training.'<sup>1</sup>

Although he would not live to witness it, the American Psychoanalytic Association's [APsaA] annual meeting in May 1946 confirmed Fenichel's assessment of American psychoanalysis to an extent that even he might have found surprising. The presidential nominee, William Menninger, delivered a controversial speech in which he recommended that psychoanalytic institutes strive for 'eventual integration' into psychiatric departments in medical centres. More radically still, he urged the Association to abandon the mandate that all aspiring members undergo a personal training analysis. He argued that this requirement – historically the very foundation of psychoanalytic education and certification – led the APsaA 'to arbitrarily exclude a potential group of great value to psychoanalysis.' According to Menninger, a more liberal membership policy would help to transform an inward-looking 'fraternity' into 'the spearhead of a movement' (Menninger, 1946: 413).

Although the APsaA membership ultimately rejected Menninger's proposals, the fact that such a challenge to the psychoanalytic enterprise could have been waged from within its official edifice is a telling indication of the profession's confused and fragmented state. Menninger's recommendations not only sought to overturn time-honoured psychoanalytic traditions, but also threatened to undermine the very basis of the profession's identity. Rather than supporting institutions and practices designed to demarcate a unique province of psychoanalytic authority, the future president of the APsaA in essence championed the dissolution of psychoanalysis as an autonomous profession.

How had such a situation come to pass? This paper seeks to illuminate the curious development of American psychoanalysis in the immediate postwar years, a period of sustained professional growth and unprecedented popularization.<sup>2</sup> Transformed from its prewar status as a small and marginalized specialty, psychoanalysis in the postwar era became the dominant paradigm in American psychiatry and a veritable cultural phenomenon (Burnham, 1978; Buhle, 1998; Hale, 1995; Michel, 1983; Zaretsky, 2004).<sup>3</sup> This psychoanalytic 'boom', I hope to demonstrate, can best be understood in terms of a complicated interplay between professional developments (in both psychiatry and psychoanalysis) and the emergent Cold War culture (Turkle, 1992).<sup>4</sup> Led by William Menninger, a particular contingent of the APsaA eagerly welcomed the postwar demand for psychological experts who could minister to societal as well as individual ills.<sup>5</sup> Yet those who hoped to transform psychoanalysis into a social tool had to contend with a history that placed it squarely outside the mainstream. Its European and Jewish origins, its past association with cultural radicalism, its ambiguous status within medicine, its

tendency to breed dissent within its own ranks – all these factors posed obstacles in the quest for an expanded psychoanalytic realm.

In response, Menninger and his allies launched a campaign to Americanize, medicalize and popularize their profession.<sup>6</sup> They tried to redirect the insular psychoanalytic community away from its theoretical concerns and intensive focus on the individual unconscious by advocating assimilation with psychiatry and stressing practical applications. To a large extent, the rapid growth and increasing prestige of psychoanalysis in postwar America can be attributed to their efforts. Yet in the process – as Fenichel's lament suggests – any shared conception of the term 'psychoanalysis' was lost.

### **The quest for mental health in the nuclear age**

In 1951 the American Psychiatric Association released a statement during Mental Health Week declaring,

The emotional health of our citizens and leaders is our country's most critical natural resource ... A politically mature national policy and program, in a democratic nation, rests upon the personal maturity of its citizens and of their political representatives.<sup>7</sup>

In the aftermath of World War II, commentators routinely linked the issues of mental health and democratic viability, and mental illness emerged as a major preoccupation, even something of a cause célèbre. Journalists, prominent philanthropists, Hollywood producers, legislators and professional experts all joined forces to generate a popular movement for mental health. Characterizing mental illness as 'public enemy no. 1', they inveighed against conditions in state mental hospitals and decried a dearth of trained personnel to meet the nation's mental health care needs (Palmer, 1945; Whitman, 1948; Younger, 1949). In 1946 Congress responded by passing the National Mental Health Act, which for the first time provided federal monies to support psychiatric research and training (Brand, 1965).

The sense of urgency which informed these developments stemmed from a widely held conviction that mental health constituted a critical – and critically endangered – national resource. In large measure, this conviction arose from the experiences of World War II, when the US Selective Service rejected a staggering number of men (1,100,000) on psychological and neurological grounds. Yet despite this extensive screening, during the war nearly 40 per cent of all medical discharges were for neuropsychiatric reasons (Herman, 1995).<sup>8</sup> Frequently reiterated in the popular press, these alarming statistics created an image of a weak and emasculated citizenry, psychologically unfit to defend the nation (Furnas, 1945; Hersey, 1945; Lynch, 1945).

If mental illness made America vulnerable to external enemies, it also threatened to erode the nation's democratic order from within. Beginning in

the 1930s, a host of experts and popular commentators advocated psychological insight as a means of warding off the dangerous appeal of fascism and communism. These destructive mass movements, they argued, attained power by manipulating the insecurities and unconscious desires of the populace. Because mental instability weakened an individual's resistance to demagoguery and group identification, a society composed of unstable individuals was veering toward totalitarianism. According to this logic, psychological experts had a critical role to play in sustaining democracy. In 1946 the political scientist Harold Lasswell went so far as to assert that psychoanalysts possessed 'a refined instrument for answering the question of who can be trusted with power'. He proposed that labour leaders, business executives and public officials all be subjected to psychoanalytical testing.<sup>9</sup>

The tendency to view mental health as a national resource created a climate favourable to the expansion of psychiatric authority. To a remarkable extent, psychiatrists succeeded in capitalizing on their wartime gains and consolidating their newly acquired prestige in the postwar era. In May 1948 William Menninger, who had headed the Neuropsychiatry Division of the Surgeon General's Office during World War II, even managed to secure a meeting with President Harry Truman. During their discussion, Menninger urged Truman to attend to 'the problem of mental health' in his campaign speeches. He also asked the President to send 'a message of greeting' to the upcoming annual meetings of the American Psychiatric Association [APA] and the APsaA.<sup>10</sup> Truman assented and approved the following statement:

Never have we had a more pressing need for experts in human engineering. The greatest prerequisite for peace, which is uppermost in the minds and hearts of all of us, must be sanity – sanity in its broadest sense, which permits clear thinking on the part of all citizens. We must continue to look to the experts in the field of psychiatry and other mental sciences for guidance in the evaluation of our mental health resources.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the psychiatrists and analysts who attended the 1948 meetings received a presidential validation of their professional importance. 'It made a very deep impression on everyone that you had such interest as to so manifest it', Menninger wrote to Truman.<sup>12</sup> This general context – in which psychoanalysts were encouraged to view their role more broadly, as helping to ensure a peaceful and democratic order – set the stage for Menninger's tenure as APsaA president.

