

self-development of Eros. As early as Plato, this conception appears as an archaic-mythical residue. Eros is being absorbed into Logos, and Logos is reason which subdues the instincts. The history of ontology reflects the reality principle which governs the world ever more exclusively: The insights contained in the metaphysical notion of Eros were driven underground. They survived, in eschatological distortion, in many heretic movements, in the hedonistic philosophy. Their history has still to be written — as has the history of the transformation of Eros in Agape.²⁹ Freud's own theory follows the general trend: in his work, the rationality of the predominant reality principle supersedes the metaphysical speculations on Eros.

We shall presently try to recapture the full content of his speculations.

²⁹ See Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953).

PART TWO

BEYOND THE REALITY PRINCIPLE

"What time has been wasted during man's destiny in the struggle to decide what man's next world will be like! The keener the effort to find out, the less he knew about the present one he lived in. The one lovely world he knew, lived in, that gave him all he had, was, according to preacher and prelate, the one to be least in his thoughts. He was recommended, ordered, from the day of his birth to bid goodbye to it. Oh, we have had enough of the abuse of this fair earth! It is no sad truth that this should be our home. Were it but to give us simple shelter, simple clothing, simple food, adding the lily and the rose, the apple and the pear, it would be a fit home for mortal or immortal man."

Sean O'Casey, *Sunset and Evening Star*

CHAPTER SIX

The Historical Limits of the Established Reality Principle

The preceding analysis tried to identify certain basic trends in the instinctual structure of civilization and, particularly, to define the specific reality principle which has governed the progress of Western civilization. We designated this reality principle as the performance principle; and we attempted to show that domination and alienation, derived from the prevalent social organization of labor, determined to a large extent the demands imposed upon the instincts by this reality principle. The question was raised whether the continued rule of the performance principle as *the* reality principle must be taken for granted (so that the trend of civilization must be viewed in the light of the same principle), or whether the performance principle has perhaps created the preconditions for a qualitatively different, non-repressive reality principle. This question suggested itself when we confronted the psychoanalytical theory of man with some basic historical tendencies:

(1) The very progress of civilization under the performance principle has attained a level of productivity at which the social demands upon instinctual energy to be spent in alienated labor could be considerably reduced. Conse-

quently, the continued repressive organization of the instincts seems to be necessitated less by the "struggle for existence" than by the interest in prolonging this struggle — by the interest in domination.

(2) The representative philosophy of Western civilization has developed a concept of reason which contains the domineering features of the performance principle. However, the same philosophy ends in the vision of a higher form of reason which is the very negation of these features — namely, receptivity, contemplation, enjoyment. Behind the definition of the subject in terms of the ever transcending and productive activity of the ego lies the image of the redemption of the ego: the coming to rest of all transcendence in a mode of being that has absorbed all becoming, that is for and with itself in all otherness.

The problem of the historical character and limitation of the performance principle is of decisive importance for Freud's theory. We have seen that he practically identifies the established reality principle (i.e., the performance principle) with the reality principle as such. Consequently, his dialectic of civilization would lose its finality if the performance principle revealed itself as only one specific historical form of the reality principle. Moreover, since Freud also identifies the historical character of the instincts with their "nature," the relativity of the performance principle would even affect his basic conception of the instinctual dynamic between Eros and Thanatos: their relation and its development would be different under a different reality principle. Conversely, Freud's instinct theory provides one of the strongest arguments *against* the relative (his-

torical) character of the reality principle. If sexuality is in its very essence antisocial and asocial, and if destructiveness is the manifestation of a primary instinct, then the idea of a non-repressive reality principle would be nothing but idle speculation.

Freud's instinct theory indicates the direction in which the problem must be examined. The performance principle enforces an integrated repressive organization of sexuality and of the destruction instinct. Therefore, if the historical process tended to make obsolete the institutions of the performance principle, it would also tend to make obsolete the organization of the instincts — that is to say, to release the instincts from the constraints and diversions required by the performance principle. This would imply the real possibility of a gradual elimination of surplus-repression, whereby an expanding area of destructiveness could be absorbed or neutralized by strengthened libido. Evidently, Freud's theory precludes the construction of any psychoanalytical utopia. If we accept his theory and still maintain that there is historical substance in the idea of a non-repressive civilization, then it must be derivable from Freud's instinct theory itself. His concepts must be examined to discover whether or not they contain elements that require reinterpretation. This approach would parallel the one used in the preceding sociological discussion. There, the attempt was made to "read off" the ossification of the performance principle from the historical conditions which it has created; presently, we shall try to "read off" from the historical vicissitudes of the instincts the possibility of their non-repressive development. Such an approach

implies a critique of the established reality principle in the name of the pleasure principle — a re-evaluation of the antagonistic relation that has prevailed between the two dimensions of the human existence.

Freud maintains that an essential conflict between the two principles is inevitable; however, in the elaboration of his theory, this inevitability seems to be opened to question. The conflict, in the form it assumes in civilization, is said to be caused and perpetuated by the prevalence of *Ananke*, *Lebensnot*, the struggle for existence. (The later stage of the instinct theory, with the concepts of Eros and death instinct, does not cancel this thesis: *Lebensnot* now appears as the want and deficiency inherent in organic life itself.) The struggle for existence necessitates the repressive modification of the instincts chiefly because of the lack of sufficient means and resources for integral, painless and toilless gratification of instinctual needs. If this is true, the repressive organization of the instincts in the struggle for existence would be due to *exogenous* factors — exogenous in the sense that they are not inherent in the “nature” of the instincts but emerge from the specific historical conditions under which the instincts develop. According to Freud, this distinction is meaningless, for the instincts themselves are “historical”;¹ there is no instinctual structure “outside” the historical structure. However, this does not dispense with the necessity of making the distinction — except that it must be made *within* the historical structure itself. The latter appears as stratified on

¹ See, for example, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1950), pp. 47, 49.

two levels: (a) the phylogenetic-biological level, the development of the animal man in the struggle with nature; and (b) the sociological level, the development of civilized individuals and groups in the struggle among themselves and with their environment. The two levels are in constant and inseparable interaction, but factors generated at the second level are exogenous to the first and have therefore a different weight and validity (although, in the course of the development, they can “sink down” to the first level): they are more relative; they can change faster and without endangering or reversing the development of the genus. This difference in the origin of instinctual modification underlies the distinction we have introduced between repression and surplus-repression;² the latter originates and is sustained at the sociological level.

Freud is well aware of the historical element in man's instinctual structure. In discussing religion as a specific historical form of “illusion,” he adduces against himself the argument: “Since men are so slightly amenable to reasonable arguments, so completely are they ruled by their instinctual wishes, why should one want to take away from them a means for satisfying their instincts and replace it by reasonable arguments?” And he answers: “Certainly men are like this, but have you asked yourselves whether they need be so, whether their inmost nature necessitates it?”³ However, in his theory of instincts, Freud does not draw any fundamental conclusions from the historical distinction, but ascribes to both levels equal and general valid-

² See page 37 above.

³ *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1949), p. 81.

ity. For his metapsychology, it is not decisive whether the inhibitions are imposed by scarcity or by the hierarchical *distribution* of scarcity, by the struggle for existence or by the interest in domination. And indeed the two factors — the phylogenetic-biological and the sociological — have grown together in the recorded history of civilization. But their union has long since become “unnatural” — and so has the oppressive “modification” of the pleasure principle by the reality principle. Freud’s consistent denial of the possibility of an essential liberation of the former implies the assumption that scarcity is as permanent as domination — an assumption that seems to beg the question. By virtue of this assumption, an extraneous fact obtains the theoretical dignity of an inherent element of mental life, inherent even in the primary instincts. In the light of the long-range trend of civilization, and in the light of Freud’s own interpretation of the instinctual development, the assumption must be questioned. The historical possibility of a gradual decontrolling of the instinctual development must be taken seriously, perhaps even the historical *necessity* — if civilization is to progress to a higher stage of freedom.

To extrapolate the hypothesis of a non-repressive civilization from Freud’s theory of the instincts, one must re-examine his concept of the primary instincts, their objectives and their interrelation. In this conception, it is mainly the death instinct that seems to defy any hypothesis of a non-repressive civilization: the very existence of such an instinct seems to engender “automatically” the whole network of constraints and controls instituted by civilization; innate destructiveness must beget perpetual repression.

Our re-examination must therefore begin with Freud’s analysis of the death instinct.

We have seen that, in Freud’s late theory of the instincts, the “compulsion inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces”⁴ is common to both primary instincts: Eros and death instinct. Freud regards this retrogressive tendency as an expression of the “inertia” in organic life, and ventures the following hypothetical explanation: at the time when life originated in inanimate matter, a strong “tension” developed which the young organism strove to relieve by returning to the inanimate condition.⁵ At the early stage of organic life, the road to the previous state of inorganic existence was probably very short, and dying very easy; but gradually “external influences” lengthened this road and compelled the organism to take ever longer and more complicated “detours to death.” The longer and more complicated the “detour,” the more differentiated and powerful the organism becomes: it finally conquers the globe as its dominion. Still, the original goal of the instincts remains — return to inorganic life, “dead” matter. Precisely here, in developing his most far-reaching hypothesis, Freud repeatedly states that exogenous factors determined the primary instinctual development: The organism was forced to abandon the earlier state of things “under the pressure of *external* disturbing forces”; the phenomena of organic life must be “attributed to *external* disturbing and diverting influences”; decisive “*external* influences altered in such

⁴ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 47.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

a way as to oblige the still surviving substance to diverge ever more widely from its original course of life."⁶ If the organism dies "for *internal* reasons,"⁷ then the detour to death must have been caused by external factors. Freud assumes that these factors must be sought in "the history of the earth we live in and of its relation to the sun."⁸ However, the development of the animal man does not remain enclosed in geological history; man becomes, on the basis of natural history, the subject and object of his own history. If, originally, the actual difference between life instinct and death instinct was very small, in the history of the animal man it grows to become an essential characteristic of the historical process itself.

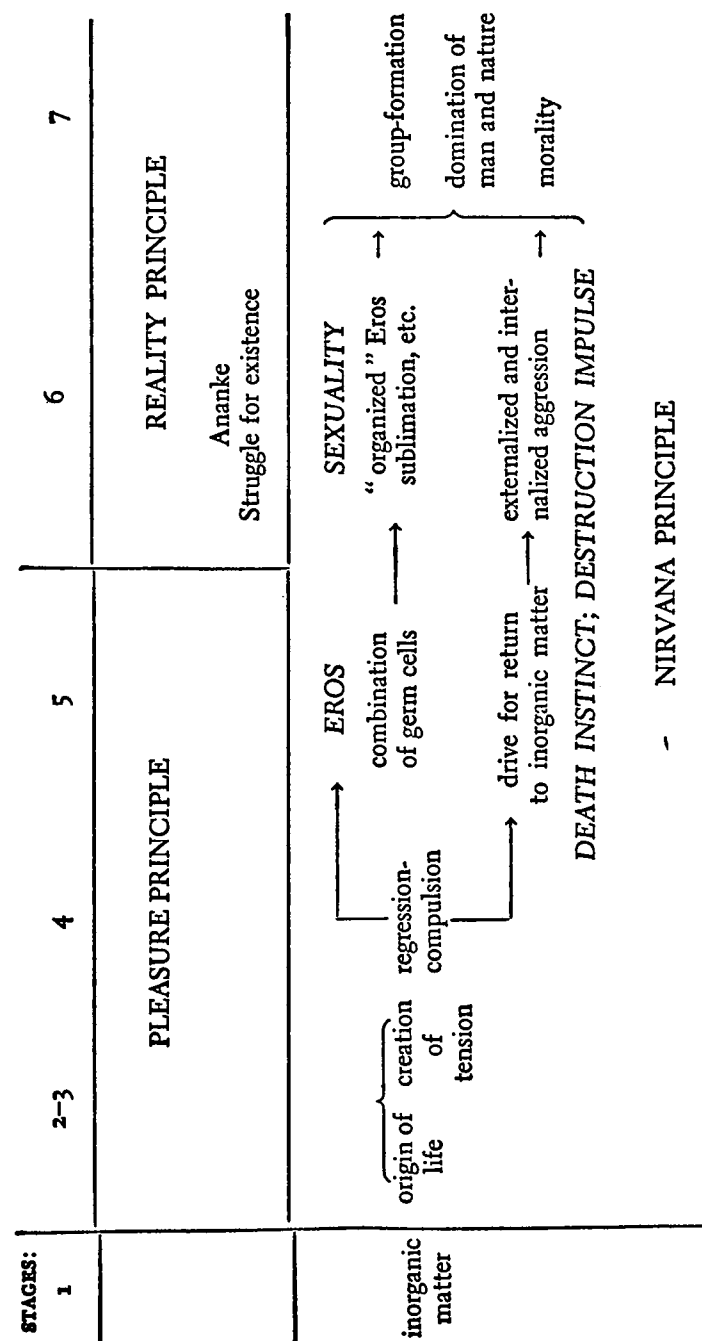
The diagram on the facing page may illustrate Freud's construction of the basic instinctual dynamic.

The diagram sketches a historical sequence from the beginning of organic life (stages 2 and 3), through the formative stage of the two primary instincts (5), to their "modified" development as human instincts in civilization (6-7). The turning points are at stages 3 and 6. They are both caused by exogenous factors by virtue of which the definite formation as well as the subsequent dynamic of the instincts become "historically acquired." At stage 3, the exogenous factor is the "unrelieved tension" created by the birth of organic life; the "experience" that life is less "satisfactory," more painful, than the preceding stage generates the death instinct as the drive for relieving this tension through regression. The working of the death instinct

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 49, 50. Italics added.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.



thus appears as the result of the trauma of primary frustration: want and pain, here caused by a geological-biological event.

The other turning point, however, is no longer a geological-biological one: it occurs at the threshold of civilization. The exogenous factor here is Ananke, the conscious struggle for existence. It enforces the repressive controls of the sex instincts (first through the brute violence of the primal father, then through institutionalization and internalization), as well as the transformation of the death instinct into socially useful aggression and morality. This organization of the instincts (actually a long process) creates the civilized division of labor, progress, and "law and order"; but it also starts the chain of events that leads to the progressive weakening of Eros and thereby to the growth of aggressiveness and guilt feeling. We have seen that this development is not "inherent" in the struggle for existence but only in its oppressive organization, and that at the present stage the possible conquest of want makes this struggle ever more irrational.

But are there not, in the instincts themselves, asocial forces that necessitate repressive constraints regardless of scarcity or abundance in the external world? Again, we recall Freud's statement that the nature of the instincts is "historically acquired." Therefore, this nature is subject to change if the fundamental conditions that caused the instincts to acquire this nature have changed. True, these conditions are still the same in so far as the struggle for existence still takes place within the framework of scarcity and domination. But they tend to become obsolete and

"artificial" in view of the real possibility of their elimination. The extent to which the *basis* of civilization has changed (while its *principle* has been retained) can be illustrated by the fact that the difference between the beginnings of civilization and its present stage seems infinitely greater than the difference between the beginnings of civilization and the preceding stage, where the "nature" of the instincts was acquired. To be sure, the change in the conditions of civilization would directly affect only the formed human instincts (the sex and aggression instincts). In the biological-geological conditions which Freud assumed for the living substance as such, no such change can be envisaged; the birth of life continues to be a trauma, and thus the reign of the Nirvana principle seems to be unshakable. However, the derivatives of the death instinct operate only in fusion with the sex instincts; as long as life grows, the former remain subordinate to the latter; the fate of the *destrudo* (the "energy" of the destruction instincts) depends on that of the libido. Consequently, a qualitative change in the development of sexuality must necessarily alter the manifestations of the death instinct.

Thus, the hypothesis of a non-repressive civilization must be theoretically validated first by demonstrating the possibility of a non-repressive development of the libido under the conditions of mature civilization. The direction of such a development is indicated by those mental forces which, according to Freud, remain essentially free from the reality principle and carry over this freedom into the world of mature consciousness. Their re-examination must be the next step.

Phantasy and Utopia

In Freud's theory, the mental forces opposed to the reality principle appear chiefly as relegated to and operating from the unconscious. The rule of the "unmodified" pleasure principle obtains only over the deepest and most "archaic" unconscious processes: they can provide no standards for the construction of the non-repressive mentality, nor for the truth value of such a construction. But Freud singles out phantasy as one mental activity that retains a high degree of freedom from the reality principle even in the sphere of the developed consciousness. We recall his description in the "Two Principles of Mental Functioning."

With the introduction of the reality principle one mode of thought-activity was split off: it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone. This is the act of *phantasy-making* (*das Phantasieren*), which begins already with the game of children, and later, continued as *day-dreaming*, abandons its dependence on real objects.¹

Phantasy plays a most decisive function in the total mental structure: it links the deepest layers of the unconscious with the highest products of consciousness (art), the dream with the reality; it preserves the archetypes of the genus, the

¹ *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), IV, 16-17. See pages 14-15 above.

perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom. Freud establishes a twofold connection, "between the sexual instincts and phantasy" on the one side, and "between the ego instincts and the activities of consciousness" on the other. This dichotomy is untenable, not only in view of the later formulation of the instinct theory (which abandons the independent ego instincts) but also because of the incorporation of phantasy into artistic (and even normal) consciousness. However, the affinity between phantasy and sexuality remains decisive for the function of the former.

The recognition of phantasy (imagination) as a thought process with its own laws and truth values was not new in psychology and philosophy; Freud's original contribution lay in the attempt to show the genesis of this mode of thought and its essential connection with the pleasure principle. The establishment of the reality principle causes a division and mutilation of the mind which fatefully determines its entire development. The mental process formerly unified in the pleasure ego is now split: its main stream is channeled into the domain of the reality principle and brought into line with its requirements. Thus conditioned, this part of the mind obtains the monopoly of interpreting, manipulating, and altering reality — of governing remembrance and oblivion, even of defining what reality is and how it should be used and altered. The other part of the mental apparatus remains free from the control of the reality principle — at the price of becoming powerless, inconsequential, unrealistic. Whereas the ego was

formerly guided and driven by the *whole* of its mental energy, it is now to be guided only by that part of it which conforms to the reality principle. This part and this part alone is to set the objectives, norms, and values of the ego; as *reason* it becomes the sole repository of judgment, truth, rationality; it decides what is useful and useless, good and evil.² *Phantasy* as a separate mental process is born and at the same time left behind by the organization of the pleasure ego into the reality ego. Reason prevails: it becomes unpleasant but useful and correct; phantasy remains pleasant but becomes useless, untrue — a mere play, day-dreaming. As such, it continues to speak the language of the pleasure principle, of freedom from repression, of uninhibited desire and gratification — but reality proceeds according to the laws of reason, no longer committed to the dream language.

However, phantasy (imagination) retains the structure and the tendencies of the psyche prior to its organization by the reality, prior to its becoming an "individual" set off against other individuals. And by the same token, like the id to which it remains committed, imagination preserves the "memory" of the subhistorical past when the life of the individual was the life of the genus, the image of the immediate unity between the universal and the particular under the rule of the pleasure principle. In contrast, the entire subsequent history of man is characterized by the destruction of this original unity: the position of the ego

² *Reason* in this sense is not identical with the *rational faculty* (intellect) of traditional theoretical psychology. The term here designates that part of the mind which is brought under the control of the reality principle and includes the organized part of the "vegetative," "sensitive," and "appetitive" faculties.

"in its capacity of independent individual organism" comes into conflict with "itself in its other capacity as a member of a series of generations." The genus now lives in the conscious and ever renewed conflict among the individuals and between them and their world. Progress under the performance principle proceeds through these conflicts. The *principium individuationis* as implemented by this reality principle gives rise to the repressive utilization of the primary instincts, which continue to strive, each in its own way, to cancel the *principium individuationis*, while they are constantly diverted from their objective by the very progress which their energy sustains. In this effort, both instincts are subdued. In and against the world of the antagonistic *principium individuationis*, imagination sustains the claim of the whole individual, in union with the genus and with the "archaic" past.

Freud's metapsychology here restores imagination to its rights. As a fundamental, independent mental process, phantasy has a truth value of its own, which corresponds to an experience of its own — namely, the surmounting of the antagonistic human reality. Imagination envisions the reconciliation of the individual with the whole, of desire with realization, of happiness with reason. While this harmony has been removed into utopia by the established reality principle, phantasy insists that it must and can become real, that behind the illusion lies *knowledge*. The truths of imagination are first realized when phantasy itself takes form, when it creates a universe of perception and compre-

³ *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1943), p. 359.

hension — a subjective and at the same time objective universe. This occurs in *art*. The analysis of the cognitive function of phantasy is thus led to aesthetics as the “science of beauty”: behind the aesthetic form lies the repressed harmony of sensuousness and reason — the eternal protest against the organization of life by the logic of domination, the critique of the performance principle.

Art is perhaps the most visible “return of the repressed,” not only on the individual but also on the generic-historical level. The artistic imagination shapes the “unconscious memory” of the liberation that failed, of the promise that was betrayed. Under the rule of the performance principle, art opposes to institutionalized repression the “image of man as a free subject; but in a state of unfreedom art can sustain the image of freedom only in the negation of unfreedom.”⁴ Since the awakening of the consciousness of freedom, there is no genuine work of art that does not reveal the archetypal content: the negation of unfreedom. We shall see later how this content came to assume the aesthetic form, governed by aesthetic principles.⁵ As aesthetic phenomenon, the critical function of art is self-defeating. The very commitment of art to form vitiates the negation of unfreedom in art. In order to be negated, unfreedom must be represented in the work of art with the semblance of reality. This element of semblance (show, *Schein*) necessarily subjects the represented reality to aesthetic standards and thus deprives it of its terror. Moreover, the form of the work of art invests the content with the qualities of

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, “Die gegängelte Musik,” in *Der Monat*, V (1953), 182.

⁵ See Chapter 9 below.

enjoyment. Style, rhythm, meter introduce an aesthetic order which is itself pleasurable: it reconciles with the content. The aesthetic quality of enjoyment, even entertainment, has been inseparable from the essence of art, no matter how tragic, how uncompromising the work of art is. Aristotle's proposition on the cathartic effect of art epitomizes the dual function of art: both to oppose and to reconcile; both to indict and to acquit; both to recall the repressed and to repress it again — “purified.” People can elevate themselves with the classics: they read and see and hear their own archetypes rebel, triumph, give up, or perish. And since all this is aesthetically formed, they can enjoy it — and forget it.

Still, within the limits of the aesthetic form, art expressed, although in an ambivalent manner, the return of the repressed image of liberation; art was opposition. At the present stage, in the period of total mobilization, even this highly ambivalent opposition seems no longer viable. Art survives only where it cancels itself, where it saves its substance by denying its traditional form and thereby denying reconciliation: where it becomes surrealistic and atonal.⁶ Otherwise, art shares the fate of all genuine human communication: it dies off. What Karl Kraus wrote at the beginning of the Fascist period is still true:

“Das Wort entschlief, als jene Welt erwachte.”

In a less sublimated form, the opposition of phantasy to the reality principle is more at home in such sub-real and surreal processes as dreaming, daydreaming, play, the

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949).

"stream of consciousness." In its most extreme claim for a gratification beyond the reality principle, phantasy cancels the established *principium individuationis* itself. Here perhaps are the roots of phantasy's commitment to the primary Eros: sexuality is "the only function of a living organism which extends beyond the individual and secures its connection with its species."⁷ In so far as sexuality is organized and controlled by the reality principle, phantasy asserts itself chiefly against normal sexuality. (We have previously discussed the affinity between phantasy and the perversions.⁸) However, the erotic element in phantasy goes beyond the perverted expressions. It aims at an "erotic reality" where the life instincts would come to rest in fulfillment without repression. This is the ultimate content of the phantasy-process in its opposition to the reality principle; by virtue of this content, phantasy plays a unique role in the mental dynamic.

Freud recognized this role, but at this point his metapsychology reaches a fateful turn. The image of a different form of reality has appeared as the truth of one of the basic mental processes; this image contains the lost unity between the universal and the particular and the integral gratification of the life instincts by the reconciliation between the pleasure and reality principles. Its truth value is enhanced by the fact that the image belongs to mankind over and above the *principium individuationis*. However, according to Freud, the image conjures only the *subhistorical past* of the genus (and of the individual) prior to all civil-

⁷ Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 358.

