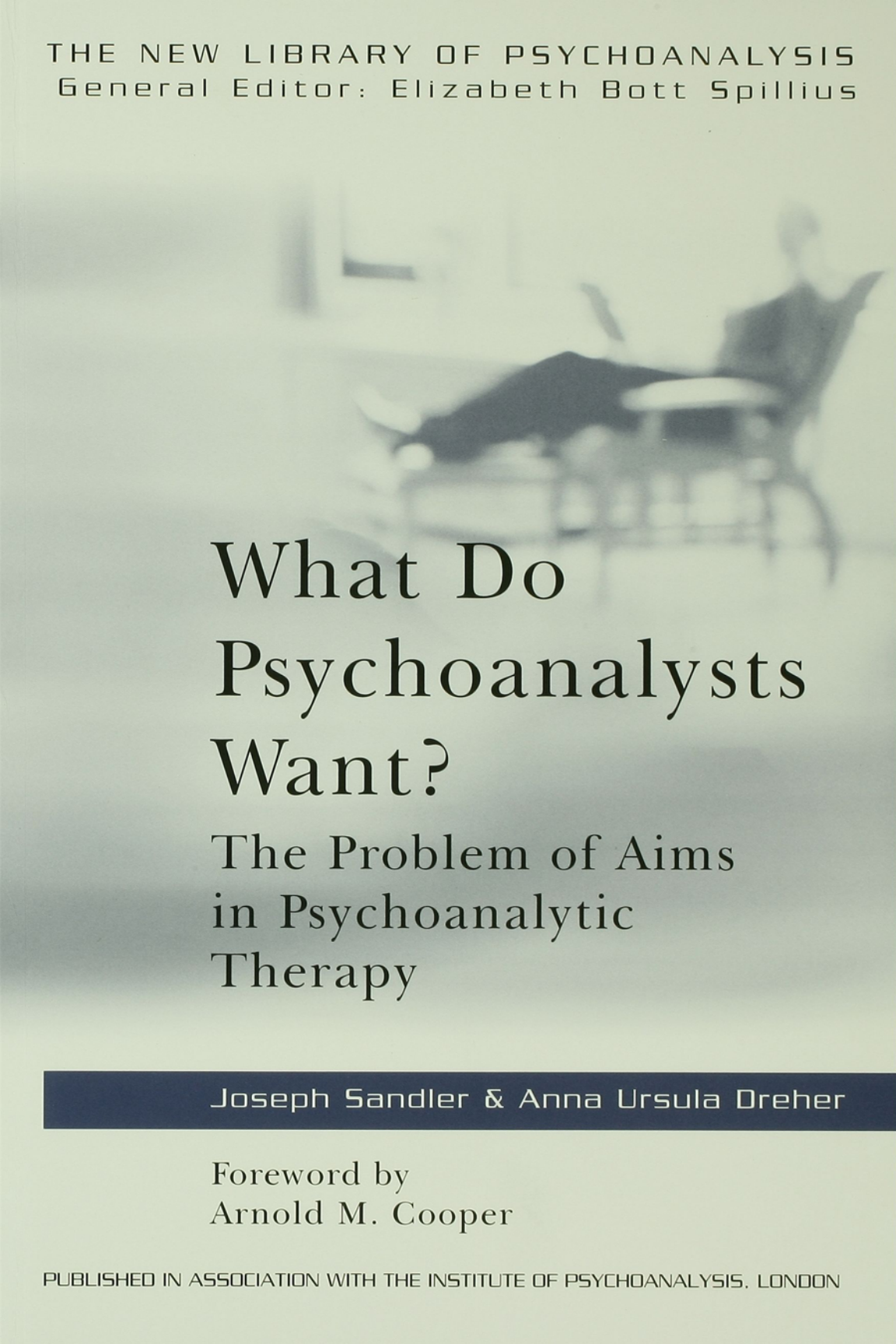


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What Do Psychoanalysts Want?

The Problem of Aims
in Psychoanalytic
Therapy

Joseph Sandler & Anna Ursula Dreher

Foreword by
Arnold M. Cooper

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS, LONDON

What Do Psychoanalysts Want?

Is analysis a therapy or is it a scientific procedure which may be incidentally therapeutic?

