

# **Barry Blackwell: Pioneers and Controversies in Psychopharmacology**

## **Chapter 16: From Past to Present: Lessons Learned**

### **A Mid-Century Madhouse:**

#### **Lessons learned, Enoch Calloway review, Parts 3 and 4**

### **PREAMBLE**

In Part 3 and 4 of his Memoir, Enoch Calloway extrapolates from past to present as an examination of the flow of events up to the time of its publication in 2007.

Doubt about the tenets of psychoanalysis had its beginnings at the Asylum in 1950 and was spawned by exposure to so many patients who had failed psychoanalysis or would be unlikely to benefit –often verbalized first by resident’s wives, living alongside in the asylum. Doubts grew at a snail’s pace in America even after the arrival of effective drugs from 1949 on. First lithium, then major and minor tranquilizers, antidepressants and mood stabilizers all had a dramatic influence elsewhere in the world while America remained in thrall with psychoanalysis.

In 1968 when I migrated to America almost every Department Chair was an analyst and most of the residents were in analysis with a faculty member. Innovative trainees and junior faculty who prescribed drugs or wanted to study them were accused of sadistic impulses as part of a counter-transference due to a patient’s failure to benefit from therapy.

Noch notes that empiricism and the need for scientific proof of efficacy also had its beginnings among the talented residents and staff at Worcester Asylum, but only began to flourish elsewhere when drugs started to appear; the placebo response was acknowledged and controlled double-blind studies became mandatory. Nate Kline played a pivotal role in Noch’s enlightenment at Worcester (before moving to Rockland State Hospital) when the earliest enthusiasm for drug treatments and research was outside academia and developed in the VA hospitals and State Asylums, initially funded by the Federal Government via the Early Clinical Drug Evaluation Units (ECDEU).

By the mid to late 1970s the Zeitgeist had begun the change, DSM III was on the horizon and the money made by Big Pharma was beginning to trickle down to the benefit of academic departments and professional organizations, like the ACNP. Chairmen became eager to recruit psychopharmacologists to attract a share of the largesse.

Even so, many academic departments were wise enough not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Some Freudian tenets were worth retaining and psychological mindedness remained an essential element of training an empathic psychiatrist. Noch notes that “even compassion can be taught.”

The eventual burning down of the Worcester Asylum provided a metaphorical impetus for Noch to conclude his retrospective update of events in 2007 with the rhetorical question: “How far has the United States really come to solving the problems of mental illness?” Noch expresses pessimism over the “destructive impact” of the anti-psychiatry movement and the Scientology cult. He is also disappointed about the partial failure of de-institutionalization due to the inability of the antipsychotic drugs to improve social and cognitive functions essential for survival in the community. One senses his nostalgia for something better than prisons, forensic units and the homeless on city streets. He complains that despite the benefits of psychotropic drugs there remain many whose needs are not met in a “profit driven” health care environment– the antithesis of caring that includes denial of effective psychotherapy which can reduce the cost of co-morbid medical care; the so-called insurance “off-set.”

## **ASYLUM: A Mid-Century Madhouse and It's Lessons about Our Mentally Ill Today**

by

**Enoch Callaway. M.D.**

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**Reviewed by Barry Blackwell**

### Part 3 and Part 4

**Part Three:** *Leaders of the Vision* (Chapters 40-48) is still linked to experiences at the Asylum but with larger contemporary implications. In *Fabulous Phonies* (Chapter 40) Noch exposes questionable aspects of psychoanalysis through the careers of two prominent analysts: Gregory Zilborg, who never visited the asylum, was an analyst, scholar, author and brilliant speaker but “his self-promotion was outrageous” (Zilborg was analyzing George Gershwin for difficulty playing the piano with his left hand; a problem the analyst attributed to masturbatory conflicts “until his right parietal brain tumor became obvious”); and John Rosen, who did visit Worcester and made a clinical presentation that bewitched the residents, illustrating his method of Direct Analysis by offering a manic patient a sexual interpretation that reduced him to tears, allegedly because it revealed “underlying homosexual conflicts.” Noch contrasts this with his subsequent experience watching patients switch from mania to depression spontaneously without analytic interpretations and also documents how Rosen’s claims were subsequently discredited.

