

EROS
AND CIVILIZATION
A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud

HERBERT MARCUSE

With a New Preface by the Author

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SOPHIE MARCUSE

1901-1951

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Political Preface 1966

Eros and Civilization: the title expressed an optimistic, euphemistic, even positive thought, namely, that the achievements of advanced industrial society would enable man to reverse the direction of progress, to break the fatal union of productivity and destruction, liberty and repression — in other words, to learn the gay science (*gaya sciencia*) of how to use the social wealth for shaping man's world in accordance with his Life Instincts, in the concerted struggle against the purveyors of Death. This optimism was based on the assumption that the rationale for the continued acceptance of domination no longer prevailed, that scarcity and the need for toil were only "artificially" perpetuated — in the interest of preserving the system of domination. I neglected or minimized the fact that this "obsolescent" rationale had been vastly strengthened (if not replaced) by even more efficient forms of social control. The very forces which rendered society capable of pacifying the struggle for existence served to repress in the individuals the need for such a liberation. Where the high standard of living does not suffice for reconciling the people with their life and their rulers, the "social engineering" of the soul and the "science of human relations" provide the

thorities are hardly forced to justify their dominion. They deliver the goods; they satisfy the sexual and the aggressive energy of their subjects. Like the unconscious, the destructive power of which they so successfully represent, they are this side of good and evil, and the principle of contradiction has no place in their logic.

As the affluence of society depends increasingly on the uninterrupted production and consumption of waste, gadgets, planned obsolescence, and means of destruction, the individuals have to be adapted to these requirements in more than the traditional ways. The "economic whip," even in its most refined forms, seems no longer adequate to insure the continuation of the struggle for existence in today's outdated organization, nor do the laws and patriotism seem adequate to insure active popular support for the ever more dangerous expansion of the system. Scientific management of instinctual needs has long since become a vital factor in the reproduction of the system: merchandise which has to be bought and used is made into objects of the libido; and the national Enemy who has to be fought and hated is distorted and inflated to such an extent that he can activate and satisfy aggressiveness in the depth dimension of the unconscious. Mass democracy provides the political paraphernalia for effectuating this introjection of the Reality Principle; it not only permits the people (up to a point) to choose their own masters and to participate (up to a point) in the government which governs them — it also allows the masters to disappear behind the technological veil of the productive and destructive apparatus which they

the benefits and comforts which it bestows upon those who collaborate. The people, efficiently manipulated and organized, are free; ignorance and impotence, introjected heteronomy is the price of their freedom.

It makes no sense to talk about liberation to free men — and we are free if we do not belong to the oppressed minority. And it makes no sense to talk about surplus repression when men and women enjoy more sexual liberty than ever before. But the truth is that this freedom and satisfaction are transforming the earth into hell. The inferno is still concentrated in certain far away places: Vietnam, the Congo, South Africa, and in the ghettos of the "affluent society": in Mississippi and Alabama, in Harlem. These infernal places illuminate the whole. It is easy and sensible to see in them only pockets of poverty and misery in a growing society capable of eliminating them gradually and without a catastrophe. This interpretation may even be realistic and correct. The question is: eliminated at what cost — not in dollars and cents, but in human lives and in human freedom?

I hesitate to use the word — freedom — because it is precisely in the name of freedom that crimes against humanity are being perpetrated. This situation is certainly not new in history: poverty and exploitation were products of economic freedom; time and again, people were liberated all over the globe by their lords and masters, and their new liberty turned out to be submission, not to the rule of law but to the rule of the law of the others. What started as rebellion by force soon became "voluntary servitude,"

increasingly rewarding and palatable. The reproduction, bigger and better, of the same ways of life came to mean, ever more clearly and consciously, the closing of those other possible ways of life which could do away with the serfs and the masters, with the productivity of repression.

Today, this union of freedom and servitude has become "natural" and a vehicle of progress. Prosperity appears more and more as the prerequisite and by-product of a self-propelling productivity ever seeking new outlets for consumption and for destruction, in outer and inner space, while being restrained from "overflowing" into the areas of misery — at home and abroad. As against this amalgam of liberty and aggression, production and destruction, the image of human freedom is dislocated: it becomes the project of the *subversion of this sort of progress*. Liberation of the instinctual needs for peace and quiet, of the "asocial" autonomous Eros presupposes liberation from repressive affluence: a reversal in the direction of progress.

It was the thesis of *Eros and Civilization*, more fully developed in my *One-Dimensional Man*, that man could avoid the fate of a Welfare-Through-Warfare State only by achieving a new starting point where he could reconstruct the productive apparatus without that "innerworldly asceticism" which provided the mental basis for domination and exploration. This image of man was the determinate negation of Nietzsche's superman: man intelligent enough and healthy enough to dispense with all heros and heroic virtues, man without the impulse to live dangerously, to meet the challenge; man with the good conscience to make life an end in itself, to live in joy, a life without fear

"Polymorphous sexuality" was the term which I used to indicate that the new direction of progress would depend completely on the opportunity to activate repressed or arrested organic, biological needs: to make the human body an instrument of pleasure rather than labor. The old formula, the development of prevailing needs and faculties, seemed to be inadequate; the emergence of new, qualitatively different needs and faculties seemed to be the prerequisite, the content of liberation.

The idea of such a new Reality Principle was based on the assumption that the material (technical) preconditions for its development were either established, or could be established in the advanced industrial societies of our time. It was self-understood that the translation of technical capabilities into reality would mean a revolution. But the very scope and effectiveness of the democratic introjection have suppressed the historical subject, the agent of revolution: free people are not in need of liberation, and the oppressed are not strong enough to liberate themselves. These conditions redefine the concept of Utopia: liberation is the most realistic, the most concrete of all historical possibilities and at the same time the most rationally and effectively repressed — the most abstract and remote possibility. No philosophy, no theory can undo the democratic introjection of the masters into their subjects. When, in the more or less affluent societies, productivity has reached a level at which the masses participate in its benefits, and at which opposition is effectively and democratically "contained," the conflict between master and slave is also effectively

exists, and explodes, in the revolt of the backward countries against the intolerable heritage of colonialism and its prolongation by neo-colonialism. The Marxian concept stipulated that only those who were free from the blessings of capitalism could possibly change it into a free society: those whose existence was the very negation of capitalist property could become the historical agents of liberation. In the international arena, the Marxian concept regains its full validity. To the degree to which the exploitative societies have become global powers, to the degree to which the new independent nations have become the battlefield of their interests, the "external" forces of rebellion have ceased to be extraneous forces: they are the enemy within the system. This does not make these rebels the messengers of humanity. By themselves, they are not (as little as the Marxian proletariat was) the representatives of freedom. Here too, the Marxian concept applies according to which the international proletariat would get its intellectual armor from outside: the "lightning of thought" would strike the "*naiven Volksboden*." Grandiose ideas about the union of theory and practice do injustice to the feeble beginnings of such a union. Yet the revolt in the backward countries has found a response in the advanced countries where youth is in protest against repression in affluence and war abroad.

Revolt against the false fathers, teachers, and heroes — solidarity with the wretched of the earth: is there any "organic" connection between the two facets of the protest? There seems to be an all but instinctual solidarity. The revolt at home against home seems largely impulsive, its

targets hard to define: nausea caused by "the way of life," revolt as a matter of physical and mental hygiene. The body against "the machine" — not against the mechanism constructed to make life safer and milder, to attenuate the cruelty of nature, but against the machine which has taken over the mechanism: the political machine, the corporate machine, the cultural and educational machine which has welded blessing and curse into one rational whole. The whole has become too big, its cohesion too strong, its functioning too efficient — does the power of the negative concentrate in still partly unconquered, primitive, elemental forces? The body against the machine: men, women, and children fighting, with the most primitive tools, the most brutal and destructive machine of all times and keeping it in check — does guerilla warfare define the revolution of our time?

Historical backwardness may again become the historical chance of turning the wheel of progress to another direction. Technical and scientific overdevelopment stands refuted when the radar-equipped bombers, the chemicals, and the "special forces" of the affluent society are let loose on the poorest of the earth, on their shacks, hospitals, and rice fields. The "accidents" reveal the substance: they tear the technological veil behind which the real powers are hiding. The capability to overkill and to overburn, and the mental behavior that goes with it are by-products of the development of the productive forces within a system of exploitation and repression; they seem to become more productive the more comfortable the system becomes to its privileged

it is a society at war; if its citizens have not noticed it, its victims certainly have.

The historical advantage of the late-comer, of technical backwardness, may be that of skipping the stage of the affluent society. Backward peoples by their poverty and weakness may be forced to forego the aggressive and wasteful use of science and technology, to keep the productive apparatus *à la mesure de l'homme*, under his control, for the satisfaction and development of vital individual and collective needs.

For the overdeveloped countries, this chance would be tantamount to the abolition of the conditions under which man's labor perpetuates, as self-propelling power, his subordination to the productive apparatus, and, with it, the obsolete forms of the struggle for existence. The abolition of these forms is, just as it has always been, the task of political action, but there is a decisive difference in the present situation. Whereas previous revolutions brought about a larger and more rational development of the productive forces, in the overdeveloped societies of today, revolution would mean reversal of this trend: elimination of overdevelopment, and of its repressive rationality. The rejection of affluent productivity, far from being a commitment to purity, simplicity, and "nature," might be the token (and weapon) of a higher stage of human development, based on the achievements of the technological society. As the production of wasteful and destructive goods is discontinued (a stage which would mean the end of capitalism in all its forms) — the somatic and mental mutilations in-

words, the shaping of the environment, the transformation of nature, may be propelled by the liberated rather than the repressed Life Instincts, and aggression would be subjected to their demands.

The historical chance of the backward countries is in the absence of conditions which make for repressive exploitative technology and industrialization for aggressive productivity. The very fact that the affluent warfare state unleashes its annihilating power on the backward countries illuminates the magnitude of the threat. In the revolt of the backward peoples, the rich societies meet, in an elemental and brutal form, not only a social revolt in the traditional sense, but also an instinctual revolt — biological hatred. The spread of guerilla warfare at the height of the technological century is a symbolic event: the energy of the human body rebels against intolerable repression and throws itself against the engines of repression. Perhaps the rebels know nothing about the ways of organizing a society, of constructing a socialist society; perhaps they are terrorized by their own leaders who know something about it, but the rebels' frightful existence is in total need of liberation, and their freedom is the contradiction to the overdeveloped societies.

Western civilization has always glorified the hero, the sacrifice of life for the city, the state, the nation; it has rarely asked the question of whether the established city, state, nation were worth the sacrifice. The taboo on the unquestionable prerogative of the whole has always been maintained and enforced, and it has been maintained and enforced the more brutally the more the whole was sup-

being asked — asked from without — and it is taken up by those who refuse to play the game of the affluents — the question of whether the abolition of this whole is not the precondition for the emergence of a truly human city, state, nation.

The odds are overwhelmingly on the side of the powers that be. What is romantic is not the positive evaluation of the liberation movements in the backward countries, but the positive evaluation of their prospects. There is no reason why science, technology, and money should not again do the job of destruction, and then the job of reconstruction in their own image. The price of progress is frightfully high, but we shall overcome. Not only the deceived victims but also their chief of state have said so. And yet there are photographs that show a row of half naked corpses laid out for the victors in Vietnam: they resemble in all details the pictures of the starved, emasculated corpses of Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Nothing and nobody can ever overcome these deeds, nor the sense of guilt which reacts in further aggression. But aggression can be turned against the aggressor. The strange myth according to which the unhealing wound can only be healed by the weapon that afflicted the wound has not yet been validated in history: the violence which breaks the chain of violence may start a new chain. And yet, in and against this continuum, the fight will continue. It is not the struggle of Eros against Thanatos, because the established society too has its Eros: it protects, perpetuates, and enlarges life. And it is not a bad life for those who comply and repress. But in the

defense of life is less detrimental to the Life Instincts than aggressiveness in aggression.

In defense of life: the phrase has explosive meaning in the affluent society. It involves not only the protest against neo-colonial war and slaughter, the burning of draft cards at the risk of prison, the fight for civil rights, but also the refusal to speak the dead language of affluence, to wear the clean clothes, to enjoy the gadgets of affluence, to go through the education for affluence. The new bohème, the beatniks and hipsters, the peace creeps — all these “decadents” now have become what decadence probably always was: poor refuge of defamed humanity.

Can we speak of a juncture between the erotic and political dimension?

In and against the deadly efficient organization of the affluent society, not only radical protest, but even the attempt to formulate, to articulate, to give word to protest assume a childlike, ridiculous immaturity. Thus it is ridiculous and perhaps “logical” that the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley terminated in the row caused by the appearance of a sign with the four-letter word. It is perhaps equally ridiculous and right to see deeper significance in the buttons worn by some of the demonstrators (among them infants) against the slaughter in Vietnam: **MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR**. On the other side, against the new youth who refuse and rebel, are the representatives of the old order who can no longer protect its life without sacrificing it in the work of destruction and waste and pollution. They now include the representatives of organized labor — cor-

capitalist prosperity depends on the continued defense of the established social system.

Can the outcome, for the near future, be in doubt? The people, the majority of the people in the affluent society, are on the side of that which is — not that which can and ought to be. And the established order is strong enough and efficient enough to justify this adherence and to assure its continuation. However, the very strength and efficiency of this order may become factors of disintegration. Perpetuation of the obsolescent need for full-time labor (even in a very reduced form) will require the increasing waste of resources, the creation of ever more unnecessary jobs and services, and the growth of the military or destructive sector. Escalated wars, permanent preparation for war, and total administration may well suffice to keep the people under control, but at the cost of altering the morality on which the society still depends. Technical progress, itself a necessity for the maintenance of the established society, fosters needs and faculties which are antagonistic to the social organization of labor on which the system is built. In the course of automation, the value of the social product is to an increasingly smaller degree determined by the labor time necessary for its production. Consequently, the real social need for productive labor declines, and the vacuum must be filled with unproductive activities. An ever larger amount of the work actually performed becomes superfluous, expendable, meaningless. Although these activities can be sustained and even multiplied under total administration there seems to exist an upper limit to their augmentation

This limit would be reached when the surplus value created by productive labor no longer suffices to pay for non-production work. A progressive reduction of labor seems to be inevitable, and for this eventuality, the system has to provide for occupation without work; it has to develop needs which transcend the market economy and may even be incompatible with it.

The affluent society is in its own way preparing for this eventuality by organizing "the desire for beauty and the hunger for community," the renewal of the "contact with nature," the enrichment of the mind, and honors for "creation for its own sake." The false ring of such proclamations is indicative of the fact that, within the established system, the aspirations are translated into administered cultural policies, sponsored by the government and the big corporations — an extension of their executive arm into the soul of masses. It is all but impossible to recognize in the aspirations thus defined those of Eros and its autonomous formation of a repressive environment and a repressive space. If these goals are to be satisfied without an irreconcilable conflict with the requirements of the market economy, they must be satisfied within the framework of space and profit. But this sort of satisfaction would amount to denial, for the erotic energy of the Life Instinct cannot be freed under the dehumanizing conditions of profitable affluence. To be sure, the conflict between the necessary development of noneconomic needs and the economic system would validate the idea of the abolition of labor (life without labor in itself) on the one hand, and the necessity for

maintaining the need for earning a living on the other is quite manageable (especially as long as the Enemy within and without can serve as propelling force behind the defense of the status quo). However, the conflict may become explosive if it is accompanied and aggravated by the prospective changes at the very base of advanced industrial society, namely, the gradual undermining of capitalist enterprise in the course of automation.

In the meantime, there are things to be done. The system has its weakest point where it shows its most brutal strength: in the escalation of its military potential (which seems to press for periodic actualization with ever shorter interruptions of peace and preparedness). This tendency seems reversible only under strongest pressure, and its reversal would open the danger spots in the social structure: its conversion into a "normal" capitalist system is hardly imaginable without a serious crisis and sweeping economic and political changes. Today, the opposition to war and military intervention strikes at the roots: it rebels against those whose economic and political dominion depends on the continued (and enlarged) reproduction of the military establishment, its "multipliers," and the policies which necessitate this reproduction. These interests are not hard to identify, and the war against them does not require missiles, bombs, and napalm. But it does require something that is much harder to produce — the spread of uncensored and unmanipulated knowledge, consciousness, and above all, the organized refusal to continue work on the material and *intellectual* instruments which are now

being used against man — for the defense of the liberty and prosperity of those who dominate the rest.

To the degree to which organized labor operates in defense of the status quo, and to the degree to which the share of labor in the material process of production declines, *intellectual* skills and capabilities become social and political factors. Today, the organized refusal to cooperate of the scientists, mathematicians, technicians, industrial psychologists and public opinion pollsters may well accomplish what a strike, even a large-scale strike, can no longer accomplish but once accomplished, namely, the beginning of the reversal, the preparation of the ground for political action. That the idea appears utterly unrealistic does not reduce the political responsibility involved in the position and function of the intellectual in contemporary industrial society. The intellectual refusal may find support in another catalyst, the instinctual refusal among the youth in protest. It is their lives which are at stake, and if not their lives, their mental health and their capacity to function as un-mutilated humans. Their protest will continue because it is a biological necessity. "By nature," the young are in the forefront of those who live and fight for Eros against Death, and against a civilization which strives to shorten the "detour to death" while controlling the means for lengthening the detour. But in the administered society, the biological necessity does not immediately issue in action; organization demands counter-organization. Today the fight for life, the fight for Eros, is the *political* fight.