Defining the aims of psychoanalysis was not initially a serious conceptual problem. However, when Freud began to think of the aim as being one of scientific research, and added the different formulations of aim (for example, that the aim was to make the patient's unconscious conscious), it became an area of tension which affected the subsequent development of psychoanalysis, the resolution of which has profound implications for the future of psychoanalysis.

In *What Do Psychoanalysts Want?* the authors look at the way psychoanalysts on both sides of the Atlantic have defined analytic aims, decade by decade, from Freud to the present day. On this basis they develop a theory about aims which is extremely relevant to clinical practice today, in which they discuss the issues from the point of view of the conscious and unconscious processes in the psychoanalyst's mind.

Besides presenting a concise history of psychoanalysis which will be of interest to a wide audience, this book makes important points for any analyst concerned to research his or her own practice.

Joseph Sandler is Emeritus Professor of Psychoanalysis, University College, London, and **Anna Ursula Dreher** is a University Lecturer and a psychoanalyst in private practice, Frankfurt.

THE NEW LIBRARY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

General Editor Dana Birksted-Breen

The New Library of Psychoanalysis was launched in 1987 in association with the Institute of Psychoanalysis, London. It took over from the International Psychoanalytical Library, which published many of the early translations of the works of Freud and the writings of most of the leading British and Continental psychoanalysts.

The purpose of the New Library of Psychoanalysis is to facilitate a greater and more widespread appreciation of psychoanalysis and to provide a forum for increasing mutual understanding between psychoanalysts and those working in other disciplines such as the social sciences, medicine, philosophy, history, linguistics, literature and the arts. It aims to represent different trends both in British psychoanalysis and in psychoanalysis generally. The New Library of Psychoanalysis is well placed to make available to the English-speaking world psychoanalytic writings from other European countries and to increase the interchange of ideas between British and American psychoanalysts.

The Institute, together with the British Psychoanalytical Society, runs a low-fee psychoanalytic clinic, organizes lectures and scientific events concerned with psychoanalysis and publishes the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. It also runs the only UK training course in psychoanalysis that leads to membership of the International Psychoanalytical Association – the body which preserves internationally agreed standards of training, of professional entry, and of professional ethics and practice for psychoanalysis as initiated and developed by Sigmund Freud. Distinguished members of the Institute have included Michael Balint, Wilfred Bion, Ronald Fairbairn, Anna Freud, Ernest Jones, Melanie Klein, John Rickman and Donald Winnicott.

Previous General Editors include David Tuckett, Elizabeth Spillius and Susan Budd. Previous and current Members of the Advisory Board include Christopher Bollas, Ronald Britton, Donald Campbell, Stephen Grosz, John Keene, Eglé Laufer, Juliet Mitchell, Michael Parsons, Rosine Jozef Perelberg, David Taylor, Mary Target, Catalina Bronstein, Sara Flanders and Richard Rusbridger.

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JOSEPH SANDLER
ANNA URSULA DREHER

Foreword by Arnold M. Cooper

To Anne-Marie and Joachim

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Foreword

ARNOLD M. COOPER

It takes persons of great courage, a quality that Sandler and Dreher seem to have in abundance, to write a book on 'What do psychoanalysts want?' The paraphrase on Freud's famous question carries with it the implication that analysts, at least in some aspects of their work, have been as confused, confusing and unknowable as Freud once thought women were. Of course, what was a reasonable mystery for the younger Freud who was in the process of creating psychoanalysis is today evidence of his gender bias. Similarly, Sandler and Dreher imply that now is an appropriate time to come to grips with some of the ambiguities, obscurities and vagueness that have characterised aspects of our thinking about and doing psychoanalysis, and to shed as much light on the question of what do analysts want as has been cast on that earlier question during the past near century. An underlying assumption of this exciting and challenging book is that knowing more about how our thinking has developed, clarifying the original implications and intentions of our ideas and tracing how they have changed over time in the course of competition with other ideas will help us to sort out what it is that we think, why we think as we do, and whether that is really how we want to think. It is consonant with Sandler's previous research on analysts' working theories to hold the view that analysts may have quite differing conscious and unconscious ideas of what they want, at times quite unaware of, and perhaps even disavowing, the working model that guides their work. Sandler and Dreher take the view that it can't hurt to try to be articulate about our thinking, and in writing this book they offer us the means to do better than we have done in the past in explicating our ideas of what it is that we are trying to achieve when we do analysis. Clearly, one aim of this volume is to help us to understand how in fact we are going about our analytic work. Interestingly, the question is put in terms of 'What do analysts want?' – not 'What do patients want?' It is a merit of this work that the intriguing title is only mildly facetious and the question it raises is more than justified by the extraordinary richness and depth of the answers that are provided. However, I cannot resist noting that it is hard