In Chapter 41, *The Psychoanalytic Innovator*, Noch examines the fate of psychoanalytic theory current during his time at Worcester due to the passage of time. Helen Deutsch published her famous book, *The Psychology of Women*, in 1945 but, “today feminists would burn her in effigy.” Helen’s husband, Felix, developed the concept of “*Sector Analysis*” and demonstrated the technique at Worcester on a patient presented at a resident’s conference. It consisted of focusing on a specific conflict, often repressed hostility that could be resolved via interpretation without the risk of “symptom substitution.” Noch points out that other forms of psychotherapy have since yielded impressive results without involving hostility, but that the practice of focusing as opposed to “free association” now seems “so obvious as to be banal.”

In Chapter 42, *How Fortune Came to Favor the Foundation and the Hospital*, Noch examines the asylum’s Camelot Years and the outcomes that have contemporary relevance. He gives credit for this period from 1921 to mid-century (as mentioned earlier) to two hospital administrators who had “the talent, vision and altruism to build, to facilitate and to leave the hands-on fun to others while he or she juggles the resources.”

The Schizophrenia Project (1921-1944) made three seminal contributions. First it documented the ignorance and oversimplification on which contemporary knowledge was

founded; primarily from single clinicians based on limited data. Second, it expanded the data base to include a large asylum population with “scrupulous observations and careful measurements.” Third, it made a careful and long term clinical study of insulin shock therapy that compared treated patients with matched untreated controls. This laid the basis for subsequent demise of this labor-intensive treatment once chlorpromazine was discovered in 1952.

The second coup was the relationship between the asylum with the Physiology Department at Clark University and recruitment of Hudson Hoagland from Harvard. This was of particular value to Noch whose interest in endocrinology began in medical school and flourished under Hoagland’s mentorship -- his “scientific role model.” Further, it led to work on the newly developed technique of electroencephalography (the EEG) and finally to Hoagland’s collaboration with Howard Pincus. What began as hope that female endocrinology would shed light on mental illness morphed into the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology which migrated from Worcester to nearby Shrewsbury in 1945 where Pincus was introduced to Margaret Sanger, leading to the discovery of the contraceptive pill. The chemistry lab remained at Worcester where its lead scientist became another mentor to Noch who was also designated a “Foundation Fellow.” Minks were the experimental model for fertility and in *On Mink Mating and Money-Making*, (Chapter 44), Noch describes how an ingenious animal psychologist designed a fur hand puppet that allowed for the collection of sperm from the male minks used to artificially inseminate females, thus increasing the frequency of litters and generating money from pelts to fund the research. Unfortunately, the law of supply and demand lowered their worth and so the “Foundation did not make the expected fortune.”

Noch pays generous tribute to role models that shaped his career in *Marvelous Mentors* (Chapter 46) and in the preceding chapter devotes special attention to Nathan Kline who served as Director of Research at Worcester in the waning days of Noch’s apprenticeship. Nate involved Noch in research on autonomic responsiveness in depression during which he served as an experimental control in a double blind experiment and was injected with a saline solution to which he had a “brisk cardiovascular response” due to what turned out, to Noch’s chagrin, to be placebo! Nate Kline went on to win two Lasker Awards for his pioneer work on the earliest antipsychotic and antidepressant medications while founding his own research center at Rockland State Hospital

(later named after him) where he espoused many of the same strategies and principles Noch describes at the asylum.

Part Three concludes with a final chapter, *Footnotes on Psychotherapy* (Chapter 48), an expansive review of advances in the field of psychiatry and what Noch learned at the asylum. He summarizes his view of what science demands of psychiatry by quoting a commentary by Edmonds and Endow of Sir Karl Popper's 1945 book, *The Open Society and its Enemies*: "Attack authoritarianism, dogma and historical inevitability; stress tolerance, transparency and debate; embrace trial and error; distrust certainty and espouse humility."

