

MY EXPERIENCE WITH PSYCHOANALYSIS

BY LUCY FREEMAN

THE analyst's low, pleasant voice interrupted my thoughts. "What are you thinking about?"

He sat on my right, so as I lay on the couch, I had to turn to look at him. He seemed like a mild-mannered man with twinkling blue eyes, rather slight of build, neatly dressed in a dark suit and brightly-colored tie. At his feet snuggled a Scotch terrier.

Perhaps he would like an explanation of why I was there, I thought. "I've got such awful sinus I can't breathe," I told him. "I also can't sleep and I get bad attacks of indigestion. I've eaten enough vitamin pills to keep the Army in good health for a year and consumed enough sleeping pills to kill the Navy if taken in one dose. I've been to dozens of doctors, each one with a different theory as to what's wrong."

I added flippantly, "So you see, I've come to you in despair, all else having failed."

"That's why most people come," he said, smiling.

I don't think I would have had the

courage to tackle analysis if it had not been for the last doctor I visited — my fifty-eighth or fifty-ninth — a young nose-and-throat specialist. After experimenting with all kinds of nasal torture — thrusting up my nose a six-inch needle laden with drugs, pumping out my nose with a hose that looked as though it belonged on a fire truck — he sighed in despair and said, "Nothing medically possible seems to help your sinus." Then, in sudden inspiration, he suggested, "Why don't you become a guinea pig?"

"Anything, if it means a new nose," I groaned. At that point, mine was throbbing as though a devil were beating it with drumsticks. "Go to a psychoanalyst," he advised.

Seeing surprise start up on my face, he explained, "Some of us doctors have a hunch that nose conditions like yours are caused by the circulatory system which, in turn, is influenced by emotional reactions."

"The money," I wailed. "It's so expensive!"

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"Reporters earn fairly good salaries these days," he retorted. "Scrub floors on the side if you have to supplement your salary."

"You doctors just want to turn us all into guinea pigs," I snapped.

Then the pain started to slash its familiar path of agony up the nose and across the forehead. I bolted from his office, muttering my thanks. Days of misery followed, during which I could hardly hold my head above the typewriter. I considered giving up my job and fleeing to the mesas of New Mexico. No, I finally decided; psychoanalysis would be less expensive in the long run.

I didn't tell all this to the analyst at first. True to what I thought were my reportorial instincts (but what I later found out was also a defense against anyone prying into my unhappiness), I asked the questions. For weeks I pumped him unmercifully about his private life—what he thought of everyone from Plato to Picasso, what political party he belonged to, and what school of psychoanalysis he upheld. To my delight, he turned out to be a Dodger fan and could play the piano like a professional. In fact, he had earned his way through college in a jazz band.

Over and over, I questioned him until finally, I guess, he was driven to ask me to talk about myself. "It doesn't seem right, somehow," I

objected. "We reporters always look with scorn on the writer who puts everything in the first person. The 'I' doesn't belong."

"Everyone should be interested in himself first," he said. "The people who refuse to talk about themselves, or to think about themselves realistically, never understand themselves or anyone else. Perhaps," he added reflectively, and it seemed a strange thing to say at the time, "you were never allowed to talk about yourself, or for yourself, and you now feel nobody cares what you say."

At those words, a feeling of terror shot through me. I was suddenly swept back into childhood, to the time one night when my face was slapped in front of my brother and two sisters because I had dared to talk back. I had raced to my room, wishing I could die. . . . Tears started to roll down my cheeks. In embarrassment I wiped them away and apologized to the analyst. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cry," I whispered.

"Maybe it's time you cried," he said. "Maybe you've felt like crying all these years and couldn't."

II

So I started to talk to him. I told him my troubles, how exhausted I always was, and yet how I could not sleep. And how impossible it was for me to lose weight because I could not give

up ice cream and candy. It's wonderful, I thought, as I droned on and on. For the first time in my life, somebody lets me talk freely, even if I *am* paying him for it. He listened as though he were my best friend.

I dared to speak of things I had done that I thought were shameful, such as charging candy in a small store when I was ten years old and then denying I had done it. He showed no shock and did not blame or censure me. He merely commented that many children crave sweets when they lack affection, that candy is often a substitute for love. He did not even scold me when I lied to him: often I would say one thing as though it were the gospel truth, and then deny it emphatically twenty minutes later. (The one consistent thing about unhappy people is their inconsistency.) "I really didn't mean to lie to you," I muttered one time. First I had said that I liked the excitement of meeting the daily newspaper deadlines, and then, a few minutes later, I gritted my teeth and said I really hated the deadlines.