Preface to First Edition

This essay employs psychological categories because they have become political categories. The traditional borderlines between psychology on the one side and political and social philosophy on the other have been made obsolete by the condition of man in the present era: formerly autonomous and identifiable psychical processes are being absorbed by the function of the individual in the state — by his public existence. Psychological problems therefore turn into political problems: private disorder reflects more directly than before the disorder of the whole, and the cure of personal disorder depends more directly than before on the cure of the general disorder. The era tends to be totalitarian even where it has not produced totalitarian states. Psychology could be elaborated and practiced as a special discipline as long as the psyche could sustain itself against the public power, as long as privacy was real, really desired, and self-shaped; if the individual has neither the ability nor the possibility to be for himself, the terms of psychology become the terms of the societal forces which define the psyche. Under these circumstances, applying psychology in the analysis of social and political events means taking an

task is rather the opposite: to develop the political and sociological substance of the psychological notions.

I have tried to reformulate certain basic questions and to follow them in a direction not yet fully explored. I am aware of the tentative character of this inquiry and hope to discuss some of the problems, especially those of an aesthetic theory, more adequately in the near future.

The ideas developed in this book were first presented in a series of lectures at the Washington School of Psychiatry in 1950-51. I wish to thank Mr. Joseph Borkin of Washington, who encouraged me to write this book. I am deeply grateful to Professors Clyde Kluckhohn and Barrington Moore, Jr., of Harvard University, and to Doctors Henry and Yela Loewenfeld of New York, who have read the manuscript and offered valuable suggestions and criticism. For the content of this essay, I take the sole responsibility. As to my theoretical position, I am indebted to my friend Professor Max Horkheimer and to his collaborators at the Institute of Social Research, now in Frankfurt.

H. M.

Introduction

Sigmund Freud's proposition that civilization is based on the permanent subjugation of the human instincts has been taken for granted. His question whether the suffering thereby inflicted upon individuals has been worth the benefits of culture has not been taken too seriously — the less so since Freud himself considered the process to be inevitable and irreversible. Free gratification of man's instinctual needs is incompatible with civilized society: renunciation and delay in satisfaction are the prerequisites of progress. "Happiness," said Freud, "is no cultural value." Happiness must be subordinated to the discipline of work as full-time occupation, to the discipline of monogamic reproduction, to the established system of law and order. The methodical sacrifice of libido, its rigidly enforced deflection to socially useful activities and expressions, is culture.

The sacrifice has paid off well: in the technically advanced areas of civilization, the conquest of nature is practically complete, and more needs of a greater number of people are fulfilled than ever before. Neither the mechanization and standardization of life, nor the mental impoverishment, nor the growing destructiveness of present-day progress provides sufficient ground for questioning the

civilization. The continual increase of productivity makes constantly more realistic the promise of an even better life for all.

However, intensified progress seems to be bound up with intensified unfreedom. Throughout the world of industrial civilization, the domination of man by man is growing in scope and efficiency. Nor does this trend appear as an incidental, transitory regression on the road to progress. Concentration camps, mass exterminations, world wars, and atom bombs are no "relapse into barbarism," but the unrepressed implementation of the achievements of modern science, technology, and domination. And the most effective subjugation and destruction of man by man takes place at the height of civilization, when the material and intellectual attainments of mankind seem to allow the creation of a truly free world.

These negative aspects of present-day culture may well indicate the obsolescence of established institutions and the emergence of new forms of civilization: repressiveness is perhaps the more vigorously maintained the more unnecessary it becomes. If it must indeed belong to the essence of civilization as such, then Freud's question as to the price of civilization would be meaningless — for there would be no alternative.

But Freud's own theory provides reasons for rejecting his identification of civilization with repression. On the ground of his own theoretical achievements, the discussion of the problem must be reopened. Does the interrelation between freedom and repression, productivity and destruction, domi-

zation? Or does this interrelation result only from a specific historical organization of human existence? In Freudian terms, is the conflict between pleasure principle and reality principle irreconcilable to such a degree that it necessitates the repressive transformation of man's instinctual structure? Or does it allow the concept of a non-repressive civilization, based on a fundamentally different experience of being, a fundamentally different relation between man and nature, and fundamentally different existential relations?

The notion of a non-repressive civilization will be discussed not as an abstract and utopian speculation. We believe that the discussion is justified on two concrete and realistic grounds: first, Freud's theoretical conception itself seems to refute his consistent denial of the historical possibility of a non-repressive civilization, and, second, the very achievements of repressive civilization seem to create the preconditions for the gradual abolition of repression. To elucidate these grounds, we shall try to reinterpret Freud's theoretical conception in terms of its own socio-historical content.

This procedure implies opposition to the revisionist Neo-Freudian schools. In contrast to the revisionists, I believe that Freud's theory is in its very substance "sociological,"¹ and that no new cultural or sociological orientation is needed to reveal this substance. Freud's "biologism" is

¹ For a discussion of the sociological character of psychoanalytic concepts, see Heinz Hartmann, "The Application of Psychoanalytic Concepts to Social Science," in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (1950), Clyde Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949); and Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Rudolph M. Lowenstein, "Some Psychoanalytic Comments on 'Culture and Personality,'" in *Psychoanalysis and Culture: Essays in Honor of Géza Róheim* (New York: Interna-

social theory in a depth dimension that has been consistently flattened out by the Neo-Freudian schools. In shifting the emphasis from the unconscious to the conscious, from the biological to the cultural factors, they cut off the roots of society in the instincts and instead take society at the level on which it confronts the individual as his ready-made "environment," without questioning its origin and legitimacy. The Neo-Freudian analysis of this environment thus succumbs to the mystification of societal relations, and their critique moves only within the firmly sanctioned and well-protected sphere of established institutions. Consequently, the Neo-Freudian critique remains in a strict sense ideological: it has no conceptual basis outside the established system; most of its critical ideas and values are those provided by the system. Idealistic morality and religion celebrate their happy resurrection: the fact that they are embellished with the vocabulary of the very psychology that originally refuted their claim ill conceals their identity with officially desired and advertised attitudes.² Moreover, we believe that the most concrete insights into the historical structure of civilization are contained precisely in the concepts that the revisionists reject. Almost the entire Freudian metapsychology, his late theory of the instincts, his reconstruction of the prehistory of mankind belong to these concepts. Freud himself treated them as mere working hypotheses, helpful in elucidating certain obscurities, in establishing tentative links between theoretically unconnected

² For a more specific discussion of Neo-Freudian revisionism, see the Epilogue below.

insights — always open to correction, and to be discarded if they no longer facilitated the progress of psychoanalytic theory and practice. In the post-Freudian development of psychoanalysis, this metapsychology has been almost entirely eliminated. As psychoanalysis has become socially and scientifically respectable, it has freed itself from compromising speculations. Compromising they were, indeed, in more than one sense: not only did they transcend the realm of clinical observation and therapeutic usefulness, but also they interpreted man in terms far more offensive to social taboos than Freud's earlier "pan-sexualism" — terms that revealed the explosive basis of civilization. The subsequent discussion will try to apply the tabooed insights of psychoanalysis (tabooed even in psychoanalysis itself) to an interpretation of the basic trends of civilization.

The purpose of this essay is to contribute to the *philosophy* of psychoanalysis — not to psychoanalysis itself. It moves exclusively in the field of theory, and it keeps outside the technical discipline which psychoanalysis has become. Freud developed a theory of man, a "psycho-logy" in the strict sense. With this theory, Freud placed himself in the great tradition of philosophy and under philosophical criteria. Our concern is not with a corrected or improved interpretation of Freudian concepts but with their philosophical and sociological implications. Freud conscientiously distinguished his philosophy from his science; the Neo-Freudians have denied most of the former. On therapeutic grounds, such a denial may be perfectly justified. However, no therapeutic argument should hamper the

development of a theoretical construction which aims, not at curing individual sickness, but at diagnosing the general disorder.

A few preliminary explanations of terms are necessary:

“Civilization” is used interchangeably with “culture” — as in Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

“Repression,” and “repressive” are used in the non-technical sense to designate both conscious and unconscious, external and internal processes of restraint, constraint, and suppression.

“Instinct,” in accordance with Freud’s notion of *Trieb*, refers to primary “drives” of the human organism which are subject to *historical* modification; they find mental as well as somatic representation.

PART ONE

UNDER THE RULE OF THE REALITY PRINCIPLE

CHAPTER ONE

The Hidden Trend in Psychoanalysis

The concept of man that emerges from Freudian theory is the most irrefutable indictment of Western civilization — and at the same time the most unshakable defense of this civilization. According to Freud, the history of man is the history of his repression. Culture constrains not only his societal but also his biological existence, not only parts of the human being but his instinctual structure itself. However, such constraint is the very precondition of progress. Left free to pursue their natural objectives, the basic instincts of man would be incompatible with all lasting association and preservation: they would destroy even where they unite. The uncontrolled Eros is just as fatal as his deadly counterpart, the death instinct. Their destructive force derives from the fact that they strive for a gratification which culture cannot grant: gratification as such and as an end in itself, at any moment. The instincts must therefore be deflected from their goal, inhibited in their aim. Civilization begins when the primary objective — namely, integral satisfaction of needs — is effectively renounced.

The vicissitudes of the instincts are the vicissitudes of the mental apparatus in civilization. The animal drives ha-

come human instincts under the influence of the external reality. Their original "location" in the organism and their basic direction remain the same, but their objectives and their manifestations are subject to change. All psychoanalytic concepts (sublimation, identification, projection, repression, introjection) connote the mutability of the instincts. But the reality which shapes the instincts as well as their needs and satisfaction is a socio-historical world. The animal man becomes a human being only through a fundamental transformation of his nature, affecting not only the instinctual aims but also the instinctual "values" — that is, the principles that govern the attainment of the aims. The change in the governing value system may be tentatively defined as follows:

from:	to:
immediate satisfaction	delayed satisfaction
pleasure	restraint of pleasure
joy (play)	toil (work)
receptiveness	productiveness
absence of repression	security

Freud described this change as the transformation of the *pleasure principle* into the *reality principle*. The interpretation of the "mental apparatus" in terms of these two principles is basic to Freud's theory and remains so in spite of all modifications of the dualistic conception. It corresponds largely (but not entirely) to the distinction between unconscious and conscious processes. The individual exists, as it were, in two different dimensions, characterized by different mental processes and principles. The difference between these two dimensions is a genetic-historical

as well as a structural one: the unconscious, ruled by the *pleasure principle*, comprises "the older, primary processes, the residues of a phase of development in which they were the only kind of mental processes." They strive for nothing but for "gaining pleasure; from any operation which might arouse unpleasantness ('pain') mental activity draws back."¹ But the unrestrained *pleasure principle* comes into conflict with the natural and human environment. The individual comes to the traumatic realization that full and painless gratification of his needs is impossible. And after this experience of disappointment, a new principle of mental functioning gains ascendancy. The *reality principle* supersedes the *pleasure principle*: man learns to give up momentary, uncertain, and destructive pleasure for delayed, restrained, but "assured" pleasure.² Because of this lasting gain through renunciation and restraint, according to Freud, the *reality principle* "safeguards" rather than "dethrones," "modifies" rather than denies, the *pleasure principle*.

However, the psychoanalytic interpretation reveals that the *reality principle* enforces a change not only in the form and timing of pleasure but in its very substance. The adjustment of pleasure to the *reality principle* implies the subjugation and diversion of the destructive force of instinctual gratification, of its incompatibility with the established societal norms and relations, and, by that token, implies the transubstantiation of pleasure itself.

¹ "Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning," in *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), IV, 14. Quotations are used by permission of the publisher.

² *Ibid.* p. 18.

With the establishment of the reality principle, the human being which, under the pleasure principle, has been hardly more than a bundle of animal drives, has become an organized ego. It strives for "what is useful" and what can be obtained without damage to itself and to its vital environment. Under the reality principle, the human being develops the function of *reason*: it learns to "test" the reality, to distinguish between good and bad, true and false, useful and harmful. Man acquires the faculties of attention, memory, and judgment. He becomes a conscious, thinking *subject*, geared to a rationality which is imposed upon him from outside. Only one mode of thought-activity is "split off" from the new organization of the mental apparatus and remains free from the rule of the reality principle: *phantasy* is "protected from cultural alterations" and stays committed to the pleasure principle. Otherwise, the mental apparatus is effectively subordinated to the reality principle. The function of "motor discharge," which, under the supremacy of the pleasure principle, had "served to unburden the mental apparatus of accretions of stimuli," is now employed in the "appropriate alteration of reality": it is converted into *action*.⁸

The scope of man's desires and the instrumentalities for their gratification are thus immeasurably increased, and his ability to alter reality consciously in accordance with "what is useful" seems to promise a gradual removal of extraneous barriers to his gratification. However, neither his desires nor his alteration of reality are henceforth his own: they are now "organized" by his society. And this "organization"

represses and transubstantiates his original instinctual needs. If absence from repression is the archetype of freedom, then civilization is the struggle against this freedom.

The replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle is the great traumatic event in the development of man — in the development of the genus (phylogenesis) as well as of the individual (ontogenesis). According to Freud, this event is not unique but recurs throughout the history of mankind and of every individual. Phylogenetically, it occurs first in the *primal horde*, when the *primal father* monopolizes power and pleasure and enforces renunciation on the part of the sons. Ontogenetically, it occurs during the period of early childhood, and submission to the reality principle is enforced by the parents and other educators. But, both on the generic and on the individual level, submission is continuously reproduced. The rule of the primal father is followed, after the first rebellion, by the rule of the sons, and the brother clan develops into institutionalized social and political domination. The reality principle materializes in a system of institutions. And the individual, growing up within such a system, learns the requirements of the reality principle as those of law and order, and transmits them to the next generation.

The fact that the reality principle has to be re-established continually in the development of man indicates that its triumph over the pleasure principle is never complete and never secure. In the Freudian conception, civilization does not once and for all terminate a "state of nature." What civilization masters and represses — the claim of the pleasure principle — continues to exist in civilization itself. The

unconscious retains the objectives of the defeated pleasure principle. Turned back by the external reality or even unable to reach it, the full force of the pleasure principle not only survives in the unconscious but also affects in manifold ways the very reality which has superseded the pleasure principle. The *return of the repressed* makes up the tabooed and subterranean history of civilization. And the exploration of this history reveals not only the secret of the individual but also that of civilization. Freud's individual psychology is in its very essence social psychology. Repression is a historical phenomenon. The effective subjugation of the instincts to repressive controls is imposed not by nature but by man. The primal father, as the archetype of domination, initiates the chain reaction of enslavement, rebellion, and reinforced domination which marks the history of civilization. But ever since the first, prehistoric restoration of domination following the first rebellion, repression from without has been supported by repression from within: the unfree individual introjects his masters and their commands into his own mental apparatus. The struggle against freedom reproduces itself in the psyche of man, as the self-repression of the repressed individual, and his self-repression in turn sustains his masters and their institutions. It is this mental dynamic which Freud unfolds as the dynamic of civilization.

According to Freud, the repressive modification of the instincts under the reality principle is enforced and sustained by the "eternal primordial struggle for existence, . . . persisting to the present day." Scarcity (*Lebensnot*, *Ananke*)

impulses, that they cannot live under the pleasure principle. Society's motive in enforcing the decisive modification of the instinctual structure is thus "economic; since it has not means enough to support life for its members without work on their part, it must see to it that the number of these members is restricted and their energies directed away from sexual activities on to their work."⁴

This conception is as old as civilization and has always provided the most effective rationalization for repression. To a considerable extent, Freud's theory partakes of this rationalization: Freud considers the "primordial struggle for existence" as "eternal" and therefore believes that the pleasure principle and the reality principle are "eternally" antagonistic. The notion that a non-repressive civilization is impossible is a cornerstone of Freudian theory. However, his theory contains elements that break through this rationalization; they shatter the predominant tradition of Western thought and even suggest its reversal. His work is characterized by an uncompromising insistence on showing up the repressive content of the highest values and achievements of culture. In so far as he does this, he denies the equation of reason with repression on which the ideology of culture is built. Freud's metapsychology is an ever-renewed attempt to uncover, and to question, the terrible necessity of the inner connection between civilization and barbarism, progress and suffering, freedom and unhappiness — a connection which reveals itself ultimately as that between Eros and Thanatos. Freud questions culture not from a roman-

⁴ A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis (New York: Garden City

ticist or utopian point of view, but on the ground of the suffering and misery which its implementation involves. Cultural freedom thus appears in the light of unfreedom, and cultural progress in the light of constraint. Culture is not thereby refuted: unfreedom and constraint are the price that must be paid.

