

## THE LIMITATIONS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS—2.

DOGMA  
OR DISCIPLINE?

*Last week Dr. Erich Fromm, the well-known psychoanalyst and author, discussed the factors which contribute to a healthy relationship between analyst and patient. This week Dr. J. A. Gengerelli, professor of psychology at the University of California, takes a hard look at the basic theory of psychoanalysis, its scientific credibility, and the widespread quackery to which its fads and abuses can give rise.*



By J. A. Gengerelli

**W**HEN I was an undergraduate there was current a malicious quip to the effect that psychiatry was a science based on but a single known fact: namely, that syphilis is responsible for general paralysis. I felt that this was a vicious canard, but as the years went by and my knowledge increased the point of the jibe became clearer to me. It is maddening to contemplate that any phenomenon as awesome, dramatic, and overwhelming as, say, schizophrenia should be, after so much scientific effort and medical experience, so little understood. This holds for all the psychoses. In the last thirty years certain therapeutic techniques have come into being which are shown to be helpful under limited conditions, but at best these are rule-of-thumb procedures. If the patient improves, this is as mysterious as a lack of improvement.

Forty years ago the average psychiatrist was the superintendent of an institution for the insane, or a member of the staff in such an institution. He was a man who, on the

whole, modestly and silently tried to penetrate the awful mystery of insanity, and created very little stir in the world. Our Man-on-the-Street had heard very little about psychiatrists and even less about psychoanalysis. Then psychoanalysis took over the spotlight in this country. Today any hillbilly knows that a psychoanalyst is a kind of doctor who has you lie on a couch while he probes your mind.

Psychoanalysis is the overwhelming influence in psychiatry, since a very large minority, if not a small majority, of all psychiatrists practising at present are, in varying degrees, of psychoanalytic persuasion. It is, thus, a school of thought within a medical discipline and as such concerns itself primarily with the cause and treatment of mental disease. This statement will make many psychoanalysts wince, for while they are willing to admit that their discipline concerns itself in great measure with mental illness, it is much more comprehensive in its scope. Indeed, it is a discipline which purports to explicate the very foundations of human nature.

As we have seen, the influence of

psychoanalysis in the United States at present is most impressive. It would, indeed, be difficult to overestimate the impact of Freud's thought on the thinking of our times, especially among the classes which may be considered as supplying the intellectual leadership for the nation. The impact of his doctrine is perhaps attributable to two things: a) he deals comprehensively with sex and b) what he has to say about the human psyche is clothed in the colorful and metaphorical language of folk poetry. Stripped of all its verbiage, the psychoanalytic message of Freud, in its essential aspects, is simple and so intuitively vivid that it is comprehensible to everyone. It is like a play, with a villain, a hero, a plot, and a stage: the *Id*, the *Superego*, their struggle, and the *Unconscious*.

Freud's language is abstract and formal even though his concepts are concrete and poetical. So aseptic is his terminology that probably no one has written of sex as sexlessly as Freud did. As would be expected, his severest critics are to be found among the academic psychologists, that is, among those investigators who con-



cern themselves with the basic laws which underlie human and animal nature. The criticisms which have been made are varied, technical, and numerous, and this is certainly not the place to enumerate them. They may, however, be classified: a) criticisms directed against the internal logic of the various psychoanalytic systems and b) criticisms of its factual basis. I will concern myself primarily with the second consideration, since a single stubborn fact can put to rout a whole division of syllogisms. In general terms, the chief complaint is that Freud's theoretical structure rests on inadequate evidence. Were astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology to condone such casual and uncontrolled fact-gathering and such tenuous deductions from facts collected and checked so cavalierly as Freud did, the imposing structure of twentieth-century science would hardly exist.

Central to Freud's theory is the struggle between the Superego and the Id. This implacable conflict begins in earliest infancy and continues throughout life, but the experiences of infancy, childhood, and adolescence are especially important. The animal desires of the untutored infant and child are gradually and increasingly thwarted by the forces of society embodied in the Superego. However, these rebuffs to the Id are not taken by the latter lying down. The wishes, the impulses, the cravings are repressed and pushed below the threshold of consciousness, it is true, but they are not killed. They remain there, struggling to find expression.

Candid manifestation and expression is not possible because of the faithful vigilance of the Superego, hence it is necessary to utilize stealth and disguises: the complexes, the bizarre loves and fears, the fantastic and senseless dreams, the various curious incapacities of mind and limb—the anesthetics, blindnesses, tics, etc.—all these are disguises which the repressed libidinal energies assume. Hence the environment of the infant and the child are of overwhelming importance, since the character of the person's surroundings may lead to crippling neuroses sooner or later.

Everyone should be psychoanalyzed, in order to free himself of all psychological scar tissue.