⁸ See Chapter 2 above.

ization. Because the latter can develop only through the destruction of the subhistorical unity between pleasure principle and reality principle, the image must remain buried in the unconscious, and imagination must become mere fantasy, child's play, daydreaming. The long road of consciousness which led from the primal horde to ever higher forms of civilization cannot be reversed. Freud's conclusions preclude the notion of an "ideal" state of nature; but they also hypostatize a specific historical *form* of civilization as the *nature* of civilization. His own theory does not justify this conclusion. From the historical necessity of the performance principle, and from its perpetuation beyond historical necessity, it does not follow that another form of civilization under another reality principle is impossible. In Freud's theory, freedom from repression is a matter of the unconscious, of the subhistorical and even subhuman *past*, of primal biological and mental processes; consequently, the idea of a non-repressive reality principle is a matter of retrogression. That such a principle could itself become a historical reality, a matter of developing consciousness, that the images of phantasy could refer to the unconquered *future* of mankind rather than to its (badly) conquered past — all this seemed to Freud at best a nice *utopia*.

[The danger of abusing the discovery of the truth value of imagination for retrogressive tendencies is exemplified by the work of Carl Jung. More emphatically than Freud, he has insisted on the *cognitive* force of imagination. According to Jung, phantasy is "undistinguishably" united with all other mental func-

tions; it appears "now as primeval, now as the ultimate and most audacious synthesis of all capabilities." Phantasy is above all the "creative activity out of which flow the answers to all answerable questions"; it is "the mother of all possibilities, in which all mental opposites as well as the conflict between internal and external world are united." Phantasy has always built the bridge between the irreconcilable demands of object and subject, extroversion and introversion.⁹ The simultaneously retrospective and expectant character of imagination is thus clearly stated: it looks not only back to an aboriginal golden past, but also forward to all still unrealized but realizable possibilities. But already in Jung's earlier work the emphasis is on the retrospective and consequently "phantastic" qualities of imagination: dream thinking "moves in a retrograde manner toward the raw material of memory"; it is a "regression to the original perception."¹⁰ In the development of Jung's psychology, its obscurantistic and reactionary trends have become predominant and have eliminated the critical insights of Freud's metapsychology.¹¹

The truth value of imagination relates not only to the past but also to the future: the forms of freedom and happiness which it invokes claim to deliver the historical *real-*

⁹ Jung, *Psychological Types*, transl. H. Godwin Baynes (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), p. 69 (with minor changes in translation).

¹⁰ *Psychology of the Unconscious*, transl. Beatrice M. Hinkle (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), pp. 13-14.

¹¹ Edward Glover's excellent analysis makes a further discussion of Jung's work unnecessary. See *Freud or Jung?* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950).

ity. In its refusal to accept as final the limitations imposed upon freedom and happiness by the reality principle, in its refusal to forget what *can be*, lies the critical function of phantasy:

Réduire l'imagination à l'esclavage, quand bien même il y irait de ce qu'on appelle grossièrement le bonheur, c'est se dérober à tout ce qu'on trouve, au fond de soi, de justice suprême. La seule imagination me rend compte de ce qui *peut être*.¹²

The surrealists recognized the revolutionary implications of Freud's discoveries: "Imagination is perhaps about to reclaim its rights."¹³ But when they asked, "Cannot the dream also be applied to the solution of the fundamental problems of life?"¹⁴ they went beyond psychoanalysis in demanding that the dream be made into reality without compromising its content. Art allied itself with the revolution. Uncompromising adherence to the strict truth value of imagination comprehends reality more fully. That the propositions of the artistic imagination are untrue in terms of the actual organization of the facts belongs to the essence of their truth:

The truth that some proposition respecting an actual occasion is untrue may express the vital truth as to the aesthetic achievement. It expresses the "great refusal" which is its primary characteristic.¹⁵

This Great Refusal is the protest against unnecessary repression, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom —

¹² "To reduce imagination to slavery — even if one's so-called happiness is at stake — means to violate all that one finds in one's inmost self of ultimate justice. Imagination alone tells me what *can be*." André Breton, *Les Manifestes du Surréalisme* (Paris: Editions du Sagittaire, 1946), p. 15. This was the first manifesto (1924).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁵ A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), p. 228.

"to live without anxiety."¹⁶ But this idea could be formulated without punishment only in the language of art. In the more realistic context of political theory and even philosophy, it was almost universally defamed as utopia.

The relegation of real possibilities to the no-man's land of utopia is itself an essential element of the ideology of the performance principle. If the construction of a non-repressive instinctual development is oriented, not on the subhistorical past, but on the historical present and mature civilization, the very notion of utopia loses its meaning. The negation of the performance principle emerges not against but *with* the progress of conscious rationality; it presupposes the highest maturity of civilization. The very achievements of the performance principle have intensified the discrepancy between the archaic unconscious and conscious processes of man, on the one hand, and his actual potentialities, on the other. The history of mankind seems to tend toward another turning point in the vicissitudes of the instincts. And, just as at the preceding turning points, the adaptation of the archaic mental structure to the new environment would mean another "catastrophe" — an explosive change in the environment itself. However, while the first turning point was, according to the Freudian hypothesis, an event in geological history, and while the second occurred at the beginning of civilization, the third turning point would be located at the highest attained level of civilization. The actor in this event would be no longer the historical animal man but the conscious, rational subject

¹⁶ "... Ohne Angst Leben." T. W. Adorno, *Versuch über Wagner* (Berlin-Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1952), p. 198.

that has mastered and appropriated the objective world as the arena of his realization. The historical factor contained in Freud's theory of instincts has come to fruition in history when the basis of Ananke (*Lebensnot*) — which, for Freud, provided the rationale for the repressive reality principle — is undermined by the progress of civilization.

Still, there is some validity in the argument that, despite all progress, scarcity and immaturity remain great enough to prevent the realization of the principle "to each according to his needs." The material as well as mental resources of civilization are still so limited that there must be a vastly lower standard of living if social productivity were redirected toward the universal gratification of individual needs: many would have to give up manipulated comforts if all were to live a human life. Moreover, the prevailing international structure of industrial civilization seems to condemn such an idea to ridicule. This does not invalidate the theoretical insistence that the performance principle has become obsolescent. The reconciliation between pleasure and reality principle does not depend on the existence of abundance for all. The only pertinent question is whether a state of civilization can be reasonably envisaged in which human needs are fulfilled in such a manner and to such an extent that surplus-repression can be eliminated.

Such a hypothetical state could be reasonably assumed at two points, which lie at the opposite poles of the vicissitudes of the instincts: one would be located at the primitive beginnings of history, the other at its most mature stage. The first would refer to a non-oppressive distribution of scarcity (as may, for example, have existed in matriarchal

phases of ancient society). The second would pertain to a rational organization of fully developed industrial society after the conquest of scarcity. The vicissitudes of the instincts would of course be very different under these two conditions, but one decisive feature must be common to both: the instinctual development would be non-repressive in the sense that at least the surplus-repression necessitated by the interests of domination would not be imposed upon the instincts. This quality would reflect the prevalent satisfaction of the basic human needs (most primitive at the first, vastly extended and refined at the second stage), sexual as well as social: food, housing, clothing, leisure. This satisfaction would be (and this is the important point) *without toil* — that is, without the rule of alienated labor over the human existence. Under primitive conditions, alienation has *not yet* arisen because of the primitive character of the needs themselves, the rudimentary (personal or sexual) character of the division of labor, and the absence of an institutionalized hierarchical specialization of functions. Under the “ideal” conditions of mature industrial civilization, alienation would be completed by general automatization of labor, reduction of labor time to a minimum, and exchangeability of functions.

Since the length of the working day is itself one of the principal repressive factors imposed upon the pleasure principle by the reality principle, the reduction of the working day to a point where the mere quantum of labor time no longer arrests human development is the first prerequisite for freedom. Such reduction by itself would almost certainly mean a considerable decrease in the standard of liv-

ing prevalent today in the most advanced industrial countries. But the regression to a lower standard of living, which the collapse of the performance principle would bring about, does not militate against progress in freedom.

The argument that makes liberation conditional upon an ever higher standard of living all too easily serves to justify the perpetuation of repression. The definition of the standard of living in terms of automobiles, television sets, airplanes, and tractors is that of the performance principle itself. Beyond the rule of this principle, the level of living would be measured by other criteria: the universal gratification of the basic human needs, and the freedom from guilt and fear — internalized as well as external, instinctual as well as “rational.” “La vraie civilization . . . n'est pas dans le gaz, ni dans la vapeur, ni dans les tables tournantes. Elle est dans la diminution des traces du pêché originel”¹⁷ — this is the definition of progress beyond the rule of the performance principle.

Under optimum conditions, the prevalence, in mature civilization, of material and intellectual wealth would be such as to allow painless gratification of needs, while domination would no longer systematically forestall such gratification. In this case, the quantum of instinctual energy still to be diverted into necessary labor (in turn completely mechanized and rationalized) would be so small that a large area of repressive constraints and modifications, no longer sustained by external forces, would collapse. Conse-

¹⁷ “True civilization does not lie in gas, nor in steam, nor in turntables. It lies in the reduction of the traces of original sin.” Baudelaire, *Mon Coeur Mis à Nu*, XXXII, in *Oeuvres Posthumes*, ed. Conard, Vol. II (Paris, 1952), p. 109.

quently, the antagonistic relation between pleasure principle and reality principle would be altered in favor of the former. Eros, the life instincts, would be released to an unprecedented degree.

Does it follow that civilization would explode and revert to prehistoric savagery, that the individuals would die as a result of the exhaustion of the available means of gratification and of their own energy, that the absence of want and repression would drain all energy which could promote material and intellectual production on a higher level and larger scale? Freud answers in the affirmative. His answer is based on his more or less silent acceptance of a number of assumptions: that free libidinal relations are essentially antagonistic to work relations, that energy has to be withdrawn from the former in order to institute the latter, that only the absence of full gratification sustains the societal organization of work. Even under optimum conditions of a rational organization of society, the gratification of human needs would require labor, and this fact alone would enforce quantitative and qualitative instinctual restraint, and thereby numerous social taboos. No matter how rich, civilization depends on steady and methodical work, and thus on unpleasurable delay in satisfaction. Since the primary instincts rebel "by nature" against such delay, their repressive modification therefore remains a necessity for all civilization.

In order to meet this argument, we would have to show that Freud's correlation "instinctual repression — socially useful labor — civilization" can be meaningfully transformed into the correlation "instinctual liberation — so-

cially useful work — civilization." We have suggested that the prevalent instinctual repression resulted, not so much from the necessity of labor, but from the specific social organization of labor imposed by the interest in domination — that repression was largely surplus-repression. Consequently, the elimination of surplus-repression would *per se* tend to eliminate, not labor, but the organization of the human existence into an instrument of labor. If this is true, the emergence of a non-repressive reality principle would alter rather than destroy the social organization of labor: the liberation of Eros could create new and durable work relations.

Discussion of this hypothesis encounters at the outset one of the most strictly protected values of modern culture — that of *productivity*. This idea expresses perhaps more than any other the existential attitude in industrial civilization; it permeates the philosophical definition of the subject in terms of the ever transcending ego. Man is evaluated according to his ability to make, augment, and improve socially useful things. Productivity thus designates the degree of the mastery and transformation of nature: the progressive replacement of an uncontrolled natural environment by a controlled technological environment. However, the more the division of labor was geared to utility for the established productive apparatus rather than for the individuals — in other words the more the social need deviated from the individual need — the more productivity tended to contradict the pleasure principle and to become an end-in-itself. The very word came to smack of repression or its philistine glorification: it connotes the resentful

defamation of rest, indulgence, receptivity — the triumph over the “lower depths” of the mind and body, the taming of the instincts by exploitative reason. Efficiency and repression converge: raising the productivity of labor is the sacrosanct ideal of both capitalist and Stalinist Stakhanovism. This notion of productivity has its historical limits: they are those of the performance principle. Beyond its domain, productivity has another content and another relation to the pleasure principle: they are anticipated in the processes of imagination which preserve freedom from the performance principle while maintaining the claim of a *new reality principle*.

The utopian claims of imagination have become saturated with historical reality. If the achievements of the performance principle surpass its institutions, they also militate against the direction of its productivity — against the subjugation of man to his labor. Freed from this enslavement, productivity loses its repressive power and impels the free development of individual needs. Such a change in the direction of progress goes beyond the fundamental reorganization of social labor which it presupposes. No matter how justly and rationally the material production may be organized, it can never be a realm of freedom and gratification; but it can release time and energy for the free play of human faculties *outside* the realm of alienated labor. The more complete the alienation of labor, the greater the potential of freedom: total automation would be the optimum. It is the sphere outside labor which defines freedom and fulfillment, and it is the definition of the human existence in terms of this sphere which constitutes the negation

of the performance principle. This negation cancels the rationality of domination and consciously “de-realizes” the world shaped by this rationality — redefining it by the rationality of gratification. While such a historical turn in the direction of progress is rendered possible only on the basis of the achievements of the performance principle and of its potentialities, it transforms the human existence in its entirety, including the work world and the struggle with nature. Progress beyond the performance principle is not promoted through improving or supplementing the present existence by more contemplation, more leisure, through advertising and practicing the “higher values,” through elevating oneself and one’s life. Such ideas belong to the cultural household of the performance principle itself. The lamentation about the degrading effect of “total work,” the exhortation to appreciate the good and beautiful things in this world and in the world hereafter, is itself repressive in so far as it reconciles man with the work world which it leaves untouched on the side and below. Moreover, it sustains repression by diverting the effort from the very sphere in which repression is rooted and perpetuated.

Beyond the performance principle, its productivity as well as its cultural values become invalid. The struggle for existence then proceeds on new grounds and with new objectives: it turns into the concerted struggle against any constraint on the free play of human faculties, against toil, disease, and death. Moreover, while the rule of the performance principle was accompanied by a corresponding control of the instinctual dynamic, the reorientation of the

struggle for existence would involve a decisive change in this dynamic. Indeed, such a change would appear as the prerequisite for sustaining progress. We shall presently try to show that it would affect the very structure of the psyche, alter the balance between Eros and Thanatos, reactivate tabooed realms of gratification, and pacify the conservative tendencies of the instincts. A new basic experience of being would change the human existence in its entirety.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Images of Orpheus and Narcissus

The attempt to draft a theoretical construct of culture beyond the performance principle is in a strict sense "unreasonable." Reason is the rationality of the performance principle. Even at the beginning of Western civilization, long before this principle was institutionalized, reason was defined as an instrument of constraint, of instinctual suppression; the domain of the instincts, sensuousness, was considered as eternally hostile and detrimental to reason.¹ The categories in which philosophy has comprehended the human existence have retained the connection between reason and suppression: whatever belongs to the sphere of sensuousness, pleasure, impulse has the connotation of being antagonistic to reason — something that has to be subjugated, constrained. Every-day language has preserved this evaluation: the words which apply to this sphere carry the sound of the sermon or of obscenity. From Plato to the "*Schund und Schmutz*" laws of the modern world,² the defamation of the pleasure principle has proved its irresisti-

¹ See Chapter 5 above.

² A bill proposed by the New York Joint Legislative Committee on Comic Books would prohibit the sale and distribution of books portraying "nudity, sex or lust in a manner which reasonably tends to excite lustful or lecherous desires . . ." (*New York Times*, February 17, 1954).

ble power; opposition to such defamation easily succumbs to ridicule.

Still, the dominion of repressive reason (theoretical and practical) was never complete: its monopoly of cognition was never uncontested. When Freud emphasized the fundamental fact that phantasy (imagination) retains a truth that is incompatible with reason, he was following in a long historical tradition. Phantasy is cognitive in so far as it preserves the truth of the Great Refusal, or, positively, in so far as it protects, against all reason, the aspirations for the integral fulfillment of man and nature which are repressed by reason. In the realm of phantasy, the unreasonable images of freedom become rational, and the "lower depth" of instinctual gratification assumes a new dignity. The culture of the performance principle makes its bow before the strange truths which imagination keeps alive in folklore and fairy tale, in literature and art; they have been aptly interpreted and have found their place in the popular and academic world. However, the effort to derive from these truths the content of a valid reality principle surpassing the prevailing one has been entirely inconsequential. Novalis' statement that "all internal faculties and forces, and all external faculties and forces, must be deduced from productive imagination"³ has remained a curiosity — as has the surrealist program *de pratiquer la poésie*. The insistence that imagination provide standards for existential attitudes, for practice, and for historical possibilities appears as childish fantasy. Only the archetypes, only the

³ *Schriften*, ed. J. Minor (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1923), III, 375. See Gaston Bachelard, *La Terre et les Réveries de la Volonté* (Paris: José Corti, 1945), pp. 4-5.

symbols have been accepted, and their meaning is usually interpreted in terms of phylogenetic or ontogenetic stages, long since surpassed, rather than in terms of an individual and cultural maturity. We shall now try to identify some of these symbols and examine their historical truth value.

More specifically, we look for the "culture-heroes" who have persisted in imagination as symbolizing the attitude and the deeds that have determined the fate of mankind. And here at the outset we are confronted with the fact that the predominant culture-hero is the trickster and (suffering) rebel against the gods, who creates culture at the price of perpetual pain. He symbolizes productiveness, the unceasing effort to master life; but, in his productivity, blessing and curse, progress and toil are inextricably intertwined. Prometheus is the archetype-hero of the performance principle. And in the world of Prometheus, Pandora, the female principle, sexuality and pleasure, appear as curse — disruptive, destructive. "Why are women such a curse? The denunciation of the sex with which the section [on Prometheus in Hesiod] concludes emphasizes above all else their economic unproductivity; they are useless drones; a luxury item in a poor man's budget."⁴ The beauty of the woman, and the happiness she promises are fatal in the work-world of civilization.

If Prometheus is the culture-hero of toil, productivity, and progress through repression, then the symbols of another reality principle must be sought at the opposite pole. Orpheus and Narcissus (like Dionysus to whom they are

⁴ See Norman O. Brown, *Hesiod's Theogony* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953), pp. 18-19, 33; and *Hermes the Thief* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1947), pp. 23ff.

akin: the antagonist of the god who sanctions the logic of domination, the realm of reason) stand for a very different reality.⁵ They have not become the culture-heroes of the Western world: theirs is the image of joy and fulfillment; the voice which does not command but sings; the gesture which offers and receives; the deed which is peace and ends the labor of conquest; the liberation from time which unites man with god, man with nature. Literature has preserved their image. In the *Sonnets to Orpheus*:

Und fast ein Mädchen wars und ging hervor
aus diesem einigen Glück von Sang und Leier
und glänzte klar durch ihre Frühlingsschleier
und machte sich ein Bett in meinem Ohr.

Und schlief in mir. Und alles war ihr Schlaf.
Die Bäume, die ich je bewundert, diese
fühlbare Ferne, die gefühlte Wiese
und jedes Staunen, das mich selbst betraf.

Sie schlief die Welt. Singender Gott, wie hast
du sie vollendet, dass sie nicht begehrte,
erst wach zu sein? Sieh, sie erstand und schlief.
Wo ist ihr Tod?⁶

⁵ The symbol of Narcissus and the term "Narcissistic" as used here do not imply the meaning given to them in Freud's theory. See, however, pages 167-168 below.

⁶ "Almost a maid, she came forth shimmering
From the high happiness of song and lyre,
And shining clearly through her veils of spring
She made herself a bed within my ear
And slept in me. All things were in her sleep:
The trees I marvelled at, the enchanting spell
Of farthest distances, the meadows deep,
And all the magic that myself befell.
Within her slept the world. You singing god, o how
Did you perfect her so she did not long
To be awake? She rose and slept.
Where is her death?"

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus: Duino Elegies*, transl. Jessie Lemont (New York: Fine Editions Press, 1945), p. 3 (with minor changes in translation). Reprinted by permission of Columbia University Press.

Or Narcissus, who, in the mirror of the water, tries to grasp **his own** beauty. Bent over the river of time, in which all **forms** pass and flee, he dreams:

Narcisse rêve au paradis . . .

Quand donc le temps, cessant sa fuite, laissera-t-il que cet écoulement se repose? Formes, formes divines et pérennelles! qui n'attendez que le repos pour reparaître, oh! quand, dans quelle nuit, dans quel silence, vous recristalliserez-vous?

Le paradis est toujours à refaire; il n'est point en quelque lointaine Thulé. Il demeure sous l'apparence. Chaque chose détient, virtuelle, l'intime harmonie de son être, comme chaque sel, en lui, l'archétype de son cristal; — et vienne un temps de nuit tacite, où les eaux plus denses descendent: dans les abîmes imperturbés fleuriront les trémies secrètes . . .

Tout s'efforce vers sa forme perdue . . .⁷

Un grand calme m'écoute, où j'écoute l'espoir.
La voix des sources change et me parle du soir;
J'entends l'herbe d'argent grandir dans l'ombre sainte,
Et la lune perfide élève son miroir
Jusque dans les secrets de la fontaine éteinte.⁸

Admire dans Narcisse un éternel retour
Vers l'onde où son image offerte à son amour
Propose à sa beauté toute sa connaissance
Tout mon sort n'est qu'obéissance
A la force de mon amour.

⁷ "Alas, when will Time cease its flight and allow this flow to rest? Forms, divine and perennial forms which only wait for rest in order to reappear! O when, in what night, will you crystallize again?"

⁸ "Paradise must always be re-created. It is not in some remote Thule; it lingers under the appearance. Everything holds within itself, as potentiality, the intimate harmony of its being — just as every salt holds within itself the archetype of its crystal. And a time of silent night will come when the waters will descend, more dense; then, in the unperturbed abysses, the secret crystals will bloom . . . Everything strives toward its lost form . . ." André Gide, *Le Traité du Narcisse*.

⁹ "A great calm hears me, where I hear Hope. The voice of the wells changes and speaks of the night; in the holy shade I hear the silver herb grow, and the treacherous moon raises its mirror deep into the secrets of the extinguished fountain." Paul Valéry, *Narcisse Parle*.

Cher CORPS, je m'abandonne à ta seule puissance;
L'eau tranquille m'attire où je me tends mes bras:
A ce vertige pur je ne résiste pas.
Que puis-je, ô ma Beauté, faire que tu ne veuilles? *

The climate of this language is that of the "*diminution des traces du péché originel*," — the revolt against culture based on toil, domination, and renunciation. The images of Orpheus and Narcissus reconcile Eros and Thanatos. They recall the experience of a world that is not to be mastered and controlled but to be liberated — a freedom that will release the powers of Eros now bound in the repressed and petrified forms of man and nature. These powers are conceived not as destruction but as peace, not as terror but as beauty. It is sufficient to enumerate the assembled images in order to circumscribe the dimension to which they are committed: the redemption of pleasure, the halt of time, the absorption of death; silence, sleep, night, paradise — the Nirvana principle not as death but as life. Baudelaire gives the image of such a world in two lines:

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme, et volupté.¹⁰

This is perhaps the only context in which the word *order* loses its repressive connotation: here, it is the order of gratification which the free Eros creates. Static triumphs over dynamic; but it is a static that moves in its own fullness — a productivity that is sensuousness, play, and song. Any at-

* "Admire in Narcissus the eternal return toward the mirror of the water which offers his image to his love, and to his beauty all his knowledge. All my fate is obedience to the force of my love. Body, I surrender to your sole power; the tranquil water awaits me where I extend my arms: I do not resist this pure madness. What, O my Beauty, can I do that thou dost not will?" Paul Valéry, *Cantate du Narcisse*, Scène II.

¹⁰ "There all is order and beauty, luxury, calm, and sensuousness."

tempt to elaborate the images thus conveyed must be self-defeating, because outside the language of art they change their meaning and merge with the connotations they received under the repressive reality principle. But one must try to trace the road back to the realities to which they refer.