### **William Menninger's struggle to reform psychoanalysis**

When William Menninger was selected by the APsaA Nominating Committee to become the Association's next president, his initial impulse was to decline the nomination. He drafted a speech to be delivered at the May 1946 meeting in Chicago in which he explained his unwillingness to assume the

presidency. Noting that in past years he had maintained 'little contact with the Association's organization and affairs', he offered the following critical appraisal:

My impressions of the Association over the last ten years – and they are held by many of us outside the inner circle – are those of discord, disharmony, sectional squabbles and professional disagreements, in which, perhaps wrongly, I wished to play no part. Many of you must know as well as I that this is our reputation among many of our psychiatric confreres.<sup>13</sup>

Menninger's reluctance to identify with organized psychoanalysis dated back to his psychiatric training in the late 1920s. In fact, it seems doubtful that he would have undergone analytic training at all were it not for heavy-handed pressure from his older brother, Karl Menninger (Carney, 1993; Friedman, 1990).<sup>14</sup> In 1934, after much hesitation, he entered a didactic analysis with Franz Alexander, a Hungarian émigré who had recently founded the Chicago Institute. Yet Menninger continued to feel estranged from the psychoanalytic community. In 1939 he wrote to Karl:

I don't know any of any medical group any place that has as many 'queer birds,' and eccentric individuals in it as the psychoanalytic group. The fact that this has been augmented now by a lot of emigrants, only adds to the bizarre nature of this whole group. For that reason, I don't feel any great urgency to identify myself too closely with them. I would much rather be identified strongly with the American Psychiatric or the American College of Physicians.<sup>15</sup>

That one who felt so alienated from the APsaA in 1939 could become its president a mere seven years later suggests how much World War II had transformed the psychoanalytic profession (Hale, 1995: ch. 11).<sup>16</sup> Still, Menninger continued to view the APsaA as a myopic organization dominated by divisive characters. When he finally relented to pressure from colleagues and accepted the nomination, he did so with the intention of reforming the Association to make it better serve his primary mission of promoting a socially-oriented and psychodynamic psychiatry.<sup>17</sup> Given his pragmatic bent and recent military experiences, Menninger was perhaps uniquely well-positioned to attempt, as his colleague Bertram Lewis put it, to 'extravert the movement, make it a social force'.<sup>18</sup>

In his acceptance speech – a line-edited version of his earlier draft, declining the nomination – Menninger outlined his vision for the APsaA. Drawing on the credibility that he had amassed at the Surgeon General's Office, he attempted to extend the wartime sense of mission into the postwar era. He altered the above-cited passage to read:

My impressions of the Association over the last ten years – and they are held by many of us outside the inner circle – is that there has been too

much discord about which our critics are delighted to capitalize. One of our first aims must be to develop a uniform front, a spirit of unity towards the enormous jobs to be done, that must eclipse personal differences and sectional disagreements. (Menninger, 1946: 413)

As part of his mission to build a broad new consensus within the APsaA, Menninger appealed to the organization's 'rank and file'. He dispatched a letter to all Association members in which he solicited recommendations regarding the APsaA's future development. At least 71 psychoanalysts responded. By highlighting points of controversy within the APsaA, these letters illuminate how the agenda to Americanize, medicalize and popularize psychoanalysis came to be articulated and resisted within the profession.

The letters reveal the contours of two primary factions, which I will call 'loyalist' and 'assimilationist', vying for power within the APsaA. The loyalist camp included most of the European refugees who responded to Menninger's appeal, as well as a cohort of American-born analysts based primarily in Boston and New York.<sup>19</sup> These analysts denounced the increasing diffuseness of psychoanalysis that Menninger unhesitatingly promoted. Rather, they insisted on maintaining an identity distinct from psychiatry, expressed wariness of efforts to popularize psychoanalytic concepts, and struggled to sustain a sense of loyalty to the Freudian canon and the memory of Freud himself.

The majority of the letters, however, were written by American-born analysts who, to varying degrees, identified with Menninger's cause. The assimilationists constituted a relatively young and homogenous set; many were Protestants from the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic born around or after the turn-of-the century. They had typically trained at psychoanalytic institutes in the USA and tended to be active within the APA as well as the APsaA. Like Menninger, most had taken part in the psychiatric war effort. All these factors helped to shape the assimilationists' stance toward psychoanalysis and their ideas about its potential contributions. Their social backgrounds and training had not equipped them to engage easily with European culture and theory. Moreover, their participation in World War II, which many would later recall as the high point of their careers, led them to conceptualize psychoanalysis in ways that departed dramatically from analytic tradition. First, they hoped to mute the impact of foreign ideas and characteristics within the APsaA. Second, they strove to integrate psychoanalysis into psychiatry and medicine more generally. And finally, they energetically promoted their Americanized and medicalized version of psychoanalysis within the culture at large.

Like Menninger himself, many of his American supporters were unabashedly chauvinistic and impatient with their European colleagues. Such feelings were manifested in antagonism toward the refugees' work and especially their manner of presentation at national meetings. Henry Brosin, who had worked with Menninger in the Surgeon General's Office during the war, argued that,

‘Authors should finish papers within the allotted time. If possible, they should read or speak intelligibly. . . . Philosophic flights and reminiscences of other days should be carefully rationed and kept in their place on the program.’<sup>20</sup> A young analyst from Baltimore, J. G. N. Cushing, insisted that the difficulty of understanding European-born speakers constituted ‘the greatest fault’ of the annual meeting. ‘I know that the refugee doctors and our imports from abroad are brilliant and clever, but I do think that someone who speaks well should read their papers for them if they are incapable of reading them.’<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the Chicago analyst Jules Masserman<sup>22</sup> outlined the following recommendations for improving the annual conventions:

- a. Eliminate the tedious, hour-long ‘metapsychological’ dissertations, originally read in German or Hungarian by the same speakers twenty years ago, and now translated and presented under a new title for our delectation.
- b. Substitute brief, pointed, practical papers with enough meat to sink teeth into – or at least enough substance to weigh.
- c. Select discussants who are objective, informed, forthright – and frank. Many of us who at least like to know exactly what is being discussed are a little bewildered by polite agreements on wordy misunderstandings and heated polemics over the inconsequential.