**Part Four** of the book is titled *It's Only the Castle Burning* (Chapters 49-54). It serves as a contemporary epilogue to all that goes before. *Welcome to the Third Millennium* (Chapter 49) is a balanced view of the current status of psychiatry in 2007, its prestige (or lack thereof) as a discipline, the shifting balance between biological psychiatry and psychoanalysis, the evolving field of genetics, the role of the ACNP and ending with, for Noch, the inevitable question, "How far has the United States really come towards solving the problems on mental illness?"

*Visits with Those Left Behind* (Chapter 50) is a late life view of what remains of asylum care and for whom? It relates how de-institutionalization and the failure of community care led to homelessness and criminalization of the mentally ill who are now housed in prisons and State hospital forensic units.

This is prelude to *Are promises Made to be Broken?* (Chapter 51), a reprise of the volatile history of the asylum culminating in Noch's concluding thought that he, "Enjoyed Worcester at the crest of the last wave. But when that broke the Worcester State Hospital had no tomorrow."

The final three chapters analyze the influences that brought about that demise beginning with *The Seeds of Deinstitutionalization* (Chapter 52). It identifies the events that invoked the end of asylum care; the libertarian zeitgeist of the 1960s; the shortcomings of the new drugs that enabled the optimistic move into community; and the inadequacy of what was available there. Noch briefly traces the evolution of anti-psychotic drugs noting that while they effectively stifled the positive symptoms of schizophrenia they did little to repair the negative social and cognitive deficits that made a normal life in community possible or tolerable. Nor did the often serious side effects encourage compliance with treatment. The chapter ends by remarking that the programs

and population-based solutions of so called community care often fail to match the needs of individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.

The penultimate chapter, *The Unholy Alliance* (Chapter 53), deals with the destructive impact of the “anti-psychiatry” movement which Noch experienced first-hand; when teaching medical students about schizophrenia he was, “attacked as a dupe of the oppressive establishment and was informed that mental illness was nothing but a myth used by the State to enforce conformity.” Noch identifies the Scientology cult and their “captive psychiatrist” Peter Breggin in a 1970s’ movement that terminated the distinguished career of neuroscientist Jose Delgado. Not mentioned by Noch is the part played by a Trotskyist movement in France that terminated Jean Delay’s career, the distinguished scientist whose team had introduced chlorpromazine to psychiatry. Also indicted are the bizarre and convoluted legal impediments to emergency treatment and commitment procedures that are often counterproductive. Noch succinctly summarizes the dilemmas involved in finding solutions to a problem that requires laws and treatment programs which reconcile conflicting goals and that “(a) guard society against violence, (b) protect the incompetent from self-harm, and (c) protect civil liberty.”

The final chapter is *Postscript: So What? With Notes on the Culture of Caring* (Chapter 54). It begins by stating the paradox that while “millions of people are enjoying the advances psychiatry has made in the last half century ...many of those who need help the most are no better off or even in worse condition than the patients I knew at Worcester.”

Noch acknowledges another paradox: the more scientists study the brain the stranger and more complex it seems to become. This reality is embedded in a health care environment that is profit driven -- “the antithesis of the culture of caring.” Despite ample evidence that certain types of psychotherapy are effective and can reduce the cost of co-morbid medical care such interventions are often denied.

Finally, Noch makes a plea for the preservation of time to teach residents “the skills of listening and interviewing. Even compassion can be taught.” He advocates for the integration of social and medical interventions. But above all, he repeats concerns that infuse this entire book - the need to test any theory against reality (empiricism) and while doing so to demonstrate compassion: “How society treats its most vulnerable members tells who we really are.”

In this slender and pithy volume Enoch Callaway tells a clear-sighted, wise and compassionate story with humor and humility. Viewed through the prism of a distinguished career, from resident to Emeritus Professor, Noch relates how far psychiatry has come, yet still needs to go. Despite its discoveries and advances our discipline cannot claim with reliability and specificity how to repair a broken brain or calm a troubled mind. This is a story for every student in any of the mental health and neuroscience disciplines; it tells how an enquiring and bright mind can absorb the principles of analyzing data and acting compassionately that lay the basis for a successful career, whatever it may bring.

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