In contrast to the images of the Promethean culture-heroes, those of the Orphic and Narcissistic world are essentially unreal and unrealistic. They designate an "impossible" attitude and existence. The deeds of the culture-heroes also are "impossible," in that they are miraculous, incredible, superhuman. However, their objective and their "meaning" are not alien to the reality; on the contrary, they are useful. They promote and strengthen this reality; they do not explode it. But the Orphic-Narcissistic images do explode it; they do not convey a "mode of living"; they are committed to the underworld and to death. At best, they are poetic, something for the soul and the heart. But they do not teach any "message" — except perhaps the negative one that one cannot defeat death or forget and reject the call of life in the admiration of beauty.

Such moral messages are superimposed upon a very different content. Orpheus and Narcissus symbolize realities just as do Prometheus and Hermes. Trees and animals respond to Orpheus' language; the spring and the forest respond to Narcissus' desire. The Orphic and Narcissistic Eros awakens and liberates potentialities that are real in things animate and inanimate, in organic and inorganic nature — real but in the un-erotic reality suppressed. These potentialities circumscribe the *telos* inherent in them as: "just to be what they are," "being-there," existing.

The Orphic and Narcissistic experience of the world negates that which sustains the world of the performance principle. The opposition between man and nature, subject and object, is overcome. Being is experienced as gratification, which unites man and nature so that the fulfillment of man is at the same time the fulfillment, without violence, of nature. In being spoken to, loved, and cared for, flowers and springs and animals appear as what they are — beautiful, not only for those who address and regard them, but for themselves, “objectively.” “Le monde tend à la beauté.”¹¹ In the Orphic and Narcissistic Eros, this tendency is released: the things of nature become free to be what they are. But to be what they are they *depend* on the erotic attitude: they receive their *telos* only in it. The song of Orpheus pacifies the animal world, reconciles the lion with the lamb and the lion with man. The world of nature is a world of oppression, cruelty, and pain, as is the human world; like the latter, it awaits its liberation. This liberation is the work of Eros. The song of Orpheus breaks the petrification, moves the forests and the rocks — but moves them to partake in joy.

The love of Narcissus is answered by the echo of nature. To be sure, Narcissus appears as the *antagonist* of Eros: he spurns love, the love that unites with other human beings, and for that he is punished by Eros.¹² As the antagonist of Eros, Narcissus symbolizes sleep and death, silence and

¹¹ Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves* (Paris: José Corti, 1942), p. 38. See also (p. 36) Joachim Gasquet's formulation: “Le monde est un immense Narcisse en train de se penser.”

¹² Friedrich Wieseler, *Narkissos: Eine kunstmythologische Abhandlung* (Göttingen, 1856), pp. 90, 94.

rest.¹³ In Thracia, he stands in close relation to Dionysus.¹⁴ But it is not coldness, asceticism, and self-love that color the images of Narcissus; it is not these gestures of Narcissus that are preserved in art and literature. His silence is not that of dead rigidity; and when he is contemptuous of the love of hunters and nymphs he rejects one Eros for another. He lives by an Eros of his own,¹⁵ and he does not love only himself. (He does not know that the image he admires is his own.) If his erotic attitude is akin to death and brings death, then rest and sleep and death are not painfully separated and distinguished: the Nirvana principle rules throughout all these stages. And when he dies he continues to live as the flower that bears his name.

In associating Narcissus with Orpheus and interpreting both as symbols of a non-repressive erotic attitude toward reality, we took the image of Narcissus from the mythological-artistic tradition rather than from Freud's libido theory. We may now be able to find some support for our interpretation in Freud's concept of *primary narcissism*. It is significant that the introduction of narcissism into psycho-

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 80–83, 93–94.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89. Narcissus and Dionysus are closely assimilated (if not identified) in the Orphic mythology. The Titans seize Zagreus-Dionysus while he contemplates his image in the mirror which they gave him. An ancient tradition (Plotinus, Proclus) interprets the mirror-duplication as the beginning of the god's self-manifestation in the multitude of the phenomena of the world — a process which finds its final symbol in the tearing asunder of the god by the Titans and his rebirth by Zeus. The myth would thus express the reunification of that which was separated, of God and world, man and nature — identity of the one and the many. See Erwin Rhode, *Psyche* (Freiburg, 1898), II, 117 note; Otto Kern, *Orpheus* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 22–23; Ivan M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* (University of California Press, 1941), pp. 307ff.

¹⁵ In most pictorial representations, Narcissus is in the company of an Amor, who is sad but not hostile. See Wieseler, *Narkissos*, pp. 16–17.

analysis marked a turning point in the development of the instinct theory: the assumption of independent ego instincts (self-preservation instincts) was shaken and replaced by the notion of an undifferentiated, unified libido prior to the division into ego and external objects.¹⁶ Indeed, the discovery of primary narcissism meant more than the addition of just another phase to the development of the libido; with it there came in sight the archetype of another existential relation to reality. Primary narcissism is more than autoeroticism; it engulfs the "environment," integrating the narcissistic ego with the objective world. The normal antagonistic relation between ego and external reality is only a later form and stage of the relation between ego and reality:

Originally the ego includes everything, later it detaches from itself the external world. The ego-feeling we are aware of now is thus only a shrunken vestige of a far more extensive feeling—a feeling which *embraced the universe* and expressed an *inseparable connection of the ego with the external world*.¹⁷

The concept of primary narcissism implies what is made explicit in the opening chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents*—that narcissism survives not only as a neurotic symptom but also as a constitutive element in the construction of the reality, coexisting with the mature reality ego. Freud describes the "ideational content" of the surviving primary ego-feeling as "limitless extension and oneness with the universe" (oceanic feeling).¹⁸ And, later in the same chapter, he suggests that the oceanic feeling seeks to rein-

¹⁶ See Chapter 2 above.

¹⁷ *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 13. Italics added.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

state "limitless narcissism."¹⁹ The striking paradox that narcissism, usually understood as egotistic withdrawal from reality, here is connected with oneness with the universe, reveals the new depth of the conception: beyond all immature autoeroticism, narcissism denotes a fundamental relatedness to reality which may generate a comprehensive existential order.²⁰ In other words, narcissism may contain the germ of a different reality principle: the libidinal cathexis of the ego (one's own body) may become the source and reservoir for a new libidinal cathexis of the objective world—transforming this world into a new mode of being. This interpretation is corroborated by the decisive role which narcissistic libido plays, according to Freud, in sublimation. In *The Ego and the Id*, he asks "whether all sublimation does not take place through the agency of the ego, which begins by changing sexual object-libido into narcissistic libido and then, perhaps, goes on to give it another aim."²¹ If this is the case, then all sublimation would begin with the reactivation of narcissistic libido, which somehow overflows and extends to objects. The hypothesis all but revolutionizes the idea of sublimation: it hints at a non-repressive mode of sublimation which

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁰ In his paper on "The Delay of the Machine Age," Hanns Sachs makes an interesting attempt to demonstrate narcissism as a constitutive element of the reality principle in Greek civilization. He discussed the problem of why the Greeks did not develop a machine technology although they possessed the skill and knowledge which would have enabled them to do so. He was not satisfied with the usual explanations on economic and technological grounds. Instead, he proposed that the predominant narcissistic element in Greek culture prevented technological progress: the libidinal cathexis of the body was so strong that it militated against mechanization and automatization. Sachs' paper appeared in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, II (1933), 420ff.

²¹ *The Ego and the Id* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), p. 38.

results from an extension rather than from a constraining deflection of the libido. We shall subsequently resume the discussion of this idea.²²

The Orphic-Narcissistic images are those of the Great Refusal: refusal to accept separation from the libidinous object (or subject). The refusal aims at liberation — at the reunion of what has become separated. Orpheus is the archetype of the poet as *liberator* and *creator*:²³ he establishes a higher order in the world — an order without repression. In his person, art, freedom, and culture are eternally combined. He is the poet of redemption, the god who brings peace and salvation by pacifying man and nature, not through force but through song:

Orpheus, the priest, the mouthpiece of the gods,
Deterred wild men from murders and foul foods,
And hence was said to tame the raging moods
Of tigers and of lions . . .
In times of yore it was the poet's part —
The part of sapience — to distinguish plain
Between the public and the private things,
Between the sacred things and things profane,
To check the ills that sexual straying brings,
To show how laws for married people stood,
To build the towns, to carve the laws in wood.²⁴

But the "culture-hero" Orpheus is also credited with the establishment of a very different order — and he pays for it with his life:

²² See Chapter 10 below.

²³ See Walther Rehm, *Orpheus* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1950), pp. 63ff. On Orpheus as culture-hero, see Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus*, p. 69.

²⁴ Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, transl. Alexander Falconer Murison, in *Horace Rendered in English Verse* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1931), p. 426. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

. . . Orpheus had shunned all love of womankind, whether because of his ill success in love, or whether he had given his troth once for all. Still, many women felt a passion for the bard; many grieved for their love repulsed. He set the example for the people of Thrace of giving his love to tender boys, and enjoying the spring-time and first flower of their growth.²⁵

He was torn to pieces by the crazed Thracian women.²⁶

The classical tradition associates Orpheus with the introduction of homosexuality. Like Narcissus, he rejects the normal Eros, not for an ascetic ideal, but for a fuller Eros. Like Narcissus, he protests against the repressive order of procreative sexuality. The Orphic and Narcissistic Eros is to the end the negation of this order — the Great Refusal. In the world symbolized by the culture-hero Prometheus, it is the negation of *all* order; but in this negation Orpheus and Narcissus reveal a new reality, with an order of its own, governed by different principles. The Orphic Eros transforms being: he masters cruelty and death through liberation. His language is *song*, and his work is *play*. Narcissus' life is that of *beauty*, and his existence is *contemplation*. These images refer to the *aesthetic dimension* as the one in which their reality principle must be sought and validated.

²⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X, 79–85, transl. Frank Justus Miller (Loeb Classical Library), Vol. II, p. 71. See Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus*, p. 57.

²⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XL, 1ff; Vol. II, pp. 121–122.

CHAPTER NINE

The Aesthetic Dimension

Obviously, the aesthetic dimension cannot validate a reality principle. Like imagination, which is its constitutive mental faculty, the realm of aesthetics is essentially "unrealistic": it has retained its freedom from the reality principle at the price of being ineffective in the reality. Aesthetic values may function in life for cultural adornment and elevation or as private hobbies, but to *live* with these values is the privilege of geniuses or the mark of decadent Bohemians. Before the court of theoretical and practical reason, which have shaped the world of the performance principle, the aesthetic existence stands condemned. However, we shall try to show that this notion of aesthetics results from a "cultural repression" of contents and truths that are inimical to the performance principle. We shall attempt to undo this repression theoretically by recalling the original meaning and function of *aesthetic*. This task involves the demonstration of the inner connection between pleasure, sensuousness, beauty, truth, art, and freedom — a connection revealed in the philosophical history of the term *aesthetic*. There the term aims at a realm which preserves the truth of the senses and reconciles, in the reality of freedom, the "lower" and the "higher" faculties of man, sensuousness and intellect, pleasure and

reason. We shall confine the discussion to the period in which the meaning of the term *aesthetic* was fixed: the second half of the eighteenth century.

In Kant's philosophy, the basic antagonism between subject and object is reflected in the dichotomy between the mental faculties: sensuousness and intellect (understanding); desire and cognition; practical and theoretical reason.¹ Practical reason constitutes freedom under self-given moral laws for (moral) ends; theoretical reason constitutes nature under the laws of causality. The realm of nature is totally different from the realm of freedom: no subjective autonomy can break into the laws of causality, and no sense-datum can determine the autonomy of the subject (for otherwise the subject would not be free). Still, the autonomy of the subject is to have an "effect" in the objective reality, and the ends that the subject sets for itself must be real. Thus, the realm of nature must be "susceptible" to the legislation of freedom; an intermediary dimension must exist in which the two meet. A third "faculty" must mediate between theoretical and practical reason — a faculty that brings about a "transition" from the realm of nature to the realm of freedom and links together the lower and higher faculties, those of desire and those of knowledge.² This third faculty is that of judgment. A tripartite division of the mind underlies the initial dichotomy. While theoretical reason (understanding) provides

¹ These are not pairs that can be correlated; they designate different conceptual areas (mental faculties in general, cognitive faculties, and their fields of application).

² Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. J. H. Bernard (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 16. Introduction, III.

the *a priori* principles of cognition, and practical reason those of desire (will), the faculty of judgment mediates between these two by virtue of the feeling of pain and pleasure. Combined with the feeling of pleasure, judgment is aesthetic, and its field of application is art.

This, in crude abbreviation, is Kant's classical derivation of the aesthetic function, in his introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*. The obscurity of his exposition is caused largely by the fact that it merges the original meaning of *aesthetic* (pertaining to the senses) with the new connotation (pertaining to beauty, especially in art), which had definitely triumphed during Kant's own period. Although his effort to recapture the unrepressed content exhausts itself within the rigid limits set by his transcendental method, his conception still furnishes the best guidance for understanding the full scope of the aesthetic dimension.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, the aesthetic dimension and the corresponding feeling of pleasure emerge not merely as a third dimension and faculty of the mind, but as its *center*, the medium through which nature becomes susceptible to freedom, necessity to autonomy. In this mediation, the aesthetic function is a "symbolic" one. The famous Paragraph 59 of the *Critique* is entitled "Of Beauty as the Symbol of Morality." In Kant's system, morality is the realm of freedom, in which practical reason realizes itself under self-given laws. Beauty symbolizes this realm in so far as it demonstrates intuitively the reality of freedom. Since freedom is an idea to which no sense-perception can correspond, such demonstration can be only "indirect," symbolical, *per analogiam*. We shall presently try

to elucidate the ground for this strange analogy, which is at the same time the ground on which the aesthetic function links the "lower" faculties of sensuousness (*Sinnlichkeit*) to morality. Before doing so, we wish to recall the context in which the problem of aesthetics became acute.

Our definition of the specific historical character of the established reality principle led to a re-examination of what Freud considered to be its universal validity. We questioned this validity in view of the historical possibility of the abolition of the repressive controls imposed by civilization. The very achievements of this civilization seemed to make the performance principle obsolete, to make the repressive utilization of the instincts archaic. But the idea of a non-repressive civilization on the basis of the achievements of the performance principle encountered the argument that instinctual liberation (and consequently total liberation) would explode civilization itself, since the latter is sustained only through renunciation and work (labor) — in other words, through the repressive utilization of instinctual energy. Freed from these constraints, man would exist without work and without order; he would fall back into nature, which would destroy culture. To meet this argument, we recalled certain archetypes of imagination which, in contrast to the culture-heroes of repressive productivity, symbolized creative receptivity. These archetypes envisioned the fulfillment of man and nature, not through domination and exploitation, but through release of inherent libidinal forces. We then set ourselves the task of "verifying" these symbols — that is to say, demonstrating their truth value as symbols of a reality principle *beyond* the per-

formance principle. We thought that the representative content of the Orphic and Narcissistic images was the erotic reconciliation (union) of man and nature in the aesthetic attitude, where order is beauty and work is play. The next step was to eliminate the distortion of the aesthetic attitude into the unreal atmosphere of the museum or of Bohemia. With this purpose in mind, we tried to recapture the full content of the aesthetic dimension by looking for its philosophical legitimation. We found that, in Kant's philosophy, the aesthetic dimension occupies the central position between sensuousness and morality — the two poles of the human existence. If this is the case, then the aesthetic dimension must contain principles valid for both realms.

The basic experience in this dimension is sensuous rather than conceptual; the aesthetic perception is essentially intuition, not notion.³ The nature of sensuousness is "receptivity," cognition through being affected by given objects. It is by virtue of its intrinsic relation to sensuousness that the aesthetic function assumes its central position. The aesthetic perception is accompanied by pleasure.⁴ This pleasure derives from the perception of the pure *form* of an object, regardless of its "matter" and of its (internal

³ The following discussion is only a condensed summary of the decisive steps in Kant's exposition. The highly complex relation between the assumption of two basic cognitive faculties (sensuousness and understanding) and three such faculties (sensuousness, imagination, apperception) cannot be discussed here. Nor can the relation between the transcendental aesthetic in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the aesthetic function in the *Critique of Judgment*. Heidegger has for the first time demonstrated the central role of the aesthetic function in Kant's system. See his *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1929); for the relation between the basic cognitive faculties, see especially pp. 31ff., 129ff.

⁴ The following according to *Critique of Judgment*, Introduction, VII; pp. 29ff.

or external) "purpose." An object represented in its pure form is "beautiful." Such representation is the work (or rather the play) of *imagination*. As imagination, the aesthetic perception is both sensuousness and at the same time more than sensuousness (the "third" basic faculty): it gives pleasure and is therefore essentially subjective; but in so far as this pleasure is constituted by the pure form of the object itself, it accompanies the aesthetic perception universally and necessarily — for *any* perceiving subject. Although sensuous and therefore receptive, the aesthetic imagination is creative: in a free synthesis of its own, it constitutes *beauty*. In the aesthetic imagination, sensuousness generates universally valid principles for an objective order.

The two main categories defining this order are "purposiveness without purpose" and "lawfulness without law."⁵ They circumscribe, beyond the Kantian context, the essence of a truly non-repressive order. The first defines the structure of beauty, the second that of freedom; their common character is gratification in the free play of the released potentialities of man and nature. Kant develops these categories only as processes of the mind, but the impact of his theory on his contemporaries went far beyond the frontiers established by his transcendental philosophy; a few years after the publication of the *Critique of Judgment*, Schiller derived from Kant's conception the notion of a new mode of civilization.

To Kant, "purposiveness without purpose" (formal purposiveness) is the form in which the object appears in the

⁵ "Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck; Gesetzmässigkeit ohne Gesetz." *Ibid.*, §§16-17, 22.

aesthetic representation. Whatever the object may be (thing or flower, animal or man), it is represented and judged not in terms of its usefulness, not according to any purpose it may possibly serve, and also not in view of its "internal" finality and completeness. In the aesthetic imagination, the object is rather represented as free from all such relations and properties, as freely being itself. The experience in which the object is thus "given" is totally different from the every-day as well as scientific experience; all links between the object and the world of theoretical and practical reason are severed, or rather suspended. This experience, which releases the object into its "free" being, is the work of the free play of imagination.⁶ Subject and object become free in a new sense. From this radical change in the attitude toward being results a new quality of pleasure, generated by the form in which the object now reveals itself. Its "pure form" suggests a "unity of the manifold," an accord of movements and relations which operates under its own laws — the pure manifestation of its "being-there," its existence. This is the manifestation of beauty. Imagination comes into accord with the cognitive notions of understanding, and this accord establishes a harmony of the mental faculties which is the pleasurable response to the free harmony of the aesthetic object. The order of beauty results from the order which governs the play of imagination. This double order is in conformity with laws, but laws that are themselves free: they are not superimposed and they do not enforce the attainment of

⁶ See Herman Moerchen, "Die Einbildungskraft bei Kant," in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phaenomenologische Forschung*, ed. Husserl, IX (Halle, 1930), 478-479.

specific ends and purposes; they are the pure form of existence itself. The aesthetic "conformity to law" links Nature and Freedom, Pleasure and Morality. The aesthetic judgment is,

... in respect of the feeling of pleasure or pain, a constitutive principle. The spontaneity in the play of the cognitive faculties, the harmony of which contains the ground of this pleasure, makes the concept [of the purposiveness of nature] the mediating link between the conceptual realm of nature and that of freedom . . . , whilst at the same time this spontaneity promotes the susceptibility of the mind to moral feeling.⁷

To Kant, the aesthetic dimension is the medium in which the senses and the intellect meet. The mediation is accomplished by imagination, which is the "third" mental faculty. Moreover, the aesthetic dimension is also the medium in which nature and freedom meet. This twofold mediation is necessitated by the pervasive conflict between the lower and the higher faculties of man generated by the progress of civilization — progress achieved through the subjugation of the sensuous faculties to reason, and through their repressive utilization for social needs. The philosophical effort to mediate, in the aesthetic dimension, between sensuousness and reason thus appears as an attempt to reconcile the two spheres of the human existence which were torn asunder by a repressive reality principle. The mediating function is performed by the aesthetic faculty, which is akin to sensuousness, pertaining to the senses. Consequently, the aesthetic reconciliation implies strengthening sensuousness as against the tyranny of reason and, ulti-

⁷ *Critique of Judgment*, Introduction, IX; pp. 40-41 (with changes in translation).

mately, even calls for the liberation of sensuousness from the repressive domination of reason.

Indeed when, on the basis of Kant's theory, the aesthetic function becomes the central theme of the philosophy of culture, it is used to demonstrate the principles of a non-repressive civilization, in which reason is sensuous and sensuousness rational. Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), written largely under the impact of the *Critique of Judgment*, aim at a remaking of civilization by virtue of the liberating force of the aesthetic function: it is envisaged as containing the possibility of a new reality principle.

The inner logic of the tradition of Western thought impelled Schiller to define the new reality principle, and the new experience corresponding to it, as *aesthetic*. We have emphasized that the term originally designated "pertaining to the senses," with stress on their cognitive function. Under the predominance of rationalism, the cognitive function of sensuousness has been constantly minimized. In line with the repressive concept of reason, cognition became the ultimate concern of the "higher," non-sensuous faculties of the mind; aesthetics were absorbed by logic and metaphysics. Sensuousness, as the "lower" and even "lowest" faculty, furnished at best the mere stuff, the raw material, for cognition, to be organized by the higher faculties of the intellect. The content and validity of the aesthetic function were whittled down. Sensuousness retained a measure of philosophical dignity in a subordinate epistemological position; those of its processes that did not fit into the rationalistic epistemology — that is, those that

went beyond the passive perception of data — became homeless. Foremost among these homeless contents and values were those of imagination: free, creative, or reproductive intuition of objects which are not directly "given" — the faculty to represent objects without their being "present."⁸ There was no *aesthetics* as the science of sensuousness to correspond to *logic* as the science of conceptual understanding. But around the middle of the eighteenth century, aesthetics appeared as a new philosophical discipline, as the theory of beauty and art: Alexander Baumgarten established the term in its modern usage. The change in meaning, from "pertaining to the senses" to "pertaining to beauty and art" is of far deeper significance than an academic innovation.

The philosophical history of the term *aesthetic* reflects the repressive treatment of the sensuous (and thereby "corporeal") cognitive processes. In this history, the foundation of aesthetics as an independent discipline counteracts the repressive rule of reason: the efforts to demonstrate the central position of the aesthetic function and to establish it as an existential category invoke the inherent truth values of the senses against their depravation under the prevailing reality principle. The discipline of aesthetics installs the order of sensuousness as against the order of reason. Introduced into the philosophy of culture, this notion aims at a liberation of the senses which, far from destroying civilization, would give it a firmer basis and would greatly enhance its potentialities. Operating through a basic impulse —

⁸ Kant's definition in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "Transcendental Aesthetic," §24.

namely, the play impulse — the aesthetic function would “abolish compulsion, and place man, both morally and physically, in freedom.” It would harmonize the feelings and affections with the ideas of reason, deprive the “laws of reason of their moral compulsion,” and “reconcile them with the interest of the senses.”⁹

It will be objected that this interpretation, which connects the philosophical term *sensuousness* (as a cognitive mental faculty) with liberation of the senses, is a mere play on an etymological ambiguity; the root *sens* in *sensuousness* no longer justifies the connotation of sensuality. In German, *sensuousness* and *sensuality* are still rendered by one and the same term: *Sinnlichkeit*. It connotes instinctual (especially sexual) gratification as well as cognitive sense-perceptiveness and representation (sensation). This double connotation is preserved in every-day as well as philosophical language, and is retained in the use of the term *Sinnlichkeit* for the foundation of aesthetics. Here, the term designates the “lower” (“opaque,” “confused”) cognitive faculties of man *plus* the “feeling of pain and pleasure,” — sensations *plus* affections.¹⁰ In Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education*, the stress is on the impulsive, instinctual character of the aesthetic function.¹¹ This content provides the basic material for the new discipline of aesthetics. The latter is conceived as the “science of

⁹ Schiller, *The Aesthetic Letters, Essays, and the Philosophical Letters*, transl. J. Weiss (Boston: Little, Brown, 1845), pp. 66–67 (with a minor change in translation).