But as Freud exposes their scope and their depth, he upholds the tabooed aspirations of humanity: the claim for a state where freedom and necessity coincide. Whatever liberty exists in the realm of the developed consciousness, and in the world it has created, is only derivative, compromised freedom, gained at the expense of the full satisfaction of needs. And in so far as the full satisfaction of needs is happiness, freedom in civilization is essentially antagonistic to happiness: it involves the repressive modification (*sublimation*) of happiness. Conversely, the unconscious, the deepest and oldest layer of the mental personality, is the drive for integral gratification, which is absence of want and repression. As such it is the immediate identity of necessity and freedom. According to Freud's conception the equation of freedom and happiness tabooed by the conscious is upheld by the unconscious. Its truth, although repelled by the consciousness, continues to haunt the mind; it preserves the memory of past stages of individual development at which integral gratification is obtained. And the past continues to claim the future: it generates the wish that the paradise be re-created on the basis of the achievements of civilization.

If memory moves into the center of psychoanalysis as its decisive mode of *cognition*, this is far more than a theoretical

cific function of memory to preserve promises and potentialities which are betrayed and even outlawed by the mature, civilized individual, but which had once been fulfilled in his dim past and which are never entirely forgotten. The reality principle restrains the cognitive function of memory — its commitment to the past experience of happiness which spurns the desire for its conscious re-creation. The psychoanalytic liberation of memory explodes the rationality of the repressed individual. As cognition gives way to re-cognition, the forbidden images and impulses of childhood begin to tell the truth that reason denies. Regression assumes a progressive function. The rediscovered past fields critical standards which are tabooed by the present. Moreover, the restoration of memory is accompanied by the restoration of the cognitive content of phantasy. Psychoanalytic theory removes these mental faculties from the incommittal sphere of daydreaming and fiction and recaptures their strict truths. The weight of these discoveries must eventually shatter the framework in which they were made and confined. The liberation of the past does not end in its reconciliation with the present. Against the imposed restraint of the discoverer, the orientation on the past tends toward an orientation on the future. The *cherche du temps perdu* becomes the vehicle of future liberation.*

* See Chapter 11 below. Ernest G. Schachtel's paper "On Memory and Childhood Amnesia" gives the only adequate psychoanalytic interpretation of the function of memory at the individual as well as societal level. The paper is entirely focused on the explosive force of memory, and its repression and "conventionalization" by society. It is, in my view, one of the few real contributions to the philosophy of psychoanalysis. Schachtel's

The subsequent discussion will be focused on this hidden trend in psychoanalysis.

Freud's analysis of the development of the repressive mental apparatus proceeds on two levels:

- (a) Ontogenetic: the growth of the repressed individual from early infancy to his conscious societal existence.
- (b) Phylogenetic: the growth of repressive civilization from the primal horde to the fully constituted civilized state.

The two levels are continually interrelated. This interrelation is epitomized in Freud's notion of the return of the repressed in history: the individual re-experiences and re-enacts the great traumatic events in the development of the genus, and the instinctual dynamic reflects throughout the conflict between individual and genus (between particular and universal) as well as the various solutions of this conflict.

We shall first follow the ontogenetic development to the mature state of the civilized individual. We shall then return to the phylogenetic origins and extend the Freudian conception to the mature state of the civilized genus. The constant interrelation between the two levels means that recurrent cross-references, anticipations, and repetitions are unavoidable.

CHAPTER TWO

The Origin of the Repressed Individual (Ontogenesis)

Freud traces the development of repression in the instinctual structure of the individual. The fate of human freedom and happiness is fought out and decided in the struggle of the instincts — literally a struggle of life and death — in which soma and psyche, nature and civilization participate. This biological and at the same time sociological dynamic is the center of Freud's metapsychology. He unfolded these decisive hypotheses with constant hesitations and qualifications — and then left them in abeyance. The final theory of instincts, in whose context they emerged after 1920, was preceded by at least two different conceptions of the anatomy of the mental personality. There is no need here to review the history of the psychoanalytic theory of instincts;¹ a brief summary of some of its features may suffice to prepare for our discussion.

Throughout the various stages of Freud's theory, the

¹ In addition to Freud's own survey (especially in the *New Introductory Lectures*), see Siegfried Bernfeld, "Ueber die Einteilung der Triebe," in *Imago*, Vol. XXI (1935); Ernest Jones, "Psychoanalysis and the Instincts," in *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. XXVI (1936); and Edward Libring, "The Development and Problems of the Theory of the Instincts," in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. XXI (1941).

mental apparatus appears as a dynamic union of opposites of the unconscious and the conscious structures; of primary and secondary processes; of inherited, "constitutionally fixed" and acquired forces; of soma-psyche and the external reality. This dualistic construction continues to prevail even in the later tripartite topology of id, ego, and super-ego; the intermediary and "overlapping" elements tend toward the two poles. They find their most striking expression in the two ultimate principles which govern the mental apparatus: pleasure principle and reality principle.

At the earliest stage of its development, Freud's theory is built around the antagonism between sex (libidinous) and ego (self-preservation) instincts; at the latest stage, it is centered on the conflict between the *life instincts* (Eros) and the *death instinct*. During a brief intermediary period, the dualistic conception was replaced by the assumption of one all-pervasive (narcissistic) libido. Throughout all these modifications of Freud's theory, sexuality retains its predominant place in the instinctual structure. The predominant role of sexuality is rooted in the very nature of the mental apparatus as Freud conceived it: if the primary mental processes are governed by the pleasure principle, then that instinct which, in operating under this principle, sustains life itself must be *the* life instinct.

But Freud's early concept of sexuality is still far remote from that of Eros as life instinct. The sexual instinct is first only one specific instinct (or, rather, group of instincts) side by side with the ego (or self-preservation) instincts, and is defined by its specific genesis, aim, and object. Far from being "pan-sexualism," Freud's theory is, at least until

his introduction of narcissism in 1914, characterized by a restriction of the scope of sexuality — a restriction which is maintained in spite of the persistent difficulty in verifying the independent existence of non-sexual self-preservation instincts. It is still a long way to the hypothesis that the latter are merely component instincts "whose function it is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death, and to ward off any possible ways of returning to inorganic existence other than those which are immanent in the organism itself,"² or — which might be another way of saying the same thing — that they are themselves of a libidinal nature, part of Eros. However, the discovery of infantile sexuality and of the all but unlimited erotogenic zones of the body anticipates the subsequent recognition of the libidinal components of the self-preservation instincts and prepares the ground for the final reinterpretation of sexuality in terms of the life instinct (Eros).

In the final formulation of the theory of instincts, the self-preservation instincts — the cherished sanctuary of the individual and his justification in the "struggle for existence" — are dissolved: their work now appears as that of the generic sex instincts or, in so far as self-preservation is achieved through socially useful aggression, as the work of the destruction instincts. Eros and the death instinct are now the two basic instincts. But it is of the greatest importance to notice that, in introducing the new conception, Freud is driven to emphasize time and again the common nature of the instincts prior to their differentiation. The

² *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1950), p. 51.

outstanding and frightening event is the discovery of the fundamental *regressive* or "conservative" tendency in all instinctual life. Freud cannot escape the suspicion that he has come upon a hitherto unnoticed "universal attribute of the instincts and perhaps of organic life in general," namely, "a 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" — a kind of "organic elasticity" or "inertia inherent in organic life."³ This would be the ultimate content or substance of those "primary processes" which Freud from the beginning recognized as operating in the unconscious. They were first designated as the striving for "the free outflow of the quantities of excitation" caused by the impact of external reality on the organism;⁴ the entirely free outflow would be the complete gratification. Now, twenty years later, Freud still starts from this assumption:

The pleasure principle, then, is a tendency operating in the service of a function whose business it is to free the mental apparatus entirely from excitation or to keep the amount of excitation in it constant or to keep it as low as possible. We cannot yet decide with certainty in favour of any of these ways of putting it.⁵

But more and more the inner logic of the conception asserts itself. Constant freedom from excitation has been finally abandoned at the birth of life; the instinctual tendency to-

³ *Ibid.*, p. 47. See also *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1933), pp. 145-146.

⁴ *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Modern Library, 1938), p. 534.

⁵ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 86.

ward equilibrium thus is ultimately regression behind life itself. The primary processes of the mental apparatus, in their striving for integral gratification, seem to be fatally bound to the "most universal endeavour of all living substance — namely to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world."⁶ The instincts are drawn into the orbit of death. "If it is true that life is governed by Fechner's principle of constant equilibrium, it consists of a continuous descent toward death."⁷ The *Nirvana principle* now emerges as the "dominating tendency of mental life, and perhaps of nervous life in general." And the pleasure principle appears in the light of the Nirvana principle — as an "expression" of the Nirvana principle:

... the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli (the "Nirvana Principle" . . .) . . . finds expression in the pleasure principle; and our recognition of this fact is one of our strongest reasons for believing in the existence of death instincts.⁸

However, the primacy of the Nirvana principle, the terrifying convergence of pleasure and death, is dissolved as soon as it is established. No matter how universal the regressive inertia of organic life, the instincts strive to attain their objective in fundamentally different modes. The difference is tantamount to that of sustaining and destroying life. Out of the common nature of instinctual life develop two antagonistic instincts. The life instincts (Eros) gain ascendancy over the death instincts. They continuously

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *The Ego and the Id* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), p. 66. Quotations are used by permission of the publisher.

⁸ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 76.

counteract and delay the "descent toward death": "fresh tensions are introduced by the claims of Eros, of the sexual instincts, as expressed in instinctual needs."⁹ They begin their life-reproducing function with the separation of the germ cells from the organism and the coalescence of two such cell bodies,¹⁰ proceeding to the establishment and preservation of "ever greater unities" of life.¹¹ They thus win, against death, the "potential immortality" of the living substance.¹² The dynamic dualism of instinctual life seems assured. However, Freud at once harks back to the original common nature of the instincts. The life instincts "are conservative in the same sense as the other instincts in that they bring back earlier states of the living substance"—although they are conservative "to a higher degree."¹³ Sexuality would thus ultimately obey the same principle as the death instinct. Later, Freud, in order to illustrate the regressive character of sexuality, recalls Plato's "fantastic hypothesis" that "living substance at the time of its coming to life was torn apart into small particles, which have ever since endeavoured to reunite through the sexual instincts."¹⁴ Does Eros, in spite of all the evidence, in the last analysis work in the service of the death instinct, and is life really only one long "detour to death"?¹⁵ But the evidence is strong enough, and the detour is long

⁹ *The Ego and the Id*, p. 66.

¹⁰ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp. 52-53.

¹¹ *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), p. 20.

¹² *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 53.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

enough to warrant the opposite assumption. Eros is defined as the great unifying force that preserves all life.¹⁶ The ultimate relation between Eros and Thanatos remains obscure.

If Eros and Thanatos thus emerge as the two basic instincts whose ubiquitous presence and continuous fusion (and de-fusion) characterize the life process, then this theory of instincts is far more than a reformulation of the preceding Freudian concepts. Psychoanalysts have correctly emphasized that Freud's last metapsychology is based on an essentially new concept of instinct: the instincts are defined no longer in terms of their origin and their organic function, but in terms of a determining force which gives the life processes a definite "direction" (*Richtung*), in terms of "life-principles." The notions *instinct*, *principle*, *regulation* are being assimilated. "The rigid opposition between a mental apparatus regulated by certain principles on the one side, and instincts penetrating into the apparatus from the outside on the other, could no longer be maintained."¹⁷ Moreover, the *dualistic* conception of the instincts, which had become questionable ever since the introduction of narcissism, now seems to be threatened from quite a different direction. With the recognition of the libidinal components of the ego instincts, it became

¹⁶ *The Ego and the Id*, p. 88; *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 102. Subsequent quotations are used by permission of the publisher.

¹⁷ Edward Bibring, "The Development and Problems of the Theory of the Instincts" *loc. cit.* See also Heinz Hartmann, "Comments on the Psychoanalytic Theory of Instinctual Drives," in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (1948).

practically impossible "to point to any instincts other than the libidinal ones,"¹⁸ to find any instinctual impulses which do not "disclose themselves as derivatives of Eros."¹⁹

This inability to discover in the primary instinctual structure anything that is not Eros, the monism of sexuality — an inability which, as we shall see, is the very token of the truth — now seems to turn into its opposite: into a monism of death. To be sure, the analysis of the repetition and regression-compulsion, and "ultimately" the sadistic constituents of Eros, restores the shaken dualistic conception: the death instinct becomes Eros' partner in its own right in the primary instinctual structure, and the perpetual struggle between the two constitutes the primary dynamic. However, the discovery of the common "conservative nature" of the instincts militates against the dualistic conception and keeps Freud's late metapsychology in that state of suspense and depth which makes it one of the great intellectual ventures in the science of man. The *quest for the common origin* of the two basic instincts can no longer be silenced. Fenichel pointed out²⁰ that Freud himself made a decisive step in this direction by assuming a "displaceable energy, which is in itself neutral, but is able to join forces either with an erotic or with a destructive impulse" — with the life or the death instinct. Never before has death been so consistently taken into the essence of life;

¹⁸ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 73.

¹⁹ *The Ego and the Id*, p. 66.

²⁰ "Zur Kritik des Todestriebes," in *Imago*, XXI (1935), 463. This paper is translated as "A Critique of the Death Instinct," in *Collected*

but never before also has death come so close to Eros. Fenichel raises the decisive question whether the antithesis of Eros and death instinct is not the "differentiation of an originally common root." He suggests that the phenomena grouped together as the death instinct may be taken as expression of a principle "valid for all instincts," a principle which, in the course of development, "might have been modified . . . by external influences."²¹ Moreover, if the "regression-compulsion" in all organic life is striving for integral quiescence, if the Nirvana principle is the ground of the pleasure principle, then the necessity of death appears in an entirely new light. The death instinct is destructiveness not for its own sake, but for the relief of tension. The descent toward death is an unconscious flight from pain and want. It is an expression of the eternal struggle against suffering and repression. And the death instinct itself seems to be affected by the historical changes which affect this struggle. Further explanation of the historical character of the instincts requires placing them in the *new concept of the person* which corresponds to the last version of Freud's theory of instincts.

The main "layers" of the mental structure are now designated as *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. The fundamental, oldest, and largest layer is the *id*, the domain of the unconscious, of the primary instincts. The *id* is free from the forms and principles which constitute the conscious, social individual. It is neither affected by time nor troubled by contradictions; it knows "no values, no good and evil, no morality."²² It

²¹ *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1928), p. 50.

does not aim at self-preservation: ²³ all it strives for is satisfaction of its instinctual needs, in accordance with the pleasure principle.²⁴

Under the influence of the external world (the environment), a part of the id, which is equipped with the organs for the reception of and the protection from stimuli, gradually developed into the ego. It is the "mediator" between the id and the external world. Perception and consciousness are only the smallest and "most superficial" part of the ego, the part topographically closest to the external world; but by virtue of these instrumentalities (the "perceptual-conscious system") the ego preserves its existence, observing and testing the reality, taking and preserving a "true picture" of it, adjusting itself to the reality, and altering the latter in its own interest. Thus the ego has the task of "representing the external world for the id, and so of saving it; for the id, blindly striving to gratify its instincts in complete disregard of the superior strength of outside forces, could not otherwise escape annihilation."²⁵ In fulfilling this task, the chief function of the ego is that of co-ordinating, altering, organizing, and controlling the instinctual impulses of the id so as to minimize conflicts with the reality: to repress impulses that are incompatible with the reality, to "reconcile" others with the reality by changing their object, delaying or diverting their gratification, transforming their mode of gratification, amalgamating them with other impulses, and so on. In this way, the ego "dethrones the pleasure-principle, which exerts undisputed

²³ *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, p. 19.

²⁴ *New Introductory Lectures*, p. 104.

sway over the processes in the id, and substitutes for it the reality-principle, which promises greater security and greater success."

In spite of its all-important functions, which secure instinctual gratification to an organism that would otherwise almost certainly be destroyed or destroy itself, the ego retains its birthmark as an "outgrowth" of the id. In relation to the id, the processes of the ego remain *secondary processes*. Nothing elucidates more strikingly the dependent function of the ego than Freud's early formulation that all thinking "is merely a detour from the memory of gratification . . . to the identical cathexis of the same memory, which is to be reached once more by the path of motor experiences."²⁶ The memory of gratification is at the origin of all thinking, and the impulse to recapture past gratification is the hidden driving power behind the process of thought. Because the reality principle makes this process an unending series of "detours," the ego experiences reality as predominantly hostile, and the ego's attitude is predominantly one of "defense." But, on the other hand, since reality, via these detours, provides gratification (although only "modified" gratification), the ego has to reject those impulses which would, if gratified, destroy its life. The ego's defense is thus a two-front struggle.

In the course of the development of the ego another mental "entity" arises: the *superego*. It originates from the long dependency of the infant on his parents; the pa-

²⁶ *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 535. In the later development of psychoanalysis, the role of the ego has been viewed as more "positive," with emphasis on its "synthetic" and "integrating" functions. For the

rental influence remains the core of the superego. Subsequently, a number of societal and cultural influences are taken in by the superego until it coagulates into the powerful representative of established morality and "what people call the 'higher' things in human life." Now the "external restrictions" which first the parents and then other societal agencies have imposed upon the individual are "introjected" into the ego and become its "conscience"; henceforth, the sense of guilt — the need for punishment generated by the transgressions or by the wish to transgress these restrictions (especially in the Oedipus situation) — permeates the mental life. "As a rule the ego carries out repressions in the service and at the behest of its superego."²⁷ However, the repressions soon become unconscious, automatic as it were, and a "great part" of the sense of guilt remains unconscious.