Such remarks suggest that American critics associated refugee analysts with useless and irritating forays into psychoanalytic theory. Indeed, the assimilationists often merged their literal inability to understand the Europeans’ presentations – which no doubt were laced with foreign phrases – with their difficulty in understanding the theoretical arguments being advanced. Their impatience with foreign languages, in other words, was inseparable from their impatience with theory itself. To counter this image of the long-winded and abstruse foreigner, they advocated an alternative ideal: the plain-speaking, practical, all-American psychoanalyst.

This antagonism toward the European origins of psychoanalysis also encompassed a generational conflict within the analytic community. To the young assimilationists, the Association’s senior leadership often appeared preoccupied with petty squabbles and hopelessly out of touch. As Cushing remarked, ‘The youngsters in the group, as myself, would appreciate it greatly if our elders would come to some accord and practice some of the tolerance which we all so ably preach.’<sup>23</sup> Robert Knight, who had recently served as chief of staff at the Menninger Clinic, criticized the previous year’s APsaA conference in New York as ‘designed to kill off further attendance at analytic meetings by any but the neophytes who want to learn everything they can and still believe that the older analysts have something to tell them.’<sup>24</sup> In a similar vein, Masserman argued that the Association should

Circumvent the traditional enmities and inertias of the old guard –  
blessed be their names – by appointing to the Committees on Education,

Program, Public Relations, etc. younger men and women with broader training and greater capacities for tolerance, cooperation and effective action.<sup>25</sup>

In criticizing older, European-born analysts, the assimilationists mobilized longstanding cultural stereotypes that resonated powerfully in the new postwar context. Their characterizations evoked images of a decrepit European civilization enfeebled by vicious infighting. Just as Americans had intervened in European political affairs, so these young American analysts perceived themselves as restoring order to the world of organized psychoanalysis. Roy Grinker of the Chicago Institute, for example, expressed disdain for the analytic scene in New York, which boasted the highest concentration of refugee analysts and psychoanalytic pioneers:

Our society is tainted by so much politics that the scientific aspects seem lost. There is too much discussion and intrigue regarding means of protecting vested interests. I believe that the national organization should step into any or all of the psychoanalytic non-scientific quarrels, especially those in New York. As a matter of fact, I think the American should be de-New Yorkated.<sup>26</sup>

Assimilationists like Grinker believed they could avoid the conflicts that had plagued psychoanalysis in the past by remaining strictly 'scientific'. They repeatedly contrasted a positive psychoanalytic future, characterized by unity and scientific progress, with an unhappy psychoanalytic past, marred by divisive, ideological squabbles. 'It would be nice if some of the wrangling about the pros and cons of Freud were to cease,' wrote Grace Baker of Baltimore 'and those who still seem so zealously pre-occupied with such matters could use their energies toward the further development of psychiatry and psycholanalysis.'<sup>27</sup> Marylander Edith Weigert argued that the 'scientific level' of psychoanalytic meetings would continue to suffer 'as long as members feel they cannot reveal their views in papers and discussions, because they are not sufficiently "orthodox" and might lead to emotional clashes with representatives of a Freudian "Orthodoxie".' She advocated 'a broadminded policy which might overcome the unscientific spirit of exclusive intolerance.'<sup>28</sup> Masserman ended his missive by noting that the APsaA might benefit from a 'panel of psychoanalyzed angels to tell us why we – of all people – should indulge in so many petty squabbles and so much organizational and scientific obstructionism.'<sup>29</sup> These remarks reflect not only the frustration that members felt in regard to the schisms and infighting that had plagued psychoanalytic institutes, but also the general postwar aversion to ideological conflict and predilection for consensus building. To promote an image of themselves as scientific medical experts, assimilationists eagerly sought alliances with medical specialists whose scientific credentials were less subject to doubt.<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Appel of the Pennsylvania Institute urged the APsaA to develop a curriculum for teaching analysis in medical schools; he



also criticized presentations at annual meetings for focusing on 'unusual cases or unusual conditions ... not enough related to basic problems in psychiatry.'<sup>31</sup> Bernard Kamm, a former Menninger employee, suggested 'strengthening our supporting function not only of the nearest borderline field, psychiatry, but also of internal medicine.'<sup>32</sup> And Leo Bartemeier, a close friend of Menninger's based in Detroit, proposed that psychoanalytic societies should invite local psychiatrists to play an active role in their meetings.<sup>33</sup>

At base, the notion that psychoanalysts ought to ally themselves with other medical specialties begged a fundamental question: did psychoanalysis possess a unique body of knowledge – the mastery of which required lengthy and specialized training – that justified its claims to exclusion and autonomy? As previously noted, Menninger's answer to this question would seem to have been 'no'. In fact, he addressed the issue quite directly in a sentence that he deleted from the revised version of his presidential address: 'We have no God-given secrets that require an initiation ceremonial of every potentially interested and contributing prospect to the field.'<sup>34</sup> A few other APsaA members seemed to concur. The New York analyst Harry Murray, for example, envisioned a future in which psychoanalysis would be entirely integrated into related disciplines. 'There is still a function for the Psychoanalytic Association for encouraging studies and reflections along the line inaugurated by Freud,' he conceded, 'but psychoanalysis is not a separate science and eventually its theories and practices should become a part of psychology and psychiatry.'<sup>35</sup>

Those who criticized psychoanalysis' distant relationship to other medical specialties also raised questions about the proper role of the psychoanalyst within society at large. Traditionally, a psychoanalyst's professional duties involved intensive treatment of a small number of patients and teaching in a psychoanalytic institute. In the context of the perceived mental health crisis, however, assimilationists viewed this limited focus as increasingly indefensible. As Menninger (1946: 414) argued in his acceptance speech:

I am convinced that the psychoanalytically oriented psychiatrist and not the psychoanalyst per se represents the greatest hope in providing for [present] needs. ... I wish to protest at this time which seems a near crisis to me, against the direction of some, if not much, of our best analytic teaching power into the intensive training analysis of a handful of candidates when those same brains could give a helpful working dynamic orientation to ten times the number of men. ... Without doubt, I feel that for the next two or three years of paramount importance is the providing of the largest number possible of dynamically oriented psychiatrists.