¹⁰ Alexander Baumgarten, “Meditationes Philosophicae de Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus,” §§25–26, in Albert Riemann, *Die Aesthetik* A. O. Baumgartens (Halle: Niemeyer, 1928), p. 114.

¹¹ Schiller, *The Aesthetic Letters*, fourth and eighth letters, and *passim*.

sensitive cognition” — a “logic of the lower cognitive faculties.”¹² Aesthetics is the “sister” and at the same time the counterpart to logic. The opposition to the predominance of reason characterizes the new science: “. . . not reason but sensuousness [*Sinnlichkeit*] is constitutive of aesthetic truth or falsehood. What sensuousness recognizes, or can recognize, as true, aesthetics can represent as true, even if reason rejects it as untrue.”¹³ And Kant stated in his lectures on anthropology: “. . . one can establish universal laws of sensuousness [*Sinnlichkeit*] just as one can establish universal laws of understanding; i.e. there is a science of sensuousness, namely, aesthetics, and a science of understanding, namely, logic.”¹⁴ The principles and truths of sensuousness supply the content of aesthetics, and “the objective and purpose of aesthetics is the perfection of sensitive cognition. This perfection is beauty.”¹⁵ Here the step is made that transforms aesthetics, the science of sensuousness, into the science of *art*, and the order of sensuousness into the order of art.

The etymological fate of a basic term is rarely an accident. What is the reality behind the conceptual development from *sensuality* to *sensuousness* (sensitive cognition) to *art* (aesthetics)? Sensuousness, the mediating concept, designates the senses as sources and organs of cognition. But the senses are not exclusively, and not even primarily, organs of cognition. Their cognitive function is con-fused

¹² Baumgarten, “Aesthetik,” ed. Bernhard Poppe, in A. G. Baumgarten (Bonn, Leipzig, 1907), §1; see also p. 44. “Meditationes Philosophicae,” §115.

¹³ Baumgarten, “Aesthetik,” p. 42.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁵ Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, Vol. I (Frankfurt a/O. 1750), §14.

with their appetitive function (sensuality); they are erogenic, and they are governed by the pleasure principle. From this fusion of the cognitive and appetitive functions derives the confused, inferior, passive character of sense-cognition which makes it unsuitable for the reality principle unless subjected to and formed by the conceptual activity of the intellect, of reason. And in so far as philosophy accepted the rules and values of the reality principle, the claim of sensuousness free from the dominance of reason found no place in philosophy; greatly modified, it obtained refuge in the theory of art. The truth of art is the liberation of sensuousness through its reconciliation with reason: this is the central notion of classical idealistic aesthetics. In art,

... thought is materialized, and matter is not extraneously determined by thought but is itself free in so far as the natural, sensuous, affectional possess their measure, purpose, and harmony in themselves. While perception and feeling are raised to the universality of the spirit, thought not only renounces its hostility against nature but en-joys itself in nature. Feeling, joy, and pleasure are sanctioned and justified so that nature and freedom, sensuousness and reason, find in their *unity* their right and their gratification.¹⁶

¹⁶ "[Im Kunstsönen ist] der Gedanke verkörpert, und die Materie von ihm nicht äusserlich bestimmt, sondern existiert selber frei, indem das Natürliche, Sinnliche, Gemüth u.s.f. in sich selbst Maass, Zweck und Uebereinstimmung hat, und die Anschauung und Empfindung ebenso in geistige Allgemeinheit erhoben ist, als der Gedanke seiner Feindschaft gegen die Natur nicht nur entsagt, sondern sich in ihr erheitert und Empfindung, Lust und Genuss berechtigt und geheiligt ist, so dass Natur und Freiheit, Sinnlichkeit und Begriff in Einem ihr Recht und Befriedigung finden." Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, Vol. I, Introduction; in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart, 1927), X, 95. See *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, transl. F. P. B. Osmond (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1920), I, p. 83.

Art challenges the prevailing principle of reason: in representing the order of sensuousness, it invokes a tabooed logic — the logic of gratification as against that of repression. Behind the sublimated aesthetic form, the unsublimated content shows forth: the commitment of art to the pleasure principle.¹⁷ The investigation of the erotic roots of art plays a large role in psychoanalysis; however, these roots are in the work and function of art rather than in the artist. The aesthetic form is sensuous form — constituted by the *order of sensuousness*. If the "perfection" of sense-cognition is defined as beauty, this definition still retains the inner connection with instinctual gratification, and aesthetic pleasure is still pleasure. But the sensual origin is "repressed," and the gratification is in the pure *form* of the object. As aesthetic value, the non-conceptual truth of the senses is sanctioned, and freedom from the reality principle is granted to the "free play" of creative imagination. Here, a reality with quite different standards is recognized. However, since this other, "free" reality is attributed to art, and its experience to the aesthetic attitude, it is non-committing and does not engage the human existence in the ordinary way of life; it is "unreal."

Schiller's attempt to undo the sublimation of the aesthetic function starts from Kant's position: only because imagination is a central faculty of the mind, only because beauty is a "necessary condition of humanity,"¹⁸ can the aesthetic function play a decisive role in reshaping civiliza-

¹⁷ See Otto Rank, "The Play-impulse and Aesthetic Pleasure," in *Art and Artist* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1932).

¹⁸ Schiller, *The Aesthetic Letters*, p. 46.

tion. When Schiller wrote, the need for such a reshaping seemed obvious; Herder and Schiller, Hegel and Novalis developed in almost identical terms the concept of alienation. As industrial society begins to take shape under the rule of the performance principle, its inherent negativity permeates the philosophical analysis:

. . . enjoyment is separated from labor, the means from the end, exertion from recompense. Eternally fettered only to a single little fragment of the whole, man fashions himself only as a fragment; ever hearing only the monotonous whirl of the wheel which he turns, he never develops the harmony of his being, and, instead of shaping the humanity that lies in his nature, he becomes a mere imprint of his occupation, his science.¹⁹

Since it was civilization itself which "dealt modern man this wound," only a new mode of civilization can heal it. The wound is caused by the antagonistic relation between the two polar dimensions of the human existence. Schiller describes this antagonism in a series of paired concepts: sensuousness and reason, matter and form (spirit), nature and freedom, the particular and the universal. Each of the two dimensions is governed by a basic *impulse*: the "sensuous impulse" and the "form-impulse."²⁰ The former is essentially passive, receptive, the latter active, mastering, domineering. Culture is built by the combination and interaction of these two impulses. But in the established civilization, their relation has been an antagonistic one: instead of reconciling both impulses by making sensuousness rational and reason sensuous, civilization has subjugated sensuousness to reason in such a manner that the former, if

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22 (with minor changes in translation).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

it reasserts itself, does so in destructive and "savage" forms while the tyranny of reason impoverishes and barbarizes sensuousness. The conflict must be resolved if human potentialities are to realize themselves freely. Since only the impulses have the lasting force that fundamentally affects the human existence, such reconciliation between the two impulses must be the work of a third impulse. Schiller defines this third mediating impulse as the *play impulse*, its objective as beauty, and its goal as freedom. We shall presently try to rescue the full content of Schiller's notion from the benevolent aesthetic treatment to which the traditional interpretation has confined it.

The quest is for the solution of a "political" problem: the liberation of man from inhuman existential conditions. Schiller states that, in order to solve the political problem, "one must pass through the aesthetic, since it is beauty that leads to freedom." The play impulse is the vehicle of this liberation. The impulse does not aim at playing "with" something; rather it is the play of life itself, beyond want and external compulsion — the manifestation of an existence without fear and anxiety, and thus the manifestation of freedom itself. Man is free only where he is free from constraint, external and internal, physical and moral — when he is constrained neither by law nor by need.²¹ But each constraint is the reality. Freedom is thus, in a strict sense, freedom from the established reality: man is free when the "reality loses its seriousness" and when its necessity "becomes light" (*leicht*).²² "The greatest stupidity and the greatest intelligence have a certain affinity with

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71, 96.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

each other in that they both seek only the *real*"; however, such need for and attachment to the real are "merely the results of want." In contrast, "indifference to reality" and interest in "show" (dis-play, *Schein*) are the tokens of freedom from want and a "true enlargement of humanity."²³ In a genuinely humane civilization, the human existence will be play rather than toil, and man will live in display rather than need.

These ideas represent one of the most advanced positions of thought. It must be understood that the liberation from the reality which is here envisaged is not transcendental, "inner," or merely intellectual freedom (as Schiller explicitly emphasizes²⁴) but freedom *in* the reality. The reality that "loses its seriousness" is the inhumane reality of want and need, and it loses its seriousness when wants and needs can be satisfied without alienated labor. Then, man is free to "play" with his faculties and potentialities and with those of nature, and only by "playing" with them is he free. His world is then display (*Schein*), and its order is that of beauty. Because it is the realization of freedom, play is *more* than the constraining physical and moral reality: ". . . man is only *serious* with the agreeable, the good, the perfect; but with beauty he plays."²⁵ Such formulations would be irresponsible "aestheticism" if the realm of play were one of ornament, luxury, holiday, in an otherwise repressive world. But here the aesthetic function is conceived as a principle governing the entire human existence, and it can do so only if it becomes "universal."

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 140, 142.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Aesthetic culture presupposes "a total revolution in the mode of perception and feeling,"²⁶ and such revolution becomes possible only if civilization has reached the highest physical and intellectual maturity. Only when the "constraint of need" is replaced by the "constraint of superfluity" (abundance) will the human existence be impelled to a "free movement which is itself both end and means."²⁷ Liberated from the pressure of painful purposes and performances necessitated by want, man will be restored into the "freedom to be what he ought to be."²⁸ But what "ought" to be will be freedom itself: the freedom to play. The mental faculty exercising this freedom is that of *imagination*.²⁹ It traces and projects the potentialities of all beings liberated from their enslavement by constraining matter, they appear as "pure forms." As such, they constitute an order of their own: they exist "according to the laws of beauty."³⁰

Once it has really gained ascendancy as a principle of civilization, the play impulse would literally transform the reality. Nature, the objective world, would then be experienced primarily, neither as dominating man (as in primitive society), nor as being dominated by man (as in the established civilization), but rather as an object of "contemplation."³¹ With this change in the basic and formative experience, the object of experience itself changes: released from violent domination and exploitation, and instead shaped by the play impulse, nature would also be liberated

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138. (Translation changed.)

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140. (Translation changed.)

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 123.

from its own brutality and would become free to display the wealth of its purposeless forms which express the "inner life" of its objects.⁸² And a corresponding change would take place in the subjective world. Here, too, the aesthetic experience would arrest the violent and exploitative productivity which made man into an instrument of labor. But he would not be returned to a state of suffering passivity. His existence would still be activity, but "what he possesses and produces need bear no longer the traces of servitude, the fearful design of its purpose";⁸³ beyond want and anxiety, human activity becomes *display* — the free manifestation of potentialities.

At this point, the explosive quality of Schiller's conception comes into focus. He had diagnosed the disease of civilization as the conflict between the two basic impulses of man (the sensuous and the form impulses), or rather as the violent "solution" of this conflict: the establishment of the repressive tyranny of reason over sensuousness. Consequently, the reconciliation of the conflicting impulses would involve the removal of this tyranny — that is, the restoration of the right of sensuousness. Freedom would have to be sought in the liberation of sensuousness rather than reason, and in the limitation of the "higher" faculties in favor of the "lower." In other words, the salvation of culture would involve abolition of the repressive control that civilization has imposed on sensuousness. And this is indeed the idea behind the *Aesthetic Education*. It aims at basing morality on a sensuous ground;⁸⁴ the laws of reason

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143. (Translation changed.)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10. Weiss here translates *sinnliche* not as "sensuous" but as "sensible."

son must be reconciled with the interest of the senses;⁸⁵ the domineering form impulse must be restrained: "sensuousness must triumphantly maintain its province, and resist the violence which spirit (*Geist*) would fain inflict upon it by its encroaching activity."⁸⁶ To be sure, if freedom is to become the governing principle of civilization, not only reason but also the "sensuous impulse" requires a restraining transformation. The additional release of sensuous energy must conform with the universal order of freedom. However, whatever order would have to be imposed upon the sensuous impulse must itself be "an operation of freedom."⁸⁷ The free individual himself must bring about the harmony between individual and universal gratification. In a truly free civilization, all laws are self-given by the individuals: "to give freedom by freedom is the universal law" of the "aesthetic state";⁸⁸ in a truly free civilization, "the will of the whole" fulfills itself only "through the nature of the individual."⁸⁹ Order is freedom only if it is founded and sustained by the free gratification of the individuals. But the fatal enemy of lasting gratification is *time*, the inner finiteness, the brevity of all conditions. The idea of integral human liberation therefore necessarily contains the notion of the struggle against time. We have seen that theomorphic and Narcissistic images symbolize the rebellion against passing, the desperate effort to arrest the flow of time — the conservative nature of the pleasure principle. The "aesthetic state" is really to be the state of freedom, for it must ultimately defeat the destructive course of

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

time. Only this is the token of a non-repressive civilization. Thus, Schiller attributes to the liberating play impulse the function of "abolishing time in time," of reconciling being and becoming, change and identity.⁴⁰ In this task culminates the progress of mankind to a higher form of culture.

The idealistic and aesthetic sublimations which prevail in Schiller's work do not vitiate its radical implications. Jung recognized these implications and was duly frightened by them. He warned that the rule of the play impulse would bring about a "release of repression" which would entail a "depreciation of the hitherto highest values," a "catastrophe of culture" — in a word, "barbarism."⁴¹ Schiller himself was apparently less inclined than Jung to identify repressive culture with culture as such; he seemed to be willing to accept the risk of catastrophe for the former and a debasement of its values if this would lead to a higher culture. He was fully aware that, in its first free manifestations, the play impulse "will be hardly recognized," for the sensuous impulse will incessantly interpose with its "wild desire."⁴² However, he thought that such "barbarian" outbreaks would be left behind as the new culture developed, and that only a "leap" could lead from the old to the new one. He did not concern himself with the catastrophic changes in the social structure that this "leap" would involve: they lay beyond the limits of idealistic philosophy. But the direction of the change toward a non-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴¹ Jung, *Psychological Types*, transl. H. Godwin Baynes (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), p. 135.

⁴² Schiller, *The Aesthetic Letters*, p. 142.

repressive order is clearly indicated in his aesthetic conception.

If we reassemble its main elements, we find:

(1) The transformation of toil (labor) into play, and of repressive productivity into "display" — a transformation that must be preceded by the conquest of want (scarcity) as the determining factor of civilization.⁴³

(2) The self-sublimation of sensuousness (of the sensuous impulse) and the de-sublimation of reason (of the form-impulse) in order to reconcile the two basic antagonistic impulses.

(3) The conquest of time in so far as time is destructive of lasting gratification.

These elements are practically identical with those of a reconciliation between pleasure principle and reality principle. We recall the constitutive role attributed to imagination (phantasy) in play and display: Imagination preserves the objectives of those mental processes which have remained free from the repressive reality principle; in their

⁴³ An attempt to define, on a biological basis, human freedom in terms of play has been recently made by Gustav Bally, in *Vom Ursprung und Grenzen der Freiheit* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1945), especially pp. 71ff, 74-75. He sees the dimension of freedom in freedom from instinctual determination. Man is not, like the animal, necessarily determined by his instincts; he possesses an *entspanntes Feld* — a *Spielraum* — which he "keeps distant from his instinctual objectives," plays with and thus plays with his world. This attitude of a constant distance from the instinctual objective makes human culture possible. Bally's conception is close to Schiller's, but it is regressive where Schiller's is progressive. Schiller's playful freedom is the result of instinctual freedom; Bally's is "relative freedom against the instincts" (p. 94), freedom to resist instinctual needs. No wonder, then, that the new interpretation of freedom turns out to be the old freedom to renounce, to deny temptations, the "courage" to bind oneself, the power of self-repression (p. 79). And, quite consistently, the ultimate and true freedom, "freedom from anxiety and death," is denounced as a false and "questionable" liberty (p. 100).

aesthetic function, they can be incorporated into the conscious rationality of mature civilization. The play impulse stands for the common denominator of the two opposed mental processes and principles.

Still another element links the aesthetic philosophy with the Orphic and Narcissistic images: the view of a non-repressive order in which the subjective and objective world, man and nature, are harmonized. The Orphic symbols center on the singing god who lives to defeat death and who liberates nature, so that the constrained and constraining matter releases the beautiful and playful forms of animate and inanimate things. No longer striving and no longer desiring "for something still to be attained,"⁴⁴ they are free from fear and fetter — and thus free *per se*. The contemplation of Narcissus repels all other activity in the erotic surrender to beauty, inseparably uniting his own existence with nature. Similarly, the aesthetic philosophy conceives of non-repressive order in such a manner that nature in man and outside man becomes freely susceptible to "laws" — the laws of display and beauty.

Non-repressive order is essentially an order of *abundance*; the necessary constraint is brought about by "superfluity" rather than need. Only an order of abundance is compatible with freedom. At this point, the idealistic and the materialistic critiques of culture meet. Both agree that non-repressive order becomes possible only at the highest maturity of civilization, when all basic needs can be satisfied with a minimum expenditure of physical and mental energy in a minimum of time. Rejecting the notion of free-

⁴⁴ ". . . um ein endlich noch Erreichtes" (Rilke).

dom which pertains to the rule of the performance principle, they reserve freedom for the new mode of existence that would emerge on the basis of universally gratified existence-needs. The realm of freedom is envisioned as lying *beyond* the realm of necessity: freedom is not within but outside the "struggle for existence." Possession and procurement of the necessities of life are the prerequisite, rather than the content, of a free society. The realm of necessity, of labor, is one of unfreedom because the human existence in this realm is determined by objectives and functions that are not its own and that do not allow the free play of human faculties and desires. The optimum in this realm is therefore to be defined by standards of rationality rather than freedom — namely, to organize production and distribution in such a manner that the least time is spent for making all necessities available to all members of society. Necessary labor is a system of essentially inhuman, mechanical, and routine activities; in such a system, individuality cannot be a value and end in itself. Reasonably, the system of societal labor would be organized rather with a view to saving time and space for the development of individuality *outside* the inevitably repressive work-world. Play and display, as principles of civilization, imply not the transformation of labor but its complete subordination to the freely evolving potentialities of man and nature. The ideas of play and display now reveal their full distance from the values of productiveness and performance: play is *unproductive* and *useless* precisely because it rejects the repressive and exploitative traits of labor and does not "work"; it "just plays" with the reality. But it also can-

cels their sublime traits — the “higher values.” The de-sublimation of reason is just as essential a process in the emergence of a free culture as is the self-sublimation of sensuousness. In the established system of domination, the repressive structure of reason and the repressive organization of the sense-faculties supplement and sustain each other. In Freud’s terms: civilized morality is the morality of repressed instincts; liberation of the latter implies “debasement” of the former. But this debasement of the higher values may take them back into the organic structure of the human existence from which they were separated, and the reunion may transform this structure itself. If the higher values lose their remoteness, their isolation from and against the lower faculties, the latter may become freely susceptible to culture.

CHAPTER TEN

The Transformation of Sexuality into Eros

The vision of a non-repressive culture, which we have lifted from a marginal trend in mythology and philosophy, aims at a new relation between instincts and reason. The civilized morality is reversed by harmonizing instinctual freedom and order: liberated from the tyranny of repressive reason, the instincts tend toward free and lasting existential relations — they generate a new reality principle. In Schiller’s idea of an “aesthetic state,” the vision of a non-repressive culture is concretized at the level of mature civilization. At this level, the organization of the instincts becomes a social problem (in Schiller’s terminology, *political*), as it does in Freud’s psychology. The processes that create the ego and superego also shape and perpetuate specific societal institutions and relations. Such psychoanalytical concepts as sublimation, identification, and introjection have not only a psychical but also a social content: they terminate in a system of institutions, laws, agencies, things, and customs that confront the individual as objective entities. Within this antagonistic system, the mental conflict between ego and superego, between ego and id, is at one and the same time a conflict between the individual and his society. The latter embodies the rationality of the whole, and the indi-

vidual's struggle against the repressive forces is a struggle against objective reason. Therefore, the emergence of a non-repressive reality principle involving instinctual liberation would *regress* behind the attained level of civilized rationality. This regression would be psychical as well as social: it would reactivate early stages of the libido which were surpassed in the development of the reality ego, and it would dissolve the institutions of society in which the reality ego exists. In terms of these institutions, instinctual liberation is relapse into barbarism. However, occurring at the height of civilization, as a consequence not of defeat but of victory in the struggle for existence, and supported by a free society, such liberation might have very different results. It would still be a reversal of the process of civilization, a subversion of culture—but *after* culture had done its work and created the mankind and the world that could be free. It would still be "regression"—but in the light of mature consciousness and guided by a new rationality. Under these conditions, the possibility of a non-repressive civilization is predicated not upon the arrest, but upon the liberation, of progress—so that man would order his life in accordance with his fully developed knowledge, so that he would ask again what is good and what is evil. If the guilt accumulated in the civilized domination of man by man can ever be redeemed by freedom, then the "original sin" must be committed again: "We must again eat from the tree of knowledge in order to fall back into the state of innocence."¹

¹ "Wir müssen wieder vom Baum der Erkenntnis essen, um in den Stand der Unschuld zurückzufallen." Heinrich von Kleist, "Ueber das Marionettentheater," conclusion.

The notion of a non-repressive instinctual order must first be tested on the most "disorderly" of all instincts—namely, sexuality. Non-repressive order is possible only if the sex instincts can, by virtue of their own dynamic and under changed existential and societal conditions, generate lasting erotic relations among mature individuals. We have to ask whether the sex instincts, after the elimination of all surplus-repression, can develop a "libidinal rationality" which is not only compatible with but even promotes progress toward higher forms of civilized freedom. This possibility will be examined here in Freud's own terms.

We have reiterated Freud's conclusion that any genuine decrease in the societal controls over the sex instincts would, even under optimum conditions, reverse the organization of sexuality toward precivilized stages. Such regression would break through the central fortifications of the performance principle: it would undo the channeling of sexuality into monogamic reproduction and the taboo on perversions. Under the rule of the performance principle, the libidinal cathexis of the individual body and libidinal relations with others are normally confined to leisure time and directed to the preparation and execution of genital intercourse; only in exceptional cases, and with a high degree of sublimation, are libidinal relations allowed to enter into the sphere of work. These constraints, enforced by the need for sustaining a large quantum of energy and time for non-gratifying labor, perpetuate the desexualization of the body in order to make the organism into a subject-object of socially useful performances. Conversely, if the work day and energy are reduced to a minimum, without a corresponding manipula-

tion of the free time, the ground for these constraints would be undermined. Libido would be released and would overflow the institutionalized limits within which it is kept by the reality principle.

Freud repeatedly emphasized that the lasting interpersonal relations on which civilization depends presuppose that the sex instinct is inhibited in its aim.² Love, and the enduring and responsible relations which it demands, are founded on a union of sexuality with "affection," and this union is the historical result of a long and cruel process of domestication, in which the instinct's legitimate manifestation is made supreme and its component parts are arrested in their development.³ This cultural refinement of sexuality, its sublimation to love, took place within a civilization which established possessive private relations apart from, and in a decisive aspect conflicting with, the possessive societal relations. While, outside the privacy of the family, men's existence was chiefly determined by the exchange value of their products and performances, their life in home and bed was to be permeated with the spirit of divine and moral law. Mankind was supposed to be an end in itself and never a mere means; but this ideology was effective in the private rather than in the societal functions of the individuals, in the sphere of libidinal satisfaction rather than in that of labor. The full force of civilized morality was mobilized against the use of the body as mere object, means, instrument of pleasure; such reification was tabooed and

² *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), IV, 203ff; *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1949), pp. 72, 78.