"That's all right," he reassured me. "You'll find yourself doing that often, if it's the truth you're after."

The truth? What was the truth? Whatever it was, it was buried deep beneath the lies, the defenses, the rationalizations that had been so carefully built up over the years. In

searching for the truth, I stormed, I cursed, I displayed the overwhelming self-pity in whose deceptive cloak of comfort I had snuggled for so many years. I struck hilarity one moment and plummeted deep into despair the next. Through all the turmoil, the analyst's calm, quiet voice kept on reassuring me, helping me to achieve the courage to take a look at what I was really like inside.

I was being helped to open the door on my inner self and take a look, even if the sight was painful, in order that I might become free. I had to expose the dank, musty guilts, the shames and sorrows, the hurts and jealousies, to the warmth of the sun. In the light of reason the fears would crumble to dust, the prejudices disintegrate and much of the agony abate. Only then would I be able to answer in part Dostoyevsky's famous question: "Do you know who you are?"

Life to me had always been a tormenting mystery, one gigantic question mark. "What's the answer to it all?" I kept asking myself. Finally I asked the analyst.

"The answer to life is to live it," he replied.

Live it freely, doing what you want out of choice, not compulsion. Live it with ease and enjoyment, not existing from crisis to crisis as I had done, but from month to month and year to year in full, rounded satisfaction. All

this I got from the analyst. Such a calm was entirely foreign to me, but I started in small ways to know its nature.

For instance, I had always moved very fast, racing around the city, never taking time to relax. My break-neck pace was an office joke. Other reporters, accustomed to speed, would watch my flights in amazement, calling out, "Where's the fire today?"

One day, however, just after I left the analyst's office, I found myself walking along the streets slowly. "Why, this is what it is like to walk," I thought. "I don't have to run." I don't know why I slowed up at that moment. It was just a feeling of well-being; I was unable to pin it on any specific instance. It marked a transformation in my whole body as I slowly exchanged the atmosphere of anxiety in which I had grown up for the one of safety and security I found in the analyst's office.

There were other moments when a growing awareness of something only dimly felt would strike me, and I would think, "This is it!" These were the moments when I felt "good," when I seemed to come to life, when I could draw on a cigarette and feel in possession of myself. They were the moments when terror took a holiday.

But first the terror had to come out. I remember particularly one session during which we discussed life and

death. We were talking of man's strongest instincts, the will to survive and to procreate. I had just got off a lovely line about self-preservation and procreation being "the two main threads of life's daily pattern, and all else is fringe."

"Has it ever occurred to you that your speed in rushing about may be due to an unconscious fear that someone wants to kill you?" the analyst asked.

I shook my head forcefully. "No," I said. "I don't think it's that. It's just that I always have a lot to do."

"But you're always dreaming that someone is chasing you and trying to kill you," he reminded me.

"But that's a dream," I objected.

"Do you mean to tell me that you don't believe your dreams are a part of you?" he asked.

That I couldn't deny, being such an ardent admirer of Freud. Besides I certainly did dream all the time that someone was after me to scalp or shoot me.

"It's funny," I mused, "but deep inside there's a hidden kind of fear. It probably doesn't mean much, though."

"And yet you operate as though everything you did were a matter of life or death, as though you would live or die by every single action," he said.

There was wonder in his voice, and kindness, and an invitation to trust.

Long-forgotten feelings of danger came to my mind's surface and, at the same time, the tears started up.

"I can't explain this," I said as though in a daze. "I don't know why I'm crying but I *am* afraid. I'm afraid especially at night. I can't stand the dark. I have to put away all sharp things like scissors and hatpins before I can go to bed."

He asked why I thought I did that.

"I think it's because I'm afraid I will get up during the night while I'm asleep and stab myself," I said slowly.

"Either that, or murder someone else?" he asked.

Murder? Was murder in my heart? Well, wasn't it, at times?

I knew, too, whom I wanted to murder. My parents. It was really they at whom I was raging. At that moment I understood what I had felt as a child and *what I still felt*, if I would accept it. I was furious because I felt unloved and unwanted. I saw myself growing up through the fearful years, competing in athletics and in school, wanting to please my father by being as good as, or better than, the boys, wanting my mother's approval but always failing to get it.