to imagine any other branch of the healing arts asking 'What do the practitioners want?' – usually quite self-evident – or even asking 'What do patients want?' – which is usually equally self-evident.

The subtitle, 'The problem of aims in psychoanalytic therapy', poses the provocatively simple question: why do we and our patients engage in this complex, time-consuming, arduous and usually expensive enterprise? This exploration of aims provides the authors with the opportunity for an in-depth examination of the essential ingredients of the complex enterprise of psychoanalysis, and of how analysts' views on what we are doing have changed during the past century. Of course, the title assumes that there is an aim to this activity, giving short shrift to those who might maintain that analysis is aimless, a position that perhaps no one explicitly espouses, but which is close to the views of those who have maintained the circular proposition that the aim of psychoanalysis is to analyse, eschewing specific theoretical research, therapeutic or other 'practical' goals. In the effort to elucidate the aims of psychoanalysis, Sandler and Dreher have written a short but rather monumental account of the history of psychoanalytic aims, which, perhaps not surprisingly, turns out to be a history of psychoanalysis itself. This unique vantage point – i.e., the examination of our aims – provides the authors with the opportunity to concentrate on what most readers will find to be the heart of psychoanalytic history: those informing ideas that guide all our clinical activities, cutting through the details of how we conduct an analysis in order to achieve those aims. The great interest of psychoanalysts in technique, important in its own right, has sometimes obscured the obvious fact that technique is a means and not an end.

In the course of their investigations, the authors present brilliant summaries of the crux of the ideas of major movers of the field after Freud: Klein, Strachey, Fairbairn, Loewald, Kohut, Kernberg and others. Freed of any obligation to take cognizance of the politics or personalities of those involved, the authors concentrate on those analytic ideas that have changed the way analysts conceive and conduct their professional tasks. I know no comparable source for such wonderfully lucid, jargon-free descriptions of the thinking of our major innovators and what they have added to our psychoanalytic endeavour. In an era of theoretical pluralism, with clashing and competing ideas, this book serves an extremely important unifying function. Analysis, if it is a single activity, ought to have a reasonably unified set of aims that should cut across technical or theoretical differences within the discipline. When aims are not shared, it begins to be difficult to recognise the unity of the discipline that provides the foundation for a variety of applications.

Clearly, every new idea or claim for a change of analytic theory or technique has asserted that it is worthy of consideration on the grounds that it will be more successful in attaining some goal of the analyst's work than

was the previous theory or technique. It would seem self-evident that any new theory or technique that did not make some kind of a detectable difference in the analytic work and its outcome would justifiably be deemed trivial and not worth serious study. The authors of this book do an admirable job of guiding us through the tangled thickets of competing analytic ideas, informing us how each idea contributed to a change in the analytic enterprise. Knowing the context in which ideas arose, and the currents that led to their modification, is enormously helpful in beginning to come to a better understanding of one's own experience and how we have come to hold the notions that inform our own psychoanalytic work.

This book is also particularly timely because in many parts of the psychoanalytic universe those who pay the bill – insurers and other varieties of third-party payers – are demanding an accounting of us. What do we achieve for our patient that justifies the cost? While certain of our justifiable analytic aims – for example increased self-knowledge or an enduring capacity for self-analysis – will never endear us to insurance companies, confusion and an avoidance of clarity concerning our aims and claims will surely damage us in other academic and research communities that are of great importance to us – medicine, for instance, or psychology, philosophy, literature and the arts. We are interested not only in resources to sustain patient treatment, but research funding and our standing in the intellectual community are also at stake.