³ *Collected Papers*, IV, 215.

remained the ill-reputed privilege of whores, degenerates, and perverts. Precisely in his gratification, and especially in his sexual gratification, man was to be a higher being, committed to higher values; sexuality was to be dignified by love. With the emergence of a non-repressive reality principle, with the abolition of the surplus-repression necessitated by the performance principle, this process would be reversed. In the societal relations, reification would be replaced as the division of labor became reoriented on the satisfaction of freely developing individual needs; whereas, in the libidinal relations, the taboo on the reification of the body would be lessened. No longer used as a full-time instrument of labor, the body would be resexualized. The regression involved in this spread of the libido would not manifest itself in a reactivation of all erotogenic zones and, consequently, in a resurgence of pregenital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy. The body in its entirety would become an object of cathexis, a thing to be enjoyed — an instrument of pleasure. This change in the value and scope of libidinal relations would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the intimate interpersonal relations have been organized, particularly the monogamic and patriarchal family.

These prospects seem to confirm the expectation that intellectual liberation can lead only to a society of sex maniacs, that is, to no society. However, the process just outlined involves not simply a release but a *transformation* of the libido: from sexuality constrained under genital supremacy to a totalization of the entire personality. It is a spread rather than an explosion of libido — a spread over private and socie-

tal relations which bridges the gap maintained between them by a repressive reality principle. This transformation of the libido would be the result of a societal transformation that released the free play of individual needs and faculties. By virtue of these conditions, the free development of transformed libido *beyond* the institutions of the performance principle differs essentially from the release of constrained sexuality *within* the dominion of these institutions. The latter process explodes *suppressed* sexuality; the libido continues to bear the mark of suppression and manifests itself in the hideous forms so well known in the history of civilization; in the sadistic and masochistic orgies of desperate masses, of "society elites," of starved bands of mercenaries, of prison and concentration-camp guards. Such release of sexuality provides a periodically necessary outlet for unbearable frustration; it strengthens rather than weakens the roots of instinctual constraint; consequently, it has been used time and again as a prop for suppressive regimes. In contrast, the free development of transformed libido within transformed institutions, while eroticizing previously tabooed zones, time, and relations, would minimize the manifestations of *mere* sexuality by integrating them into a far larger order, including the order of work. In this context, sexuality tends to its own sublimation: the libido would not simply reactivate precivilized and infantile stages, but would also transform the perverted content of these stages.

The term *perversions* covers sexual phenomena of essentially different origin. The same taboo is placed on instinctual manifestations incompatible with civilization and

those incompatible with repressive civilization, especially with monogamic genital supremacy. However, within the historical dynamic of the instinct, for example, coprophilia and homosexuality have a very different place and function.⁴ A similar difference prevails within one and the same perversion: the function of sadism is not the same in a free libidinal relation and in the activities of SS Troops. The inhuman, compulsive, coercive, and destructive forms of these perversions seem to be linked with the general perversion of the human existence in a repressive culture, but the perversions have an instinctual substance distinct from these forms; and this substance may well express itself in other forms compatible with normality in high civilization. Not all component parts and stages of the instinct that have been suppressed have suffered this fate because they prevented the evolution of man and mankind. The purity, regularity, cleanliness, and reproduction required by the performance principle are not naturally those of any mature civilization. And the reactivation of prehistoric and childhood wishes and attitudes is not necessarily regression; it may well be the opposite — proximity to a happiness that has always been the repressed promise of a better future. In one of his most advanced formulations, Freud once defined happiness as the "subsequent fulfillment of a prehistoric wish. That is why wealth brings so little happiness: money was not a wish in childhood."⁵

But if human happiness depends on the fulfillment of

⁴ See Chapter 2 above.

⁵ Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. I (New York: Basic Books, 1953), p. 330.

childhood wishes, civilization, according to Freud, depends on the suppression of the strongest of all childhood wishes: the Oedipus wish. Does the realization of happiness in a free civilization still necessitate this suppression? Or would the transformation of the libido also engulf the Oedipus situation? In the context of our hypothesis, such speculations are insignificant; the Oedipus complex, although the primary source and model of neurotic conflicts, is certainly not the central cause of the discontents in civilization, and not the central obstacle for their removal. The Oedipus complex "passes" even under the rule of a repressive reality principle. Freud advances two general interpretations of the "passing of the Oedipus complex": it "becomes extinguished by its lack of success"; or it "must come to an end because the time has come for its dissolution, just as the milk-teeth fall out when the permanent ones begin to press forward."⁸ The passing of the complex appears as a "natural" event in both cases.

We have spoken of the *self-sublimation of sexuality*. The term implies that sexuality can, under specific conditions, create highly civilized human relations without being subjected to the repressive organization which the established civilization has imposed upon the instinct. Such self-sublimation presupposes historical progress beyond the institutions of the performance principle, which in turn would release instinctual regression. For the development of the instinct, this means regression from sexuality in the service of reproduction to sexuality in the "function of ob-

⁸ *Collected Papers*, II, 269.

taining pleasure from zones of the body."⁷ With this restoration of the primary structure of sexuality, the primacy of the genital function is broken — as is the desexualization of the body which has accompanied this primacy. The organism in its entirety becomes the substratum of sexuality, while at the same time the instinct's objective is no longer absorbed by a specialized function — namely, that of bringing "one's own genitals into contact with those of someone of the opposite sex."⁸ Thus enlarged, the field and objective of the instinct becomes the life of the organism itself. This process almost naturally, by its inner logic, suggests the conceptual transformation of sexuality into Eros.

The introduction of the term Eros in Freud's later writings was certainly motivated by different reasons: Eros, as life instinct, denotes a larger biological instinct rather than a larger scope of sexuality.⁹ However, it may not be accidental that Freud does not rigidly distinguish between Eros and sexuality, and his usage of the term *Eros* (especially in *The Ego and the Id*, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*) implies an enlargement of the meaning of sexuality itself. Even without Freud's explicit reference to Plato the change in emphasis is clear: Eros signifies a quantitative and qualitative aggrandizement of sexuality. And the aggrandized concept seems to demand a correspondingly modified concept of sub-

⁷ *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), p. 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹ See the papers of Siegfried Bernfeld and Edward Bibring in *Imago*, Vols. XXI, XXII (1935, 1936). See also page 137 above.

limation. The modifications of sexuality are not the same as the modifications of Eros. Freud's concept of sublimation refers to the fate of sexuality under a repressive reality principle. Thus, sublimation means a change in the aim and object of the instinct "with regard to which our social values come into the picture."¹⁰ The term is applied to a group of unconscious processes which have in common that

... as the result of inner or outer deprivation, the aim of object-libido undergoes a more or less complete deflection, modification, or inhibition. In the great majority of instances, the new aim is one distinct or remote from sexual satisfaction, i.e., is an asexual or non-sexual aim.¹¹

This mode of sublimation is to a high degree dictated by specific societal requirements and cannot be automatically extended to other and less repressive forms of civilization with different "social values." Under the performance principle, the diversion of libido into useful cultural activities takes place after the period of early childhood. Sublimation then operates on a preconditioned instinctual structure, which includes the functional and temporal restraints of sexuality, its channeling into monogamic reproduction, and the desexualization of most of the body. Sublimation works with the thus preconditioned libido and its possessive, exploitative, aggressive force. The repressive "modification" of the pleasure principle precedes the actual sublimation, and the latter carries the repressive elements over into the socially useful activities.

¹⁰ Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1933), p. 133.

¹¹ Edward Glover, "Sublimation, Substitution, and Social Anxiety," in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (1931), p. 285.

However, there are other modes of sublimation. Freud speaks of aim-inhibited sexual impulses which need not be described as sublimated although they are "closely related" to sublimated impulses. "They have not abandoned their directly sexual aims, but they are held back by internal resistances from attaining them; they rest content with certain approximations to satisfaction."¹² Freud calls them "social instincts" and mentions as examples "the affectionate relations between parents and children, feelings of friendship, and the emotional ties in marriage which had their origin in sexual attraction." Moreover, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud has emphasized the extent to which societal relations ("community" or civilization) are founded on unsublimated as well as sublimated libidinous ties: "sexual love for women" as well as "desexualized, sublimated, homosexual love for other men" here appear as instinctual sources of an enduring and expanding culture.¹³ This conception suggests, in Freud's work, an idea of civilization very different from that derived from repressive sublimation, namely, civilization evolving from and sustained by free libidinal relations. Erich Róheim used Ferenczi's notion of a "genitofugal libido" to support his theory of the libidinous origin of culture. With the relief of extreme tension, libido flows back from the object to the body, and this "recathecting of

¹² Encyclopaedia article "The Libido Theory," reprinted in *Collected Papers*, V, 134.

¹³ Page 57.

¹⁴ *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie* (Leipzig: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924), pp. 51-52. This book has appeared in English as *Genital Theory*, transl. H. A. Bunker (Albany: Psychoanalytic Quarterly, Inc., 1935).

the whole organism with libido results in a feeling of happiness in which the organs find their reward for work and stimulation to further activity."¹⁵ The concept assumes a genitofugal "libido trend to the development of culture" — in other words, an inherent trend in the libido itself toward "cultural" expression, *without* external repressive modification. And this "cultural" trend in the libido seems to be *genitofugal*, that is to say, *away* from genital supremacy toward the erotization of the entire organism.

These concepts come close to recognizing the possibility of non-repressive sublimation. The rest is left to speculation. And indeed, under the established reality principle, non-repressive sublimation can appear only in marginal and incomplete aspects; its fully developed form would be sublimation without desexualization. The instinct is not "deflected" from its aim; it is gratified in activities and relations that are not sexual in the sense of "organized" genital sexuality and yet are libidinal and erotic. Where repressive sublimation prevails and determines the culture, non-repressive sublimation must manifest itself in contradiction to the entire sphere of social usefulness; viewed from this sphere, it is the negation of all accepted productivity and performance. The Orphic and Narcissistic images are recalled: Plato blames Orpheus for his "softness" (he was only a

¹⁵ Róheim, *The Origin and Function of Culture*, (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph No. 69, 1943), p. 74. In his article "Sublimation" in the *Yearbook of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. I (1945), Róheim stresses that in sublimation "id strivings reconquer the ground in a disguised form." Thus, "in contrast to the prevailing view, . . . in sublimation we have no ground wrested from the id by the super-ego, but quite to the contrary, what we have is super-ego territory inundated by the id" (p. 117). Here, too, the emphasis is on the *ascendancy* of libido in sublimation.

harp-player), which was duly punished by the gods¹⁶ — as was Narcissus' refusal to "participate." Before the reality as it is, they stand condemned: they rejected the required sublimation. However,

. . . La sublimation n'est pas toujours la négation d'un désir; elle ne se présente pas toujours comme une sublimation *contre* des instincts. Elle peut être une sublimation *pour* un idéal. Alors Narcisse ne dit plus: "Je m'aime tel que je suis," il dit: "Je suis tel que je m'aime."¹⁷

The Orphic and Narcissistic Eros engulfs the reality in libidinal relations which transform the individual and his environment; but this transformation is the isolated deed of unique individuals, and, as such, it generates death. Even if sublimation does not proceed *against* the instincts but as their affirmation, it must be a supra-individual process on a common ground. As an isolated individual phenomenon, the reactivation of narcissistic libido is not culture-building but neurotic:

The difference between a neurosis and a sublimation is evidently the social aspect of the phenomenon. A neurosis isolates; a sublimation unites. In a sublimation something new is created — a *group*, or a community, or a tool — and it is created in a group or for the use of a group.¹⁸

Libido can take the road of self-sublimation only as a *social* phenomenon: as an unrepressed force, it can promote the formation of culture only under conditions which relate

¹⁶ *Symposium* 179 D.

¹⁷ "Sublimation is not always the negation of a desire; it does not always take the form of sublimation *against* the instincts. It could be a sublimation *for* an ideal. Thus Narcissus no longer says: 'I love myself as I am.' He says: 'I am such that I love myself.'" Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves* (Paris: José Corti, 1942), pp. 34-35.

¹⁸ Róheim, *The Origin and Function of Culture*, p. 74.

associated individuals to each other in the cultivation of the environment for their developing needs and faculties. Re-activation of polymorphous and narcissistic sexuality ceases to be a threat to culture and can itself lead to culture-building if the organism exists not as an instrument of alienated labor but as a subject of self-realization — in other words, if socially useful work is at the same time the transparent satisfaction of an individual need. In primitive society, this organization of work may be immediate and “natural”; in mature civilization, it can be envisaged only as the result of liberation. Under such conditions, the impulse to “obtain pleasure from the zones of the body” may extend to seek its objective in lasting and expanding libidinal relations because this expansion increases and intensifies the instinct’s gratification. Moreover, nothing in the nature of Eros justifies the notion that the “extension” of the impulse is confined to the corporeal sphere. If the antagonistic separation of the physical from the spiritual part of the organism is itself the historical result of repression, the overcoming of this antagonism would open the spiritual sphere to the impulse. The aesthetic idea of a sensuous reason suggests such a tendency. It is essentially different from sublimation in so far as the spiritual sphere becomes the “direct” object of Eros and remains a libidinal object: there is a change neither in energy nor in aim.

The notion that Eros and Agape may after all be one and the same — not that Eros is Agape but that Agape is Eros — may sound strange after almost two thousand years of theology. Nor does it seem justifiable to refer to Plato as a defender of this identification — Plato who himself in-

troduced the repressive definition of Eros into the household of Western culture. Still, the *Symposium* contains the clearest celebration of the sexual origin and substance of the spiritual relations. According to Diotima, Eros drives the desire for one beautiful body to another and finally to all beautiful bodies, for “the beauty of one body is akin to the beauty of another,” and it would be foolish “not to recognize that the beauty in every body is one and the same.”¹⁹ Out of this truly polymorphous sexuality arises the desire for that which animates the desired body: the psyche and its various manifestations. There is an unbroken ascent in erotic fulfillment from the corporeal love of one to that of the others, to the love of beautiful work and play (*ἐπιθηδεύματα*), and ultimately to the love of beautiful knowledge (*καλὰ μαθήματα*). The road to “higher culture” leads through the true love of boys (*ὁρῶς παιδεραστεῖν*).²⁰ Spiritual “procreation” is just as much the work of Eros as is corporeal procreation, and the right and true order of the Polis is just as much an erotic one as is the right and true order of love. The culture-building power of Eros is non-repressive sublimation: sexuality is neither deflected from nor blocked in its objective; rather, in attaining its objective, it transcends it to others, searching for fuller gratification.

In the light of the idea of non-repressive sublimation, Freud’s definition of Eros as striving to “form living substance into ever greater unities, so that life may be prolonged and brought to higher development”²¹ takes on

¹⁹ 210 B. Jowett translates, not “body,” but “form.”

²⁰ 211 B. Jowett translates: “. . . under the influence of true love.”

²¹ Freud, *Collected Papers*, V, 135.

added significance. The biological drive becomes a cultural drive. The pleasure principle reveals its own dialectic. The erotic aim of sustaining the entire body as subject-object of pleasure calls for the continual refinement of the organism, the intensification of its receptivity, the growth of its sensuousness. The aim generates its own projects of realization: the abolition of toil, the amelioration of the environment, the conquest of disease and decay, the creation of luxury. All these activities flow directly from the pleasure principle, and, at the same time, they constitute work which associates individuals to "greater unities"; no longer confined within the mutilating dominion of the performance principle, they modify the impulse without deflecting it from its aim. There is sublimation and, consequently, culture; but this sublimation proceeds in a system of expanding and enduring libidinal relations, which are in themselves work relations.

The idea of an erotic tendency toward work is not foreign to psychoanalysis. Freud himself remarked that work provides an opportunity for a "very considerable discharge of libidinal component impulses, narcissistic, aggressive and even erotic."²² We have questioned this statement²³ because it makes no distinction between alienated and non-alienated labor (between labor and work): the former is by its very nature repressive of human potentialities and therefore also repressive of the "libidinal component impulses" which may enter into work. But the statement assumes a different significance if it is seen in the context of

²² *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 34 note.

²³ See Chapter 4 above.

the social psychology which Freud proposes in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. He suggests that "the libido props itself upon the satisfaction of the great vital needs, and chooses as its first objects the people who have a share in that process."²⁴ This proposition, if unfolded in its implications, comes close to vitiating Freud's basic assumption that the "struggle for existence" (that is, for the "satisfaction of the great vital needs") is *per se* anti-libidinous in so far as it necessitates the regimentation of the instinct by a constraining reality principle. It must be noted that Freud links the libido not merely to the satisfaction of the great vital needs but to the joint human efforts to obtain satisfaction, i.e., to the work process:

... experience has shown that in cases of collaboration libidinal ties are regularly formed between the fellow-workers which prolong and solidify the relations between them to a point beyond what is merely profitable.²⁵

If this is true, then Ananke is not a sufficient cause for the instinctual constraints of civilization — and not a sufficient reason for denying the possibility of a non-repressive libidinous culture. Freud's suggestions in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* do more than reformulate his thesis of Eros as the builder of culture; culture here rather appears as the builder of Eros — that is to say, as the "natural" fulfillment of the innermost trend of Eros. Freud's psychology of civilization was based on the inexorable conflict between Ananke and free instinctual development. But if Ananke itself becomes the primary field of libidinal development, the contradiction evaporates. Not only

²⁴ Page 57.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

would the struggle for existence not necessarily cancel the possibility of instinctual freedom (as we suggested in Chapter 6); but it would even constitute a "prop" for instinctual gratification. The work relations which form the base of civilization, and thus civilization itself, would be "propped" by non-desexualized instinctual energy. The whole concept of sublimation is at stake.

The problem of work, of socially useful activity, without (repressive) sublimation can now be restated. It emerged as the problem of a change in the character of work by virtue of which the latter would be assimilated to play — the free play of human faculties. What are the instinctual preconditions for such a transformation? The most far-reaching attempt to answer this question is made by Barbara Lantos in her article "Work and the Instincts."²⁶ She defines work and play in terms of the instinctual stages involved in these activities. Play is entirely subject to the pleasure principle: pleasure is in the movement itself in so far as it activates erotogenic zones. "The fundamental feature of play is, that it is gratifying in itself, without serving any other purpose than that of instinctual gratification." The impulses that determine play are the pregenital ones: play expresses objectless autoeroticism and gratifies those component instincts which are already directed toward the objective world. Work, on the other hand, serves ends outside itself — namely, the ends of self-preservation. "To work is the active effort of the ego . . . to get from the outside world whatever is needed for self-preservation." This

²⁶ In *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. XXIV (1943), Part 3 and 4, pp. 114ff.

contrast establishes a parallelism between the organization of the instincts and that of human activity:

Play is an aim in itself, work is the agent of self-preservation. Component instincts and auto-erotic activities seek pleasure with no ulterior consequences; genital activity is the agent of procreation. The genital organization of the sexual instincts has a parallel in the work-organization of the ego-instincts.²⁷

Thus it is the purpose and not the content which marks an activity as play or work.²⁸ A transformation in the instinctual structure (such as that from the pregenital to the genital stage) would entail a change in the instinctual value of the human activity *regardless of its content*. For example, if work were accompanied by a reactivation of pregenital polymorphous eroticism, it would tend to become gratifying in itself without losing its work content. Now it is precisely such a reactivation of polymorphous eroticism which appeared as the consequence of the conquest of scarcity and alienation. The altered societal conditions would therefore create an instinctual basis for the transformation of work into play. In Freud's terms, the less the efforts to obtain satisfaction are impeded and directed by the interest in domination, the more freely the libido could prop itself upon the satisfaction of the great vital needs. Sublimation and domination hang together. And the dissolution of the former would, with the transformation of the instinctual structure, also transform the basic attitude toward man and nature which has been characteristic of Western civilization.

In psychoanalytic literature, the development of libidinal

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

work relations is usually attributed to a "general maternal attitude as the dominant trend of a culture."²⁹ Consequently, it is considered as a feature of primitive societies rather than as a possibility of mature civilization. Margaret Mead's interpretation of Arapesh culture is entirely focused on this attitude:

To the Arapesh, the world is a garden that must be tilled, not for one's self, not in pride and boasting, not for hoarding and usury, but that the yams and the dogs and the pigs and most of all the children may grow. From this whole attitude flow many of the other Arapesh traits, the lack of conflict between the old and young, the lack of any expectation of jealousy or envy, the emphasis upon co-operation.³⁰

Foremost in this description appears the fundamentally different experience of the world: nature is taken, not as an object of domination and exploitation, but as a "garden" which can grow while making human beings grow. It is the attitude that experiences man and nature as joined in a non-repressive and still functioning order. We have seen how the otherwise most divergent traditions of thought converged on this idea: the philosophical opposition against the performance principle; the Orphic and Narcissistic archetypes; the aesthetic conception. But while the psycho-analytical and anthropological concepts of such an order have been oriented on the prehistorical and precivilized *past*, our discussion of the concept is oriented on the *future*, on the conditions of fully mature civilization. The transformation of sexuality into Eros, and its extension to lasting libidinal work relations, here presuppose the ra-

²⁹ Róheim, *The Origin and Function of Culture*, p. 75.

³⁰ *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (New York: New American Library, 1952), p. 100.

tional reorganization of a huge industrial apparatus, a highly specialized societal division of labor, the use of fantastically destructive energies, and the co-operation of vast masses.

The idea of libidinal work relations in a developed industrial society finds little support in the tradition of thought, and where such support is forthcoming it seems of a dangerous nature. The transformation of labor into pleasure is the central idea in Fourier's giant socialist utopia. If

... l'industrie est la destination qui nous est assignée par le créateur, comment penser qu'il veuille nous y amener par la violence, et qu'il n'ait pas su mettre en jeu quelque ressort plus noble, quelque amorce capable de transformer les travaux en plaisirs.³¹

Fourier insists that this transformation requires a complete change in the social institutions: distribution of the social product according to need, assignment of functions according to individual faculties and inclinations, constant mutation of functions, short work periods, and so on. But the possibility of "attractive labor" (*travail attrayant*) derives above all from the release of libidinal forces. Fourier assumes the existence of an *attraction industrielle* which makes for pleasurable co-operation. It is based on the *attraction passionnée* in the nature of man, which persists despite the opposition of reason, duty, prejudice. This *attraction passionnée* tends toward three principal objectives: the creation of "luxury, or the pleasure of the five

³¹ If "industry is the fate assigned to us by the Creator, how can one believe that he wishes to force us into it — that he does not know how to bring to bear some nobler means, some enticement capable of transforming work into pleasure." F. Armand and R. Maublanc, *Fourier: Textes Choisis* (Paris: Editions Sociales Internationales, 1937), III, 154.

senses"; the formation of libidinal groups (of friendship and love); and the establishment of a harmonious order, organizing these groups for work in accordance with the development of the individual "passions" (internal and external "play" of faculties).³² Fourier comes closer than any other utopian socialist to elucidating the dependence of freedom on non-repressive sublimation. However, in his detailed blueprint for the realization of this idea, he hands it over to a giant organization and administration and thus retains the repressive elements. The working communities of the *phalanstère* anticipate "strength through joy" rather than freedom, the beautification of mass culture rather than its abolition. Work as free play cannot be subject to administration; only alienated labor can be organized and administered by rational routine. It is beyond this sphere, but on its basis, that non-repressive sublimation creates its own cultural order.

Once more, we emphasize that non-repressive sublimation is utterly incompatible with the institutions of the performance principle and implies the negation of this principle. This contradiction is the more important since post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory itself shows a marked tendency to obliterate it and to glorify repressive productivity as human self-realization. A striking example is provided by Ives Hendrick in his paper "Work and the Pleasure Principle."³³ He suggests that the "energy and the need to exercise the physiological organs available for work" are not provided by the libido but rather by a spe-

³² *Ibid.*, II, 240ff.

