

## A Critical Examination of Psychoanalysis

*A Critical Examination of Psychoanalysis, by Adolph Wohlgemuth. New York: The Macmillan Company. \$3.50.*

MR. ADOLPH WOHLGEMUTH of London, a well-known experimental-introspective psychologist, has written a Critical Examination of Psychoanalysis. "I had," he says, "to expose the inherent absurdity of Freud's teaching and ce n'est que le ridicule qui tue." Psychoanalysis has been ridiculed before, but since it still lives, one must believe that the ridicule was insufficient in quantity or quality. Wohlgemuth will do something beyond the common, and give us ridicule in the grand style.

In general I do not pay much attention to the laboratory psychologist's criticism of Freud. These critics have a way of referring to scientific psychology as though this were matter of general agreement, but when we read Watson on McDougall or McDougall on Wundt's "tissue of unacceptable hypotheses" and so on, in fact almost any one of them on any other not of his school, we conclude that scientific psychology is "my" psychology, and the other kind is "yours." Even Wohlgemuth admits that Freud *pretends* to be scientific. In spite of all this I read the book now reviewed, because I thought it might be more worth while than the general run, and in a sense it is. Its humor apart, which is heavy—very heavy—it is a good example of the way the laboratory psychologist misses the point. The criticism is painstakingly thorough and psychoanalysis would doubtless be demolished if it were centrally hit. In fact the blow is only a glancing one and leaves essentials as they were.

Wohlgemuth in some cases does a half job very well. For instance, he takes a dream that is not his—the dream of the seven fat and seven lean kine—and develops it analytically. He takes Freud's number cases and shows that he can deduce consequences as remarkable as Freud's own. But—although a professional introspector, he fails to introspect the operation seriously enough. He finds that he can associate to the incidents of Pharaoh's dream and arrive at a coherent interpretation. He manages to make Freud's numbers give all sorts of curious combinations that can be connected with incidents in his own life. What he does not consider is that all this is insignificant. To illustrate by an analogy. A telegram may come to a man saying, "Train delayed by floods," and cause him to turn pale and grow more and more agitated as memories and the fear of possible consequences gather about this news. His companion may have the same real interest in the arrival of the train, and the information may let loose in him a flood of reminiscences, yet these may be nothing but mere anecdote. Associations can of course build up about any theme.

Differences of this kind are important, but Wohlgemuth makes reference to them only to ignore them. He thinks his competence as a psychologist enables him to study the facts, and he introspects carefully, but he does not see that his material is not to the point. If he had thoroughly, under introspective control, analyzed a dream important to himself, and compared it with his analysis of Pharaoh's dream, noting the difference of reaction in feeling and emotion in one case and the other, the operation would have had some value. So with the case of num-

bers, the interpretation of fairy tales, and other things. Wohlgemuth criticizes the analysts, quite justly I think, because they report results without ever using such controls, and then he does exactly the same thing from the other side. The Scientific mind—with a big S—is prone to this.

The truth in this matter of science is, I think, that all serious psychologies are scientific in so far as they systematically work for the advancement of our knowledge, and that none of them is scientific enough to offer us categories so clearly demonstrated as to be available for general use. In the achieved sciences there are practicable and agreed-on irreducible elements, but every psychologist has his own list of irreducible elements. The criteria are useful to the worker in his subject, but they are utterly useless for criticizing other people, with other aims. Wohlgemuth's original work is as different as possible in its purposes from Freud's. He has neglected the proverb of the cobbler and his last. He is in fact a very good psychological cobbler, but a very poor psychological sage.

Mr. Wohlgemuth is not a wit by nature but by intention, and it was indiscreet on his part to promise Freud's annihilation through his ridicule. Here are two epigrams which he so values that in default of place for them in the body of the text, he gathers them into a supplementary jewel chapter.

"Darwin discovered The Descent of Man, and Freud discovered that there wasn't a decent man."

"Darwin was for twenty years dreaming of the Origin of Species, but Freud presented us in a shorter time with a specious origin of dreaming."

It is hard for me to believe that Swift and Voltaire will, in the Elysian Fields, ask Wohlgemuth to be a third in that illustrious company.

The best chapter in the book is not a psychological chapter. Wohlgemuth objects, with warrant, I believe, to the abuse of dogmatic symbol interpretation, and he discusses at some length the symbol of the serpent, and the serpent as an object of veneration. Also he has at least one amusing passage. In satirizing the abstention of the analyst from any directing of the patients' associations, he tells of accompanying a stranger in London whom he suspects of a Hyde Park complex, from the Mansion House to Hyde Park. The park is of course never mentioned, but by insidiously keeping the stranger from taking any turning that would lead elsewhere, Hyde Park is reached by him at last.

LEO STEIN.