Franz Alexander speaks of the "transformation of conscious condemnation, which depends upon perception (and judgment), into an unconscious process of repression"; he assumes a tendency toward a decrease of mobile psychic energy to a "tonic form" — *corporealization of the psyche*.²⁸ This development, by which originally conscious struggles with the demands of reality (the parents and their successors in the formation of the superego) are transformed into unconscious automatic reactions, is of the utmost importance for the course of civilization. The reality principle asserts itself through a shrinking of the conscious ego in a significant direction: the autonomous

²⁷ *The Ego and the Id*, p. 75.

²⁸ Franz Alexander, *The Psychoanalysis of the Total Personality* (New

development of the instincts is frozen, and their pattern is fixed at the childhood level. Adherence to a *status quo* is implanted in the instinctual structure. The individual becomes instinctually re-actionary — in the literal as well as the figurative sense. It exercises against itself, unconsciously, a severity which once was appropriate to an infantile stage of its development but which has long since become obsolete in the light of the rational potentialities of (individual and social) maturity.²⁹ The individual punishes itself (and then is punished) for deeds which are undone or which are no longer incompatible with civilized reality, with civilized man.

The superego thus enforces not only the demands of reality but also those of a *past* reality. By virtue of these unconscious mechanisms, the mental development lags behind the real development, or (since the former is itself a factor in the latter) retards the real development, denies its potentialities in the name of the past. The past reveals its twofold function in the shaping of the individual — and of his society. Recalling the dominion of the primal pleasure principle, where freedom from want was a necessity, the id carries the memory traces of this state forward into every present future: it projects the past into the future. However, the superego, also unconscious, rejects this instinctual claim on the future, in the name of a past no longer one of integral satisfaction but one of bitter adjustment to a punitive present. Phylogenetically and ontogenetically, with the progress of civilization and with the

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 23–25. For the further differentiation in the origin and

growth of the individual, the memory traces of the unity between freedom and necessity become submerged in the acceptance of the necessity of unfreedom; rational and rationalized, memory itself bows to the reality principle.

The reality principle sustains the organism in the external world. In the case of the human organism, this is an *historical* world. The external world faced by the growing ego is at any stage a specific socio-historical organization of reality, affecting the mental structure through specific societal agencies or agents. It has been argued that Freud's concept *reality principle* obliterates this fact by making historical contingencies into biological necessities: his analysis of the repressive transformation of the instincts under the impact of the reality principle generalizes from a specific historical form of reality to reality pure and simple. This criticism is valid, but its validity does not vitiate the truth in Freud's generalization, namely, that a repressive organization of the instincts underlies *all* historical forms of the reality principle in civilization. If he justifies the repressive organization of the instincts by the irreconcilability between the primary pleasure principle and the reality principle, he expresses the historical fact that civilization has progressed as organized *domination*. This awareness guides his entire phylogenetic construction, which derives civilization from the replacement of the patriarchal despotism of the primal horde by the internalized despotism of the brother clan. Precisely because all civilization has been organized domination, the historical development assumes the dignity and necessity of a universal biological

ian concepts thus contains the elements of its opposite: their historical substance must be recaptured, not by adding some sociological factors (as do the "cultural" Neo-Freudian schools), but by unfolding their own content. In this sense, our subsequent discussion is an "extrapolation," which derives from Freud's theory notions and propositions implied in it only in a reified form, in which historical processes appear as natural (biological) processes.

Terminologically, this extrapolation calls for a duplication of concepts: the Freudian terms, which do not adequately differentiate between the biological *and* the socio-historical vicissitudes of the instincts, must be paired with corresponding terms denoting the specific socio-historical component. Presently we shall introduce two such terms:

(a) *Surplus-repression*: the restrictions necessitated by social domination. This is distinguished from (basic) *repression*: the "modifications" of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization.

(b) *Performance principle*: the prevailing historical form of the *reality principle*.

Behind the reality principle lies the fundamental fact of Ananke or scarcity (*Lebensnot*), which means that the struggle for existence takes place in a world too poor for the satisfaction of human needs without constant restraint, renunciation, delay. In other words, whatever satisfaction is possible necessitates *work*, more or less painful arrangements and undertakings for the procurement of the means for satisfying needs. For the duration of work, which occupies practically the entire existence of the mature individ-

the basic instincts strive for the prevalence of pleasure and for the absence of pain, the pleasure principle is incompatible with reality, and the instincts have to undergo a repressive regimentation.

However, this argument, which looms large in Freud's metapsychology, is fallacious in so far as it applies to the brute *fact* of scarcity what actually is the consequence of a specific *organization* of scarcity, and of a specific existential attitude enforced by this organization. The prevalent scarcity has, throughout civilization (although in very different modes), been organized in such a way that it has not been distributed collectively in accordance with individual needs, nor has the procurement of goods for the satisfaction of needs been organized with the objective of best satisfying the developing needs of the individuals. Instead, the *distribution* of scarcity as well as the effort of overcoming it, the mode of work, have been *imposed* upon individuals — first by mere violence, subsequently by a more rational utilization of power. However, no matter how useful this rationality was for the progress of the whole, it remained the rationality of *domination*, and the gradual conquest of scarcity was inextricably bound up with and shaped by the interest of domination. Domination differs from rational exercise of authority. The latter, which is inherent in any societal division of labor, is derived from knowledge and confined to the administration of functions and arrangements necessary for the advancement of the whole. In contrast, domination is exercised by a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged position. Such domination does not exclude

technical, material, and intellectual progress, but only as an unavoidable by-product while preserving irrational scarcity, want, and constraint.

The various modes of domination (of man and nature) result in various historical forms of the reality principle. For example, a society in which all members normally work for a living requires other modes of repression than a society in which labor is the exclusive province of one specific group. Similarly, repression will be different in scope and degree according to whether social production is oriented on individual consumption or on profit; whether a market economy prevails or a planned economy; whether private or collective property. These differences affect the very content of the reality principle, for every form of the reality principle must be embodied in a system of societal institutions and relations, laws and values which transmit and enforce the required "modification" of the instincts. This "body" of the reality principle is different at the different stages of civilization. Moreover, while any form of the reality principle demands a considerable degree and scope of repressive control over the instincts, the specific historical institutions of the reality principle and the specific interests of domination introduce *additional* controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association. These additional controls arising from the specific institutions of domination are what we denote as *surplus-repression*.

For example, the modifications and deflections of instinctual energy necessitated by the perpetuation of the monogamic-patriarchal family, or by a hierarchical division

of labor, or by public control over the individual's private existence are instances of surplus-repression pertaining to the institutions of a *particular* reality principle. They are added to the basic (phylogenetic) restrictions of the instincts which mark the development of man from the human animal to the *animal sapiens*. The power to restrain and guide instinctual drives, to make biological necessities into individual needs and desires, increases rather than reduces gratification: the "mediatization" of nature, the breaking of its compulsion, is the human form of the pleasure principle. Such restrictions of the instincts may first have been enforced by scarcity and by the protracted dependence of the human animal, but they have become the privilege and distinction of man which enabled him to transform the blind necessity of the fulfillment of want into desired gratification.⁸⁰

The "containment" of the partial sexual impulses, the progress to genitality belong to this basic layer of repression which makes possible intensified pleasure: the maturation of the organism involves normal and natural maturation of pleasure. However, the mastery of instinctual drives may also be used *against* gratification; in the history of civilization, basic repression and surplus-repression have been inextricably intertwined, and the normal progress to genitality has been organized in such a way that the partial impulses and their "zones" were all but desexualized in order to conform to the requirements of a specific social organization of the human existence. The vicissitudes of the "proximity senses" (smell and taste) provide a good example for the interrelation between basic repression and

⁸⁰ See Chapter 11 below.

surplus-repression. Freud thought that "the coprophilic elements in the instinct have proved incompatible with our aesthetic ideas, probably since the time when man developed an upright posture and so removed his organ of smell from the ground."⁸¹ There is, however, another aspect to the subduing of the proximity senses in civilization: they succumb to the rigidly enforced taboos on too intense bodily pleasure. The pleasure of smell and taste is "much more of a bodily, physical one, hence also more akin to sexual pleasure, than is the more sublime pleasure aroused by sound and the least bodily of all pleasures, the sight of something beautiful."⁸² Smell and taste give, as it were, unsublimated pleasure *per se* (and unrepressed disgust). They relate (and separate) individuals immediately, without the generalized and conventionalized forms of consciousness, morality, aesthetics. Such immediacy is incompatible with the effectiveness of organized domination, with a society which "tends to isolate people, to put distance between them, and to prevent spontaneous relationships and the 'natural' animal-like expressions of such relations."⁸³ The pleasure of the proximity senses plays on the erotogenic zones of the body — and does so only for the sake of pleasure. Their unrepressed development would eroticize the organism to such an extent that it would counteract the desexualization of the organism required by its social utilization as an instrument of labor.

⁸¹ "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life," in *Selected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), IV, 215.

⁸² Ernest Schachtel, "On Memory and Childhood Amnesia," in *A Study of Interpersonal Relations*, ed. Patrick Mullahy (New York: Herge Press, 1950), p. 24.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Throughout the recorded history of civilization, the instinctual constraint enforced by scarcity has been intensified by constraints enforced by the hierarchical distribution of scarcity and labor; the interest of domination added super-repression to the organization of the instincts under the reality principle. The pleasure principle was dethroned not only because it militated against progress in civilization but also because it militated against a civilization whose progress perpetuates domination and toil. Freud seems to acknowledge this fact when he compares the attitude of civilization toward sexuality with that of a tribe or a society of the population "which has gained the upper hand and is exploiting the rest to its own advantage. Fear of revolt among the oppressed then becomes a motive for even stricter regulations."⁸⁴

The modification of the instincts under the reality principle affects the life instinct as well as the death instinct but the development of the latter becomes fully understandable only in the light of the development of the life instinct, i.e., of the repressive *organization of sexuality*. The sex instincts bear the brunt of the reality principle. The organization culminates in the subjection of the partial sex instincts to the primacy of genitality, and in their subjugation under the function of procreation. The process involves the diversion of libido from one's own body toward an alien object of the opposite sex (the mastery of primary and secondary narcissism). The gratification of the partial instincts and of non-procreative genitality are, according to the degree of their independence, tabooed as perversions

eliminated, or transformed into subsidiaries of procreative genitality. Moreover, the latter is in most civilizations funneled into monogamic institutions. This organization results in a quantitative and qualitative restriction of sexuality: the unification of the partial instincts and their subordination under the procreative function alter the very nature of sexuality: from an autonomous "principle" governing the entire organism it is turned into a specialized temporary function, into a means for an end. In terms of the pleasure principle governing the "unorganized" sex instincts, reproduction is merely a "by-product." The primary content of sexuality is the "function of obtaining pleasure from zones of the body"; this function is only subsequently brought into the service of that of reproduction."⁸⁵ Freud emphasizes time and again that without its organization for such "service" sexuality would include all non-sexual and therefore all civilized societal relations — even at the stage of mature heterosexual genitality:

... The conflict between civilization and sexuality is caused by the circumstance that sexual love is a relationship between two people, in which a third can only be superfluous or disturbing, whereas civilization is founded on relations between larger groups of persons. When a love relationship is at its height no room is left for any interest in the surrounding world; the pair of lovers are sufficient unto themselves, do not even need the child they have in common to make them happy.⁸⁶

Earlier, in arguing the distinction between sexual and preservation instincts, he points up the fatal implications of sexuality:

⁸⁵ *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, n. 26.

It is undeniable that the exercise of this function does not always bring advantage to the individual, as do his other activities, but that for the sake of an exceptionally high degree of pleasure he is involved by this function in dangers which jeopardize his life and often enough exact it.⁸⁷

But how does this interpretation of sexuality as an essentially explosive force in "conflict" with civilization justify the definition of Eros as the effort "to combine organic substances into ever larger unities,"⁸⁸ to "establish ever greater unities and to preserve them thus—in short, to bind together"?⁸⁹ How can sexuality become the probable "substitute" for the "instinct towards perfection,"⁹⁰ the power that "holds together everything in the world"?⁹¹ How does the notion of the asocial character of sexuality jibe with the "supposition that love relationships (or, to use a more neutral expression, emotional ties) also constitute the essence of the group mind?"⁹² The apparent contradiction is not solved by attributing the explosive connotations to the earlier concept of sexuality and the constructive ones to Eros—for the latter includes both. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, immediately following the passage quoted above, Freud joins the two aspects: "In no other case does Eros so plainly betray the core of his being, his aim of making one out of many; but when he has achieved it in the proverbial way through the love of two human beings, he is not willing to go further." Nor can

⁸⁷ *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1943), p. 358.

⁸⁸ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 57.

⁸⁹ *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, p. 20.

⁹⁰ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 57.

⁹¹ *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (New York: Live-right Publishing Corp., 1949), p. 40.

the contradiction be eliminated by locating the constructive cultural force of Eros only in the sublimated modes of sexuality: according to Freud, the drive toward ever larger unities belongs to the biological-organic nature of Eros itself.

At this stage of our interpretation, rather than trying to reconcile the two contradictory aspects of sexuality, we suggest that they reflect the inner unreconciled tension in Freud's theory: against his notion of the inevitable "biological" conflict between pleasure principle and reality principle, between sexuality and civilization, militates the idea of the unifying and gratifying power of Eros, chained and worn out in a sick civilization. This idea would imply that the *free* Eros does not preclude lasting civilized societal relationships—that it repels only the supra-repressive organization of societal relationships under a principle which is the negation of the pleasure principle. Freud allows himself the image of a civilization consisting of pairs of individuals "libidinally satisfied in each other, and linked to all the others by work and common interest."⁹³ But he adds that such a "desirable" state does not exist and never has existed, that culture "exact[s] a heavy toll of aim-inhibited libido, and heavy restrictions upon sexual life are unavoidable." He finds the reason for culture's "antagonism to sexuality" in the aggressive instincts deeply fused with sexuality: they threaten time and again to destroy civilization, and they force culture "to call up every possible reinforcement" against them. "Hence its system of methods

⁹³ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 80. See also *The Future of*

by which mankind is to be driven to identifications and aim-inhibited love-relationships; hence the restrictions on sexual life.”⁴⁴ But, again, Freud shows that this repressive system does not really solve the conflict. Civilization plunges into a destructive dialectic: the perpetual restrictions on Eros ultimately weaken the life instincts and thus strengthen and release the very forces against which they were “called up” — those of destruction. This dialectic, which constitutes the still unexplored and even tabooed core of Freud’s metapsychology, will be explored later on; here, we shall use Freud’s antagonistic conception of Eros for elucidating the specific historical mode of repressiveness imposed by the established reality principle.

In introducing the term *surplus-repression* we have focused the discussion on the institutions and relations that constitute the social “body” of the reality principle. These do not just represent the changing external manifestations of one and the same reality principle but actually change the reality principle itself. Consequently, in our attempt to elucidate the scope and the limits of the prevalent repressiveness in contemporary civilization, we shall have to describe it in terms of the specific reality principle that has governed the origins and the growth of this civilization. We designate it as *performance principle* in order to emphasize that under its rule society is stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members. It is clearly not the only historical reality principle: other modes of societal organization not merely prevailed

⁴⁴ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 86–87.

in primitive cultures but also survived into the modern period.

The performance principle, which is that of an acquisitive and antagonistic society in the process of constant expansion, presupposes a long development during which domination has been increasingly rationalized: control over social labor now reproduces society on an enlarged scale and under improving conditions. For a long way, the interests of domination and the interests of the whole coincide: the profitable utilization of the productive apparatus fulfills the needs and faculties of the individuals. For the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labor; but their labor is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individuals must submit if they want to live. And it becomes the more alien the more specialized the division of labor becomes. Men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions. While they work, they do not fulfill their own needs and faculties but work in *alienation*. Work has now become *general*, and so have the restrictions placed upon the libido: labor time, which is the largest part of the individual’s life time, is painful time, for alienated labor is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle. Libido is diverted for socially useful performances in which the individual works for himself only in so far as he works for the apparatus, engaged in activities that mostly do not coincide with his own faculties and desires.

However — and this point is decisive — the instinctual

energy thus withdrawn does not accrue to the (unsublimated) aggressive instincts because its social utilization (in labor) sustains and even enriches the life of the individual. The restrictions imposed upon the libido appear as the more rational, the more universal they become, the more they permeate the whole of society. They operate on the individual as external objective laws and as an internalized force: the societal authority is absorbed into the "conscience" and into the unconscious of the individual and works as his own desire, morality, and fulfillment. In the "normal" development, the individual lives his repression "freely" as his own life: he desires what he is supposed to desire; his gratifications are profitable to him and to others; he is reasonably and often even exuberantly happy. This happiness, which takes place part-time during the few hours of leisure between the working days or working nights, but sometimes also during work, enables him to continue his performance, which in turn perpetuates his labor and that of the others. His erotic performance is brought in line with his societal performance. Repression disappears in the grand objective order of things which rewards more or less adequately the complying individuals and, in doing so, reproduces more or less adequately society as a whole.