³³ *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (1943).

cial instinct, the "mastery instinct." Its aim is "to control, or alter a piece of the environment . . . by the skillful use of perceptual, intellectual, and motor techniques." This drive for "integration and skillful performance" is "mentally and emotionally experienced as the need to perform work efficiently."³⁴ Since work is thus supposed to be itself the gratification of an instinct rather than the "temporary negation" of an instinct, work "yields pleasure" in efficient performance. Work pleasure results from the satisfaction of the mastery instinct, but "work pleasure" and libidinal pleasure usually coincide, since the ego organizations which function as work are "generally, and perhaps always, utilized concurrently for the discharge of surplus libidinal tension."³⁵

As usual, the revision of Freudian theory means a regression. The assumption of any special instinct begs the question, but the assumption of a special "mastery instinct" does even more: it destroys the entire structure and dynamic of the "mental apparatus" which Freud has built. Moreover, it obliterates the most repressive features of the performance principle by interpreting them as gratification of an instinctual need. Work pure and simple is the chief social manifestation of the reality principle. In so far as work is conditional upon delay and diversion of instinctual gratification (and according to Freud it is), it contradicts the pleasure principle. If work pleasure and libidinal pleasure "usually coincide," then the very concept of the reality principle becomes meaningless and superfluous, and the vicissitudes of the instincts as described by Freud would

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

at best be an abnormal development. Nor can the reality principle be saved by stipulating (as Hendrick does) a work principle different from the reality principle; for if the latter does not govern work it has practically nothing to govern in the reality.

To be sure, there is work that yields pleasure in skillful performance of the bodily organs "available for work." But what kind of work, and what kind of pleasure? If pleasure is indeed in the act of working and not extraneous to it, such pleasure must be derived from the acting organs of the body and the body itself, activating the erotogenic zones or eroticizing the body as a whole; in other words, it must be libidinal pleasure. In a reality governed by the performance principle, such "libidinal" work is a rare exception and can occur only outside or at the margin of the work world — as "hobby," play, or in a directly erotic situation. The normal kind of work (socially useful occupational activity) in the prevailing division of labor is such that the individual, in working, does *not* satisfy *his* own impulses, needs, and faculties but performs a pre-established function. Hendrick, however, takes no notice of the fact of *alienated* labor, which is the predominant mode of work under the given reality principle. Certainly there can be "pleasure" in alienated labor too. The typist who hands in a perfect transcript, the tailor who delivers a perfectly fitting suit, the beauty-parlor attendant who fixes the perfect hairdo, the laborer who fulfills his quota — all may feel pleasure in a "job well done." However, either this pleasure is extraneous (anticipation of reward), or it is the satisfaction (itself a token of repression) of being well occu-

pied, in the right place, of contributing one's part to the functioning of the apparatus. In either case, such pleasure has nothing to do with primary instinctual gratification. To link performances on assembly lines, in offices and shops with instinctual needs is to glorify dehumanization as pleasure. It is no wonder that Hendrick considers as the "sublime test of men's will to perform their work effectively" the efficient functioning of an army which has no longer any "fantasies of victory and a pleasant future," which keeps on fighting for no other reason than because it is the soldier's job to fight, and "to do the job was the only motivation that was still meaningful."⁸⁶ To say that the job must be done because it is a "job" is truly the apex of alienation, the total loss of instinctual and intellectual freedom — repression which has become, not the second, but the first nature of man.

In contrast to such aberrations, the true spirit of psychoanalytic theory lives in the uncompromising efforts to reveal the anti-humanistic forces behind the philosophy of productiveness:

Of all things, hard work has become a virtue instead of the curse it was always advertised to be by our remote ancestors. . . . Our children should be prepared to bring their children up so they won't have to work as a neurotic necessity. The necessity to work is a neurotic symptom. It is a crutch. It is an attempt to make one feel valuable even though there is no particular need for one's working.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁸⁷ C. B. Chisholm in the panel discussion "The Psychiatry of Endurance, Peace and Social Progress," in *Psychiatry*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (1946), p. 31.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Eros and Thanatos

Under non-repressive conditions, sexuality tends to "grow into" Eros — that is to say, toward self-sublimation in lasting and expanding relations (including work relations) which serve to intensify and enlarge instinctual gratification. Eros strives for "eternalizing" itself in a permanent *order*. This striving finds its first resistance in the realm of necessity. To be sure, the scarcity and poverty prevalent in the world could be sufficiently mastered to permit the ascendancy of universal freedom, but this mastery seems to be self-propelling — perpetual labor. All the technological progress, the conquest of nature, the rationalization of man and society have not eliminated and cannot eliminate the necessity of alienated labor, the necessity of working mechanically, unpleasurably, in a manner that does not represent individual self-realization.

However, progressive alienation itself increases the potential of freedom: the more external to the individual the necessary labor becomes, the less does it involve him in the realm of necessity. Relieved from the requirements of domination, the quantitative reduction in labor time and energy leads to a qualitative change in the human existence: the free rather than the labor time determines its content. The expanding realm of freedom becomes truly

a realm of play — of the free play of individual faculties. Thus liberated, they will generate new forms of realization and of discovering the world, which in turn will reshape the realm of necessity, the struggle for existence. The altered relation between the two realms of the human reality alters the relation between what is desirable and what is reasonable, between instinct and reason. With the transformation from sexuality into Eros, the life instincts evolve their sensuous order, while reason becomes sensuous to the degree to which it comprehends and organizes necessity in terms of protecting and enriching the life instincts. The roots of the aesthetic experience re-emerge — not merely in an artistic culture but in the struggle for existence itself. It assumes a new rationality. The repressiveness of reason that characterizes the rule of the performance principle does not belong to the realm of necessity *per se*. Under the performance principle, the gratification of the *sex* instinct depends largely on the "suspension" of reason and even of consciousness: on the brief (legitimate or furtive) oblivion of the private and the universal unhappiness, on the interruption of the reasonable routine of life, of the duty and dignity of status and office. Happiness is almost by definition unreasonable if it is unrepressed and uncontrolled. In contrast, beyond the performance principle, the gratification of the instinct requires the more conscious effort of free rationality, the less it is the by-product of the superimposed rationality of oppression. The more freely the instinct develops, the more freely will its "conservative nature" assert itself. The striving for *lasting* gratification makes not only for an enlarged order of libidinal relations

("community") but also for the perpetuation of this order on a higher scale. The pleasure principle extends to consciousness. Eros redefines reason in his own terms. Reasonable is what sustains the order of gratification.

To the degree to which the struggle for existence becomes co-operation for the free development and fulfillment of individual needs, repressive reason gives way to a new *rationality of gratification* in which reason and happiness converge. It creates its own division of labor, its own priorities, its own hierarchy. The historical heritage of the performance principle is administration, not of men, but of things: mature civilization depends for its functioning on a multitude of co-ordinated arrangements. These arrangements in turn must carry recognized and recognizable authority. Hierarchical relationships are not unfree *per se*; civilization relies to a great extent on rational authority, based on knowledge and necessity, and aiming at the protection and preservation of life. Such is the authority of the engineer, of the traffic policeman, of the airplane pilot in flight. Once again, the distinction between repression and surplus-repression must be recalled. If a child feels the "need" to cross the street any time at its will, repression of this "need" is not repressive of human potentialities. It may be the opposite. The need to "relax" in the entertainments furnished by the culture industry is itself repressive, and its repression is a step toward freedom. Where repression has become so effective that, for the repressed, it assumes the (illusory) form of freedom, the abolition of such freedom readily appears as a totalitarian act. Here, the old conflict arises again: human freedom is

not only a private affair — but it is nothing at all unless it is *also* a private affair. Once privacy must no longer be maintained apart from and against the public existence, the liberty of the individual and that of the whole may perhaps be reconciled by a "general will" taking shape in institutions which are directed toward the individual needs. The renunciations and delays demanded by the general will must not be opaque and inhuman; nor must their reason be authoritarian. However, the question remains: how can civilization freely generate freedom, when unfreedom has become part and parcel of the mental apparatus? And if not, who is entitled to establish and enforce the objective standards?

From Plato to Rousseau, the only honest answer is the idea of an educational dictatorship, exercised by those who are supposed to have acquired knowledge of the real Good. The answer has since become obsolete: knowledge of the available means for creating a humane existence for all is no longer confined to a privileged elite. The facts are all too open, and the individual consciousness would safely survive at them if it were not methodically arrested and diverted. The distinction between rational and irrational authority, between repression and surplus-repression, can be made and verified by the individuals themselves. That they cannot make this distinction now does not mean that they cannot learn to make it once they are given the opportunity to do so. Then the course of trial and error becomes a rational course in freedom. Utopias are susceptible to unrealistic blueprints; the conditions for a free society are not. They are a matter of reason.

It is not the conflict between instinct and reason that provides the strongest argument against the idea of a free civilization, but rather the conflict which instinct creates in itself. Even if the destructive forms of its polymorphous perversity and license are due to surplus-repression and become susceptible to libidinal order once surplus-repression is removed, instinct itself is beyond good and evil, and no free civilization can dispense with this distinction. The mere fact that, in the choice of its objects, the sex instinct is not guided by reciprocity constitutes a source of unavoidable conflict among individuals — and a strong argument against the possibility of its self-sublimation. But is there perhaps in the instinct itself an inner barrier which “contains” its driving power? Is there perhaps a “natural” self-restraint in Eros so that its genuine gratification would call for delay, detour, and arrest? Then there would be obstructions and limitations imposed not from outside, by a repressive reality principle, but set and accepted by the instinct itself because they have inherent libidinal value. Freud indeed suggested this notion. He thought that “unrestrained sexual liberty from the beginning” results in lack of full satisfaction:

It is easy to show that the value the mind sets on erotic needs instantly sinks as soon as satisfaction becomes readily obtainable. Some obstacle is necessary to swell the tide of the libido to its height.¹

Moreover, he considered the “strange” possibility that “something in the nature of the sexual instinct is unfavorable to the achievement of absolute gratification.”² The

¹ “The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life,” in *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), IV, 213.

² *Ibid.*, p. 214.

idea is ambiguous and lends itself easily to ideological justifications: the unfavorable consequences of readily available satisfaction have probably been one of the strongest props for repressive morality. Still, in the context of Freud's theory, it would follow that the “natural obstacles” in the instinct, far from denying pleasure, may function as a premium on pleasure if they are divorced from archaic taboos and exogenous constraints. Pleasure contains an element of self-determination which is the token of human triumph over blind necessity:

Nature does not know real pleasure but only satisfaction of want. All pleasure is societal — in the unsublimated no less than in the sublimated impulses. Pleasure originates in alienation.³

What distinguishes pleasure from the blind satisfaction of want is the instinct's refusal to exhaust itself in immediate satisfaction, its ability to build up and use barriers for intensifying fulfillment. Though this instinctual refusal has done the work of domination, it can also serve the opposite function: eroticize non-libidinal relations, transform biological tension and relief into free happiness. No longer employed as instruments for retaining men in alienated performances, the barriers against absolute gratification would become elements of human freedom; they would protect that other alienation in which pleasure originates — man's alienation not from himself but from mere nature: his free self-realization. Men would really exist as individuals, each shaping his own life; they would face each other with truly

³ “Natur kennt nicht eigentlich Genuss: sie bringt es nicht weiter als Stillung des Bedürfnisses. Alle Lust ist gesellschaftlich in den unsublimierten Affekten nicht weniger als in den sublimierten.” Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam: Querido Verlag, 1947), p. 127.

different needs and truly different modes of satisfaction — with their own refusals and their own selections. The ascendancy of the pleasure principle would thus engender antagonisms, pains, and frustrations — individual conflicts in the striving for gratification. But these conflicts would themselves have libidinal value: they would be permeated with the rationality of gratification. This *sensuous* rationality contains its own moral laws.

The idea of a libidinal morality is suggested not only by Freud's notion of instinctual barriers to absolute gratification, but also by psychoanalytic interpretations of the superego. It has been pointed out that the superego, as the mental representative of morality, is not unambiguously the representative of the reality principle, especially of the forbidding and punishing father. In many cases, the superego seems to be in secret alliance with the id, defending the claims of the id against the ego and the external world. Charles Odier therefore proposed that a part of the superego is "in the last analysis the representative of a primitive phase, during which morality had not yet freed itself from the pleasure principle."⁴ He speaks of a pregenital, prehistoric, pre-oedipal "pseudo-morality" prior to the acceptance of the reality principle, and calls the mental representative of this "pseudo-morality" the *superid*. The psychical phenomenon which, in the individual, suggests such a pregenital morality is an identification with the mother, expressing itself in a castration-wish rather than castration-threat. It might be the survival of a regressive

⁴ "Vom Ueber-Ich," in *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, XII (1926), 280-281.

tendency: remembrance of the primal Mother-Right, and at the same time a "symbolic means against losing the then prevailing privileges of the woman." According to Odier, the pregenital and prehistorical morality of the *superid* is incompatible with the reality principle and therefore a neurotic factor.

One more step in the interpretation, and the strange traces of the "superid" appear as traces of a different, lost reality, or lost relation between ego and reality. The notion of reality which is predominant in Freud and which is condensed in the reality principle is "bound up with the father." It confronts the id and the ego as a hostile, external force, and, accordingly, the father is chiefly a hostile figure, whose power is symbolized in the castration-threat, "directed against the gratification of libidinal urges toward the mother." The growing ego attains maturity by complying with this hostile force: "submission to the castration threat" is the "decisive step in the establishment of the ego as based on the reality principle."⁵ However, this reality which the ego faces as an outside antagonistic power is neither the only nor the primary reality. The development of the ego is development "away from primary narcissism"; at this early stage, reality "is not outside, but is contained in the pre-ego of primary narcissism." It is not hostile and alien to the ego, but "intimately connected with, originally not even distinguished from it."⁶ This reality is first (and last?) experienced in the child's libidinal relation to the mother — a relation which is at the beginning within

⁵ Hans W. Loewald, "Ego and Reality," in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. XXXII (1951), Part I, p. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*

the "pre-ego" and only subsequently divorced from it. And with this division of the original unity, an "urge towards re-establishing the original unity" develops: a "libidinal flow between infant and mother."⁷ At this primary stage of the relation between "pre-ego" and reality, the Narcissistic and the maternal Eros seem to be one, and the primary experience of reality is that of a libidinous union. The Narcissistic phase of individual pre-genitality "recalls" the maternal phase of the history of the human race. Both constitute a reality to which the ego responds with an attitude, not of defense and submission, but of integral identification with the "environment." But in the light of the paternal reality principle, the "maternal concept" of reality here emerging is immediately turned into something negative, dreadful. The impulse to re-establish the lost Narcissistic-maternal unity is interpreted as a "threat," namely, the threat of "maternal engulfment" by the overpowering womb.⁸ The hostile father is exonerated and reappears as savior who, in punishing the incest wish, protects the ego from its annihilation in the mother. The question does not arise whether the Narcissistic-maternal attitude toward reality cannot "return" in less primordial, less devouring forms under the power of the mature ego and in a mature civilization. Instead, the necessity of suppressing this attitude once and for all is taken for granted. The patriarchal reality principle holds sway over the psychoanalytic interpretation. It is only beyond this reality principle that the "maternal" images of the super ego convey promises rather

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

than memory traces — images of a free future rather than of a dark past.

However, even if a maternal libidinal morality is traceable in the instinctual structure, and even if a sensuous rationality could make the Eros freely susceptible to order, one innermost obstacle seems to defy all project of a non-repressive development — namely, the bond that binds Eros to the death instinct. The brute fact of death denies once and for all the reality of a non-repressive existence. For death is the final negativity of time, but "joy wants eternity." Timelessness is the ideal of pleasure. Time has no power over the id, the original domain of the pleasure principle. But the ego, through which alone pleasure becomes real, is in its entirety subject to time. The mere anticipation of the inevitable end, present in every instant, introduces a repressive element into all libidinal relations and renders pleasure itself painful. This primary frustration in the instinctual structure of man becomes the inexhaustible source of all other frustrations — and of their social effectiveness. Man learns that "it cannot last anyway," that every pleasure is short, that for all finite things the hour of their birth is the hour of their death — that it couldn't be otherwise. He is resigned before society forces him to practice resignation methodically. The flux of time is society's most natural ally in maintaining law and order, conformity, and the institutions that relegate freedom to a perpetual utopia; the flux of time helps men to forget what was and what can be: it makes them oblivious to the better past and the better future.

This ability to forget — itself the result of a long and terrible education by experience — is an indispensable requirement of mental and physical hygiene without which civilized life would be unbearable; but it is also the mental faculty which sustains submissiveness and renunciation. To forget is also to forgive what should not be forgiven if justice and freedom are to prevail. Such forgiveness reproduces the conditions which reproduce injustice and enslavement: to forget past suffering is to forgive the forces that caused it — without defeating these forces. The wounds that heal in time are also the wounds that contain the poison. Against this surrender to time, the restoration of remembrance to its rights, as a vehicle of liberation, is one of the noblest tasks of thought. In this function, remembrance (*Erinnerung*) appears at the conclusion of Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*; in this function, it appears in Freud's theory.⁹ Like the ability to forget, the ability to remember is a product of civilization — perhaps its oldest and most fundamental psychological achievement. Nietzsche saw in the training of memory the beginning of civilized morality — especially the memory of obligations, contracts, dues.¹⁰ This context reveals the one-sidedness of memory-training in civilization: the faculty was chiefly directed toward remembering duties rather than pleasures; memory was linked with bad conscience, guilt, and sin. Unhappiness and the threat of punishment, not happiness and the promise of freedom, linger in memory.

Without release of the repressed content of memory, without release of its liberating power, non-repressive sublimation is unimaginable. From the myth of Orpheus to

⁹ See Chapter 1 above.

¹⁰ *Genealogy of Morals*, Part II, 1-3.

the novel of Proust, happiness and freedom have been linked with the idea of the recapture of time: the *temps retrouvé*. Remembrance retrieves the *temps perdu*, which was the time of gratification and fulfillment. Eros, penetrating into consciousness, is moved by remembrance; with it he protests against the order of renunciation; he uses memory in his effort to defeat time in a world dominated by time. But in so far as time retains its power over Eros, happiness is essentially a thing of the *past*. The terrible sentence which states that only the lost paradises are the true ones judges and at the same time rescues the *temps perdu*. The lost paradises are the only true ones not because, in retrospect, the past joy seems more beautiful than it really was, but because remembrance alone provides the joy without the anxiety over its passing and thus gives it an otherwise impossible duration. Time loses its power when remembrance redeems the past.

Still, this defeat of time is artistic and spurious; remembrance is no real weapon unless it is translated into historical action. Then, the struggle against time becomes a decisive moment in the struggle against domination:

The conscious wish to break the continuum of history belongs to the revolutionary classes in the moment of action. This consciousness asserted itself during the July Revolution. In the evening of the first day of the struggle, simultaneously but independently at several places, shots were fired at the time pieces on the clocks of Paris.¹¹

It is the alliance between time and the order of repression that motivates the efforts to halt the flux of time, and it is this alliance that makes time the deadly enemy of Eros.

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, "Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte," in *Die Neue Schenau* (1950), p. 568.

To be sure, the threat of time, the passing of the moment of fullness, the anxiety over the end, may themselves become erotogenic — obstacles that “swell the tide of the libido.” However, the wish of Faust which conjures the pleasure principle demands, not the beautiful moment, but eternity. With its striving for eternity, Eros offends against the decisive taboo that sanctions libidinal pleasure only as a temporal and controlled condition, not as a permanent fountainhead of the human existence. Indeed, if the alliance between time and the established order dissolved, “natural” private unhappiness would no longer support organized societal unhappiness. The relegation of human fulfillment to utopia would no longer find adequate response in the instincts of man, and the drive for liberation would assume that terrifying force which actually it never had. Every sound reason is on the side of law and order in their insistence that the eternity of joy be reserved for the hereafter, and in their endeavor to subordinate the struggle against death and disease to the never-ceasing requirements of national and international security.

The striving for the preservation of time in time, for the arrest of time, for conquest of death, seems unreasonable by any standard, and outright impossible under the hypothesis of the death instinct that we have accepted. Or does this very hypothesis make it more reasonable? The death instinct operates under the Nirvana principle: it tends toward that state of “constant gratification” where no tension is felt — a state without want. This trend of the instinct implies that its *destructive* manifestations would be minimized as it approached such a state. If the instinct's

basic objective is not the termination of life but of pain — the absence of tension — then paradoxically, in terms of the instinct, the conflict between life and death is the more reduced, the closer life approximates the state of gratification. Pleasure principle and Nirvana principle then converge. At the same time, Eros, freed from surplus-repression, would be strengthened, and the strengthened Eros would, as it were, absorb the objective of the death instinct. The instinctual value of death would have changed: if the instincts pursued and attained their fulfillment in a non-repressive order, the regressive compulsion would lose much of its biological rationale. As suffering and want recede, the Nirvana principle may become reconciled with the reality principle. The unconscious attraction that draws the instincts back to an “earlier state” would be effectively counteracted by the desirability of the attained state of life. The “conservative nature” of the instincts would come to rest in a fulfilled present. Death would cease to be an instinctual goal. It remains a fact, perhaps even an ultimate necessity — but a necessity against which the unrepressed energy of mankind will protest, against which it will wage its greatest struggle.

In this struggle, reason and instinct could unite. Under conditions of a truly human existence, the difference between succumbing to disease at the age of ten, thirty, fifty, or seventy, and dying a “natural” death after a fulfilled life, may well be a difference worth fighting for with all instinctual energy. Not those who die, but those who die before they must and want to die, those who die in agony and pain, are the great indictment against civilization.

They also testify to the unredeemable guilt of mankind. Their death arouses the painful awareness that it was unnecessary, that it could be otherwise. It takes all the institutions and values of a repressive order to pacify the bad conscience of this guilt. Once again, the deep connection between the death instinct and the sense of guilt becomes apparent. The silent "professional agreement" with the fact of death and disease is perhaps one of the most widespread expressions of the death instinct — or, rather, of its social usefulness. In a repressive civilization, death itself becomes an instrument of repression. Whether death is feared as constant threat, or glorified as supreme sacrifice, or accepted as fate, the education for consent to death introduces an element of surrender into life from the beginning — surrender and submission. It stifles "utopian" efforts. The powers that be have a deep affinity to death; death is a token of unfreedom, of defeat. Theology and philosophy today compete with each other in celebrating death as an existential category: perverting a biological fact into an ontological essence, they bestow transcendental blessing on the guilt of mankind which they help to perpetuate — they betray the promise of utopia. In contrast, a philosophy that does not work as the handmaiden of repression responds to the fact of death with the Great Refusal — the refusal of Orpheus the liberator. Death can become a token of freedom. The necessity of death does not refute the possibility of final liberation. Like the other necessities, it can be made rational — painless. Men can die without anxiety if they know that what they love is protected from misery and oblivion. After a fulfilled life, they may take

it upon themselves to die — at a moment of their own choosing. But even the ultimate advent of freedom cannot redeem those who died in pain. It is the remembrance of them, and the accumulated guilt of mankind against its victims, that darken the prospect of a civilization without repression.

EPILOGUE

Critique of Neo-Freudian Revisionism

Psychoanalysis has changed its function in the culture of our time, in accordance with fundamental social changes that occurred during the first half of the century. The collapse of the liberal era and of its promises, the spreading totalitarian trend and the efforts to counteract this trend, are reflected in the position of psychoanalysis. During the twenty years of its development prior to the First World War, psychoanalysis elaborated the concepts for the psychological critique of the most highly praised achievement of the modern era: the individual. Freud demonstrated that constraint, repression, and renunciation are the stuff from which the "free personality" is made; he recognized the "general unhappiness" of society as the unsurpassable limit of cure and normality. Psychoanalysis was a radically critical theory. Later, when Central and Eastern Europe were in revolutionary upheaval, it became clear to what extent psychoanalysis was still committed to the society whose secrets it revealed. The psychoanalytic conception of man, with its belief in the basic unchangeability of human nature, appeared as "reactionary"; Freudian theory seemed to imply that the humanitarian ideals of socialism were hu-

manly unattainable. Then the revisions of psychoanalysis began to gain momentum.

It might be tempting to speak of a split into a left and right wing. The most serious attempt to develop the critical social theory implicit in Freud was made in Wilhelm Reich's earlier writings. In his *Einbruch der Sexualmoral* (1931), Reich oriented psychoanalysis on the relation between the social and instinctual structures. He emphasized the extent to which sexual repression is enforced by the interests of domination and exploitation, and the extent to which these interests are in turn reinforced and reproduced by sexual repression. However, Reich's notion of sexual repression remains undifferentiated; he neglects the historical dynamic of the sex instincts and of their fusion with the destructive impulses. (Reich rejects Freud's hypothesis of the death instinct and the whole depth dimension revealed in Freud's late metapsychology.) Consequently, sexual liberation *per se* becomes for Reich a panacea for individual and social ills. The problem of sublimation is minimized; no essential distinction is made between repressive and non-repressive sublimation, and progress in freedom appears as a mere release of sexuality. The critical sociological insights contained in Reich's earlier writings are thus arrested; a sweeping primitivism becomes prevalent, foreshadowing the wild and fantastic hobbies of Reich's later years.

