

SANITARIUM · SCHLOSS TEGEL

Ernst Simmel was born in ^{BRESLAU}~~Berlin~~, was educated ^{IN BERLIN}~~there~~, started his career there. The vicissitudes of the time, especially the advent of the Nazis, brought him to Los Angeles. Wherever he worked, his pioneering psychoanalytic ventures won him a place in the annals of psychiatry.

In 1927 he founded Sanitarium Schloss Tegel, widely considered a significant landmark in the development of the modern mental hospital. Tegel is a suburb of Berlin, the grounds and buildings of the hospital the former estate of the Humboldt family. In spite of the brilliance of the sanitarium's founder, and the freshness and force of his novel ideas, Tegel survived only four brief years. The sanitarium succumbed in 1931 to the financial crisis and to the reactionary ideology of Nazism. World-wide economic depression engulfed Germany, already in serious difficulty due to inflation after World War I.

There is a special irony in the failure of Tegel when one considers the acclaim it received from many famous, influential persons of the period--first and foremost Sigmund Freud. His approval was not only professional; Tegel had a special personal meaning for him. At Simmel's invitation, Freud made it his headquarters on the several occasions when he came to Berlin for surgical treatment of his malignancy. He greatly appreciated the serene and beautiful setting of Tegel, as well as Simmel's thoughtfulness in arranging for his privacy. Mrs. Frances Deri,

who also migrated to Los Angeles, has described meeting Freud when she was a member of the staff there.

One of the Los Angeles analysts who visited Tegel was David Brunswick. He has described this visit and has commented on Simmel's great vitality and wide interests. In Los Angeles at this time there was a small group of dedicated Freudian analysts, all of them laymen. Dr. Brunswick's report led them to invite Simmel to Los Angeles. Their invitation was in part based upon their need for greater medical orientation, and upon the anticipated benefits from his long experience in developing analytic organizations and in teaching psychoanalysis. Their need for leadership coincided with Simmel's need to leave Germany. Not long after the closing of Tegel, he aroused Nazi suspicion and distrust because of his long association with progressive and socialist movements.

Dr. Karl Menninger had invited Simmel to join the staff of the Menninger Sanitarium in Topeka, Kansas. This offer was made June 23, 1933, and reads partly as follows: ". . . recently Dr. Alexander handed me a letter just received by him from you in which you expressed interest in the possibility of coming to our clinic to do psychoanalytic work. We are delighted to know of your interest in the project and we should like to make it possible. It happens that my brother is leaving for Europe this week and will be in Germany shortly after you receive this letter and he will come to see you when he arrives in Berlin. This will enable you to get a better idea of the nature and extent of our work. We are hoping that it will be possible to have you with us by fall."

Simmel's interests were broad and varied: the new insights afforded by psychoanalysis encouraged him to tackle even those problems usually considered the most difficult, mainly the addictions, psychoses and impulse disorders. Early in his career, during World War I, Simmel introduced hypnotherapy in the treatment of traumatic combat neuroses among German army casualties. A succeeding generation of therapists employed similar treatment for victims of combat in the Second World War, substituting Pentothal for Simmel's hypnotherapy. Other major areas of interest for Simmel were the psychotherapy of the psychoses and the use of psychoanalytic treatment in a hospital setting. His Tegel experiences greatly extended his knowledge and resulted in a number of published papers which won him wide respect. These writings attracted the attention of the Menningers, occupied as they were with the founding of their clinic and hospital on psychoanalytic principles.

Simmel accepted the Los Angeles invitation. He arrived in Los Angeles in 1934, and lived there until his death in 1947. Throughout the years, he maintained cordial relations with the Menningers.

A brochure dating from 1927 reveals Simmel's basic ideas and attitudes for his hospital, emphasizing the dynamic, analytic viewpoint. A translated quotation from this brochure reads: "The medically novel idea to be practised here is derived from the principle that such treatment rests upon the study of the psychic past history of the human personality. Many patients could be helped, but are homebound by specific illness, others need removal from their usual environment. This hospital wants

to help patients who cannot be treated as usual outpatients, because of the severity of their illness. Compulsion neuroses, phobias, functional diseases, somatic problems are among such difficult cases. Other problems for hospital treatment include addictions of all kinds, gambling, impulse disorders, adolescent problems, marital discord, etc."