Thus, for Menninger, a merger with psychiatry was not only a means of attaining greater scientific credibility, but also the most conscionable use of psychoanalytic expertise in the context of a mental health care crisis.

Indeed, even if they had trouble defining psychoanalysis, assimilationists were nonetheless convinced that they possessed the knowledge and capacity to make a profound social contribution. In their letters, they tended to be less concerned with articulating the substance of this contribution than with affirming its importance. For example, O. Spurgeon English, a leading figure in psychosomatic medicine, argued that the threat of totalitarianism required psychoanalysts to intervene as parental experts, protecting and educating a child-like citizenry:

It strikes me that if Hitler and Stalin can dictate values, to millions of people, that we need not worry so much about becoming dogmatic and dictatorial. I think there is after all the function of teaching. ... A good parent does not stand by and passively let the children burn the house down or remain indefinitely away from school. Consequently, I feel that if we collectively know as much about human behavior as we think we do, then our next step should be to do something about giving it wider dissemination.<sup>36</sup>

The New York psychoanalyst Ralph M. Crowley voiced similar sentiments; he feared that, by failing to engage in the sort of proselytizing that English advocated, the APsaA had rendered itself irrelevant. 'My feeling', he wrote, 'is that the association is not influential and is tending to lose ground year by year, as it fails to keep up with times.'<sup>37</sup>

The ideal of the analyst as social practitioner ultimately reinforced the assimilationists' emphasis on Americanization and medicalization. For the all-American, scientific analyst, they believed, stood a far better chance of gaining a public hearing than his European-born counterpart. Thus, the simultaneous attempts to Americanize, medicalize and popularize represented mutually reinforcing strands of a single agenda. This is apparent in a letter by Hugh Galbraith of Tulsa, Oklahoma, which draws together all three of these strains:

It seems to me that your oft expressed admonition for psychoanalysts to get out of their cloister has special relevance now. If we grant the truth of the politicians' and the political writers' assertions that the world is going to hell fast, and that of some psychoanalysts that psychoanalysis has some of the answers to social and political problems, should not more emphasis be placed in studies and writings on these answers rather than on relatively petty clinical and theoretical problems? Shouldn't we question the practice of most psychoanalysts of sitting in their offices all day making a lot of money out of a few patients as being insufficient excuse for their existence in a collapsing social order? (Do I sound like a Commie? I hope not!) Shouldn't we get out of our chairs and do more public speaking, more serving on committees of functioning organizations and seek to do more teaching medical schools, and perhaps, psychology departments of Universities, as the opportunities present themselves?

... Shouldn't more attention be paid to an analyst's capacity for being effective in public life, and thereby demonstrate his understanding of life as it is lived and what needs to be done to improve our social order, and less to his ability to write brilliant papers, in considering the qualifications of training analysts?<sup>38</sup>

In these passages, Galbraith articulated the essential components of the Menninger creed. First, he argued that analysts needed to respond to the crises of their times by renouncing self-imposed isolation in favour of an interventionist stance. This would in turn require a shift from theorizing about the individual unconscious to applying psychoanalytic findings on a social scale, for in the current sociopolitical context, theoretical and even clinical issues appeared 'relatively petty'. Yet Galbraith perceived no conflict between this new social role and an expanded place for analysts within medicine. On the contrary, the fact that he advanced these prescriptions within a single sentence indicates that he envisioned popularization and medicalization as proceeding hand-in-hand. Like Menninger, Galbraith believed that psychoanalysts – especially training analysts – should be 'effective' men, capable of serving as public ambassadors for the profession. In his conception of the ideal analyst, intelligence and erudition were secondary to human relations skills.

Not surprisingly, the assimilationists' challenge to traditional psychoanalysis elicited anger and dismay from their loyalist opponents. In many ways, the loyalist response harked back to Freud's own indignant attacks on those who deviated from his cause. Yet the movement led by Menninger differed markedly from earlier cases of dissent within psychoanalytic ranks, in part because the American reformers waged their campaign from within an official psychoanalytic organization. Moreover, what is interesting about Menninger's movement, and what helps to account for the difficulty his opponents faced in countering it, is that it was never articulated as a revision of Freudian concepts or, indeed, as a theoretical position at all. On the contrary, Menninger and his allies refused to engage in what they viewed as divisive ideological battles. They simply asserted that they were promoting psychoanalysis, even as they appeared willing to undermine its organizational structure and to evade troublesome questions about its intellectual basis. For theoretically-oriented psychoanalysts like the émigré David Rapaport,<sup>39</sup> the result was maddening. 'We are living amidst a crew of pragmatic simplifiers,' he lamented, 'and it is not simple to point out why we find the job more complicated than they seem to consider it' (Hale, 1993: 242).

### **The loyalist response**

Although few in number, the letters William Menninger received from the loyalist analysts conveyed the deep disaffection they felt from the assimilationist agenda. These psychoanalysts generally did not partake in the enthusiasm

that fuelled the popular mental health movement; in fact, their letters rarely alluded to the national or international political scene. Whereas assimilationists used expansive language to promote their wide-ranging agenda, loyalists tended to be defensive in both their tone and goals.