Like everyone else I knew, I assumed I had had a happy, carefree childhood. I did not believe that the pain and misery I now endured could have any relation to the little girl that once was me and her childhood

feelings. My parents fed me, clothed me, praised me for my good marks in school, and sent me to college. What more could a little girl ask?

She could ask for trust and faith and firm guidance, the analyst said. A little girl could ask that her parents not expect her to save them and bring them happiness. A little girl could ask for real love. "To a child, having no love is death," the analyst said.

Because I felt unloved, I had gone to enormous lengths to find people to tell me that I was good. Their telling helped for a time, and then the only thing to do was find more people, and more and more. A thousand, a million, are never enough for those who are starved emotionally. It is like drink or dope. There is never enough, because inside we do not like ourselves, because our parents, without meaning to, made us feel that we weren't much good. They could not give us the kind of love we wanted, because, when we examined their lives, they had never known it from their parents. They, too, had known only uncertainty.

And so, when I was little, I said to myself, "My father and mother don't love me because I'm no good." I couldn't say, "They don't love me because they don't know how." That would be total destruction. A parent is God to a child, for there is no one else in the child's life. Therefore, the

child chooses the lesser of two evils, disliking himself and believing his parents to be right.

What would make me like myself? Acceptance of myself as I was, emotionally as well as intellectually, acceptance of the knowledge that I was not loved in childhood and that it was not my fault. The realization that my parents did the best they could and that, much as I demanded it, they could not change.

III

Growing up, in a sense, is disillusionment about one's parents. This is dramatically illustrated in the play *Death of a Salesman*, when disillusionment comes abruptly to the young boy, Biff. He finds his father, whom he thought of as God, in a hotel room with a cheap, drunken woman. The boy bursts into sobs and flees the room, his heart breaking as the father pounds the floor in a fury, screaming, "I order you to come back!"

Thus it is with many of us to a lesser degree. Our parents have ordered us all our lives, for our own good, they hold. We have lived by commands, though, rather than in a cooperative effort, and commands are for slaves, not free men. To be happy we must learn to see our parents as they are, as the children of other parents who in turn did unto them. Analysis helps to reach this disillusion-

ment, but in a slow, gradual way that does not destroy, and in such a way that after the disillusionment there comes the knowledge that one's parents are likable human beings, not infallible gods.

"Honor thy father and mother that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee . . ." was one of the Ten Commandments that the psychoanalyst quoted, and he said it held a promise to us all. This was brought to awareness in the one session when the murder in my heart did out. Actually, such moments do not reveal anything really new. They merely enable you to face many things which have been so dangerous that you have buried them far beneath consciousness.

Such moments are part of the whole. They depend on what has gone before and quickly become part of what happens afterwards. They join up with other moments to form the larger network of understanding. For analysis is not magic. It produces no sudden, dramatic results, as the movies would have us believe. It is no short-cut to happiness; it is a long, thoughtful procedure that takes much patience on the part of the analyst as he helps you down the winding road to emotional freedom.

Much to my dismay, the analyst would never tell me what to do. I would plead with him to make de-

cisions for me, but he would always tell me to use my own good mind. I had never really thought — I acted on impulse, driven from one sensation to the next. As I began to gain faith in myself, however, I also started to think. It is one of those strange paradoxes, and there are many as you grow to know yourself, that the more you become aware of feelings that you were never able to tolerate, the better you think.

For instance, I had never realized how jealous I was of my brother and sisters; there is much of Othello in all of us if we would but be honest. Then there was the problem of homosexuality, for everyone has feelings for the members of his own sex; and of incest, for the parents of the opposite sex play a large part in every person's life. There was also the matter of normal sex relations.

I had announced at one session that I really wasn't very frightened of sex, that I could accept it casually. Three minutes later I was showing disgust with people who tell dirty jokes. Ten minutes later I was relating a dream. "Last night I dreamed I had a baby," I told him, "but the funny thing was the baby was born at the age of 49. Imagine that! Makes no sense at all."

"What comes to you about the age 49?" the analyst asked.

"Let's see," I stalled. "Maybe something important happened in the

lives of my parents when one of them was 49. Yes, I think that may be it. Now, what could it have been?"