The conflict between sexuality and civilization unfolds with this development of domination. Under the rule of the performance principle, body and mind are made into instruments of alienated labor; they can function as such instruments only if they renounce the freedom of the libidinal subject-object which the human organism primarily is and desires. The distribution of *time* plays a funda-

mental role in this transformation. Man exists only *part-time*, during the working days, as an instrument of alienated performance; the rest of the time he is free for himself. (If the average working day, including preparation and travel to and from work, amounts to ten hours, and if the biological needs for sleep and nourishment require another ten hours, the free time would be four out of each twenty-four hours throughout the greater part of the individual's life.) This free time would be potentially available for pleasure. But the pleasure principle which governs the id is "timeless" also in the sense that it militates against the temporal dismemberment of pleasure, against its distribution in small separated doses. A society governed by the performance principle must of necessity impose such distribution because the organism must be trained for its alienation at its very roots — the *pleasure ego*.⁴⁵ It must learn to forget the claim for timeless and useless gratification, for the "eternity of pleasure." Moreover, from the working day, alienation and regimentation spread into the free time. Such co-ordination does not have to be, and normally is not, enforced from without by the agencies of society. The basic control of leisure is achieved by the length of the working day itself, by the tiresome and mechanical routine of alienated

⁴⁵ To be sure, every form of society, every civilization has to exact labor time for the procurement of the necessities and luxuries of life. But not every kind and mode of labor is essentially irreconcilable with the pleasure principle. The human relations connected with work may "provide for a very considerable discharge of libidinal component impulses, narcissistic, aggressive, and even erotic." (*Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 34 note.) The irreconcilable conflict is not between work (reality principle) and Eros (pleasure principle), but between *alienated* labor (performance principle) and Eros. The notion of non-alienated, libidinal work will be discussed below.

labor; these require that leisure be a passive relaxation and a re-creation of energy for work. Not until the late stage of industrial civilization, when the growth of productivity threatens to overflow the limits set by repressive domination, has the technique of mass manipulation developed an entertainment industry which directly controls leisure time, or has the state directly taken over the enforcement of such controls.⁴⁶ The individual is not to be left alone. For left to itself, and supported by a free intelligence aware of the potentialities of liberation from the reality of repression, the libidinal energy generated by the id would thrust against its ever more extraneous limitations and strive to engulf an ever larger field of existential relations, thereby exploding the reality ego and its repressive performances.

The organization of sexuality reflects the basic features of the performance principle and its organization of society. Freud emphasizes the aspect of centralization. It is especially operative in the "unification" of the various objects of the partial instincts into one libidinal object of the opposite sex, and in the establishment of genital supremacy. In both cases, the unifying process is repressive — that is to say, the partial instincts do not develop freely into a "higher" stage of gratification which preserves their objectives, but are cut off and reduced to subservient functions. This process achieves the socially necessary desexualization of the body: the libido becomes concentrated in one part of the body, leaving most of the rest free for use as the instrument of labor. The temporal reduction of the libido is thus supplemented by its spatial reduction.

⁴⁶ See Chapter 4 below.

Originally, the sex instinct has no extraneous temporal and spatial limitations on its subject and object; sexuality is by nature "polymorphous-perverse." The societal organization of the sex instinct taboos as *perversions* practically all its manifestations which do not serve or prepare for the procreative function. Without the most severe restrictions, they would counteract the sublimation on which the growth of culture depends. According to Fenichel, "pre-genital strivings are the object of sublimation," and genital primacy is its prerequisite.⁴⁷ Freud questioned why the taboo on the perversions is sustained with such an extraordinary rigidity. He concluded that no one can forget that the perversions are not merely detestable but also something monstrous and terrifying — "as if they exerted a seductive influence; as if at bottom a secret envy of those who enjoy them had to be strangled."⁴⁸ The perversions seem to give a *promesse de bonheur* greater than that of "normal" sexuality. What is the source of their promise? Freud emphasized the "exclusive" character of the deviations from normality, their rejection of the procreative sex act. The perversions thus express rebellion against the subjugation of sexuality under the order of procreation, and against the institutions which guarantee this order. Psychoanalytic theory sees in the practices that exclude or prevent procreation an opposition against continuing the chain of reproduction and thereby of paternal domination — an attempt to prevent the "reappearance of the father."⁴⁹ The

⁴⁷ *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*, p. 142.

⁴⁸ *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 282.

⁴⁹ G. Barag, "Zur Psychoanalyse der Prostitution," in *Imago*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3 (1937), p. 345.

perversions seem to reject the entire enslavement of the pleasure ego by the reality ego. Claiming instinctual freedom in a world of repression, they are often characterized by a strong rejection of that feeling of guilt which accompanies sexual repression.⁵⁰

By virtue of their revolt against the performance principle in the name of the pleasure principle, the perversions show a deep affinity to phantasy as that mental activity which "was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone."⁵¹ Phantasy not only plays a constitutive role in the perverse manifestations of sexuality;⁵² as artistic imagination, it also links the perversions with the images of integral freedom and gratification. In a repressive order, which enforces the equation between normal, socially useful, and good, the manifestations of pleasure for its own sake must appear as *fleurs du mal*. Against a society which employs sexuality as means for a useful end, the perversions uphold sexuality as an end in itself; they thus place themselves outside the dominion of the performance principle and challenge its very foundation. They establish libidinal relationships which society must ostracize because they threaten to reverse the process of civilization which turned the organism into an instrument of work. They are a symbol of what had to be suppressed so that suppression could prevail and organize the ever more efficient domination of man and nature—a

⁵⁰ Otto Rank, *Sexualität und Schuldgefühl* (Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1926), p. 103.

⁵¹ Freud, ". . . Two Principles in Mental Functioning," in *Collected Papers*, IV, 16–17.

⁵² Rank, *Sexualität und Schuldgefühl* 103.

symbol of the destructive identity between freedom and happiness. Moreover, license in the practice of perversions would endanger the orderly reproduction not only of labor power but perhaps even of mankind itself. The fusion of Eros and death instinct, precarious even in the normal human existence, here seems to be loosened beyond the danger point. And the loosening of this fusion makes manifest the erotic component in the death instinct and the fatal component in the sex instinct. The perversions suggest the ultimate identity of Eros and death instinct, or the submission of Eros to the death instinct. The cultural task (the life task?) of the libido—namely, to make the "destructive instinct harmless"⁵³—here comes to naught: the instinctual drive in search of ultimate and integral fulfillment regresses from the pleasure principle to the Nirvana principle. Civilization has acknowledged and sanctioned this supreme danger: it admires the convergence of death instinct and Eros in the highly sublimated and (monogamic) creations of the *Liebestod*, while outlawing the less complete but more realistic expressions of Eros as an end in itself.

There is no societal organization of the death instinct paralleling that of Eros: the very depth at which the instinct operates protects it from such a systematic and methodical organization; only some of its derivative manifestations are susceptible to control. As a component of sado-masochistic gratification, it falls under the strict taboo on perversions. Still, the entire progress of civilization is rendered possible

⁵³ Freud, "The Economic Problem in Masochism," in *Collected*

only by the transformation and utilization of the death instinct or its derivatives. The diversion of primary destructiveness from the ego to the external world feeds technological progress, and the use of the death instinct for the formation of the superego achieves the punitive submission of the pleasure ego to the reality principle and assures civilized morality. In this transformation, the death instinct is brought into the service of Eros; the aggressive impulses provide energy for the continuous alteration, mastery, and exploitation of nature to the advantage of mankind. In attacking, splitting, changing, pulverizing things and animals (and, periodically, also men), man extends his dominion over the world and advances to ever richer stages of civilization. But civilization preserves throughout the mark of its deadly component:

... we seem almost forced to accept the dreadful hypothesis that in the very structure and substance of all human constructive social efforts there is embodied a principle of death, that there is no progressive impulse but must become fatigued, that the intellect can provide no permanent defence against a vigorous barbarism.⁵⁴

The socially channeled destructiveness reveals time and again its origin in a drive which defies all usefulness. Beneath the manifold rational and rationalized motives for war against national and group enemies, for the destructive conquest of time, space, and man, the deadly partner of Eros becomes manifest in the persistent approval and participation of the victims.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 196-197.

"In the construction of the personality the destruction instinct manifests itself most clearly in the formation of the super-ego."⁵⁶ To be sure, by its defensive role against the "unrealistic" impulses of the id, by its function in the lasting conquest of the Oedipus complex, the super-ego builds up and protects the unity of the ego, secures its development under the reality principle, and thus works in the service of Eros. However, the superego attains these objectives by directing the ego against its id, turning part of the destruction instincts against a part of the personality — by destroying, "splitting" the unity of the personality as a whole; thus it works in the service of the antagonist of the life instinct. This inner-directed destructiveness, moreover, constitutes the moral core of the mature personality. Conscience, the most cherished moral agency of the civilized individual, emerges as permeated with the death instinct; the categorical imperative that the superego enforces remains an imperative of self-destruction while it constructs the social existence of the personality. The work of repression pertains to the death instinct as well as the life instinct. Normally, their fusion is a healthy one, but the sustained severity of the superego constantly threatens this healthy balance. "The more a man checks his aggressive tendencies toward others the more tyrannical, that is aggressive, he becomes in his ego-ideal . . . the more intense become the aggressive tendencies of his ego-ideal against his ego."⁵⁷ Driven to the extreme, in melancholia, "a pure culture of the death instinct" may hold sway in the super-

⁵⁶ Franz Alexander, *The Psychoanalysis of the Total Personality*, p. 150.

ego: it may become a "kind of gathering place for the death instincts."⁵⁸ But this extreme danger has its roots in the *normal* situation of the ego. Since the ego's work results in a

... liberation of the aggressive instincts in the super-ego, the struggle against the libido exposes it to the danger of maltreatment and death. In suffering under the attacks of the super-ego or perhaps even succumbing to them, the ego is meeting with a fate like that of the protozoa which are destroyed by the products of disintegration that they themselves have created.⁵⁹

And Freud adds that "from the [mental] economic point of view the morality that functions in the super-ego seems to be a similar product of disintegration."

It is in this context that Freud's metapsychology comes face to face with the fatal dialectic of civilization: the very progress of civilization leads to the release of increasingly destructive forces. In order to elucidate the connection between Freud's individual psychology and the theory of civilization, it will be necessary to resume the interpretation of the instinctual dynamic at a different level — namely, the phylogenetic one.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 79.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

CHAPTER THREE

The Origin of Repressive Civilization (Phylogenesis)

The quest for the origin of repression leads back to the origin of instinctual repression, which occurs during early childhood. The superego is the heir of the Oedipus complex, and the repressive organization of sexuality is chiefly directed against its pregenital and perverse manifestations. Moreover, the "trauma of birth" releases the first expressions of the death instinct — the impulse to return to the Nirvana of the womb — and necessitates the subsequent controls of this impulse. It is in the child that the reality principle completes its work, with such thoroughness and severity that the mature individual's behavior is hardly more than a repetitive pattern of childhood experiences and reactions. But the childhood experiences which become traumatic under the impact of reality are *pre-individual*, *generic*: with individual variations, the protracted dependence of the human infant, the Oedipus situation, and pregenital sexuality all belong to the *genus* man. Moreover, the unreasonable severity of the superego of the neurotic personality, the unconscious sense of guilt and the unconscious need for punishment, seem to be out of proportion with the actual "sinful" impulses of the individual: the perpetua-

tion and (as we shall see) intensification of the sense of guilt throughout maturity, the excessively repressive organization of sexuality, cannot be adequately explained in terms of the still acute danger of individual impulses. Nor can the individual reactions to early traumata be adequately explained by "what the individual himself has experienced"; they deviate from individual experiences "in a way that would accord much better with their being reactions to genetic events," and in general they can be explained only "through such an influence."¹ The analysis of the mental structure of the personality is thus forced to regress behind early childhood, from the prehistory of the individual to that of the genus. In the personality, according to Otto Rank, there operates a "biological sense of guilt" which stands for the demands of the species. The moral principles "which the child imbibes from the persons responsible for its upbringing during the first years of its life" reflect "certain phylogenetic echoes of primitive man."² Civilization is still determined by its *archaic heritage*, and this heritage, so Freud asserts, includes "not only dispositions, but also ideational contents, memory traces of the experiences of former generations." Individual psychology is thus *in itself* group psychology in so far as the individual itself still is in archaic identity with the species. This archaic heritage bridges the "gap between individual and mass psychology."³

¹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 157.

² Alexander, *The Psychoanalysis of the Total Personality* (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph No. 52, 1929), p. 7.

This conception has far-reaching implications for the method and substance of social science. As psychology tears the ideological veil and traces the construction of the personality, it is led to dissolve the individual: his autonomous personality appears as the *frozen* manifestation of the general repression of mankind. Self-consciousness and reason, which have conquered and shaped the historical world, have done so in the image of repression, internal and external. They have worked as the agents of domination; the liberties which they have brought (and these are considerable) grew in the soil of enslavement and have retained the mark of their birth. These are the disturbing implications of Freud's theory of the personality. By "dissolving" the idea of the ego-personality into its primary components, psychology now bares the sub-individual and pre-individual factors which (largely unconscious to the ego) actually *make* the individual: it reveals the power of the universal and over the individuals.

This disclosure undermines one of the strongest ideological fortifications of modern culture — namely, the notion of the autonomous individual. Freud's theory here joins the great critical efforts to dissolve ossified sociological concepts into their historical content. His psychology does not focus on the concrete and complete personality as it exists in its private and public environment, because this existence conceals rather than reveals the essence and nature of the personality. It is the end result of long historical processes which are congealed in the network of human and institutional entities making up society, and these

sequently, to understand them for what they really are, psychology must *unfreeze* them by tracing their hidden origins. In doing so, psychology discovers that the determining childhood experiences are linked with the experiences of the species — that the individual lives the universal fate of mankind. The past defines the present because mankind has not yet mastered its own history. To Freud, the universal fate is in the instinctual drives, but they are themselves subject to historical “modifications.” At their beginning is the experience of domination, symbolized by the primal father — the extreme Oedipus situation. It is never entirely overcome: the mature ego of the civilized personality still preserves the archaic heritage of man.

If this dependency of the ego is not kept in mind, the increased emphasis in Freud's later writings on the autonomy of the mature ego might be abused as justification for abandoning the most advanced conceptions of psychoanalysis — a retreat undertaken by the cultural and interpersonal schools. In one of his last papers,⁴ Freud proposes that not all modifications of the ego are “acquired during the defensive conflicts of early childhood”; he suggests that “each individual ego is endowed from the beginning with its own peculiar dispositions and tendencies,” that there exist “primary congenital variations in the ego.” However, this new autonomy of the ego seems to turn into its opposite: far from retracting the notion of the ego's essential dependency on pre-individual, generic constellations, Freud strengthens the role of these constellations in the develop-

⁴ “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” in *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), V, 343.

ment of the ego. For he interprets the congenital variations of the ego in terms of “our ‘archaic heritage,’” and he thinks that “*even before the ego exists*, its subsequent lines of development, tendencies and reactions are already determined.”⁵ Indeed, the apparent renaissance of the ego is accompanied by the accentuation of the “deposits from primitive human development present in our archaic heritage.” When Freud concludes from the congenital structure of the ego that the “topographical differentiation between ego and id loses much of its value for our investigation,” then this assimilation of ego and id seems to alter the balance between the two mental forces in favor of the id rather than the ego, the generic rather than the individual processes.⁶

No part of Freud's theory has been more strongly rejected than the idea of the survival of the archaic heritage — his reconstruction of the prehistory of mankind from the primal horde through patricide to civilization. The difficulties in scientific verification and even in logical consistency are obvious and perhaps insurmountable. Moreover, they are reinforced by the taboos which the Freudian hypothesis so effectively violates: it does not lead back to the image of a paradise which man has forfeited by his sin against God but to the domination of man by man, estab-

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 343–344. Italics added.

⁶ In his paper on the “Mutual Influences in the Development of Ego and Id,” Heinz Hartmann stresses the phylogenetic aspect: the “differentiation of ego and id, developed by whatever process of evolution through hundreds of thousands of years, is in the form of a disposition, in part an innate character of man.” However, he assumes a “primary autonomy in ego development.” Hartmann's paper is in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol. VII (New York: International Universities Press, 1952).

lished by a very earthly father-despot and perpetuated by the unsuccessful or uncompleted rebellion against him. The "original sin" was against man — and it was no sin because it was committed against one who was himself guilty. And this phylogenetic hypothesis reveals that mature civilization is still conditioned by archaic mental immaturity. The memory of prehistoric impulses and deeds continues to haunt civilization: the repressed material returns, and the individual is still punished for impulses long since mastered and deeds long since undone.