The loyalists' insistence on maintaining psychoanalytic autonomy registered the pressure towards diffusion being exerted upon the profession. Many felt compelled to defend their decision to focus strictly on psychoanalytic affairs. The Bostonian Ives Hendrick, one of the few Americans to be analysed by Freud (and to study at the Berlin Institute in the 1920s), feared that psychoanalysis was becoming a:

handmaiden to psychiatry. ... All improvement in the American Psychoanalytic organization should begin with the basic concept that its functions are primarily psychoanalytic ... It is uniquely the organization for maintenance of standards of analytic specialization by its acceptance of members, for scientific discussion between analysts, and for supervision of professional standards of training. These in themselves involve big jobs and will not be well done if it should extend its functions in ways which can be better done and are being done by other organizations.<sup>39</sup>

Hendrick's Boston colleague Joseph Michaels agreed. While he had 'no objection to the utilization of psychoanalytic concepts' by other disciplines, he believed that 'every effort' should be made:

to maintain and strengthen psychoanalysis as an independent science. ... To the extent that we nurture and stimulate the science of psychoanalysis so that it can thrive and develop in its own independent way, to that degree will its contributions to other field increase.<sup>40</sup>

In keeping with these sentiments, the Boston Psychoanalytic Society as a whole unanimously endorsed a resolution opposing Menninger's proposal to open up APsaA membership to those who had not undergone a training analysis.<sup>41</sup>

Loyalists criticized the blurring of boundaries between psychiatry and psychoanalysis in other ways as well. Judith Silberpfennig Kestenberg, who perceived a 'growing tendency towards shallowness and standardization' in American psychoanalysis, wanted annual APsaA meetings to be less dominated by the APA (the annual conventions of the two organizations were held coterminously).<sup>42</sup> Edward Hitschmann, a refugee based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, stated simply, 'I feel it as a great misfortune of Psychoanalysis that it seems here and now to be merged in Psychiatry'. According to Hitschmann, psychoanalytic training in the USA had suffered as the 'imperfect knowledge of the "dynamically oriented"' gained ascendancy. 'The excellent principal "Youth at the front" is not always valid for Education', he asserted.<sup>43</sup>

Many of those who criticized the increasing fusion with psychiatry also regretted the wider cultural dissemination of psychoanalysis. Kestenberg, for

one, denounced the 'disastrous influence of current fiction, movies and magazine articles.'<sup>44</sup> Others expressed scepticism regarding the potential for social applications of psychoanalysis. Maxwell Gitelson of the Chicago Institute rejected the assimilationists' assertion that analysts could assume social and political roles without sacrificing their professional and intellectual credibility. The APsaA should remain strictly scientific, he argued, with its focus limited to advancing psychoanalytic knowledge and maintaining high training standards. 'It should have no axes to grind', he wrote, 'It should not be a propaganda organization of any kind.'<sup>45</sup>

In voicing their resistance to cultural and medical appropriations of psychoanalysis, loyalists expressed their allegiance to Freud and the movement he had founded. The refugees in particular repeatedly referred to the heritage of psychoanalysis as a means of criticizing contemporary trends. For them, the value of the psychoanalytic enterprise resided in its founding texts and unique historical trajectory: a repudiation of this past constituted a repudiation of psychoanalysis itself. This comes through clearly in the letters of two refugee analysts, Elisabeth Geleerd and Richard Sterba. In contrast to many of the European analysts who had immediately settled in New York, Geleerd and Sterba had worked closely with some of their assimilationist colleagues in more provincial settings. Geleerd had found employment at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, during the early 1940s. Sterba and his wife, the psychoanalyst Edith Sterba, had settled outside Detroit, where Leo Bartemeier, a leading assimilationist, dominated the local psychoanalytic scene. Perhaps because of these experiences, both individuals expressed a keen understanding of the conflict dominating the APsaA. In attempting to articulate her frustration, Geleerd appealed to history:

This organization came into being as a group of people who held Freud's fundamental principles to be important scientific truths, which not only pervade their scientific work but all their ideas and conceptions about human relations. Originally scientists who believed these truths 'to be self-evident' organized all over the western and part of the eastern world, worlds which were hostile to their ideas. At present, certainly in the U.S., scientific and public opinion have changed; in some cases, in fact completely reversing itself. Unfortunately, in this process several analysts have watered down Freud's fundamental concepts considerably, even to the point where they are completely unrecognizable and almost hostile toward Freud's ideas. One hears remarks from analysts to the effect that they do not believe they should be orthodox, or that Freud's ideas are old-fashioned and that now they have an improved 'modern' conception of analysis. Such opinions are sometimes expressed by analysts of reputation, some of whom are holding office in local societies, and in the American Psychoanalytic Association. I have been to meetings for general psychiatrists where some analysts have expressed opinions more hostile to analysis than were professed by the non-analytic psychiatrists present.<sup>46</sup>

In a similar vein, Sterba complained:

I consider it a sign of severe deterioration of the spirit of our organization that we eliminated the name Sigmund Freud from our constitution. It indicates that many of our members do not want to practice and teach psychoanalysis as it was founded and understood by Freud. It is a frustrating and useless task to keep them together for constructive purposes when they are striving apart. The papers at the 1946 meeting of the Association showed that there is a hesitation to present true analytic papers before a group in which many members have openly expressed their hostilities against classical psychoanalysis in talks and writings. I do not feel that our association can produce valuable contributions *as an association* with its present structure.<sup>47</sup>

In their letters, both Geleerd and Sterba mourned the loss of a unified psychoanalytic movement devoted to developing and promoting Freud's original discoveries. The narrative they sketched was one in which a unified and coherent European movement gave way in the USA to confusion, fragmentation and a repression of true psychoanalytic endeavours. For both analysts, the growing influence of the assimilationists raised doubts as to whether the APsaA represented psychoanalysis at all.