This statement reveals his zeal and optimism and is, perhaps, the first written formulation in clear unequivocal terms of the function of a psychoanalytically oriented hospital. Almost a generation earlier, Groddeck had applied his insight and talent to therapy in his sanitarium at Baden Baden. Groddeck was much admired by Simmel. On the occasion of Groddeck's sixtieth birthday in 1926, Simmel composed the tribute which was published in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis.

In the sanitarium, Simmel scheduled daily psychotherapy of at least one hour for each patient. Each staff physician had a maximum case load of eight patients. Medication was administered only in emergencies. Paramedical personnel, including those performing humble services, were selected with care and trained in special methods and attitudes. Simmel felt that everyone working in the hospital should have a personal analysis. His goal was to create an atmosphere adapted to the aims of therapy, beginning with harmonious design of the rooms to create a pleasant setting, to select furnishings minimizing the character of a conventional hospital room, with the emphasis on living and working. These ideas anticipated later mental hospital design, now accepted as commonplace. The influence of Simmel's approach to mental hospitals and hospital methods is shown in correspondence

with the Menningers. In June 1937, Will Menninger wrote to Simmel: "I have just completed a revision of our Order Sheets and I have thought about you a good many times since working on these and want to send you a set of them to look over. In addition I am sending you an abbreviated Guide to the Therapeutic Aims which is self-explanatory and is to be used in conjunction with the Order Sheet as an aid to the physician and therapist. I will be especially appreciative of any suggestions you have about them, any ideas that occur to you as you read them over. I think you understand we have gone to considerable pains to interpret and agree as to the concept inferred by the various words and phrases used on the Order Sheet; in other words, all the therapists, nurses, and doctors refer in general to the same idea. It is my hope to write an amplified interpretation of the Order Sheet before long, to give illustration of every term used. I think gradually we are becoming more and more specific in carrying out the sanitarium program on a psychoanalytic basis."

From the foregoing it is obvious that Simmel's Topeka colleagues acknowledged their debt to him in matters relating to organizing their hospital on dynamic principles. For several years, he was designated Honorary President of the Topeka Psychoanalytic Society and he, in turn, held their regard and this tribute in high esteem, writing in 1942, "In my psychoanalytic career, it has been one of my proudest achievements. . . ."

Simmel frequently attended professional meetings in the east and took the opportunity to stop over in Topeka, where he was always received with warmth and hospitality. Whenever he was there he was invited to join the Topeka group. Simmel graciously

acknowledged this gesture, but his increasing California commitments made him refuse these offers. Memorable for him was a week's stay in 1941, the highlight being a "Special Meeting of the Topeka Psychoanalytic Society in Honor of Ernst Simmel," held on May 25th. Simmel gave a paper there: "The Superego in Organic Disease." Afterward he recalled this visit in a glowing letter of thanks: "So many things impressed me during my stay in Topeka . . . was it the fact that I could again breathe the atmosphere of such a psychoanalytic clinic and hospital as I had dreamed of in Tegel, but had never been able to attain?" His praise and admiration reflected the frustration endured when Tegel closed in 1931. Later, in California, he experienced further frustrations when his attempt to establish a psychoanalytic hospital came to naught.

Simmel was a fine intuitive therapist, a remarkable innovator in founding the first psychoanalytic hospital, and a brilliant teacher of psychoanalysis. He recognized the hospital as a basic element in the therapeutic armamentarium, a supplement to psychoanalysis, often essential in difficult cases. Clearly he viewed the broader opportunity made possible when hospital facilities were available, facilities he had described and developed. Both in Germany and in this country, he made many contributions to the training of analysts and to the education of workers in related fields.

Although much of Simmel's hospital experience was limited to the relatively brief Tegel enterprise, his influence on the Menninger Clinic and others has made his ideas a force in mental hospital history. Simmel died in 1947 in Los Angeles, but the vigor of his vision lives on.