On the "right wing" of psychoanalysis, Carl Jung's psychology soon became an obscurantist pseudo-mythology.¹

¹ See Edward Glover, *Freud or Jung?* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950).

The "center" of revisionism took shape in the cultural and interpersonal schools — the most popular trend of psychoanalysis today. We shall try to show that, in these schools, psychoanalytic theory turns into ideology: the "personality" and its creative potentialities are resurrected in the face of a reality which has all but eliminated the conditions for the personality and its fulfillment. Freud recognized the work of repression in the highest values of Western civilization — which presuppose and perpetuate unfreedom and suffering. The Neo-Freudian schools promote the very same values as cure against unfreedom and suffering — as the triumph over repression. This intellectual feat is accomplished by expurgating the instinctual dynamic and reducing its part in the mental life. Thus purified, the psyche can again be redeemed by idealistic ethics and religion; and the psychoanalytic theory of the mental apparatus can be rewritten as a philosophy of the soul. In doing so, the revisionists have discarded those of Freud's psychological tools that are incompatible with the anachronistic revival of philosophical idealism — the very tools with which Freud uncovered the explosive instinctual and social roots of the personality. Moreover, secondary factors and relationships (of the mature person and its cultural environment) are given the dignity of primary processes — a switch in orientation designed to emphasize the influence of the social reality on the formation of the personality. However, we believe that the exact opposite happens — that the impact of society on the psyche is weakened. Whereas Freud, focusing on the vicissitudes of the primary instincts, discovered society in the most concealed layer of the genus and

individual man, the revisionists, aiming at the reified, ready-made form rather than at the origin of the societal institutions and relations, fail to comprehend what these institutions and relations have done to the personality that they are supposed to fulfill. Confronted with the revisionist schools, Freud's theory now assumes a new significance: it reveals more than ever before the depth of its criticism, and — perhaps for the first time — those of its elements that transcend the prevailing order and link the theory of repression with that of its abolition.

The strengthening of this link was the initial impulse behind the revisionism of the cultural school. Erich Fromm's early articles attempt to free Freud's theory from its identification with present-day society; to sharpen the psychoanalytic notions that reveal the connection between instinctual and economic structure; and at the same time to indicate the possibility of progress beyond the "patricentric-acquisitive" culture. Fromm stresses the sociological substance of Freud's theory: psychoanalysis understands the sociopsychological phenomena as

... processes of active and passive adjustment of the instinctual apparatus to the socio-economic situation. The instinctual apparatus itself is — in certain of its foundations — a biological datum, but to a high degree modifiable; the economic conditions are the primary modifying factors.²

Underlying the societal organization of the human existence are basic libidinal wants and needs; highly plastic and pliable, they are shaped and utilized to "cement" the given society. Thus, in what Fromm calls the "patricentric-

² "Ueber Methode und Aufgabe einer analytischen Sozialpsychologie," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, I (1932), 39-40.

acquisitive" society (which, in this study, is defined in terms of the rule of the performance principle), the libidinal impulses and their satisfaction (and deflection) are coordinated with the interests of domination and thereby become a stabilizing force which binds the majority to the ruling minority. Anxiety, love, confidence, even the will to freedom and solidarity with the group to which one belongs³ — all come to serve the economically structured relationships of domination and subordination. By the same token, however, fundamental changes in the social structure will entail corresponding changes in the instinctual structure. With the historical obsolescence of an established society, with the growth of its inner antagonisms, the traditional mental ties are loosening:

Libidinal forces become free for new forms of utilization and thus change their social function. Now they no longer contribute to the preservation of society but lead to the building of new social formations; they cease, as it were, to be cement and instead become dynamite.⁴

Fromm followed up this conception in his article on "The Socio-psychological Significance of the Theory of Matriarchy."⁵ Freud's own insights into the historical character of the modifications of the impulses vitiate his equation of the reality principle with the norms of patricentric-acquisitive culture. Fromm emphasizes that the idea of a matricentric culture — regardless of its anthropological merit — envisions a reality principle geared not to the interest of domination, but to gratified libidinal relations among

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵ In *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, Vol. III (1934).

men. The instinctual structure demands rather than precludes the rise of a free civilization on the basis of the achievements of patricentric culture, but through the transformation of its institutions:

Sexuality offers one of the most elemental and strongest possibilities of gratification and happiness. If these possibilities were allowed within the limits set by the need for the productive development of the personality rather than by the need for the domination of the masses, the fulfillment of this one fundamental possibility of happiness would of necessity lead to an increase in the claim for gratification and happiness in other spheres of the human existence. The fulfillment of this claim requires the availability of the material means for its satisfaction and must therefore entail the explosion of the prevailing social order.⁶

The social content of Freudian theory becomes manifest: sharpening the psychoanalytical concepts means sharpening their critical function, their opposition to the prevailing form of society. And this critical sociological function of psychoanalysis derives from the fundamental role of sexuality as a "productive force"; the libidinal claims propel progress toward freedom and universal gratification of human needs beyond the patricentric-acquisitive stage. Conversely, the weakening of the psychoanalytic conception, and especially of the theory of sexuality, must lead to a weakening of the sociological critique and to a reduction of the social substance of psychoanalysis. Contrary to appearance, this is what has happened in the cultural schools. Paradoxically (but only apparently paradoxically), such development was the consequence of the improvements in therapy. Fromm has devoted an admirable paper to "The Social Conditions of Psychoanalytic Therapy," in which he

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

shows that the psychoanalytic situation (between analyst and patient) is a specific expression of liberalist toleration and as such dependent on the existence of such toleration in the society. But behind the tolerant attitude of the "neutral" analyst is concealed "respect for the social taboos of the bourgeoisie."¹ Fromm traces the effectiveness of these taboos at the very core of Freudian theory, in Freud's position toward sexual morality. With this attitude, Fromm contrasts another conception of therapy, first perhaps formulated by Ferenczi, according to which the analyst rejects patricentric-authoritarian taboos and enters into a positive rather than neutral relation with the patient. The new conception is characterized chiefly by an "unconditional affirmation of the patient's claim for happiness" and the "liberation of morality from its tabooistic features."²

However, with these demands, psychoanalysis faces a fateful dilemma. The "claim for happiness," if truly affirmed, aggravates the conflict with a society which allows only controlled happiness, and the exposure of the moral taboos extends this conflict to an attack on the vital protective layers of society. This may still be practicable in a social environment where toleration is a constitutive element of personal, economic, and political relationships; but it must endanger the very idea of "cure" and even the very existence of psychoanalysis when society can no longer afford such toleration. The affirmative attitude toward the claim for happiness then becomes practicable only if happiness and the "productive development of the personality"

¹ *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, IV (1935), 374-375.

² *Ibid.*, p. 395.

are redefined so that they become compatible with the prevailing values, that is to say, if they are internalized and idealized. And this redefinition must in turn entail a weakening of the explosive content of psychoanalytic theory as well as of its explosive social criticism. If this is indeed (as I think) the course that revisionism has taken, then it is because of the objective social dynamic of the period: in a repressive society, individual happiness and productive development are in contradiction to society; if they are defined as values to be realized within this society, they become themselves repressive.

The subsequent discussion is concerned only with the later stages of Neo-Freudian psychology, where the regressive features of the movement appear as predominant. The discussion has no other purpose than to throw into relief, by contrast, the critical implications of psychoanalytic theory emphasized in this study; the *therapeutic* merits of the revisionist schools are entirely outside the scope of this discussion. This limitation is enforced not only by my own lack of competence but also by a discrepancy between theory and therapy inherent in psychoanalysis itself. Freud was fully aware of this discrepancy, which may be formulated (much oversimplified) as follows: while psychoanalytic theory recognizes that the sickness of the individual is ultimately caused and sustained by the sickness of his civilization, psychoanalytic therapy aims at curing the individual so that he can continue to function as part of a sick civilization without surrendering to it altogether. The acceptance of the reality principle, with which psychoanalytic therapy

ends, means the individual's acceptance of the civilized regimentation of his instinctual needs, especially sexuality. In Freud's theory, civilization appears as established in contradiction to the primary instincts and to the pleasure principle. But the latter survives in the id, and the civilized ego must permanently fight its own timeless past and forbidden future. Theoretically, the difference between mental health and neurosis lies only in the degree and effectiveness of resignation: mental health is successful, efficient resignation — normally so efficient that it shows forth as moderately happy satisfaction. Normality is a precarious condition. "Neurosis and psychosis are both of them an expression of the rebellion of the id against the outer world, of its 'pain,' unwillingness to adapt itself to necessity — to ananke, or, if one prefers, of its incapacity to do so."⁹ This rebellion, although originating in the instinctual "nature" of man, is a disease that has to be cured — not only because it is struggling against a hopelessly superior power, but because it is struggling against "necessity." Repression and unhappiness *must be* if civilization is to prevail. The "goal" of the pleasure principle — namely, to be happy — "is not attainable,"¹⁰ although the effort to attain it shall not and cannot be abandoned. In the long run, the question is only how much resignation the individual can bear without breaking up. In this sense, therapy is a course in resignation: a great deal will be gained if we succeed in "transforming your hysterical misery into every

⁹ "The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis," in *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), II, 279.

¹⁰ *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 39.

day unhappiness," which is the usual lot of mankind.¹¹ This aim certainly does not (or should not) imply that the patient becomes capable of adjusting completely to an environment repressive of his mature aspirations and abilities. Still, the analyst, as a physician, must accept the social framework of facts in which the patient has to live and which he cannot alter.¹² This irreducible core of conformity is further strengthened by Freud's conviction that the repressive basis of civilization cannot be changed anyway — not even on the supra-individual, societal scale. Consequently, the critical insights of psychoanalysis gain their full force only in the field of theory, and perhaps particularly where theory is farthest removed from therapy — in Freud's "metapsychology."

The revisionist schools obliterated this discrepancy between theory and therapy by assimilating the former to the latter. This assimilation took place in two ways. First, the most speculative and "metaphysical" concepts not subject to any clinical verification (such as the death instinct, the hypothesis of the primal horde, the killing of the primal father and its consequences) were minimized or discarded altogether. Moreover, in this process some of Freud's most decisive concepts (the relation between id and ego, the function of the unconscious, the scope and significance of sexuality) were redefined in such a way that their explosive connotations were all but eliminated. The depth dimen-

¹¹ Breuer and Freud, *Studies in Hysteria* (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph No. 61, 1936), p. 232. See also *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1943), pp. 397-398.

¹² See *New Introductory Lectures* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1933), p. 206.

sion of the conflict between the individual and his society, between the instinctual structure and the realm of consciousness, was flattened out. Psychoanalysis was reoriented on the traditional consciousness psychology of pre-Freudian texture. The right to such reorientations in the interest of successful therapy and practice is not questioned here; but the revisionists have converted the weakening of Freudian theory into a new theory, and the significance of this theory alone will be discussed presently. The discussion will neglect the differences among the various revisionist groups and concentrate on the theoretical attitude common to all of them. It is distilled from the representative works of Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and Harry Stack Sullivan. Clara Thompson¹³ is taken as a representative historian of the revisionists.

The chief objections of the revisionists to Freud may be summed up as follows: Freud grossly underrated the extent to which the individual and his neurosis are determined by conflicts with his environment. Freud's "biological orientation" led him to concentrate on the phylogenetic and ontogenetic *past* of the individual: he considered the character as essentially fixed with the fifth or sixth year (if not earlier), and he interpreted the fate of the individual in terms of primary instincts and their vicissitudes, especially sexuality. In contrast, the revisionists shift the emphasis "from the past to the present,"¹⁴ from the biological to the cultural level, from the "constitution" of the

¹³ *Psychoanalysis: Evolution and Development* (New York: Hermitage House, 1951).

¹⁴ Thompson, *Psychoanalysis*, pp. 15, 182.

individual to his environment.¹⁵ "One can understand the biological development better if one discards the concept of libido altogether" and instead interprets the different stages "in terms of growth and of human relations."¹⁶ Then the subject of psychoanalysis becomes the "total personality" in its "relatedness to the world"; and the "constructive aspects of the individual," his "productive and positive potentialities," receive the attention they deserve. Freud was cold, hard, destructive, and pessimistic. He did not see that sickness, treatment, and cure are a matter of "interpersonal relationships" in which total personalities are engaged on both sides. Freud's conception was predominantly relativistic: he assumed that psychology can "help us to understand the motivation of value judgments but cannot help in establishing the validity of the value judgments themselves."¹⁷ Consequently, his psychology contained no ethics or only his personal ethics. Moreover, Freud saw society as "static" and thought that society developed as a "mechanism for controlling man's instincts," whereas the revisionists know "from the study of comparative cultures" that "man is not biologically endowed with dangerous fixed animal drives and that the only function of society is to control these." They insist that society "is not a static set of laws instituted in the past at the time of the murder of the primal father, but is rather a growing, changing, developing network of interpersonal experiences and behavior." To this, the following insights are added:

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 13, 26-27, 155.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁷ Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (New York and Toronto: Rinehart, 1947), p. 34.

One cannot become a human being except through cultural experience. Society creates new needs in people. Some of the new needs lead in a constructive direction and stimulate further development. Of such a nature are the ideas of justice, equality and cooperation. Some of the new needs lead in a destructive direction and are not good for man. Wholesale competitiveness and the ruthless exploitation of the helpless are examples of destructive products of culture. When the destructive elements predominate, we have a situation which fosters war.¹⁸

This passage may serve as a starting point to show the decline of theory in the revisionist schools. There is first the laboring of the obvious, of everyday wisdom. Then there is the adduction of sociological aspects. In Freud they are included in and developed by the basic concepts themselves; here they appear as incomprehended, external factors. There is furthermore the distinction between good and bad, constructive and destructive (according to Fromm: productive and unproductive, positive and negative), which is not derived from any theoretical principle but simply taken from the prevalent ideology. For this reason, the distinction is merely eclectic, extraneous to theory, and tantamount to the conformist slogan "Accentuate the positive." Freud was right; life is bad, repressive, destructive — but it isn't so bad, repressive, destructive. There are also the constructive, productive aspects. Society is not only this, but also that; man is not only against himself but also for himself.

These distinctions are meaningless and — as we shall try to show even wrong unless the task (which Freud took upon himself) is fulfilled: to demonstrate how, under the impact of civilization, the two "aspects" are interrelated

¹⁸ Thompson, *Psychoanalysis*, p. 143.

in the instinctual dynamic itself, and how the one inevitably turns into the other by virtue of this dynamic. Short of such demonstration, the revisionist "improvement" of Freud's "one-sidedness" constitutes a blank discarding of his fundamental theoretical conception. However, the term *eclecticism* does not adequately express the substance of the revisionist philosophy. Its consequences for psychoanalytic theory are much graver: the revisionist "supplementation" of Freudian theory, especially the adduction of cultural and environmental factors, consecrates a false picture of civilization and particularly of present-day society. In minimizing the extent and the depth of the conflict, the revisionists proclaim a false but easy solution. We shall give here only a brief illustration.

One of the most cherished demands of the revisionists is that the "total personality" of the individual — rather than his early childhood, or his biological structure, or his psychosomatic condition — must be made the subject of psychoanalysis:

The infinite diversity of personalities is in itself characteristic of human existence. By personality I understand the totality of inherited and acquired psychic qualities which are characteristic of one individual and which make the individual unique.¹⁹

I think it is clear that Freud's conception of counter-transference is to be distinguished from the present-day conception of analysis as an interpersonal process. In the interpersonal situation, the analyst is seen as relating to his patient not only with his distorted affects but with his healthy personality also. That is, the analytic situation is essentially a human relationship.²⁰

¹⁹ Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself*, p. 50.

²⁰ Clara Thompson, *Psychoanalysis*, p. 108.

The preconception to which I am leading is this: personality tends toward the state that we call mental health or interpersonal adjustive success, handicaps by way of acculturation notwithstanding. The basic direction of the organism is forward.²¹

Again, the obvious ("diversity of personalities"; analysis as an "interpersonal process"), because it is not comprehended but merely stated and used, becomes a half-truth which is false since the missing half changes the content of the obvious fact.

The quoted passages testify to the confusion between ideology and reality prevalent in the revisionist schools. It is true that man appears as an individual who "integrates" a diversity of inherited and acquired qualities into a total personality, and that the latter develops in relating itself to the world (things and people) under manifold and varying conditions. But this personality and its development are *pre-formed* down to the deepest instinctual structure, and this pre-formation, the work of accumulated civilization, means that the diversities and the autonomy of individual "growth" are secondary phenomena. How much reality there is behind individuality depends on the scope, form, and effectiveness of the repressive controls prevalent at the given stage of civilization. The autonomous personality, in the sense of creative "uniqueness" and fullness of its existence, has always been the privilege of a very few. At the present stage, the personality tends toward a standardized reaction pattern established by the hierarchy of power and functions and by its technical, intellectual, and cultural apparatus.

²¹ Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry* (Washington: William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, 1947), p. 48.

The analyst and his patient share this alienation, and since it does not usually manifest itself in any neurotic symptom but rather as the hallmark of "mental health," it does not appear in the revisionist consciousness. When the process of alienation is discussed, it is usually treated, not as the whole that it is, but as a negative aspect of the whole.²² To be sure, personality has not disappeared: it continues to flower and is even fostered and educated — but in such a way that the expressions of personality fit and sustain perfectly the socially desired pattern of behavior and thought. They thus tend to cancel individuality. This process, which has been completed in the "mass culture" of late industrial civilization, vitiates the concept of interpersonal relations if it is to denote more than the undeniable fact that all relations in which the human being finds itself are either relations to other persons or abstractions from them. If, beyond this truism, the concept implies more — namely, that "two or more persons come to define an integrated situation" which is made up of "individuals" ²³ — then the implication is fallacious. For the individual situations are the derivatives and appearances of the *general* fate, and, as Freud has shown, it is the latter which contains the clue to the fate of the individual. The *general* repressiveness shapes the individual and universalizes even his most personal features. Accordingly, Freud's theory is consistently oriented on early infancy — the forma-

²² Compare Erich Fromm's discussion of the "marketing orientation," *Man for Himself*, pp. 67ff.

²³ Ernest Beaglehole, "Interpersonal Theory and Social Psychology," *A Study in Interpersonal Relations*, ed. Patrick Mullahy (New York: Hermitage Press, 1950), p. 54.

tive period of the universal fate in the individual. The subsequent mature relations "re-create" the formative ones. The decisive relations are thus those which are the *least* interpersonal. In an alienated world, specimens of the genus confront each other: parent and child, male and female, then master and servant, boss and employee; they are interrelated at first in specific modes of the universal alienation. If and when they cease to be so and grow into truly personal relations, they still retain the universal repressiveness which they surmount as their mastered and comprehended negative. Then, they do not require treatment.

Psychoanalysis elucidates the universal in the individual experience. To that extent, and only to that extent, can psychoanalysis break the reification in which human relations are petrified. The revisionists fail to recognize (or fail to draw the consequences from) the actual state of alienation which makes the person into an exchangeable function and the personality into an ideology. In contrast, Freud's basic "biologistic" concepts reach beyond the ideology and its reflexes: his refusal to treat a reified society as a "developing network of interpersonal experiences and behavior" and an alienated individual as a "total personality" corresponds to the reality and contains its true notion. If he refrains from regarding the inhuman existence as a passing negative aspect of forward-moving humanity, he is more humane than the good-natured, tolerant critics who brand his "inhuman" coldness. Freud does not readily believe that the "basic direction of the organism is forward." Even without the hypothesis of the death instinct

and of the conservative nature of the instincts, Sullivan's proposition is shallow and questionable. The "basic" direction of the organism appears as a quite different one in the persistent impulses toward relief of tension, toward fulfillment, rest, passivity — the struggle against the progress of time is intrinsic not only to the Narcissistic Eros. The sadomasochistic tendencies can hardly be associated with a forward direction in mental health, unless "forward" and "mental health" are redefined to mean almost the opposite of what they are in our social order — "a social order which is in some ways grossly inadequate for the development of healthy and happy human beings."²⁴ Sullivan refrains from such a redefinition; he makes his concepts conform with conformity:

The person who believes that he *voluntarily* cut loose from his earlier moorings and *by choice* accepted new dogmata, in which he has diligently indoctrinated himself, is quite certain to be a person who has suffered great insecurity. He is often a person whose self-organization is derogatory and hateful. The new movement has given him group support for the expression of ancient personal hostilities that are now directed against the group from which he has come. The new ideology rationalizes destructive activity to such effect that it seems almost, if not quite, constructive. The new ideology is especially palliative of conflict in its promise of a better world that is to rise from the debris to which the present order must first be reduced. In this Utopia, he and his fellows will be good and kind — for them will be no more injustice, and so forth. If he is one of the more radical groups, the activity of more remote memory in the synthesis of decisions and choice may be suppressed almost completely, and the activity of prospective reverie channelled rigidly in the dogmatic pattern. In this case, except for his dealings with his fellow radicals, the man may act as if he had acquired the psychopathic type of personality discussed

²⁴ Patrick Mullahy, introduction to *A Study of Interpersonal Relations*, page xvii.

in the third lecture. He shows no durable grasp of his own reality or that of others, and his actions are controlled by the most immediate opportunism, without consideration of the probable future.²⁵

The passage illuminates the extent to which the interpersonal theory is fashioned by the values of the *status quo*. If a person has "cut loose from his earlier moorings" and "accepted new dogmata," the presumption is that he has "suffered great insecurity," that his "self-organization is hateful and derogatory," that his new creed "rationalizes destructive activity" — in short, that he is the psychopathic type. There is no suggestion that his insecurity is rational and reasonable, that not his self-organization but the others' is derogatory and hateful, that the destructiveness involved in the new dogma might indeed be constructive in so far as it aims at a higher stage of realization. This psychology has no other objective standards of value than the prevailing ones: health, maturity, achievement are taken as they are defined by the given society — in spite of Sullivan's awareness that, in our culture, maturity is "often no particular reflection on anything more than one's socioeconomic status and the like."²⁶ Deep conformity holds sway over this psychology, which suspects all those who "cut loose from their earlier moorings" and become "radicals" as neurotic (the description fits all of them, from Jesus to Lenin, from Socrates to Giordano Bruno), and which almost automatically identifies the "promise of a better world" with "Utopia," its substance with "revery," and

²⁵ Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry*, p. 96. See Helen Merrell Lynd's review in *The Nation*, January 15, 1949.

²⁶ *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953), p. 298.

mankind's sacred dream of justice for all with the personal resentment (no more injustice "for them") of maladjusted types. This "operational" identification of mental health with "adjustive success" and progress eliminates all the reservations with which Freud hedged the therapeutic objective of adjustment to an inhuman society²⁷ and thus commits psychoanalysis to this society far more than Freud ever did.

Behind all the differences among the historical forms of society, Freud saw the basic inhumanity common to all of them, and the repressive controls which perpetuate, in the instinctual structure itself, the domination of man by man. By virtue of this insight Freud's "static concept of society" is closer to the truth than the dynamic sociological concepts supplied by the revisionists. The notion that "civilization and its discontent" had their roots in the biological constitution of man profoundly influenced his concept of the function and goal of therapy. The personality which the individual is to develop, the potentialities which he is to realize, the happiness which he is to attain — they are regimented from the very beginning, and their content can be defined only in terms of this regimentation. Freud destroys the illusions of idealistic ethics: the "personality" is but a "broken" individual who has internalized and successfully utilized repression and aggression. Considering what civilization has made of man, the difference in the development of personalities is chiefly that between an unproportional and a proportional share of that "everyday unhappiness"

²⁷ See Freud's statement in *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, pp. 332-333.

which is the common lot of mankind. The latter is all that therapy can achieve.