Now there cannot be the slightest doubt of the importance of the environment in infancy, childhood, and adolescence. But—granting that there are persons who cannot see out of one eye when all ophthalmological tests give negative results, who are anesthetic in the right hand when all the sensory paths are intact, who are overcome by fear at the sight of a closed umbrella, who have recurrent dreams of being chased by a burly man with a knife—must we use the elaborate, picturesque abacadabra of psychoanalytic theory to understand these phenomena? As the physiologist Anton Carlson used to say testily: "What is the evidence?"

The evidence is clinical, that is, to be found in case histories. A patient comes to the psychoanalyst's office with one or several complaints. After extended probing into the individual's past, circumstances come to light which could be related to the present symptoms; the experiences in question are found to have a strong emotional tone and were forgotten. Upon being brought to light and looked at objectively, discussed, evaluated, the symptoms are mitigated or disappear. This whole process may require a year or more. Of course, there are many instances where everything is achieved by the therapist *except* removal of the symptoms, in which case he concludes that the resistance on the part of the Id was too great.

However, the crux of the matter is not so much the cases which are not cured as those which are. A child wets the bed, and no attempted medication has helped. She is taken to a psychoanalytically-oriented therapist, who finds among other things that the child is jealous of and hates the mother. He therefore concludes that the bed-wetting constitutes an unconscious reprisal against the mother. The facts are clear enough: the child does wet the bed and does, let us admit, detest her mother. The conclusion, however, is not clear. The two facts by no means guarantee the truth of the conclusion. But the rebuttal to all objections is to show that, after the child is submitted to therapy and her feelings and attitudes toward the mother are brought to light for her and explained, the enuresis disappears. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many instances, but let us ignore the negative results. We are to inquire: does the fact that the therapy ameliorates the situation prove the correctness of the diagnosis?

By no means. Psychoanalytic ther-

apy is by its very nature such a protracted and complex thing that one cannot readily catalogue the relevant elements of experience which transpire in it from the subject's point of view. The therapy is literally an education. No one can go on week after week for an hour at a time speaking out everything that appears in consciousness without being affected perceptibly by the process, whether or not he has a Superego or an Id. Many therapists not subscribing to psychoanalytic doctrine have an equal degree of success with recalcitrant cases of enuresis. Indeed, it has been shown that psychiatrists of other than psychoanalytic persuasion report the same percentage of successful treatments among their patients as do psychoanalysts themselves. This is not categorical proof, of course, but it looks very much as if the patient got better or got worse quite independent of the theory.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that much of human thought and conduct is sex-motivated, but this could only be news to puritans. It does not require the elaborate metaphysical machinery of the Freudian system to make it plausible. It is very well to say, for instance, that ideas and experiences which are unacceptable to the Superego are banished to the unconscious and thereby forgotten. But there are many very unpleasant and humiliating experiences which haunt us to our dying day even though their banishment to the unconscious would be a most welcome change. Matters are even worse: it is a manifest fact that we are not conscious of all the incidents, experiences, and situations which have befallen us. There are so many. We forget most of them. Sometimes we forget things which one might readily suppose would be remembered; for example, the date of one's marriage. Does this prove that the item was actively suppressed? Does the fact that one does not get along too well with one's wife prove it? Not until it can be shown that husbands who get along well with their wives are more likely to remember their wedding date than those who do not.

**C**ONTEMPORARY psychology has earned for itself, especially since the last world war, a rather substantial reputation. Its services during the war were many and various, and were dispatched with a gratifying degree of success—all the way from managing matters of personnel selection to the functional design of instrument panels. Since 1880, the date of founding of the first psychological laboratory, psychologists have cultivated

the scientific vineyard with an almost humorless assiduousness, and they have acquired a lot of detailed knowledge. In the process, it must be emphasized that they have become clever designers of good experiments. The subject-matter of psychological experimentation is so tenuous and elusive, usually, that to the typical well-trained academic psychologist good experimental design is almost second nature.

Throughout this period of time they have also been quick to press into service techniques and gadgets which

have been developed in other disciplines—from symbolic logic to transistors. We have learned that man is the most plastic of the living creatures, and that a vastly higher proportion of what he does and what he values is due to his experiences and learning than is the case in any other species known to science. Psychologists know a great deal about how we perceive the world around us, and how our beliefs, our training, and our wishes modify our perceptions.

Unfortunately, there is very much we do not know; it seems we are in

ignorance of the more important things. We know very little, for instance, about the sources of personality. Unfortunately, the things we do not know are precisely the things we should know were a science of psychology an accomplished fact rather than a promising program. The vacuum of sound scientific understanding of human thought, desire, and action has provided an excellent arena for a conceptual Roman holiday. Into it have rushed a varied assortment of characters: the soothsayers, the mystics, the muddle-headed, the sob-sisters, and not least of all the hard-headed opportunists who see a splendid opportunity to turn the general confusion to their financial advantage. As a consequence, the whole field of knowledge regarding human relations is filled with a tremendous cacophony of voices, each trying to recruit a following. Nostrums and cults appear overnight. Witness, for instance, diabetics or the "Case of Bridey Murphy."