If Freud's hypothesis is not corroborated by any anthropological evidence, it would have to be discarded altogether except for the fact that it telescopes, in a sequence of catastrophic events, the historical dialectic of domination and thereby elucidates aspects of civilization hitherto unexplained. We use Freud's anthropological speculation only in this sense: for its *symbolic* value. The archaic events that the hypothesis stipulates may forever be beyond the realm of anthropological verification; the alleged consequences of these events are historical facts, and their interpretation in the light of Freud's hypothesis lends them a neglected significance which points to the historical future. If the hypothesis defies common sense, it claims, in its defiance, a truth which common sense has been trained to forget.

In Freud's construction, the first human group was established and sustained by the enforced rule of one individual over all others. At one time in the life of the genus man, life was organized by *domination*. And the man who succeeded in dominating the others was the *father* — that is to

say, the man who possessed the desired women and who had, with them, produced and kept alive the sons and daughters. The father monopolized for himself the woman (the supreme pleasure) and subjugated the other members of the horde to his power. Did he succeed in establishing his dominion *because* he succeeded in excluding them from supreme pleasure? In any case, for the group as a whole, the monopolization of pleasure meant an unequal distribution of pain: ". . . the fate of the sons was a hard one; if they excited the father's jealousy they were killed or castrated or driven out. They were forced to live in small communities and to provide themselves with wives by stealing them from others."⁷ The burden of whatever work had to be done in the primal horde would have been placed on the sons who, by their exclusion from the pleasure reserved for the father, had now become "free" for the channeling of instinctual energy into unpleasurable but necessary activities. The constraint on the gratification of instinctual needs imposed by the father, the suppression of pleasure, thus not only was the result of domination but also created the mental preconditions for the *continued functioning* of domination.

In this organization of the primal horde, rationality and irrationality, biological and sociological factors, the common and the particular interest are inextricably intertwined. The primal horde is a temporarily functioning group, which sustains itself in some sort of order; it may therefore be assumed that the patriarchal despotism which established this order was "rational" to the extent to which it created and

⁷ *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 128.

preserved the group — thereby the reproduction of the whole and the common interest. Setting the model for the subsequent development of civilization, the primal father prepared the ground for progress through enforced constraint on pleasure and enforced abstinence; he thus created the first preconditions for the disciplined “labor force” of the future. Moreover, this hierarchical division of pleasure was “justified” by protection, security, and even love: because the despot was the father, the hatred with which his subjects regarded him must from the beginning have been accompanied by a biological affection — ambivalent emotions which were expressed in the wish to replace and to imitate the father, to identify oneself with him, with his pleasure as well as with his power. The father establishes domination in his own interest, but in doing so he is justified by his age, by his biological function, and (most of all) by his success: he creates that “order” without which the group would immediately dissolve. In this role, the primal father foreshadows the subsequent domineering father-images under which civilization progressed. In his person and function, he incorporates the inner logic and necessity of the reality principle itself. He has “historical rights.”*

The reproductive order of the horde survived the primal father:

. . . one or the other son might succeed in attaining a situation similar to that of the father in the original horde. One favoured position came about in a natural way: it was that of the youngest son, who, protected by his mother's love, could profit by his father's advancing years and replace him after his death.⁹

* *Ibid.*, p. 135.

* *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Primal patriarchal despotism thus became an “effective” order. But the effectiveness of the superimposed organization of the horde must have been very precarious, and consequently the hatred against patriarchal suppression very strong. In Freud's construction, this hatred culminates in the rebellion of the exiled sons, the collective killing and devouring of the father, and the establishment of the brother clan, which in turn deifies the assassinated father and introduces those taboos and restraints which, according to Freud, generate social morality. Freud's hypothetical history of the primal horde treats the rebellion of the brothers as a rebellion against the father's taboo on the women of the horde; no “social” protest against the unequal division of pleasure is involved. Consequently, in a strict sense, civilization begins only in the brother clan, when the taboos, now self-imposed by the ruling brothers, implement repression in the *common interest* of preserving the group as a whole. And the decisive psychological event which separates the brother clan from the primal horde is the development of *guilt feeling*. Progress beyond the primal horde — i.e., civilization — presupposes guilt feeling: it introjects into the individuals, and thus sustains, the principal prohibitions, constraints, and delays in gratification on which civilization depends.

It is a reasonable surmise that after the killing of the father a time followed when the brothers quarrelled among themselves for the succession, which each of them wanted to obtain for himself alone. They came to see that these fights were as dangerous as they were futile. This hard-won understanding — as well as the memory of the deed of liberation they had achieved together and the attachment that had grown up among them during the time of

their exile — led at last to a union among them, a sort of social contract. Thus there came into being the first form of a social organization accompanied by a renunciation of instinctual gratification; recognition of mutual obligations; institutions declared sacred, which could not be broken — in short, the beginnings of morality and law.¹⁰

The rebellion against the father is rebellion against biologically justified authority; his assassination destroys the order which has preserved the life of the group. The rebels have committed a crime against the whole and thereby also against themselves. They are guilty before the others and before themselves, and they must repent. The assassination of the father is the supreme crime because the father established the order of reproductive sexuality and thus is, in his person, the genus which creates and preserves all individuals. The patriarch, father and tyrant in one, unites sex and order, pleasure and reality; he evokes love and hatred; he guarantees the biological and sociological basis on which the history of mankind depends. The annihilation of his person threatens to annihilate lasting group life itself and to restore the prehistoric and subhistoric destructive force of the pleasure principle. But the sons want the same thing as the father: they want lasting satisfaction of their needs. They can attain this objective only by repeating, in a new form, the order of domination which had controlled pleasure and thereby preserved the group. The father survives as the god in whose adoration the sinners repent so that they can continue to sin, while the new fathers secure those suppressions of pleasure which are necessary for preserving their rule and their organization of the group.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

The progress from domination by one to domination by several involves a "social spread" of pleasure and makes repression self-imposed in the ruling group itself: *all* its members have to obey the taboos if they want to maintain their rule. Repression now permeates the life of the oppressors themselves, and part of their instinctual energy becomes available for sublimation in "work."

At the same time, the taboo on the women of the clan leads to expansion and amalgamation with other hordes; organized sexuality begins that formation of larger units which Freud regarded as the function of Eros in civilization. The role of the women gains increasing importance. "A good part of the power which had become vacant through the father's death passed to the women; the time of the matriarchate followed."¹¹ It seems essential for Freud's hypothesis that in the sequence of the development toward civilization the matriarchal period is *preceded* by primal patriarchal despotism: the low degree of repressive domination, the extent of erotic freedom, which are traditionally associated with matriarchy appear, in Freud's hypothesis, as consequences of the overthrow of patriarchal despotism rather than as primary "natural" conditions. In the development of civilization, freedom becomes possible only as *liberation*. Liberty follows domination — and leads to the reaffirmation of domination. Matriarchy is replaced by a patriarchal counter-revolution, and the latter is stabilized by the institutionalization of religion.

During that time a great social revolution had taken place. Matriarchy was followed by a restitution of the patriarchal order.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 129–130.

The new fathers, it is true, never succeeded to the omnipotence of the primeval father. There were too many of them and they lived in larger communities than the original horde had been; they had to get on with one another and were restricted by social institutions.¹³

Male gods at first appear as sons by the side of the great mother-deities, but gradually they assume the features of the father; polytheism cedes to monotheism, and then returns the "one and only father deity whose power is unlimited."¹³ Sublime and sublimated, original domination becomes eternal, cosmic, and good, and in this form guards the process of civilization. The "historical rights" of the primal father are restored.¹⁴

The sense of guilt, which, in Freud's hypothesis, is intrinsic to the brother clan and its subsequent consolidation into the first "society," is primarily guilt feeling about the perpetration of the supreme crime, patricide. Anxiety arises over the consequences of the crime. However, these consequences are twofold: they threaten to destroy the life of the group by the removal of the authority which (although in terror) had preserved the group; and, at the same time, this removal promises a society without the father — that is, without suppression and domination. Must it not be assumed that the sense of guilt reflects this twofold structure and its ambivalence? The rebellious parricides act only to forestall the *first* consequence, the threat: they re-establish domination by substituting many fathers for one, and then by deifying and internalizing the one father. But in doing so they betray the promise of their own deed — the promise of liberty. The despot-patriarch

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 131–132.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

has succeeded in implanting his reality principle in the rebellious sons. Their revolt has, for a short span of time, broken the chain of domination; then the new freedom is again suppressed — this time by their own authority and action. Must not their sense of guilt include guilt about the betrayal and denial of their deed? Are they not guilty of restoring the repressive father, guilty of self-imposed perpetuation of domination? The question suggests itself if Freud's phylogenetic hypothesis is confronted with his notion of the instinctual dynamic. As the reality principle takes root, even in its most primitive and most brutally enforced form, the pleasure principle becomes something frightful and terrifying; the impulses for free gratification meet with anxiety, and this anxiety calls for protection against them. The individuals have to defend themselves against the specter of their integral liberation from want and pain, against integral gratification. And the latter is represented by the woman who, as mother, has once, for the first and last time, provided such gratification. These are the instinctual factors which reproduce the rhythm of liberation and domination.

Through her sexual power, woman is dangerous to the community, the social structure of which rests on the fear displaced to the father. The king is slain by the people, not in order that they may be free, but that they may take upon themselves a heavier yoke, one that will protect them more surely from the mother.¹⁵

The king-father is slain not only because he imposes intolerable restraints but also because the restraints, imposed by an individual person, are not effective enough a "barrier

¹⁵ Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), p. 93.

to incest," not effective enough to cope with the desire to return to the mother.¹⁶ Liberation is therefore followed by ever "better" domination:

The development of the paternal domination into an increasingly powerful state system administered by man is thus a continuance of the primal repression, which has as its purpose the ever wider exclusion of woman.¹⁷

The overthrow of the king-father is a crime, but so is his restoration — and both are necessary for the progress of civilization. The crime against the reality principle is redeemed by the crime against the pleasure principle: redemption thus cancels itself. The sense of guilt is sustained in spite of repeated and intensified redemption: anxiety persists because the crime against the pleasure principle is not redeemed. There is guilt over a deed that has not been accomplished: liberation. Some of Freud's formulations seem to indicate this: the sense of guilt was "the consequence of uncommitted aggression"; and

. . . it is not really a decisive matter whether one has killed one's father or abstained from the deed; one must feel guilty in either case, for guilt is the expression of the conflict of ambivalence, the eternal struggle between Eros and the destructive or death instinct.¹⁸

Much earlier Freud spoke of a pre-existing sense of guilt, which seems to be "lurking" in the individual, ready and waiting to "assimilate" an accusation made against him.¹⁹ This notion seems to correspond to the idea of a "floating

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁸ *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), pp. 128, 121.

¹⁹ "Psychoanalysis and the Ascertaining of Truth in Courts of Law," in *Collected Papers*, II, 23.

anxiety" which has subterranean roots even beneath the *individual* unconscious.

Freud assumes that the primal crime, and the sense of guilt attached to it, are reproduced, in modified forms, throughout history. The crime is re-enacted in the conflict of the old and new generation, in revolt and rebellion against established authority — and in subsequent repentance: in the restoration and glorification of authority. In explaining this strange perpetual recurrence, Freud suggested the hypothesis of the *return of the repressed*, which he illustrated by the psychology of religion. Freud thought that he had found traces of the patricide and of its "return" and redemption in the history of Judaism, which begins with the killing of Moses. The concrete implications of Freud's hypothesis become clearer in his interpretation of anti-Semitism. He believed that anti-Semitism had deep roots in the unconscious: jealousy over the Jewish claim of being the "first-born, favorite child of God the Father"; dread of circumcision, associated with the threat of castration; and, perhaps most important, "grudge against the new religion" (Christianity) which was forced on many modern peoples "only in relatively recent times." This grudge was "projected" onto the source from which Christianity came, namely, Judaism.²⁰

If we follow this train of thought beyond Freud, and connect it with the twofold origin of the sense of guilt, the life and death of Christ would appear as a struggle against the father — and as a triumph over the father.²¹ The message

²⁰ *Moses and Monotheism*, pp. 144f.

²¹ See Erich Fromm, *Die Entwicklung des Christendogmas* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1931).

of the Son was the message of liberation: the overthrow of the Law (which is domination) by Agape (which is Eros). This would fit in with the heretical image of Jesus as the Redeemer in the flesh, the Messiah who came to save man here on earth. Then the subsequent transubstantiation of the Messiah, the deification of the Son beside the Father, would be a betrayal of his message by his own disciples — the denial of the liberation in the flesh, the revenge on the redeemer. Christianity would then have surrendered the gospel of Agape-Eros again to the Law; the father-rule would be restored and strengthened. In Freudian terms, the primal crime could have been expiated, according to the message of the Son, in an order of peace and love on earth. It was not; it was rather superseded by another crime — that against the Son. With his transubstantiation, his gospel too was transubstantiated; his deification removed his message from this world. Suffering and repression were perpetuated.

This interpretation would lend added significance to Freud's statement that the Christian peoples are "badly christened," that "under the thin veneer of Christianity they have remained what their ancestors were, barbarically polytheistic."²² They are "badly christened" in so far as they accept and obey the liberating gospel only in a highly sublimated form — which leaves the reality unfree as it was before. Repression (in the technical Freudian sense) played only a minor role in the institutionalization of Christianity. The transformation of the original content, the deflection from the original objective, took place in

²² *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 145.

broad daylight, consciously, with public argumentation and justification. Equally open was the armed struggle of institutionalized Christianity against the heretics, who tried or allegedly tried to rescue the unsublimated content and the unsublimated objective. There were good rational motives behind the bloody wars against the Christian revolutions which filled the Christian era. However, the cruel and organized slaughter of Cathari, Albigensians, Anabaptists, of slaves, peasants, and paupers who revolted under the sign of the cross, the burning of witches and their defenders — this sadistic extermination of the weak suggests that unconscious instinctual forces broke through all the rationality and rationalization. The executioners and their bands fought the specter of a liberation which they desired but which they were compelled to reject. The crime against the Son must be forgotten in the killing of those whose practice recalls the crime. It took centuries of progress and domestication before the return of the repressed was mastered by the power and progress of industrial civilization. But at its late stage its rationality seems to explode in another return of the repressed. The image of liberation, which has become increasingly realistic, is persecuted the world over. Concentration and labor camps, the trials and tribulations of non-conformists release a hatred and fury which indicate the total mobilization against the return of the repressed.

If the development of religion contains the basic ambivalence — the image of domination *and* the image of liberation — then Freud's thesis in *The Future of an Illusion* must be re-evaluated. Freud there stressed the role of

religion in the historical deflection of energy from the real improvement of the human condition to an imaginary world of eternal salvation. He thought that the disappearance of this illusion would greatly accelerate the material and intellectual progress of mankind, and he praised science and scientific reason as the great liberating antagonists of religion. Perhaps no other writing shows Freud closer to the great tradition of Enlightenment; but also no other shows him more clearly succumbing to the dialectic of Enlightenment. In the present period of civilization, the progressive ideas of rationalism can be recaptured only when they are reformulated. The function of science and of religion has changed—as has their interrelation. Within the total mobilization of man and nature which marks the period, science is one of the most destructive instruments—destructive of that freedom from fear which it once promised. As this promise evaporated into utopia, “scientific” becomes almost identical with denouncing the notion of an earthly paradise. The scientific attitude has long since ceased to be the militant antagonist of religion, which has equally effectively discarded its explosive elements and often accustomed man to a good conscience in the face of suffering and guilt. In the household of culture, the functions of science and religion tend to become complementary; through their present usage, they both deny the hopes which they once aroused and teach men to appreciate the facts in a world of alienation. In this sense, religion is no longer an illusion, and its academic promotion falls in line with the predominant positivistic trend.²³ Where

²³ See Max Horkheimer, “Der neueste Angriff auf die Metaphysik,” in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, VI (1937), 4ff.

religion still preserves the uncompromised aspirations for peace and happiness, its “illusions” still have a higher truth value than science which works for their elimination. The repressed and transfigured content of religion cannot be liberated by surrendering it to the scientific attitude.

Freud applies the notion of the return of the repressed, which was elaborated in the analysis of the history of individual neuroses,²⁴ to the general history of mankind. This step from individual to group psychology introduces one of the most controversial problems: How can the historical return of the repressed be understood?

In the course of thousands of centuries it certainly became forgotten that there was a primeval father . . . , and what fate he met. . . . In what sense, therefore, can there be any question of a tradition? ²⁵

Freud's answer, which assumes “an impression of the past in unconscious memory traces,” has encountered widespread rejection. However, the assumption loses much of its fantastic character if it is confronted with the concrete and tangible factors which refresh the memory of every generation. In enumerating the conditions under which the repressed material may penetrate into consciousness, Freud mentions a strengthening of the instincts “attached to the repressed material,” and events and experiences “which are so much like the repressed material that they have the power to awaken it.”²⁶ As an example for the strengthening of the instincts he cites the “processes during puberty.” Under the impact of the ripening genital sexuality, there reappear in the

²⁴ “Repression,” in *Collected Papers*, IV, 93.