#### **William Menninger's swan song**

'I can't let the chance go by to report back to the total membership what a lot of our members our thinking', William Menninger wrote to the analyst Harry Weinstock in November 1947, soon after he began receiving what he called 'some terribly stimulating letters from our members'.<sup>48</sup> In May 1948 he seized the opportunity to share selected responses when he delivered his 'swan-song' address, 'A psychiatric examination of the American Psychoanalytic Association'. The speech was never published; as he later explained, 'I just felt personally that it would be too valuable a bit of ammunition for the enemies of analysis to ever put into print and so I never turned it loose.'<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Menninger's rhetorical approach, in which he assumed the voice of a psychiatrist presenting a case history of the APsaA, seemed designed to be inflammatory. 'It might have been – and still may be – wiser to ask some consulting psychiatrist totally outside our organization to make such an examination', he caustically remarked at the outset of his talk. 'My impression, however, is that we would likely rationalize his judgments on the basis that he had not been analyzed.'<sup>50</sup>

Menninger 'diagnosed' the APsaA as 'A narcissistic character, manifest by historical evidence of much internal conflict, numerous defense against long-standing rejection, and current heroic efforts to readjust its very limited resources to unlimited external demands.'<sup>51</sup> In outlining a course of 'treatment', he reiterated many of the arguments that he had earlier advanced; he urged the APsaA to foster closer ties with medicine and to open up membership to

those who had not been formally analysed. In his final recommendation, Menninger exhorted psychoanalysts to 'reexamine the investment of their talent and time'. Characteristically, he framed the issue in moral terms, arguing that the sociopolitical situation demanded a greater diffusion of psychoanalysts' energies:

In an unhappy and unsettled world-wide social situation, in the face of the need of psychiatric services and the training demands, can any member possibly justify in any conceivable way, the devotion of his entire ability to the treatment of eight or ten patients a year? Insofar as members of this association permit themselves such a misuse of their talents or the commercialization of their science, they threaten all psychoanalysis.

According to Menninger, the APsaA would thrive in the future only if individual members 'recognize that they are physicians, that they are psychiatrists, and that in both of these roles they have obligations greater than those of psychoanalysts.'<sup>52</sup>

In both his speech and in a subsequent memorandum<sup>53</sup> that codified his recommendations in a less rhetorically charged manner, Menninger referred to the American Psychiatric Association as the 'parent organization' to the APsaA – a characterization that implicitly denied the European, and indeed even the specifically psychoanalytic, origins of the APsaA. Not surprisingly, a number of psychoanalysts took issue with his description. 'I do not believe that this is justified,' Therese Benedek wrote, 'and many of the psychoanalysts would not accept that filial relationship.'<sup>54</sup> 'You speak of the A.P.A. as a parent organization, which implies that we should fit in as one of the many subordinates', complained the Baltimore analyst A. Russell Anderson.<sup>55</sup> 'Most of us do think of ourselves as psychiatrists as well as analysts . . .,' Ives Hendrick noted, 'but we do not think of our Association as essentially a subsidiary of the American Psychiatric.'<sup>56</sup>

Nor did Menninger's assertion that psychiatry trumped psychoanalysis as the more legitimate and socially responsible profession go unanswered. Insisting that psychoanalysis had its own unique mission, distinct from psychiatry, a number of psychoanalysts defended the practice of working intensively with a small number of patients as the only trustworthy means of exploring the unconscious mind. Here again, Hendrick was perhaps Menninger's most articulate critic. 'We are far from knowing all we can about the unconscious yet, and psychoanalysis has this specificity of function', he wrote. 'My reaction is that you treat the Psychoanalytic Association with the same philosophy you do psychiatry in general, and believe analysts will be better citizens if they renounce their special field.'<sup>57</sup> Likewise, Richard Sterba argued that Menninger's proposal to bridge the gap between psychiatry and psychoanalysis could only harm the latter since most psychiatrists lacked a true understanding of psychoanalysis, 'even if they use the terms, as they increasingly do'. Echoing Freud himself, Sterba continued, 'I think we

should constantly strive to make psychiatrists aware of the fact that having the name does not mean having the thing, and that an analyst differs widely in his understanding from a non-analyzed psychoanalytically untrained psychiatrist.<sup>58</sup>

In fact, one did not have to be a confirmed loyalist to be troubled by the implications of Menninger's proposals. Even the above-mentioned Cushing (who complained about the difficulty of understanding émigré and refugee analysts) balked at his assault on the APsaA's professional autonomy. Defending the organization's right to control its membership, Cushing argued that psychoanalysts did in fact possess a unique body of knowledge that distinguished them from other specialists, including psychiatrists:

I feel that we have set ourselves up in the Psychoanalytic Society as a group of people who are using a particular technique or discipline, if you will, in our way of handling patients. While we are willing to transmit as much of our knowledge as possible to others, we have set the Society up as practically a board of its own, the admission to which is on the basis of a very specialized knowledge. It would be ridiculous to think of my joining a group such as the Atomic Research Club. However, I have an interest in that field but to admit me to such a body would mean that I would have to have a very specialized knowledge and I think the same thing applies to the American Psychoanalytic Society.<sup>59</sup>

Yet while he attempted to uphold psychoanalytic prerogatives, the tepid quality of Cushing's defence is revealing. The difficulty that he experienced defining psychoanalysis – 'a particular technique or discipline, if you will, in our way of handling patients' – suggests the quandary that the assimilationists faced during a period of rapid psychiatric expansion and popularization. As they confronted the demands of the era, so clearly embodied and articulated for a brief time by the APsaA's own president, psychoanalysts struggled to articulate the basis of their authority in a clear and convincing manner.

## Conclusion

It is difficult to determine exactly who won the battle over American psychoanalysis. After 1948 Menninger retreated from the APsaA with the relief of a man finally abandoning a bad marriage. Although he continued to be a high-profile spokesman for psychiatry, he seems to have gladly shed his (always tenuous) identity as a psychoanalyst. When he appeared on the cover of *Time* five months after stepping down from the APsaA presidency, the article noted:

Dr. Will Menninger describes himself as a 'psychodynamic psychiatrist.' Says he: 'The distinction between Freudian psychiatrists and non-Freudians is becoming infinitesimal. Dynamic psychiatry is being



accepted more & more widely . . . In other words, people are beginning to see that damage of the same kind can be done by a bullet, bacteria, or a mother-in-law.' The extreme Freudian approach, he thinks, is 'almost metaphysical.' (Anonymous, 1948)

Thus, while still attempting to appropriate the mantle of psychoanalysis in the name of a broader psychodynamic psychiatry, Menninger simultaneously distanced himself from a more traditional analytic approach – one which he found 'extreme' and more akin to philosophy or even religion than proper science.