The miasma of ignorance which surrounds the topic of psychology and the resulting babel of tongues about complexes, inhibitions, repressions, psychosomatic illnesses, fears, childhood traumas, Oedipus yearnings, and maladjustments due to frustrations have reduced many thoughtful adults to a helpless mass of disorganized and quivering apprehensions. This is particularly true of those who are literate and who read books and articles to prepare themselves for approaching parenthood or who, being parents already, seek "scientific" guidance. Many households stagger from one crisis to another, as each daily development becomes the occasion for extended judicious palaver and conclave. The child's nursery and playroom is infiltrated with a subtle atmosphere of solicitous apprehension and solemn vacillation. Sometimes the patience of one or the other or both of the parents begins to fray at the edges, and family life and childraising, instead of being something warm, comfortable and gay, slowly and imperceptibly take on the tone of an endless and loveless chore.

How about the effect on the child? In the vacuum of wills into which he was born and raised, certain attitudes slowly develop on his part. As the years go by he perceives that he is the center of the universe he knows; he has to work for the things he wants, to be sure, but nearly everything he wants is forthcoming if he "plays his cards right" and will only persist long enough. Indeed, there are times when he thinks he senses a secret admiration on the part of his

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## WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA?

*These days the average reader runs across the word schizophrenia in nearly every novel or play. As Dr. Gengerelli points out, it is an illness (or illnesses) for which there is known no sure cure. But what does the word mean? Every textbook on schizophrenia is largely an attempt to define the word (and specify the condition) in the terms of the case-experiences of whoever wrote the book. This is not a bad system except that not often do two authors agree on one usage. As we can see here, the "Webster" definition is clear but general. The professional definitions following require a certain amount of reconciliation. Probably the meaning of the word is uncertain enough that a layman should never use it, and a scientist only when he simultaneously cites a specific, well-known technical formulation.*

**WEBSTER:** "A type of psychosis characterized by loss of contact with the environment and by disintegration of the personality."

**DREVER,** in "A Dictionary of Psychology": "A type of mental disorder, inclusive of what was formerly called *dementia praecox*, characterized by dissociation, particularly between the intellectual processes and the affective, the latter being also to a great extent disorganized, with many varieties."

**ALEXANDER,** in "Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis": "In schizophrenia the ego loses its synthetic function of harmonizing the different and often contradictory instinctual demands. Sudden unmotivated aggressive attacks and self-destructiveness are clear signs of disintegration in the structure of the ego. . . . The self-mutilations are symbolic of self-castrations and are manifestations of isolated feminine wishes which are released after the synthetic function of the ego is destroyed. The polymorphous, manic behavior is the manifestation of disorganized instinctual demands which have lost their interconnections and seek independent outlets. . . . The ability to dispense with reality is a characteristic of schizophrenia which differen-

tiates it from neuroses, in which so radical a flight from reality is impossible."

**HENDERSON AND GILLESPIE,** in "A Textbook of Psychiatry": "In its typical form it consists in a slow, steady deterioration of the entire personality, usually showing itself at the period of adolescence. It involves principally the affective life, expresses itself in disorder of feeling, of conduct, and of thought, and in an increasing withdrawal of interest from the environment. . . . Kraepelin differentiated three principal types. Later he added a fourth variety, and in the last edition of his textbook numerous other forms: simple depressive *dementia praecox*, delusional *dementia praecox*, circular *dementia praecox*, etc."

**MENNINGER,** in "The Human Mind": "The common tendency of the members of the group is an inability to get along well with other people. These people sometimes appear to want to mix with the herd. More often they obviously do not want to and they never do—successfully, at any rate. They may achieve great things and they may not—we may acclaim them and pay them due respect—but we never love them very much. We can't. They won't let us."





*Spotlight on Fiction*

## "NEVER SO FEW"

*Author: Tom T. Chamales*

By MAXWELL GEISMAR, author of *"Writers in Crisis"* and other studies of American literature.

**A**FTER two decades of the higher criticism it may be useful to return to the basic axioms of the literary craft. What counts in a novel is simply the amount of life it contains. And what one really pays tribute to, in any novel, is the artist's vision of life. On the first score, there is little doubt that in *"Never So Few"* (Scribners, \$4.50) Tom T. Chamales has written an extraordinary first novel of the Burma guerillas—the Kachin tribesmen with their American and English leaders—during the Second World War. It is an exotic and absorbing experience that one lives through in the dense pages of this book, full of pain, suffering, and death.