²⁵ *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 148.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

. . . phantasies of all persons the infantile tendencies . . . and among them one finds in regular frequency and in the first place, the sexual feeling of the child for the parents. Usually, this has already been differentiated by sexual attraction, namely, the attraction of the son for the mother, and of the daughter for the father. Simultaneously with the overcoming and rejection of these distinctly incestuous phantasies, there occurs one of the most important as well as one of the most painful psychic accomplishments of puberty; it is the breaking away from the parental authority, through which alone is formed that opposition between the new and old generation, which is so important for cultural progress.²⁷

The events and experiences which may "awaken" the repressed material — even without a specific strengthening of the instincts attached to it — are, at the societal level, encountered in the institutions and ideologies which the individual faces daily and which reproduce, in their very structure, both domination and the impulse to overthrow it (family, school, workshop and office, the state, the law, the prevailing philosophy and morality). The decisive difference between the primal situation and its civilized historical return is, of course, that in the latter the ruler-father is normally no longer killed and eaten, and that domination is normally no longer personal. The ego, the superego, and the external reality have done their work — but "it is not really a decisive matter whether one has killed one's father or abstained from the deed," if the function of the conflict and its consequences are the same.

In the Oedipus situation, the primal situation recurs under circumstances which from the beginning assure the last-

²⁷ *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Modern Library, 1938), pp. 617-618. See also Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (London: Hogarth Press, 1937), Chaps. 11, 12.

ing triumph of the father. But they also assure the life of the son and his future ability to take the father's place. How did civilization achieve this compromise? The multitude of somatic, mental, and social processes which resulted in this achievement are practically identical with the contents of Freud's psychology. Force, identification, repression, sublimation co-operate in the formation of the ego and superego. The function of the father is gradually transferred from his individual person to his social position, to his image in the son (conscience), to God, to the various agencies and agents which teach the son to become a mature and restrained member of his society. *Ceteris paribus*, the intensity of restraint and renunciation involved in this process is probably not smaller than it was in the primal horde. However, they are more rationally distributed between father and son and among society as a whole; and the rewards, though not greater, are relatively secure. The monogamic family, with its enforceable obligations for the father, restricts his monopoly of pleasure; the institution of inheritable private property, and the universalization of labor, give the son a justified expectancy of his own sanctioned pleasure in accordance with his socially useful performances. Within this framework of objective laws and institutions, the processes of puberty lead to the liberation from the father as a necessary and legitimate event. It is nothing short of a mental catastrophe — but it is nothing more. Then the son leaves the patriarchal family and sets out to become a father and boss himself.

The transformation of the pleasure principle into the performance principle, which changes the despotic monopoly

of the father into restrained educational and economic authority, also changes the original object of the struggle: the mother. In the primal horde, the image of the desired woman, the mistress-wife of the father, was Eros and Thanatos in immediate, natural union. She was the aim of the sex instincts, and she was the mother in whom the son once had that integral peace which is the absence of all need and desire — the Nirvana before birth. Perhaps the taboo on incest was the first great protection against the death instinct: the taboo on Nirvana, on the regressive impulse for peace which stood in the way of progress, of Life itself. Mother and wife were separated, and the fatal identity of Eros and Thanatos was thus dissolved. With regard to the mother, sensual love becomes *aim-inhibited* and transformed into *affection* (tenderness). Sexuality and affection are divorced; only later they are to meet again in the love to the wife which is sensual as well as tender, aim-inhibited as well as aim-attaining.²⁸ Tenderness is created out of abstinence — abstinence first enforced by the primal father. Once created, it becomes the psychical basis not only for the family but also for the establishment of lasting group relations:

the primal father had prevented his sons from satisfying their directly sexual tendencies; he forced them into abstinence and consequently into the emotional ties with him and with one another which could arise out of those of their tendencies that were inhibited in their sexual aim. He forced them, so to speak, into group psychology.²⁹

²⁸ *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, pp. 599, 615; *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1949), pp. 117–118; *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 71.

²⁹ *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, p. 94.

At this level of civilization, within the system of rewarded inhibitions, the father can be overcome without exploding the instinctual and social order: his image and his function now perpetuate themselves in every child — even if it does not know him. He merges with duly constituted authority. Domination has outgrown the sphere of personal relationships and created the institutions for the orderly satisfaction of human needs on an expanding scale. But it is precisely the development of these institutions which undermines the established basis of civilization. Its inner limits appear in the late industrial age.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Dialectic of Civilization

Freud attributes to the sense of guilt a decisive role in the development of civilization; moreover, he establishes a correlation between progress and *increasing* guilt feeling. He states his intention "to represent the sense of guilt as the most important problem in the evolution of culture, and to convey that the price of progress in civilization is paid in forfeiting happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt."¹ Recurrently Freud emphasizes that, as civilization progresses, guilt feeling is "further reinforced," "intensified," is "ever-increasing."² The evidence adduced by Freud is twofold: first, he derives it analytically from the theory of instincts, and, second, he finds the theoretical analysis corroborated by the great diseases and discontents of contemporary civilization: an enlarged cycle of wars, ubiquitous persecution, anti-Semitism, genocide, bigotry, and the enforcement of "illusions," toil, sickness, and misery in the midst of growing wealth and knowledge.

We have briefly reviewed the prehistory of the sense of guilt; it has "its origin in the Oedipus complex and was acquired when the father was killed by the association of

¹ *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 123.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 120-122.

the brothers."³ They satisfied their aggressive instinct; but the love which they had for the father caused remorse, created the superego by identification, and thus created the "restrictions which should prevent a repetition of the deed."⁴ Subsequently, man abstains from the deed; but from generation to generation the aggressive impulse revives, directed against the father and his successors, and from generation to generation aggression has to be inhibited anew:

Every renunciation then becomes a dynamic fount of conscience; every fresh abandonment of gratification increases its severity and intolerance . . . every impulse of aggression which we omit to gratify is taken over by the super-ego and goes to heighten its aggressiveness (against the ego).⁵

The excessive severity of the superego, which takes the wish for the deed and punishes even suppressed aggression, is now explained in terms of the eternal struggle between Eros and the death instinct: the aggressive impulse against the father (and his social successors) is a derivative of the death instinct; in "separating" the child from the mother, the father also inhibits the death instinct, the Nirvana impulse. He thus does the work of Eros; love, too, operates in the formation of the superego. The severe father, who as the forbidding representative of Eros subdues the death instinct in the Oedipus conflict, enforces the first "communal" (social) relations: his prohibitions create identification among the sons, aim-inhibited love (affection), exogamy, sublimation. On the basis of renunciation, Eros begins its cultural work of combining life into ever larger units. And as the

³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

father is multiplied, supplemented, and replaced by the authorities of society, as prohibitions and inhibitions spread, so do the aggressive impulse and its objects. And with it grows, on the part of society, the need for strengthening the defenses — the need for reinforcing the sense of guilt:

Since culture obeys an inner erotic impulse which bids it bind mankind into a closely knit mass, it can achieve this aim only by means of its vigilance in fomenting an ever-increasing sense of guilt. That which began in relation to the father ends in relation to the community. If civilization is an inevitable course of development from the group of the family to the group of humanity as a whole, then an intensification of the sense of guilt — resulting from the innate conflict of ambivalence, from the eternal struggle between the love and the death trends — will be inextricably bound up with it, until perhaps the sense of guilt may swell to a magnitude that individuals can hardly support.⁸

In this quantitative analysis of the growth of the sense of guilt, the change in the *quality* of guiltiness, its growing irrationality, seems to disappear. Indeed, Freud's central sociological position prevented him from following this avenue. To him, there was no higher rationality against which the prevailing one could be measured. If the irrationality of guilt feeling is that of civilization itself, then it is rational; and if the abolition of domination destroys culture itself, then it remains the supreme crime, and no effective means for its prevention are irrational. However, Freud's own theory of instincts impelled him to go further and to unfold the entire fatality and futility of this dynamic. Strengthened defense against aggression is necessary; but in order to be effective the defense against enlarged aggression would have to strengthen the sex instincts, for only a strong Eros can effectively "bind" the destruc-

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

tive instincts. And this is precisely what the *developed civilization is incapable of doing* because it depends for its very existence on extended and intensified regimentation and control. The chain of inhibitions and deflections of instinctual aims cannot be broken. "Our civilization is, generally speaking, founded on the suppression of instincts."⁹

Civilization is first of all progress in *work* — that is, work for the procurement and augmentation of the necessities of life. This work is normally without satisfaction in itself; to Freud it is unpleasurable, painful. In Freud's metapsychology there is no room for an original "instinct of workmanship," "mastery instinct," etc.⁸ The notion of the conservative nature of the instincts under the rule of the pleasure and Nirvana principles strictly precludes such assumptions. When Freud incidentally mentions the "natural human aversion to work,"⁹ he only draws the inference from his basic theoretical conception. The instinctual syndrome "unhappiness and work" recurs throughout Freud's writings,¹⁰ and his interpretation of the Prometheus myth is centered on the connection between curbing of sexual passion and civilized work.¹¹ The basic work in civilization

⁷ "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness," in *Collected Papers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), II, 82.

⁸ Ives Hendrick, "Work and the Pleasure Principle," in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, XII (1943), 314. For a further discussion of this paper, see Chapter 10 below.

⁹ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 34 note.

¹⁰ In a letter of April 16, 1896, he speaks of the "moderate misery necessary for intensive work." Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. I (New York: Basic Books, 1953), p. 305.

¹¹ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 50-51 note; *Collected Papers*, V, 288ff. For Freud's apparently contradictory statement on the libidinal satisfaction provided by work (*Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 34 note), see page 212 below.

is non-libidinal, is labor; labor is "unpleasantness," and such unpleasantness has to be enforced. "For what motive would induce man to put his sexual energy to other uses if by any disposal of it he could obtain fully satisfying pleasure? He would never let go of this pleasure and would make no further progress."¹² If there is no original "work instinct," then the energy required for (unpleasurable) work must be "withdrawn" from the primary instincts — from the sexual and from the destructive instincts. Since civilization is mainly the work of Eros, it is first of all withdrawal of libido: culture "obtains a great part of the mental energy it needs by subtracting it from sexuality."¹³

But not only the work impulses are thus fed by aim-inhibited sexuality. The specifically "social instincts" (such as the "affectionate relations between parents and children, . . . feelings of friendship, and the emotional ties in marriage") contain impulses which are "held back by internal resistance" from attaining their aims;¹⁴ only by virtue of such renunciation do they become sociable. Each individual contributes his renunciations (first under the impact of external compulsion, then internally), and from "these sources the common stock of the material and ideal wealth of civilization has been accumulated."¹⁵ Although Freud remarks that these social instincts "need not be described as sublimated" (because they have not abandoned their sexual aims but rest content with "certain approxima-

¹² "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life," in *Collected Papers*, IV, 216.

¹³ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 74.

¹⁴ "The Libido Theory," in *Collected Papers*, V, 134.

¹⁵ "'Civilized' Sexual Morality . . .," p. 82.

tions to satisfaction"), he calls them "closely related" to sublimation.¹⁶ Thus the main sphere of civilization appears as a sphere of *sublimation*. But sublimation involves *desexualization*. Even if and where it draws on a reservoir of "neutral displaceable energy" in the ego and in the id, this neutral energy "proceeds from the narcissistic reservoir of libido," i.e., it is desexualized Eros.¹⁷ The process of sublimation alters the balance in the instinctual structure. Life is the fusion of Eros and death instinct; in this fusion, Eros has subdued its hostile partner. However:

After sublimation the erotic component no longer has the power to bind the whole of the destructive elements that were previously combined with it, and these are released in the form of inclinations to aggression and destruction.¹⁸

Culture demands continuous sublimation; it thereby weakens Eros, the builder of culture. And desexualization, by weakening Eros, unbinds the destructive impulses. Civilization is thus threatened by an instinctual de-fusion, in which the death instinct strives to gain ascendancy over the life instincts. Originating in renunciation and developing under progressive renunciation, civilization tends toward self-destruction.

This argument runs too smooth to be true. A number of objections arise. In the first place, not all work involves desexualization, and not all work is unpleasurable, is renunciation. Secondly, the inhibitions enforced by culture also affect — and perhaps even chiefly affect — the deriva-

¹⁶ "The Libido Theory," p. 134.

¹⁷ *The Ego and the Id* (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), pp. 38, 61-63. See Edward Glover, "Sublimation, Substitution, and Social Anxiety," in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (1931), p. 264.

¹⁸ *The Ego and the Id*, p. 80.

tives of the death instinct, aggressiveness and the destruction impulses. In this respect at least, cultural inhibition would accrue to the strength of Eros. Moreover, work in civilization is itself to a great extent *social utilization* of aggressive impulses and is thus work in the service of Eros. An adequate discussion of these problems presupposes that the theory of the instincts is freed from its exclusive orientation on the performance principle, that the image of a non-repressive civilization (which the very achievements of the performance principle suggest) is examined as to its substance. Such an attempt will be made in the last part of this study; here, some tentative clarifications must suffice.

The psychical sources and resources of work, and its relation to sublimation, constitute one of the most neglected areas of psychoanalytic theory. Perhaps nowhere else has psychoanalysis so consistently succumbed to the official ideology of the blessings of "productivity."¹⁹ Small wonder then, that in the Neo-Freudian schools, where (as we shall see in the Epilogue) the ideological trends in psychoanalysis triumph over its theory, the tenor of work morality is all-pervasive. The "orthodox" discussion is almost in its entirety focused on "creative" work, especially art, while work in the realm of necessity — labor — is relegated to the background.

To be sure, there is a mode of work which offers a high degree of libidinal satisfaction, which is pleasurable in its execution. And artistic work, where it is genuine, seems to grow out of a non-repressive instinctual constellation and to envisage non-repressive aims — so much so that the term

¹⁹ Ives Hendrick's article cited above is a striking example.

sublimation seems to require considerable modification if applied to this kind of work. But the bulk of the work relations on which civilization rests is of a very different kind. Freud notes that the "daily work of earning a livelihood affords particular satisfaction when it has been selected by free choice."²⁰ However, if "free choice" means more than a small selection between pre-established necessities, and if the inclinations and impulses used in work are other than those preshaped by a repressive reality principle, then satisfaction in daily work is only a rare privilege. The work that created and enlarged the material basis of civilization was chiefly labor, alienated labor, painful and miserable — and still is. The performance of such work hardly gratifies *individual* needs and inclinations. It was imposed upon man by brute necessity and brute force; if alienated labor has anything to do with Eros, it must be very indirectly, and with a considerably sublimated and weakened Eros.

But does not the civilized inhibition of *aggressive* impulses in work offset the weakening of Eros? Aggressive as well as libidinal impulses are supposed to be satisfied in work "by way of sublimation," and the culturally beneficial "sadistic character" of work has often been emphasized.²¹ The development of technics and technological rationality absorbs to a great extent the "modified" destructive instincts:

The instinct of destruction, when tempered and harnessed (as it were, inhibited in its aim) and directed towards objects, is com-

²⁰ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 34 note.

²¹ See Alfred Winterstein, "Zur Psychologie der Arbeit," in *Imago*, XVIII (1932), 142.

pelled to provide the ego with satisfaction of its needs and with power over nature.²²

Technics provide the very basis for progress; technological rationality sets the mental and behaviorist pattern for productive performance, and "power over nature" has become practically identical with civilization. Is the destructiveness sublimated in these activities sufficiently subdued and diverted to assure the work of Eros? It seems that socially useful destructiveness is less sublimated than socially useful libido. To be sure, the diversion of destructiveness from the ego to the external world secured the growth of civilization. However, extroverted destruction remains destruction: its objects are in most cases actually and violently assailed, deprived of their form, and reconstructed only after partial destruction; units are forcibly divided, and the component parts forcibly rearranged. Nature is literally "violated." Only in certain categories of sublimated aggressiveness (as in surgical practice) does such violation directly strengthen the life of its object. Destructiveness, in extent and intent, seems to be more directly satisfied in civilization than the libido.

However, while the destructive impulses are thus being satisfied, such satisfaction cannot stabilize their energy in the service of Eros. Their destructive force must drive them beyond this servitude and sublimation, for their aim is, not matter, not nature, not any object, but life itself. If they are the derivatives of the death instinct, then they cannot accept as final any "substitutes." Then, through constructive technological destruction, through the con-

²² *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 101.

structive violation of nature, the instincts would still operate toward the annihilation of life. The radical hypothesis of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* would stand: the instincts of self-preservation, self-assertion, and mastery, in so far as they have absorbed this destructiveness, would have the function of assuring the organism's "own path to death." Freud retracted this hypothesis as soon as he had advanced it, but his formulations in *Civilization and Its Discontents* seem to restore its essential content. And the fact that the destruction of life (human and animal) has progressed with the progress of civilization, that cruelty and hatred and the scientific extermination of men have increased in relation to the real possibility of the elimination of oppression — this feature of late industrial civilization would have instinctual roots which perpetuate destructiveness beyond all rationality. The growing mastery of nature then would, with the growing productivity of labor, develop and fulfill the human needs *only as a by-product*: increasing cultural wealth and knowledge would provide the material for progressive destruction and the need for increasing instinctual repression.