"What else?" he asked. "I can think of lots of things. The forty-niners. Or seven times seven. Or a middle-aged woman —"

"That's it!" I cried out, and my eyes started to fill with uncontrollable tears. "Those figures — 49 or 50 — how often I've heard mother say that at 49 or 50 a woman has no more worries about having babies."

"So, it is logical that you might wish your baby born without the problems of sex that have seemed so threatening to you all your life?" he asked.

I started to sob, wildly and furiously. The nights during which I had fought off men's arms, some of which I wanted around me, merged with those during which mother or father had caught me necking in the parlor or on the porch. The pitiful bull sessions at college, the awe and envy many of us had for girls who discussed contraceptives, the unfulfilled desires which netted me stomach-aches, were all caught in those sobs of fury and pity.

The dreams have helped me to feel the truth. They brought me closer to what James Stephens, the poet, meant when he wrote, "What the heart understands today, the mind will understand tomorrow." For me, the mind

understood first because the heart was afraid.

The mind alone is never enough. Knowledge cannot help; words never cured anyone who was ill of mind. Even criminals know, intellectually, that they should not commit crimes. I was helped not by my intellect but by my whole body, for, as the analyst said, "Treatment takes place in your viscera. The intellect has never solved an emotional problem."

At first it was difficult to understand what he meant. For years I had used my intellect as a defense, accepting things verbally and intellectually but not emotionally. Sometimes what I said and what I felt were miles apart. The analyst might repeat something fifty times and I would agree each time but it would hold no real meaning until one day it would become part of my "guts." Then I would feel it and believe it. It was almost osmosis — the absorption of the concept into both brain and blood.

"Don't you get tired of saying the same thing over and over again until I finally accept it?" I asked him.

"Time is my ally," he replied.

IV

As the time passed and as my tears flowed, a remarkable thing happened. The pain in my nose eased up. After about a year of analysis, it disappeared completely. The more I cried, the

better I felt. After the very tearful sessions I would float out of his office through the city as though a gag had been removed from my throat and chains from my feet.

"My sinus must be my unshed tears," I remarked, as, for the first time in years, I breathed through open nostrils.

The sinus was a lot of things. It was self-pity, repressed anger, fear. It was a way of punishing myself for feeling I was no good. But all I cared was that it disappeared as I pulled back through the unhappy years, realizing that I had been fighting a phantom battle, waging war against enemies of my own making. They stood invincible, these wavering ghosts of childhood, a terrible threat to living even though they were fantasies.

It was not the remembering alone that opened my eyes. It was the growing awareness that all the fears I had were without basis, that I had been tilting at windmills all those years. Remembering is only part of the process; you also have to feel the fear and come to know that it is false.

This feeling of fear, when it is distorted, is what keeps us children emotionally even though we grow up physically and intellectually. When I first heard the word "fear" from the analyst, I asked him what he meant by it — fear of what? "Just fear, period," he replied. "It is always with

you. Some things bring it out; others allay it or relieve it."

Everyone has fear to a certain degree, for without it we probably would not survive very long. Those of us who felt unloved as children, however, are the very frightened people. We have the strongest defenses against fear.

One of the hardest things to grasp in analysis is that it is not the fears of today but the fears of yesterday that must be faced. You react to the fears of yesterday without knowing it. Terror lies not in what happens, or what may happen, but in what *has* happened. You may have long forgotten the events, but the memory of fear lingers on until the day you die if you do not cast it off.

Where there is undue fear, there is anger, for anger follows in the wake of fear. The angry people are the frightened people, whether they are able to express their anger or not. Some of them are so angry and so frightened that they are literally "scared out of their wits." These are the people in mental hospitals.

What destroys fear? The displacement of it by love. The analyst quoted the Bible: "Perfect love casteth out fear." Well, "perfect love" was a new kind of love to me. He explained that it was a love that accepts, gives, allows the other person to live. It differed from my conception of

love, which he described as need and hunger, a love that demands, grabs, possesses, and strangles, rather than sets free.

When I asked him where sex came in, he said that sex was part of love, but that many of us had to think of sex and love as two different things because of our fear of sex. We must clothe it in fantasy, pretend it is something else because we cannot accept it for what it is, a natural appetite like eating, and yet one that calls for control. We put so much emphasis on sex because sexuality is the core of life, and as neurosis represents a threat to life, we who feel neurotic will seize sex when we feel our life is threatened. We seize it wildly, blindly, fanatically, not really experiencing it but using it.