The idea of presenting the story of the evolving aims of psychoanalysis in decade blocks provides a vivid panorama of the changing ideas of psychoanalysis, and a surprising sense of how rapidly and consistently we have been willing to change – sometimes without clear acknowledgement that we are doing so. Not only are we presented with a deep and penetrating review of Freud's changing concepts of the aims of analysis, but we are given a sense of Freud's willingness to see the aims of analysis differently according to his changing views of the structure of the mind and the analytic process. Freud was quite able to maintain differing and sometimes conflicting views of the aims of analysis without any apparent disturbance of his scientific equanimity. It is a fascinating story to see how one or another of Freud's multiple views became the sole or predominant view for later groups of analysts determined to bring about a unification of theory or see the predominance of a favourite point of view.

Each decade has been marked by one or more conflicts that centred that period's analytic discourse. These conflicts have included issues such as: therapeutic outcome aims versus psychoanalytic process aims; limited versus ambitious aims; relational versus intrapsychic aims, psychoanalysis viewed as a treatment versus psychoanalysis viewed as a research tool; outer-directed versus inner-directed criteria for change; clear therapeutic goals versus therapeutic neutrality; ideal or theoretical versus practical aims;

analysis as a limited versus an interminable process; primary aims of preserving the analytic process versus adopting a flexible (non-analytic?) stance to help the patient; the therapist as anonymous and neutral versus the therapist as participant and more or less self-revelatory. The list is expandable. There has been a gradual shift from the aim of symptom removal, to the attainment of insight, to the achievement of an internalised capacity for self-observation and self-analysis. A consistent issue underlying many of the specific disputes has been the discrepancy between the idealisation of the analytic method and the increasing recognition of limitations of the achievements of the method. This history of our aims shows us how these differing views have, with some exceptions, influenced one another, leading to new, more informed and sophisticated syntheses of how we understand analysis. The history of psychoanalysis includes intense battles and periodic attempts at reconciling disputes through some form of co-existence. We have been through periods of analytic hubris, when we thought we knew far more than we did and could achieve far more than we could, and we have alternated with probably more appropriate periods of analytic modesty and times of therapeutic pessimism.

The volume also provides us in passing with an account of the sociology of change in psychoanalysis. It is surprising to be reminded that it was not until the 1960s that we seriously began to see health in terms of flexible adaptation to life circumstances, including Aristotelian ideals of reasonableness and balance, and Sandler and Dreher remind us how significant cultural norms are in trying to understand any version of normality and its relation to the aims of psychoanalysis. Sandler and Dreher beautifully outline the continuing different perspectives on aims – historical-conceptual, socio-cultural and clinical-technical. It is also clear that there are always dual views of aims: the analyst's conscious and preconscious ideas of the overarching aims of psychoanalytic work, and the specific, and ever-changing, views of psychoanalytic aims that unfold during the interactions with each specific patient.

One of the many interesting discoveries in this book is the realisation of how enormous the changes in psychoanalysis have been. Even at its most 'orthodox', contemporary psychoanalysis has evolved and grown in directions that might not have been predicted even a few decades ago. The interest in research, including outcome studies, is growing, and even more important, the methodology for doing such research is improving. Professor Sandler has himself been a major contributor to the contemporary research ambience of psychoanalysis.

I am fully aware of the enormous contribution of Anna Ursula Dreher to this work. Without her wide knowledge of, and engagement in, conceptual research this book never would have been written. However, no introduction would be adequate without an acknowledgement of

