

THE AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION

POSITION STATEMENT
ON
ABORTION

(APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, MAY 7th, 1970
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA)

THE AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION

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POSITION STATEMENT ON ABORTION

In the spring of 1968 a Committee of the Executive Council of the American Psychoanalytic Association undertook a study of the issues that relate to the medical procedure referred to as therapeutic abortion.

The Report of the Committee, submitted to the Council on 7 May 1970, notes the religious, cultural, and social roots of abortion laws, as well as the medical concerns which, until the development of anesthesia and of means for combating infection, made the procedure a dangerous one.

In addition, the Committee studied the data related to psychological effects of abortion upon women. Psychiatric and psychoanalytic findings reveal no consensus or basis for general prediction of the nature of the expectable psychological sequelae. Though there are always emotional aspects of each such proceeding, there is no evidence that these are necessarily negative or enduring. As psychoanalysts, we are aware of the existence of many motives behind the pregnancy and its termination and of the presence of psychological conflict which are less effects of the abortion per se than of the underlying difficulty.

For these reasons the Committee on Social Problems took the following position which was approved unanimously by the Executive Council of the American Psychoanalytic Association.

We support a woman's right to choose whether or not to continue her pregnancy.

We view a therapeutic abortion as a medical procedure to be agreed upon between a patient and her physician; and one which should be removed entirely from the domain of criminal law.

5/25/70