Over and against such a "minimum program," Fromm and the other revisionists proclaim a higher goal of therapy: "optimal development of a person's potentialities and the realization of his individuality." Now it is precisely this goal which is essentially unattainable — not because of limitations in the psychoanalytic techniques but because the established civilization itself, in its very structure, denies it. Either one defines "personality" and "individuality" in terms of their possibilities *within* the established form of civilization, in which case their realization is for the vast majority tantamount to successful adjustment. Or one defines them in terms of their transcending content, including their socially denied potentialities beyond (and beneath) their actual existence; in this case, their realization would imply transgression, beyond the established form of civilization, to radically new modes of "personality" and "individuality" incompatible with the prevailing ones. Today, this would mean "curing" the patient to become a rebel or (which is saying the same thing) a martyr. The revisionist concept vacillates between the two definitions. Fromm revives all the time-honored values of idealistic ethics as if nobody had ever demonstrated their conformist and repressive features. He speaks of the productive realization of the personality, of care, responsibility, and respect for one's fellow men, of productive love and happiness — as if man could actually practice all this and still remain sane and full of "well-being" in a society which Fromm himself describes as one of total alienation, dominated by the com-

modity relations of the "market." In such a society, the self-realization of the "personality" can proceed only on the basis of a double repression: first, the "purification" of the pleasure principle and the internalization of happiness and freedom; second, their reasonable restriction until they become compatible with the prevailing unfreedom and unhappiness. As a result, productiveness, love, responsibility become "values" only in so far as they contain manageable resignation and are practiced within the framework of socially useful activities (in other words, after repressive sublimation); and then they involve the effective denial of free productiveness and responsibility — the renunciation of happiness.

For example, productiveness, proclaimed as the goal of the healthy individual under the performance principle, must normally (that is, outside the creative, "neurotic," and "eccentric" exceptions) show forth in good business, administration, service, with the reasonable expectation of recognized success. Love must be semi-sublimated and even inhibited libido, staying in line with the sanctioned conditions imposed on sexuality. This is the accepted, "realistic" meaning of productiveness and love. But the very same terms also denote the *free* realization of man, or the idea of such realization. The revisionist usage of these terms plays on this ambiguity, which designates both the unfree and the free, both the mutilated and the integral faculties of man, thus vesting the established reality principle with the grandeur of promises that can be redeemed only *beyond* this reality principle. This ambiguity makes the revisionist philosophy appear to be critical where it is con-

formist, political where it is moralistic. Often, the *style* alone betrays the attitude. It would be revealing to make a comparative analysis of the Freudian and Neo-Freudian styles. The latter, in the more philosophical writings, frequently comes close to that of the sermon, or of the social worker; it is elevated and yet clear, permeated with goodwill and tolerance and yet moved by an *esprit de sérieux* which makes transcendental values into facts of everyday life. What has become a sham is taken as real. In contrast, there is a strong undertone of irony in Freud's usage of "freedom," "happiness," "personality"; either these terms seem to have invisible quotation marks, or their negative content is explicitly stated. Freud refrains from calling repression by any other name than its own; the Neo-Freudians sometimes sublimate it into its opposite.

But the revisionist combination of psychoanalysis with idealistic ethics is not simply a glorification of adjustment. The Neo-Freudian sociological or cultural orientation provides the other side of the picture — the "not only but also." The therapy of adjustment is rejected in the strongest terms; ²⁸ the "deification" of success is denounced. ²⁹ Present-day society and culture are accused of greatly impeding the realization of the healthy and mature person; the principle of "competitiveness, and the potential hostility that accompanies it, pervades all human relationships." ³⁰ The revisionists claim that their psychoanalysis is in itself a *critique* of society:

²⁸ Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 73ff.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁰ Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1937), p. 284.

The aim of the "cultural school" goes beyond merely enabling man to submit to the restrictions of his society; in so far as it is possible it seeks to free him from its irrational demands and make him more able to develop his potentialities and to assume leadership in building a more constructive society.³¹

The tension between health and knowledge, normality and freedom, which animated Freud's entire work, here disappears; a qualifying "in so far as it is possible" is the only trace left of the explosive contradiction in the aim. "Leadership in building a more constructive society" is to be combined with normal functioning in the established society.

This philosophy is achieved by directing the criticism against surface phenomena, while accepting the basic premises of the criticized society. Fromm devotes a large part of his writing to the critique of the "market economy" and its ideology, which place strong barriers in the way of productive development.³² But here the matter rests. The critical insights do not lead to a transvaluation of the values of productiveness and the "higher self" — which are exactly the values of the criticized culture. The character of the revisionist philosophy shows forth in the assimilation of the positive and the negative, the promise and its betrayal. The affirmation absorbs the critique. The reader may be left with the conviction that the "higher values" can and should be practiced within the very conditions which betray them; and they can be practiced because the revisionist philosopher accepts them in their adjusted and idealized form — on the terms of the established reality principle.

³¹ Clara Thompson, *Psychoanalysis*, p. 152.

³² Fromm, *Man for Himself*, especially pp. 67ff, 127-128.

Fromm, who has demonstrated the repressive features of internalization as few other analysts have done, revives the ideology of internalization. The "adjusted" person is blamed because he has betrayed the "higher self," the "human values"; therefore he is haunted by "inner emptiness and insecurity" in spite of his triumph in the "battle for success." Far better off is the person who has attained "inner strength and integrity"; though he may be less successful than his "unscrupulous neighbor,"

. . . he will have security, judgment, and objectivity which will make him much less vulnerable to changing fortunes and opinions of others and will in many areas enhance his ability for constructive work.³³

The style suggests the Power of Positive Thinking to which the revisionist critique succumbs. It is not the values that are spurious, but the context in which they are defined and proclaimed: "inner strength" has the connotation of that unconditional freedom which can be practiced even in chains and which Fromm himself once denounced in his analysis of the Reformation.³⁴

If the values of "inner strength and integrity" are supposed to be anything more than the character traits that the alienated society expects from any good citizen in his business (in which case they merely serve to sustain alienation), then they must pertain to a consciousness that has broken through the alienation as well as its values. But to such consciousness these values themselves become intolerable because it recognizes them as accessories to the enslavement of man. The "higher self" reigns over the domesticated

³³ Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 75.

³⁴ *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Rinehart, 1941), pp. 74ff.

impulses and aspirations of the individual, who has sacrificed and renounced his "lower self" not only in so far as it is incompatible with civilization but in so far as it is incompatible with repressive civilization. Such renunciation may indeed be an indispensable step on the road of human progress. However, Freud's question — whether the higher values of culture have not been achieved at too great a cost for the individual — should be taken seriously enough to enjoin the psychoanalytic philosopher from preaching these values without revealing their forbidden content, without showing what they have *denied* to the individual. What this omission does to psychoanalytic theory may be illustrated by contrasting Fromm's idea of love with Freud's. Fromm writes:

Genuine love is rooted in productiveness and may properly be called, therefore, "productive love." Its essence is the same whether it is the mother's love for the child, our love for man, or the erotic love between two individuals . . . certain basic elements may be said to be characteristic of all forms of productive love. These are care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.³⁵

Compare with this ideological formulation Freud's analysis of the instinctual ground and underground of love, of the long and painful process in which sexuality with all its polymorphous perversity is tamed and inhibited until it ultimately becomes susceptible to fusion with tenderness and affection — a fusion which remains precarious and never quite overcomes its destructive elements. Compare with Fromm's sermon on love Freud's almost incidental remarks in "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life":

³⁵ *Man for Himself*, p. 98.

. . . we shall not be able to deny that the behavior in love of the men of present-day civilization bears in general the character of the psychically impotent type. In only very few people of culture are the two strains of tenderness and sensuality duly fused into one: the man almost always feels his sexual activity hampered by his respect for the woman and only develops full sexual potency when he finds himself in the presence of a lower type of sexual object . . .³⁶

According to Freud, love, in our culture, can and must be practiced as "aim-inhibited sexuality," with all the taboos and constraints placed upon it by a monogamic-patriarchal society. Beyond its legitimate manifestations, love is destructive and by no means conducive to productiveness and constructive work. Love, taken seriously, is outlawed: "There is no longer any place in present-day civilized life for a simple natural love between two human beings."³⁷ But to the revisionists, productiveness, love, happiness, and health merge in grand harmony; civilization has not caused any conflicts between them which the mature person could not solve without serious damage.

Once the human aspirations and their fulfillment are internalized and sublimated to the "higher self," the social issues become primarily spiritual issues, and their solution becomes a *moral* task. The sociological concreteness of the revisionists reveals itself as surface: the decisive struggles are fought out in the "soul" of man. Present-day authoritarianism and the "deification of the machine and of success" threaten the "most precious spiritual possessions" of man.³⁸ The revisionist minimization of the biological

³⁶ *Collected Papers*, IV, 210.

³⁷ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 77 note.

³⁸ Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 119.

sphere, and especially of the role of sexuality, shifts the emphasis not only from the unconscious to consciousness, from the id to the ego, but also from the presublimated to the sublimated expressions of the human existence. As the repression of instinctual gratification recedes into the background and loses its decisive importance for the realization of man, the depth of societal repression is reduced. Consequently, the revisionist emphasis on the influence of "social conditions" in the development of the neurotic personality is sociologically and psychologically far more inconsequential than Freud's "neglect" of these conditions. The revisionist mutilation of the instinct theory leads to the traditional devaluation of the sphere of material needs in favor of spiritual needs. Society's part in the regimentation of man is thus played down; and in spite of the outspoken critique of some social institutions, the revisionist sociology accepts the foundation on which these institutions rest.

Neurosis, too, appears as an essentially *moral* problem, and the individual is held responsible for the failure of his self-realization. Society, to be sure, receives a share of the blame, but, in the long run, it is man himself who is at fault:

Looking at his creation, he can say, truly, it is good. But looking at himself what can he say? . . . While we have created wonderful things we have failed to make of ourselves beings for whom this tremendous effort would seem worthwhile. Ours is a life not of brotherliness, happiness, contentment but of spiritual chaos and bewilderment.³⁹

³⁹ Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 1.

The disharmony between society and the individual is stated and left alone. Whatever society may do to the individual, it prevents neither him nor the analyst from concentrating on the "total personality" and its productive development. According to Horney, society creates certain typical difficulties which, "accumulated, may lead to the formation of neuroses."⁴⁰ According to Fromm, the negative impact of society upon the individual is more serious, but this is only a challenge to practice productive love and productive thinking. The decision rests with man's "ability to take himself, his life and happiness seriously; on his willingness to face his and his society's moral problem. It rests upon his courage to be himself and to be for himself."⁴¹ In a period of totalitarianism, when the individual has so entirely become the subject-object of manipulation that, for the "healthy and normal" person, even the idea of a distinction between being "for himself" and "for others" has become meaningless, in a period when the omnipotent apparatus punishes real non-conformity with ridicule and defeat — in such a situation the Neo-Freudian philosopher tells the individual to be himself and for himself. To the revisionist, the brute fact of societal repression has transformed itself into a "moral problem" — as it has done in the conformist philosophy of all ages. And as the clinical fact of neurosis becomes, "in the last analysis, a symptom of moral failure,"⁴² the "psychoanalytic cure of the soul" becomes education in the attainment of a "religious" attitude.⁴³

⁴⁰ *The Neurotic Personality*, p. 284.

⁴¹ *Man for Himself*, p. 250.

⁴² *Man for Himself*, page viii.

⁴³ *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 76.

The escape from psychoanalysis to internalized ethics and religion is the consequence of this revision of psychoanalytic theory. If the "wound" in the human existence is not operative in the biological constitution of man, and if it is not caused and sustained by the very structure of civilization, then the depth dimension is removed from psychoanalysis, and the (ontogenetic and phylogenetic) conflict between pre-individual and supra-individual forces appears as a problem of the rational or irrational, the moral or immoral behavior of conscious individuals. The substance of psychoanalytic theory lies not simply in the discovery of the role of the unconscious but in the description of its specific instinctual dynamic, of the vicissitudes of the two basic instincts. Only the history of these vicissitudes reveals the full depth of the oppression which civilization imposes upon man. If sexuality does not play the constitutional role which Freud attributed to it, then there is no fundamental conflict between the pleasure principle and the reality principle; man's instinctual nature is "purified" and qualified to attain, without mutilation, socially useful and recognized happiness. It was precisely because he saw in sexuality the representative of the integral pleasure principle that Freud was able to discover the common roots of the "general" as well as neurotic unhappiness in a depth far below all individual experience, and to recognize a primary "constitutional" repression underlying all consciously experienced and administered repression. He took this discovery very seriously — much too seriously to identify happiness with its efficient sublimation in productive love and other productive activities. Therefore he considered a civilization oriented on the realization of happiness as a catastrophe, as

the end of all civilization. For Freud, an enormous gulf separated real freedom and happiness from the pseudo freedom and happiness that are practiced and preached in a repressive civilization. The revisionists see no such difficulty. Since they have spiritualized freedom and happiness, they can say that "the problem of production has been virtually solved":⁴⁴

Never before has man come so close to the fulfillment of his most cherished hopes as today. Our scientific discoveries and technical achievements enable us to visualize the day when the table will be set for all who want to eat . . .⁴⁵

These statements are true — but only in the light of their contradiction: precisely because man has never come so close to the fulfillment of his hopes, he has never been so strictly restrained from fulfilling them; precisely because we can visualize the universal satisfaction of individual needs, the strongest obstacles are placed in the way of such satisfaction. Only if the sociological analysis elucidates this connection does it go beyond Freud; otherwise it is merely an inconsequential adornment, purchased at the expense of mutilating Freud's theory of instincts.

Freud had established a substantive link between human freedom and happiness on the one hand and sexuality on the other: the latter provided the primary source for the former and at the same time the ground for their necessary restriction in civilization. The revisionist solution of the conflict through the spiritualization of freedom and happiness demanded the weakening of this link. Therapeutic findings may have motivated the theoretical reduction in

⁴⁴ Fromm, *Man for Himself*, p. 140.

⁴⁵ Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 1.

the role of sexuality; but such a reduction was in any case indispensable for the revisionist philosophy.

Sexual problems, although they may sometimes prevail in the symptomatic picture, are no longer considered to be in the dynamic center of neuroses. Sexual difficulties are the effect rather than the cause of the neurotic character structure. Moral problems on the other hand gain in importance.⁴⁶

This conception does far more than minimize the role of the libido; it reverses the inner direction of Freudian theory. Nowhere does this become clearer than in Fromm's reinterpretation of the Oedipus complex, which tries to "translate it from the sphere of sex into that of interpersonal relations." "The gist of this "translation" is that the essence of the incest wish is not "sexual craving" but the desire to remain protected, secure — a child. "The foetus lives with and from the mother, and the act of birth is only one step in the direction of freedom and independence." True — but the freedom and independence to be gained are (if at all) afflicted with want, resignation, and pain; and the act of birth is the first and most terrifying step in the direction *away from* satisfaction and security. Fromm's ideological interpretation of the Oedipus complex implies acceptance of the unhappiness of freedom, of its separation from satisfaction; Freud's theory implies that the Oedipus wish is the eternal infantile *protest* against this separation — protest not against freedom but against painful, repressive freedom. Conversely, the Oedipus wish is the eternal infantile desire

⁴⁶ Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1939), p. 10.

⁴⁷ *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, pp. 79ff. See also Fromm's more sophisticated interpretation in *The Forgotten Language* (New York: Rinehart, 1951), pp. 231-235.

for the archetype of freedom: freedom from want. And since the (unrepressed) sex instinct is the biological carrier of this archetype of freedom, the Oedipus wish is essentially "sexual craving." Its natural object is, not simply the mother *qua* mother, but the mother *qua* woman — female principle of gratification. Here the Eros of receptivity, rest, painless and integral satisfaction is nearest to the death instinct (return to the womb), the pleasure principle nearest to the Nirvana principle. Eros here fights its first battle against everything the reality principle stands for: against the father, against domination, sublimation, resignation. Gradually then, freedom and fulfillment are being associated with these paternal principles; freedom from want is sacrificed to moral and spiritual independence. It is first the "sexual craving" for the mother-woman that threatens the psychical basis of civilization; it is the "sexual craving" that makes the Oedipus conflict the prototype of the instinctual conflicts between the individual and his society. If the Oedipus wish were in essence nothing more than the wish for protection and security ("escape from freedom"), if the child desired only impermissible security and not impermissible pleasure, then the Oedipus complex would indeed present an essentially educational problem. As such, it can be treated without exposing the instinctual danger zones of society.

The same beneficial result is obtained by the rejection of the death instinct. Freud's hypothesis of the death instinct and its role in civilized aggression shed light on one of the neglected enigmas of civilization; it revealed the hidden unconscious tie which binds the oppressed to their oppressors,

the soldiers to their generals, the individuals to their masters. The wholesale destruction marking the progress of civilization within the framework of domination has been perpetuated, in the face of its possible abolition, by the instinctual agreement with their executioners on the part of the human instruments and victims. Freud wrote, during the First World War:

Think of the colossal brutality, cruelty and mendacity which is now allowed to spread itself over the civilized world. Do you really believe that a handful of unprincipled placehunters and corrupters of men would have succeeded in letting loose all this latent evil, if the millions of their followers were not also guilty? ⁴⁸

But the impulses which this hypothesis assumes are incompatible with the moralistic philosophy of progress espoused by the revisionists. Karen Horney states succinctly the revisionist position:

Freud's assumption [of a Death Instinct] implies that the ultimate motivation for hostility or destructiveness lies in the impulse to destroy. Thus he turns into its opposite our belief that we destroy in order to live: we live in order to destroy. ⁴⁹

This rendering of Freud's conception is incorrect. He did not assume that we live in order to destroy; the destruction instinct operates either against the life instincts or in their service; moreover, the objective of the death instinct is not destruction *per se* but the elimination of the need for destruction. According to Horney, we wish to destroy because we "are or feel endangered, humiliated, abused," because we want to defend "our safety or our happiness or what appears to us as such." No psychoanalytic theory

⁴⁸ A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, pp. 130-131.

⁴⁹ New Ways in Psychoanalysis, pp. 130-131.

was necessary to arrive at these conclusions, with which individual and national aggression has been justified since times immemorial. Either our safety is really threatened, in which case our wish to destroy is a sensible and rational reaction; or we only "feel" it is threatened, in which case the individual and supra-individual reasons for this feeling have to be explored.

The revisionist rejection of the death instinct is accompanied by an argument that indeed seems to point up the "reactionary" implications of Freudian theory as contrasted with the progressive sociological orientation of the revisionists. Freud's assumption of a death instinct

. . . paralyzes any effort to search in the specific cultural conditions for reasons which make for destructiveness. It must also paralyze efforts to change anything in these conditions. If man is inherently destructive and consequently unhappy, why strive for a better future? ⁵⁰

The revisionist argument minimizes the degree to which, in Freudian theory, impulses are modifiable, subject to the "vicissitudes" of history. The death instinct and its derivatives are no exception. We have suggested that the energy of the death instinct does not necessarily "paralyze" the efforts to obtain a "better future"; on the contrary, such efforts are paralyzed by the systematic constraints which civilization places on the life instincts, and by their consequent inability to "bind" aggression effectively. The realization of a "better future" involves far more than the elimination of the bad features of the "market," of the "ruthlessness" of competition, and so on; it involves a fundamental change in the instinctual as well as cultural

⁵⁰ *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*, p. 132.

structure. The striving for a better future is "paralyzed" not by Freud's awareness of these implications but by the revisionist "spiritualization" of them, which conceals the gap that separates the present from the future. Freud did not believe in prospective social changes that would alter human nature sufficiently to free man from external and internal oppression; however, his "fatalism" was not without qualification.

The mutilation of the instinct theory completes the reversal of Freudian theory. The inner direction of the latter was (in apparent contrast to the "therapeutic program" from id to ego) that from consciousness to the unconscious, from personality to childhood, from the individual to the generic processes. Theory moved from the surface to the depth, from the "finished" and conditioned person to its sources and resources. This movement was essential for Freud's critique of civilization: only by means of the "regression" behind the mystifying forms of the mature individual and his private and public existence did he discover their basic negativity in the foundations on which they rest. Moreover, only by pushing his critical regression back to the deepest biological layer could Freud elucidate the explosive content of the mystifying forms and, at the same time, the full scope of civilized repression. Identifying the energy of the life instincts as libido meant defining their gratification in contradiction to spiritual transcendentalism: Freud's notion of happiness and freedom is eminently critical in so far as it is materialistic — protesting against the spiritualization of want.

The Neo-Freudians reverse this inner direction of Freud's

theory, shifting the emphasis from the organism to the personality, from the material foundations to the ideal values. Their various revisions are logically consistent: one entails the next. The whole may be summed up as follows: The "cultural orientation" encounters the societal institutions and relationships as finished products, in the form of objective entities — given rather than made facts. Their acceptance in this form demands the shift in psychological emphasis from infancy to maturity, for only at the level of developed consciousness does the cultural environment become definable as determining character and personality over and above the biological level. Conversely, only with the playing down of biological factors, the mutilation of the instinct theory, is the personality definable in terms of objective cultural values divorced from the repressive ground which denies their realization. In order to present these values as freedom and fulfillment, they have to be purged of the material of which they are made, and the struggle for their realization has to be turned into a spiritual and moral struggle. The revisionists do not insist, as Freud did, on the enduring truth value of the instinctual needs which must be "broken" so that the human being can function in interpersonal relations. In abandoning this insistence, from which psychoanalytic theory drew all its critical insights, the revisionists yield to the negative features of the very reality principle which they so eloquently criticize.

Index

- Adorno, Theodor W., 106, 144f, 150, 227
 Aesthetic, 144f, 171, 172ff, 181ff
 Alexander, Franz, 32, 53, 56
 Alienation, 45ff, 102, 105, 112, 116, 152, 222, 227, 253
 Ananke. *See* Scarcity
 Aristotle, 112, 122
 Art, 144, 184ff
 Authority, rational, 36, 224
- Bachelard, Gaston, 110, 166, 208
 Bally, Gustav, 193
 Barag, G., 49
 Baudelaire, Charles, 153, 164
 Baumgarten, Alexander, 181ff
 Beaglehole, Ernest, 253
 Benjamin, Walter, 233
 Bernfeld, Siegfried, 21, 205
 Bibring, Edward, 21, 27, 205
 Breton, André, 149
 Brother clan, 63f
 Brown, Norman O., 161
- Chisholm, C. B., 221
 Christianity, 69ff
 Civilization: principle of, 4f, 11 (*see also* Performance principle); non-repressive, 5, 43, 124f, 134, 139, 150f, 153, 195f; dialectic of, 44, 54ff, 78ff, 107f, 129f; archaic heritage of, 56, 59f
 Corporealization of the psyche, 32, 94, 103
 Culture-heroes, 161, 170f. *See also* Prometheus
- Death instinct (destruction impulses), 22f, 28, 51ff, 84ff, 101f, 135ff, 231ff; in Neo-Freudian schools, 270f
 Domination, 36f, 40, 58ff, 77, 98ff; institutionalized, 89f; logic of, 111f, 118f, 124
- Ego, 30f, 58, 109f, 113f, 229
 Eliade, Mircea, 124
 Eros, 22f, 26, 42, 124ff, 205ff *et passim*
 Eternal return. *See* Time
- Family, changing function of, 96f, 201
 Fechner, Gustav, 25
 Fenichel, Otto, 28f, 49
 Ferenczi, Sandor, 207
 Fourier, Charles, 217f
 Freud, Anna, 74
 Fromm, Erich, 69, 241ff, 249, 251, 253, 258, 260ff, 265ff
- Gide, André, 163
 Glover, Edward, 83, 148, 206, 239
 Gratification, logic of, 112, 116, 124, 223ff
 Guilt feeling, 32, 56, 63f, 91, 99, 124; ambivalent character of, 66ff; intensification of, 78ff
- Happiness, 3, 18, 104, 203, 223, 227, 244
 Hartmann, Heinz, 5, 27, 59
 Hegel, G. F. W., 113ff, 122, 184, 232
 Hendrick, Ives, 81, 84, 218f
 Horace, 170
 Horkheimer, Max, 72, 96, 227