## The Fir and the Palm

*The Fir and the Palm, by Elizabeth Bibesco. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$3.50.*

LET it be admitted at once that this is a clever book. In partial extenuation of this fault—for a terrible fault it is in the eyes of most book reviewers—the theme demanded clever handling if it was to take on substance at all. A fir tree, lonely on its northern height, dreams of a palm tree, mourning alone on a sun parched ridge. They have nothing better to do. Cyril loves Helen his wife with a white, restrained passion, of which she is unaware. Christopher, too, loves Helen, with a devotion pure enough to make your head ache. Helen loves Toby who has the glitter and cold blood of a serpent and a quite

human anxiety to keep out of trouble. Toby is inclined toward Selina, who is a sophisticated ingenue not definitely inclined toward anyone. Virginia loves Matthew but fears that marriage would take the golden dust off his wings, and it may be only by virtue of the golden dust that he is anything at all. Mrs. Blaine poses herself decoratively, to what end none of the company knows. There are two time-expired soldiers of love, an Austrian diplomat and an English knight, to make sage comment, and a shrewd and acid dowager. None of these people have anything whatever to keep them busy, except that Helen works a little in her garden when frustrated love is more irritating than the sun, and Virginia goes slumming to get herself stirred up in behalf of the poor. Toby considers himself a man of action because he can't sit still; his idea of heroic action is going to Thibet.

You can't help comparing the pattern of this book to an elaborate, most civilized dance, of an age more stately and more frivolous than ours. Gorgeous ladies and gallant gentlemen lightly tread out the measures on a splendid waxed floor, sprinkled with green leaves—an invocation to nature—in a flood of amber light. The figures develop into hopeless complexities, as it seems to the onlooker. Then they suddenly dissolve into rudimentary simplicity, and combine again into a brief movement of stiff formality. The middle space is cleared; two dancers waltz up to a painted precipice and waltz back again. The music stops; everybody is where he was at the beginning, breathing perhaps a little faster. It was worth looking on.

It might be inferred that Elizabeth Bibesco's art strikes me as artificial. It does not. These people are real, almost libellously real. They are presented as extremely intelligent people, and they live up to their promise. Especially the women. The men are most intelligent when their conversation is most characteristically feminine. I'd except Cyril. His talk is masculine but you have to take his brilliancy largely on faith. But he is just a husband and does not matter much.

Neither is there any doubt about the reality of Helen's love for Toby, nor about the genuineness of Toby's aversion to getting entangled. The only test of reality in fiction is the inevitability of the unexpected, and by this test Elizabeth Bibesco's work is very real. These characters had to behave just as they did, although you didn't expect it of them.

It is not fair to an artist to go behind his craftsmanship and make the life he depicts the object of criticism. Yet one cannot help it. There is something about the life of talk—even good talk, like that of the world of the Fir and the Palm—which seems not to go well with the British genius. The French manage it very well. Perhaps it is because their civilization is so old and ripe that a Frenchman can be a professional talker without spending himself on the air. His rigid little egoistic self maintains itself inviolate whatever his pretence of giving himself entirely to the life of conversation. You never feel borne down by a sense of futility after following the fortunes of a group of French talkers. You do invariably with English talkers, whether they take twenty pages to a breath as in H. G. Wells or a single line as in Elizabeth Bibesco. The Englishman in action is superb, though his action may be useless or even pernicious. The Englishman settled down to a life of talk is dramatically just an empty space, even if the talk is wise and witty.

After reading this book I am unappeased. I have a vulgar hunger for a blood and thunder story. Or for

some tale of an archaic, bearded Anglo-Saxon knight, reeking with sweet and campfire smoke, who throttles his enemy with a grim "That's that," repairs to his drafty castle to gorge himself on pork chins and brown ale, and to sleep peacefully all night by the side of his tawny, long-limbed wife.

ALVIN JOHNSON.

## Birth Control for Clio

*The Nations of Today, edited by John Buchan. First six volumes: France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Baltic and Caucasian States, British America, Japan. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. Each volume \$5.00.*

THESE volumes are the first installment in an ambitious attempt to bring out an historical series covering the history and economic life of all the leading states of the world, with major emphasis on the modern and contemporary period. In the eight pages of his "General Introduction" Mr. Buchan presents as admirable a case for the study of history, and especially the history of foreign states, as is known to the reviewer.

This series has been undertaken to provide for the ordinary citizen a popular account of the history of his own and other nations, a chronicle of those movements of the past of which the effect is not yet exhausted, and which are still potent for the peace and comfort of the present. The writers conceive history as a living thing of the most urgent consequence to the men of today; they regard the world around us as an organic growth dependent upon a long historic ancestry. The modern view of history—apart from the pedantry of certain specialists—is a large view, subordinating the mere vicissitudes of dynasties and parliaments to those more fateful events which are the true milestones of civilization. Clio has become an active goddess and her eyes range far. History is, of course, like all sciences, the quest for a particular kind of truth, but that word "truth" has been given a generous interpretation. The older type of historian was apt to interest himself chiefly in the doings of kings and statesmen, the campaigns of generals and the contests of parties. These no doubt are important, but they are not the whole, and to insist upon them to the exclusion of all else is to make the past an unfeatured wilderness, where the only personalities are generals on horseback, judges in ermine and monarchs in purple. Nowadays, whatever we may lack in art, we have gained in science. The plain man has come to his own, and, as Lord Acton has put it, "The true historian must now take his meals in the kitchen."

The War brought the meaning of history home to the world. Whether we like it or not, our isolation is shattered, and not the remotest nation can now draw in its skirts from its neighbors. The consequence must be that even those who are averse to science, and prefer to settle everything by rule of thumb, will be forced to reconsider their views. . . . In these circumstances it is inevitable that interest in foreign countries, often an unwilling and angry interest, should be compulsory for large classes which up to now have scarcely given the matter a thought. An understanding of foreign conditions—though at first it may not be a very sympathetic understanding—is forced upon us by the needs of our daily life.

To these broad and general reasons for studying and reading history, there may be added certain specific ad-