Professor Sandler's very special role in the creation of contemporary psychoanalysis. In the interests of full disclosure, a sensitive issue here in the United States, I should reveal that Anne-Marie and Joe Sandler are dear personal friends of mine. I maintain that this only increases my capacity for assessing the true worth of Sandler's contributions to analysis. Joseph Sandler is that rare figure in the universe of psychoanalytic innovators whose work is characterised by a spirit of genuine exploration. He is willing to begin an examination of some significant aspect of psychoanalysis without a preconception of how the answer should come out. He has devoted much of his psychoanalytic life to exploring the taken-for-granted aspects of psychoanalysis – our standard concepts and ways of thinking and behaving psychoanalytically – and teasing out our fuzzy-mindedness and intellectual complacency, and our illogical and contradictory ideas. In a field that has been characterised by rather vigorous ideological disputes, he has shown the almost quaint capacity simultaneously to have complete faith in and dedication to psychoanalysis as a momentous intellectual, therapeutic and scientific activity, while being able to raise doubts concerning the validity of almost every analytic proposition – especially those that most of us take as self-evidently true. He has even been known to change his opinion on psychoanalytic issues. It is no contradiction for him to be a radical critic of our self-satisfaction, while maintaining a conservatism that leads him to preserve as much of the traditional and accepted ideas and ways of thinking as he can. He has introduced the idea of 'elasticity' of concepts to assist us in bringing our thinking into line with the requirements of logic and newer research, while not having to abandon totally ideas and terms with which we have long and loving relationships that would be too painful to terminate. With the advantage of being both a sophisticated clinician and an ingenious researcher, as well as an internationally known leader of our discipline and former president of the International Psychoanalytical Association, he has been instrumental in helping us to reformulate old ideas, and to conceive our new ones. Sandler has been one of the most creative figures in bringing about what I have termed a 'quiet revolution' in psychoanalytic theory during the past several decades. In a long series of extraordinary papers, one can observe the evolution of his thinking from the more traditional frame of reference with which he graduated from analytic training, towards the formation of a complex mixture of ego psychology and object-relations theory that has become the dominant frame of reference in much of today's psychoanalytic world, due in no small part to his work. While entirely courageous in following where his researches lead, he has never had a tendency to form a new school or to create new terminology.

This intellectual odyssey has been characterised by a consistent methodological effort to keep our theory tied to our clinical activity. His prior

training as an experimental psychologist, statistically sophisticated and familiar with psychological tests and rating scales, enabled him to bring a fresh outlook to traditional concepts, supporting and altering these concepts on the basis of empirical research. He has been a bridging force in psychoanalysis, attempting to find the inherent linkages between apparently opposing ideas, and helping to close the gap between American ego psychologists, and British Kleinian and object-relations theorists.

Sandler has a long, perhaps unique, record of successful collaborations in his psychoanalytic work with many different co-authors. This volume with Anna Ursula Dreher is further evidence of how wonderfully fruitful such collaboration can be. This short and amazingly lucid history of psychoanalytic ideas challenges each of us to clarify how we think about psychoanalysis, as we enjoy this account of the great adventure of the development of psychoanalytic ideas. The encyclopaedic scope of this work seems incompatible with its brevity. I predict that this monograph will assume a place as a standard text in analytic institutes. I know no better way to orientate the student attempting to find his way among the now numerous major and minor points of view and frames of reference that demand allegiance as the better, truer, newer, or more classical or more orthodox version of psychoanalysis. Not the least of its virtues is that this book is a joy to read.

Preface

The topic dealt with in this book has, one way or another, received extensive attention in the psychoanalytic literature, but close examination of the concept reveals areas of unclarity and ambiguity. Difficulties even arise the moment one begins to consider terminology. The term 'aim' is used, on the whole, by British writers, whereas authors in the United States tend to write of 'goal'. Strictly speaking, the two terms have different though closely related meanings. Webster's dictionary (second edition) gives among its definitions of *aim* the following:

to direct one's efforts; to attempt to reach or accomplish an object or purpose; to try or purpose to be or to do something.

The definition of *goal* includes:

the end or final purpose; the end to which a design tends or which a person aims to reach or accomplish.

In German both aim and goal are rendered as *Ziel*. As a result, the choice of either aim or goal in the English translation of German psychoanalytic writings is made by the translator (as in the *Standard Edition* of Freud's works). Similarly in French the term *but* can be translated as both aim and goal. The same holds true for a number of other languages.

It is worth noting that some of the literature on psychotherapy outcome research distinguishes between aims or goals on the one hand, and objectives on the other. Webster defines an objective as 'something aimed at or striven for', i.e., it is a synonym for 'goal'. In practice, however, objectives are sometimes distinguished from goals or aims, in that the latter terms tend to be used in a more general sense, while objectives may be more specific and more operationally defined (e.g. an aim of therapy may be 'to improve the patient's mental health', as opposed to the objective of 'attaining greater success in work').

The psychoanalytic literature has tended not to take note of the distinction between aim and goal, and the two terms are for the most part used