The fact that Menninger felt compelled to make this distinction points to the success of the loyalist analysts in maintaining some kind of control over the meaning of the term 'psychoanalysis.' On the most basic level, they defeated the assimilationist challenge: psychoanalysis remained a distinct specialty based in its own separate institutes. Yet the cost of the victory remains unclear. In the 1950s, American psychoanalysis became an increasingly insular entity, characterized by a rigidly scientific discourse and a failure to engage with the kinds of social and cultural questions that Freud had raised in his later years. This diminution of psychoanalytic vitality can only be understood in reference to the impact of the assimilationist challenge and the wider cultural appropriation of psychoanalysis in the name of democratic freedom. In defending against the trend toward diffusion and loss of meaning, loyalist analysts ultimately found themselves adopting defensive strategies that may have distanced psychoanalysis from the very heritage they hoped to preserve.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Andrew Scull, Rachel Klein and Andrew Lakoff for their helpful comments, and to Connie Menninger for facilitating my research at the Menninger Archives.

### Notes

*Abbreviations:* MA = Menninger Archives (kept at the Center for Historical Research, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas); WCM = William Menninger.

Except where otherwise indicated, all letters referred to in the Notes are kept in Box WCM-ORG-APSA-AVC, MA.

1. Letter from Otto to Angel Garma, 18 Oct. 1945, Otto and Hanna Fenichel Papers, Library of Congress. For more on Fenichel's frustration with the psychoanalytic scene in the USA, see: Harris and Brock, 1991; Jacoby, 1983.
2. By 1952 the APsaA boasted 485 members. One-third had become members since 1948, over one-half since 1942, and over three-quarters since 1938. Most impressive of all was the fact that 900 candidates were undergoing training in approved institutes. See Knight, 1953.

3. The most comprehensive account of postwar American psychoanalysis is by Hale, 1995. See also: Buhle, 1998; Burnham, 1978; Kirsner, 2000; Michel, 1983; Zaretsky, 2004.
4. Turkle distinguishes between a 'psychoanalytic movement' and a 'psychoanalytic culture', characterized by a general dissemination of analytic ideas and language. She argues that, whereas a psychoanalytic movement is a necessary precondition, a widespread 'psychoanalytic thirst' must also be present in order for a psychoanalytic culture to emerge.
5. The postwar enthusiasm for psychological paradigms was by no means limited to psychoanalysis. Psychiatry and psychology also experienced phenomenal growth, attracted much popular attention and exercised new power in the public realm. See: Grob, 1991; Herman, 1995.
6. The medicalization of American psychoanalysis began in the 1930s, when the nation's first psychoanalytic institutes were founded. Although Freud defended lay practitioners, most American analysts believed that psychoanalysis should be a strictly medical specialty. In 1938 controversy over lay analysis led the APsaA to declare independence from the International Psychoanalytic Association. Nevertheless, well into the 1940s the APsaA continued to encounter difficulties in enforcing the regulation that all psychoanalysts be physicians. Moreover, the issue of how closely psychoanalysts should ally themselves with other branches of medicine remained a point of contention within the APsaA.
7. Statement by the American Psychiatric Association issued for Mental Health Week. John C. Whitehorn to Nina Ridenour, 9 Apr. 1951, Folder 9, Box 1, Leo Bartemeier Papers, American Psychiatric Association Archives, Washington, DC.
8. For additional discussions of US psychiatry during World War II, see: Bresnahan, 1999; Greene, 1977; Leys, 2000: ch. 6; Moskowitz, 2001: ch. 4; Pols, 1997: ch. 7; Wells, 1995: chs. 1, 3, 7. See also the official military history: Glass, 1966, 1973.
9. Lasswell (1946) made these remarks at the fifth annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis in New York.
10. In an untitled memo dated 27 May 1948, Menninger recorded the substance of his discussion with Truman. He also noted that Truman's press secretary, Charles Ross, the brother of a well-known Chicago analyst, Helen Ross, had played a crucial role in arranging the meeting. Folder 'Truman, Harry', Box WCM-PRO-4.73, MA.
11. Letter from Harry S. Truman to WCM, 15 May 1948, Folder 'Truman, Harry', Box WCM-PRO-4.73, MA. The statement was initially drafted by Menninger himself and then edited by Truman's press secretary, Charles Ross.
12. Letter from WCM to Harry S. Truman, 25 May 1948, Fldr. 19, Box 6, Series III, American Psychoanalytic Association Archives, Oskar Diethelm Library, Institute for the History of Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Weill Medical College of Cornell University, New York.
13. William C. Menninger, 'Presentation to American Psychoanalytic Association', Folder 'Psa: Correspondence re. Strengthening Organization', Box WCM-ORG-APSA-AVC, MA.
14. William Menninger's early impressions of psychoanalysis and his misgivings about undergoing a training analysis are described in his letters to Karl Menninger, Box KAM/WCM/CFM Correspondence, 1919-1937, MA. Karl Menninger, the Chicago Institute's first graduate, helped to pioneer the development of psychoanalysis in the Midwest and the West in the 1930s and 1940s, although his enthusiasm for psychoanalysis waned after World War II. With the help of his father and later William, he also founded the renowned Menninger Clinic, which evolved into one of the leading centres for psychiatric and psychoanalytic education in postwar America.
15. Letter from WCM to Karl Menninger, 17 Nov. 1939, in Box TIP: General Correspondence, 1930-1940, MA.