But this is also an odd and rather disturbing novel, which opens in the hills of North Burma, where an American officer, Con Reynolds, has been learning something about the natives. The Kachins are small, brown, childlike, polite, and merry. Their wise man is Nautaug; their commander is the Subadar Major La Bung La of the Burma Rifles; they are invincible warriors and wonderfully charming human beings. The great single merit of the novel is really the affectionate account of them which dispels the cliché of the white man's superiority.

The "whites" are in fact a pretty ragged lot, terrified and corrupted by the ordeal of jungle fighting, which the Kachins take as their natural existence when their country is in danger: and when was it not? The radio operator, Niven, is young, weak, and unstable; the half-Spanish, half-Filipino Lau'el is still tortured by an unhappy love affair; the tough killer Danforth, of American Indian descent, looks down his nose at these remote ancestors who have brought him only shame and disgrace in his own mind. The first job of Con Reynolds is simply to bring his "commanding officers" up to the level of discipline, courage, and dignity that the Kachins expect from their leaders.

In this respect *"Never So Few"*

almost goes back to the days of Stephen Crane, when war was an intensely personal experience which either made or destroyed a man's character. That is the opening theme of the book, and it is superbly rendered in the descriptions of the actual processes of guerilla warfare, which Mr. Chamales himself took part in for a year and a half behind the Japanese lines. This area of the novel never falters and is continually engrossing. But when the narrative moves up to the higher echelons of the British-American command in Asia, and into the areas of civilian life itself, the texture of the writing is less sure.

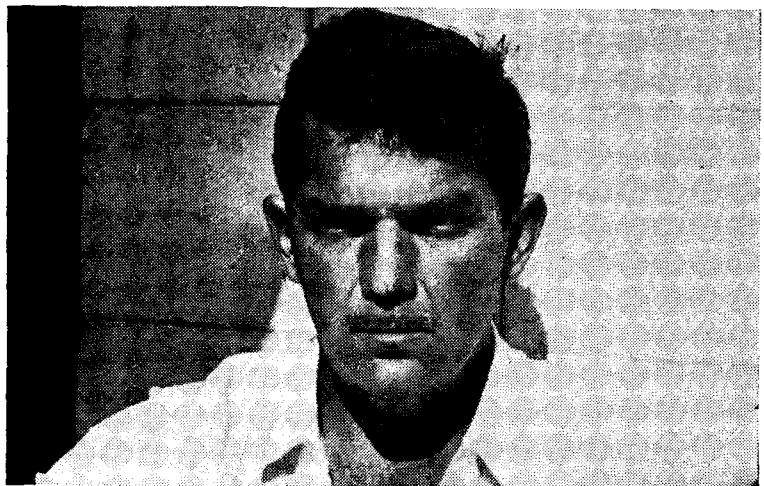
**D**URING the course of the Burma campaign we also get profiles of Lord Mountbatten, Generals Wingate, Merrill, and Stilwell, and the other great names who were assembled in the Asian theatre. But there is a mixture of old-fashioned Richard Harding Davis "romance" in the narrative here, and somehow Mr. Chamales seems to confuse the founders of the American Republic with some of its later millionaires, or with General Motors. Con Reynolds himself, when he tosses a grenade to his chauffeur, or takes over the hospital he has been sent to, becomes something of a superman. When he rejects the girl he has loved earlier because she is too "respectable" for him, we understand

his point, but are not attracted by his tone.

It is in the peacetime human relationships of all the central figures—and particularly those with women—that the novel makes us uneasy. The personal histories of Mr. Chamales's heroes are compounded of fears, frustrations, and ugly hatreds, and there is something here of contempt, not merely for the regular army itself, but for the whole fabric of civilian life. Unlike the Kachins, these Americans cannot shake off the fever of war and enjoy the delights of peace—they seem indeed to have no taste for and no memory of such pleasures. They are only happy with each other back again in the fierce jungles of Burma. They are an élite of desperate men.

There is undoubtedly truth in these portraits, as the studies of T. E. Lawrence, for example, have indicated. But it is this desperate vision of life that one questions on the part of such a talented new novelist as Mr. Chamales—and that makes one nervous. As the novel moves towards the climax of the Burma campaign the earlier episodes of warmth and gaiety even among the Kachins are muted; the scenes of war become appallingly brutal and savage. The dead-end kid, Ringa—murderer, and professional torturer of the Jap prisoners—takes over the stage in effect, and the death of Con Reynolds is inevitable, and perhaps unlamented. Now that Mr. Chamales has dealt with war so brilliantly, he will have to come to terms with peace and with art.

**YOUNG MAN IN AMERICA:** For a youth to start a novel like *"Some Must Watch"* (Scribners, \$3.95) at sixteen and finish it at nineteen is so remarkable that, like Johnson's dog walking on its hind legs, one is inclined to



—Charles Peterson.

Tom T. Chamales—"he will have to come to terms with peace."