"Everything in moderation," the analyst would say again and again. To him the temperate path was the one to take and the one that everyone would naturally take if it were not that anxiety exaggerated and distorted his feelings.

If I have made the analyst sound didactic or like a lecturer, it is because I have tried to condense and make dramatic some of the things he said. They took a long time to sink into my skin and they were preceded and followed by torrents of words on my part. His was an everlasting calm.

Not every session was fruitful.

There were days when I left feeling the hour was a complete waste because I had been afraid to talk and he probably did not want to rush me into facing my fear until I was ready. But there is waste in everything; that is part of life and part of nature, and only those of us whose inner lives are so imperfect demand perfection of everyone else.

In essence, analysis is simple. It is learning to trust another person enough so that, as he accepts you as you wanted your parents to accept you, you dare to accept yourself. In analysis you find the safety you never had as a child. The analyst wraps you in a protective cocoon of gentleness, as a mother does a baby, and feeling so cherished, you start to gain courage to express your real feelings. You learn to become comfortable with yourself, and when you achieve that you also feel comfortable with the other people who have inherited the earth.

Technically, in analysis the results are achieved through the process known as "transference." The analyst becomes for you the good parent, the love object, God, and you bestow on him all the hunger, hate, fear, terror and rage you have felt towards your parents. Knowing what to do with these feelings, he then helps you to grow naturally, for your growth has been stunted or dammed up by the

fear in your life. Fundamentally you do not change; it is only that you are better able to live with yourself.

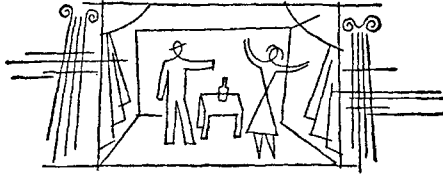
You can then take responsibility for your own behavior, give up fleeing back into childhood, and start to become mature. You will see that it is not what you do that matters, but how you feel about it. You will accept the world as it is and merge with its misery and its happiness. You will realize that you cannot influence too greatly what happens because you are only a small part of a larger scheme of life that belongs to nature, yet you can mould to a degree your own life by making your own decisions and following the philosophy "live and let live." You may never pluck a star from the sky but, as Browning wrote, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"

The analysis for me has not ended yet, and I don't know when it will. It is expensive in time and money, but how could it be otherwise? How could habits that took years to develop be changed overnight? How could days of terror be eased except in living through many days of safety?

But in the end, it's worth it. You find out that you don't have to live in fantasy, that the world of reality possesses enough enchantment without spinning around it a web of illusion to veil its truth.

THE THEATRE

by GEORGE JEAN NATHAN



24 IMPERTINENT MEMORANDA

(1) CRITICISM is a disinfectant of false standards and bogus performance and so naturally has an odor offensive to such as favor cheap cologne.

(2) In their patriotic zeal to boost last season's anti-Communist play, *The Traitor*, various critics and commentators threw some bizarre fits. Take George E. Sokolsky for one example. Thus Mr. Sokolsky:

It is . . . a relief from the left-wing social significance which, for a decade now, we have been fed by writers who, while growing rich on American audiences, find it pleasurable to run this country down. It ought not to be necessary to bring the curtain down on every second act by having a woman on stage say what we used to call dirty words. It ought not to be necessary to show Americans to be dipsomaniacs, nymphomaniacs, bums, cheats, liars, thieves. I can mention a dozen plays that made the top box-

office in which every character was what in the vulgarities of the moment is called a louse.

While I am just as anti-Communist and anti-left as Mr. Sokolsky and while *The Traitor* at least in part fetched me quite as much as it did him, it seems to me nevertheless that he otherwise is anti-sense. Where, for instance, did Mr. Sokolsky see all those plays the curtains to the second acts of which fell on a woman character's dirty words? I have seen every play produced on the American stage during the decade which he refers to and yet, if we believe him, I can not have been there. One or two plays may have had a second act tag line of the kind he mentions, but all the many others elude my memory. As to the picturing of Americans as dipsomaniacs, bums, liars, thieves, etc., does he know or forget that one of the modern Russian dramatic classics, Gorki's *Night Refuge*, thus pictures Russians? And when he states he can