16. In 1953 Menninger wrote in a personal letter that he had become president of the APsaA 'by a fluke'. He explained that, at the time, 'there was a great feud going on and although I actually had never attended more than two or three meetings of the association, I was in a relatively neutral position, in which at the beginning both factions presumably could agree on the nomination.' Letter from WCM to Bernard Bandler, 7 July 1953, Box WCM-ORG-APSA-AVC, MA.
17. Menninger played a leading role in postwar psychiatry. In 1946 he spearheaded the formation of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry [GAP], an activist organization composed of young psychiatrists who hoped to challenge the inertia of the APA. GAP's opponents were generally older psychiatrists who stressed the somatic aetiology of mental illness and hoped to retain the profession's prior focus on severe psychiatric disorders. Thus, even as Menninger sought to reform the APsaA, he simultaneously espoused an analytically-oriented approach within the APA. Menninger served as the chairman of GAP throughout the period of his APsaA presidency, and in 1947 became president of the APA as well. See: Grob, 1991: ch. 2; Pressman, 1993: ch. 8.
18. Letter from Bertram D. Lewin to WCM, 22 May 1948, Folder 'Psa: President's Address', Box WCM, Speeches, 1935-1949, MA.
19. It should be noted that the most prominent refugee analysts – including Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, Grete and Edward Bibring, Siegfried Bernfeld and Ernest Simmel – apparently did not bother to send replies. Their loyalties probably continued to reside with the International Psychoanalytic Association. Roughly 190 analysts and psychiatrists with analytic practices or interests emigrated to the USA in the 1930s and 1940s. See: Coser, 1984: 42-82; Fermi, 1968: 139-73; Hughes, 1975: 189-239; Jahoda, 1969: 420-62; Jay, 1973: 86-112.
20. Letter from Henry Brosin to WCM, 8 Oct. 1947.
21. Letter from J. G. N. Cushing to WCM, 19 Dec. 1947. Menninger replied to Cushing, 'The knotty problem of this business of speaking good English, or at least understandable English, is awfully difficult for the program. In the first place ... there is a high percentage of this group of people in our membership. In many instances, they do represent the older, more experienced persons in analysis. Nevertheless, I do feel that it is almost impossible to get anything out of a paper, the reader of which speaks such poor English that one can't understand it.' Letter from WCM to Cushing, 30 Dec. 1947.
22. Letter from Jules H. Masserman to WCM, 22 Nov. 1947.
23. Letter from Cushing to WCM, December 19, 1947.
24. Letter from Robert Knight to WCM, 21 Nov. 1947.
25. Letter from Jules H. Masserman to WCM, 22 Nov. 1947.
26. Letter from Roy Grinker to WCM, 17 Nov. 1947.
27. Letter from Grace Baker to WCM, 2 Dec. 1947.
28. Letter from Edith Weigert to WCM, no date, Box WCM-ORG-APA-AVC, MA.
29. Letter from Jules H. Masserman to WCM, 22 Nov. 1947.
30. In advocating for closer ties to medicine and experimental research in the biological sciences, assimilationists were to some extent following in the path of Alan Gregg, director of the Rockefeller Foundation's Division of Medical Sciences, who since the 1920s had sought ways of bringing psychoanalysis more firmly into the medical mainstream. In the 1930s the Rockefeller Foundation devoted significant funds to supporting research in psychosomatic medicine at the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis, then under the direction of the émigré analyst Franz Alexander. See Brown, 1987.
31. Letter from Kenneth Appel to WCM, 6 Nov. 1947.

32. Letter from Bernard Kamm to WCM, 11 Nov. 1947.
33. Letter from Leo Bartemeier to WCM, 7 Oct. 1947. Bartemeier was also one of the few Catholic psychoanalysts.
34. Letter from WCM, 'Presentation to American Psychoanalytic Association', Folder 'Psa: Correspondence re. Strengthening Organization'.
35. Letter from Harry Murray to WCM, 25 Nov. 1947.
36. Letter from O. Spurgeon English to WCM, 3. Nov. 1947.
37. Letter from Ralph M. Crowley to Menninger, 25 Oct. 1947.
38. Letter from Hugh Galbraith to WCM, 7 Nov. 1947.
39. Rapaport worked at the Menninger Clinic from 1940 to 1948. In 1941 William Menninger characterized him as follows: 'He is a Hungarian and a rather queer fellow, brilliant, I think, but has a lot of stiff European customs and most of the fellows don't seem to like him very well, complaining that he is either too stubborn or too opinionated to work with happily.' Folder 'Daily Logs, extracted from diaries, 1924-1941', Box WCM-PRO-1.2, MA.
40. Letter from Ives Hendrick to WCM, 17 Nov. 1947.
41. Letter from Joseph Michaels to WCM, 19 Nov. 1947.
42. Resolution of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society. Menninger somewhat testily replied, 'I can't feel that even the Boston Society would be greatly contaminated were such men as Harry Solomon and Douglas Thom and many other outstanding psychiatrists interested in their activities and some in some way related to it.' Letter from WCM to Paul Howard, 9 Aug. 1946.
43. Letter from Judith Silberpfennig Kestenberg to WCM, 15 Nov. 1947.
44. Letter from Edward Hitschmann to WCM, 14 Nov. 1947.
45. Letter from Judith Silberpfennig Kestenberg to WCM, 15 Nov. 1947.
46. Letter from Maxwell Gitelson to WCM, 21 Nov. 1947.
47. Letter from Elisabeth Geleerd to WCM, 8 Dec. 1947.
48. Letter from Richard Sterba to WCM, 11 Nov. 1947 (original emphasis).
49. Letter from WCM to Harry Weinstock, 19 Nov. 1947, Folder 19, Box 6, Series III, APsaA Archives.
50. Letter from WCM to Bernand Bandler, 18 Feb. 1960.
51. William Menninger, 'A Psychiatric Examination of the American Psychoanalytic Association', Folder 'Psa: President's Address', Box WCM, Speeches, 1935-1949, MA, p. 6.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.
54. William C. Menninger, 'Recommendations to the American Psychoanalytic Association', 4 Dec. 1948, Folder 20, Box 6, Series III, APsaA Archives.
55. Letter from Therese Benedek to WCM, 28 Dec. 1948, Folder 20, Box 6, Series III, APsaA Archives.
56. Letter from A. Russell Anderson to WCM, 17 Jan. 1949, Folder 20, Box 6, Series III, APsaA Archives.
57. Letter from Ives Hendrick to WCM, 31 Dec. 1948, Folder 20, Box 6, Series III, APsaA Archives.
58. Letter from Ives Hendrick to WCM, 24 May 1948, Folder 'Psa: President's Address', Box WCM, Speeches, 1935-1949, MA.
59. Letter from Richard Sterba to WCM, 12 Jan. 1949, Folder 20, Box 6, Series III, APsaA Archives.
60. Letter from J. G. N. Cushing to WCM, 24 May 1948, Folder 'Psa: President's Address', Box WCM, Speeches, 1935-1949, MA.

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