This thesis implies the existence of objective criteria for gauging the degree of instinctual repression at a given stage of civilization. However, repression is largely unconscious and automatic, while its degree is measureable only in the light of consciousness. The differential between (phylogenetically necessary) repression and surplus-repression²³ may provide the criteria. Within the total structure of the repressed personality, surplus-repression is that portion

²³ See page 37 above.

which is the result of specific societal conditions sustained in the specific interest of domination. The extent of this surplus-repression provides the standard of measurement: the smaller it is, the less repressive is the stage of civilization. The distinction is equivalent to that between the biological and the historical sources of human suffering. Of the three "sources of human suffering" which Freud enumerates — namely, "the superior force of nature, the disposition to decay of our bodies, and the inadequacy of our methods of regulating human relations in the family, the community and the state"²⁴ — at least the first and the last are in a strict sense *historical* sources; the superiority of nature and the organization of societal relations have essentially changed in the development of civilization. Consequently, the necessity of repression, and of the suffering derived from it, varies with the maturity of civilization, with the extent of the achieved rational mastery of nature and of society. Objectively, the need for instinctual inhibition and restraint depends on the need for toil and delayed satisfaction. The same and even a reduced scope of instinctual regimentation would constitute a higher degree of repression at a mature stage of civilization, when the need for renunciation and toil is greatly reduced by material and intellectual progress — when civilization could actually afford a considerable release of instinctual energy expended for domination and toil. Scope and intensity of instinctual repression obtain their full significance only in relation to the historically possible extent of freedom. For Freud, is progress in civilization progress in freedom?

²⁴ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 43.

We have seen that Freud's theory is focused on the recurrent cycle "domination-rebellion-domination." But the second domination is not simply a repetition of the first one; the cyclical movement is *progress* in domination. From the primal father via the brother clan to the system of institutional authority characteristic of mature civilization, domination becomes increasingly impersonal, objective, universal, and also increasingly rational, effective, productive. At the end, under the rule of the fully developed performance principle, subordination appears as implemented through the social division of labor itself (although physical and personal force remains an indispensable instrumentality). Society emerges as a lasting and expanding system of useful performances; the hierarchy of functions and relations assumes the form of objective reason: law and order are identical with the life of society itself. In the same process, repression too is depersonalized: constraint and regimentation of pleasure now become a function (and "natural" result) of the social division of labor. To be sure, the father, as *paterfamilias*, still performs the basic regimentation of the instincts which prepares the child for the surplus-repression on the part of society during his adult life. But the father performs this function as the representative of the family's position in the social division of labor rather than as the "possessor" of the mother. Subsequently, the individual's instincts are controlled through the social utilization of his labor power. He has to work in order to live, and this work requires not only eight, ten, twelve daily hours of his time and therefore a corresponding diversion of energy, but also during these hours and the re-

maintaining ones a behavior in conformity with the standards and morals of the performance principle. Historically, the reduction of Eros to procreative-monogamic sexuality (which completes the subjection of the pleasure principle to the reality principle) is consummated only when the individual has become a subject-object of labor in the apparatus of his society; whereas, ontogenetically, the primary suppression of infantile sexuality remains the precondition for this accomplishment.

The development of a hierarchical system of social labor not only rationalizes domination but also "contains" the rebellion against domination. At the individual level, the primal revolt is contained within the framework of the normal Oedipus conflict. At the societal level, recurrent rebellions and revolutions have been followed by counter-revolutions and restorations. From the slave revolts in the ancient world to the socialist revolution, the struggle of the oppressed has ended in establishing a new, "better" system of domination; progress has taken place through an improving chain of control. Each revolution has been the conscious effort to replace one ruling group by another; but each revolution has also released forces that have "overshot the goal," that have striven for the abolition of domination and exploitation. The ease with which they have been defeated demands explanations. Neither the prevailing constellation of power, nor immaturity of the productive forces, nor absence of class consciousness provides an adequate answer. In every revolution, there seems to have been a historical moment when the struggle against domination might have been victorious — but the moment passed. An

element of *self-defeat* seems to be involved in this dynamic (regardless of the validity of such reasons as the prematurity and inequality of forces). In this sense, every revolution has also been a betrayed revolution.

Freud's hypothesis on the origin and the perpetuation of guilt feeling elucidates, in psychological terms, this sociological dynamic: it explains the "identification" of those who revolt with the power against which they revolt. The economic and political incorporation of the individuals into the hierarchical system of labor is accompanied by an instinctual process in which the human objects of domination reproduce their own repression. And the increasing rationalization of power seems to be reflected in an increasing rationalization of repression. In retaining the individuals as instruments of labor, forcing them into renunciation and toil, domination no longer merely or primarily sustains specific privileges but also sustains society as a whole on an expanding scale. The guilt of rebellion is thereby greatly intensified. The revolt against the primal father eliminated an individual person who could be (and was) replaced by other persons; but when the dominion of the father has expanded into the dominion of society, no such replacement seems possible, and the guilt becomes fatal. Rationalization of guilt feeling has been completed. The father, restrained in the family and in his individual biological authority, is resurrected, far more powerful, in the administration which preserves the life of society, and in the laws which preserve the administration. These final and most sublime incarnations of the father cannot be overcome "symbolically," by emancipation: there is no freedom from

administration and its laws because they appear as the ultimate guarantors of liberty. The revolt against them would be the supreme crime again — this time not against the despot-animal who forbids gratification but against the wise order which secures the goods and services for the progressive satisfaction of human needs. Rebellion now appears as the crime against the whole of human society and therefore as beyond reward and beyond redemption.

However, the very progress of civilization tends to make this rationality a spurious one. The existing liberties and the existing gratifications are tied to the requirements of domination; they themselves become instruments of repression. The excuse of scarcity, which has justified institutionalized repression since its inception, weakens as man's knowledge and control over nature enhances the means for fulfilling human needs with a minimum of toil. The still prevailing impoverishment of vast areas of the world is no longer due chiefly to the poverty of human and natural resources but to the manner in which they are distributed and utilized. This difference may be irrelevant to politics and to politicians but it is of decisive importance to a theory of civilization which derives the need for repression from the "natural" and perpetual disproportion between human desires and the environment in which they must be satisfied. If such a "natural" condition, and not certain political and social institutions, provides the rationale for repression, then it has become irrational. The culture of industrial civilization has turned the human organism into an ever more sensitive, differentiated, exchangeable instrument, and

has created a social wealth sufficiently great to transform this instrument into an end in itself. The available resources make for a *qualitative* change in the human needs. Rationalization and mechanization of labor tend to reduce the quantum of instinctual energy channeled into toil (alienated labor), thus freeing energy for the attainment of objectives set by the free play of individual faculties. Technology operates against the repressive utilization of energy in so far as it minimizes the time necessary for the production of the necessities of life, thus saving time for the development of needs *beyond* the realm of necessity and of necessary waste.

But the closer the real possibility of liberating the individual from the constraints once justified by scarcity and immaturity, the greater the need for maintaining and streamlining these constraints lest the established order of domination dissolve. Civilization has to defend itself against the specter of a world which could be free. If society cannot use its growing productivity for reducing repression (because such usage would upset the hierarchy of the *status quo*), productivity must be turned *against* the individuals; it becomes itself an instrument of universal control. Totalitarianism spreads over late industrial civilization wherever the interests of domination prevail upon productivity, arresting and diverting its potentialities. The people have to be kept in a state of permanent mobilization, internal and external. The rationality of domination has progressed to the point where it threatens to invalidate its foundations; therefore it must be reaffirmed more effectively

than ever before. This time there shall be no killing of the father, not even a "symbolic" killing — because he may not find a successor.

The "automatization" of the superego²⁵ indicates the defense mechanisms by which society meets the threat. The defense consists chiefly in a strengthening of controls not so much over the instincts as over consciousness, which, if left free, might recognize the work of repression in the bigger and better satisfaction of needs. The manipulation of consciousness which has occurred throughout the orbit of contemporary industrial civilization has been described in the various interpretations of totalitarian and "popular cultures": co-ordination of the private and public existence, of spontaneous and required reactions. The promotion of thoughtless leisure activities, the triumph of anti-intellectual ideologies, exemplify the trend. This extension of controls to formerly free regions of consciousness and leisure permits a relaxation of sexual taboos (previously more important because the over-all controls were less effective). Today compared with the Puritan and Victorian periods, sexual freedom has unquestionably increased (although a reaction against the 1920's is clearly noticeable). At the same time, however, the sexual relations themselves have become much more closely assimilated with social relations; sexual liberty is harmonized with profitable conformity. The fundamental antagonism between sex and social utility — itself the reflex of the conflict between pleasure principle and reality principle — is blurred by the progressive encroachment of the reality principal on the pleas-

²⁵ See pages 32-33 above.

ure principle. In a world of alienation, the liberation of Eros would necessarily operate as a destructive, fatal force — as the total negation of the principle which governs the repressive reality. It is not an accident that the great literature of Western civilization celebrates only the "unhappy love," that the Tristan myth has become its representative expression. The morbid romanticism of the myth is in a strict sense "realistic." In contrast to the destructiveness of the liberated Eros, the relaxed sexual morality within the firmly entrenched system of monopolistic controls itself serves the system. The negation is co-ordinated with "the positive": the night with the day, the dream world with the work world, phantasy with frustration. Then, the individuals who relax in this uniformly controlled reality recall, not the dream but the day, not the fairy tale but its denunciation. In their erotic relations, they "keep their appointments" — with charm, with romance, with their favorite commercials.

But, within the system of unified and intensified controls, decisive changes are taking place. They affect the structure of the superego and the content and manifestation of guilt feeling. Moreover, they tend toward a state in which the completely alienated world, expending its full power, seems to prepare the stuff and material for a new reality principle.

The superego is loosened from its origin, and the traumatic experience of the father is superseded by more exogenous images. As the family becomes less decisive in directing the adjustment of the individual to society, the father-son conflict no longer remains the model-conflict.

This change derives from the fundamental economic processes which have characterized, since the beginning of the century, the transformation of "free" into "organized" capitalism. The independent family enterprise and, subsequently, the independent personal enterprise cease to be the units of the social system; they are being absorbed into large-scale impersonal groupings and associations. At the same time, the social value of the individual is measured primarily in terms of standardized skills and qualities of adjustment rather than autonomous judgment and personal responsibility.

The technological abolition of the individual is reflected in the decline of the social function of the family.²⁸ It was formerly the family which, for good or bad, reared and educated the individual, and the dominant rules and values were transmitted personally and transformed through personal fate. To be sure, in the Oedipus situation, not individuals but "generations" (units of the genus) faced each other; but in the passing and inheritance of the Oedipus conflict they became individuals, and the conflict continued into an individual life history. Through the struggle with father and mother as personal targets of love and aggression, the younger generation entered societal life with impulses, ideas, and needs which were largely *their own*. Consequently, the formation of their superego, the repressive modification of their impulses, their renunciation and sublimation were very personal experiences. Precisely because of this, their adjustment left painful scars, and life

²⁸ For the analysis of these processes, see *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, ed. Max Horkheimer (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1936); Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

under the performance principle still retained a sphere of private non-conformity.

Now, however, under the rule of economic, political, and cultural monopolies, the formation of the mature superego seems to skip the stage of individualization: the generic atom becomes directly a social atom. The repressive organization of the instincts seems to be *collective*, and the ego seems to be prematurely socialized by a whole system of extra-familial agents and agencies. As early as the pre-school level, gangs, radio, and television set the pattern for conformity and rebellion; deviations from the pattern are punished not so much within the family as outside and against the family. The experts of the mass media transmit the required values; they offer the perfect training in efficiency, toughness, personality, dream, and romance. With this education, the family can no longer compete. In the struggle between the generations, the sides seem to be shifted: the son knows better; he represents the mature reality principle against its obsolescent paternal forms. The father, the first object of aggression in the Oedipus situation, later appears as a rather inappropriate target of aggression. His authority as transmitter of wealth, skills, experiences is greatly reduced; he has less to offer, and therefore less to prohibit. The progressive father is a most unsuitable enemy and a most unsuitable "ideal" — but so is any father who no longer shapes the child's economic, emotional, and intellectual future. Still, the prohibitions continue to prevail, the repressive control of the instincts persists, and so does the aggressive impulse. Who are the father-substitutes against which it is primarily directed?

As domination congeals into a system of objective administration, the images that guide the development of the superego become depersonalized. Formerly the superego was "fed" by the master, the chief, the principal. These represented the reality principle in their tangible personality: harsh and benevolent, cruel and rewarding, they provoked and punished the desire to revolt; the enforcement of conformity was their personal function and responsibility. Respect and fear could therefore be accompanied by hate of what they were and did as persons; they presented a living object for the impulses and for the conscious efforts to satisfy them. But these personal father-images have gradually disappeared behind the institutions. With the rationalization of the productive apparatus, with the multiplication of functions, all domination assumes the form of administration. At its peak, the concentration of economic power seems to turn into anonymity: everyone, even at the very top, appears to be powerless before the movements and laws of the apparatus itself. Control is normally administered by offices in which the controlled are the employers and the employed. The masters no longer perform an individual function. The sadistic principals, the capitalist exploiters, have been transformed into salaried members of a bureaucracy, whom their subjects meet as members of another bureaucracy. The pain, frustration, impotence of the individual derive from a highly productive and efficiently functioning system in which he makes a better living than ever before. Responsibility for the organization of his life lies with the whole, the "system," the sum total of the institutions that determine, satisfy, and control his needs.

The aggressive impulse plunges into a void — or rather the hate encounters smiling colleagues, busy competitors, obedient officials, helpful social workers who are all doing their duty and who are all innocent victims.

Thus repulsed, aggression is again introjected: not suppression but the suppressed is guilty. Guilty of what? Material and intellectual progress has weakened the force of religion below the point where it can sufficiently explain the sense of guilt. The aggressiveness turned against the ego threatens to become senseless: with his consciousness co-ordinated, his privacy abolished, his emotions integrated into conformity, the individual has no longer enough "mental space" for developing himself *against* his sense of guilt, for living with a conscience of his own. His ego has shrunk to such a degree that the multiform antagonistic processes between id, ego, and superego cannot unfold themselves in their classic form.

Still, the guilt is there; it seems to be a quality of the whole rather than of the individuals — collective guilt, the affliction of an institutional system which wastes and arrests the material and human resources at its disposal. The extent of these resources can be defined by the level of fulfilled human freedom attainable through truly rational use of the productive capacity. If this standard is applied, it appears that, in the centers of industrial civilization, man is kept in a state of impoverishment, both cultural and physical. Most of the clichés with which sociology describes the process of dehumanization in present-day mass culture are correct; but they seem to be slanted in the wrong direction. What is retrogressive is not mechani-

zation and standardization but their containment, not the universal co-ordination but its concealment under spurious liberties, choices, and individualities. The high standard of living in the domain of the great corporations is *restrictive* in a concrete sociological sense: the goods and services that the individuals buy control their needs and petrify their faculties. In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time. The better living is offset by the all-pervasive control over living. People dwell in apartment concentrations — and have private automobiles with which they can no longer escape into a different world. They have huge refrigerators filled with frozen foods. They have dozens of newspapers and magazines that espouse the same ideals. They have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep them occupied and divert their attention from the real issue — which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions.

The ideology of today lies in that production and consumption reproduce and justify domination. But their ideological character does not change the fact that their benefits are real. The repressiveness of the whole lies to a high degree in its efficacy: it enhances the scope of material culture, facilitates the procurement of the necessities of life, makes comfort and luxury cheaper, draws ever-larger areas into the orbit of industry — while at the same time sustaining toil and destruction. The individual pays by sacrificing his time, his consciousness, his dreams; civilization pays by

sacrificing its own promises of liberty, justice, and peace for all.

The discrepancy between potential liberation and actual repression has come to maturity: it permeates all spheres of life the world over. The rationality of progress heightens the irrationality of its organization and direction. Social cohesion and administrative power are sufficiently strong to protect the whole from direct aggression, but not strong enough to eliminate the accumulated aggressiveness. It turns against those who do not belong to the whole, whose existence is its denial. This foe appears as the archenemy and Antichrist himself: he is everywhere at all times; he represents hidden and sinister forces, and his omnipresence requires total mobilization. The difference between war and peace, between civilian and military populations, between truth and propaganda, is blotted out. There is regression to historical stages that had been passed long ago, and this regression reactivates the sado-masochistic phase on a national and international scale. But the impulses of this phase are reactivated in a new, “civilized” manner: practically without sublimation, they become socially “useful” activities in concentration and labor camps, colonial and civil wars, in punitive expeditions, and so on.

Under these circumstances, the question whether the present stage of civilization is demonstrably more destructive than the preceding ones does not seem to be very relevant. In any case, the question cannot be avoided by pointing to the destructiveness prevalent throughout history. The destructiveness of the present stage reveals its full signif-

icance only if the present is measured, not in terms of past stages, but in terms of its own potentialities. There is more than a quantitative difference in whether wars are waged by professional armies in confined spaces, or against entire populations on a global scale; whether technical inventions that could make the world free from misery are used for the conquest or for the creation of suffering; whether thousands are slain in combat or millions scientifically exterminated with the help of doctors and engineers; whether exiles can find refuge across the frontiers or are chased around the earth; whether people are naturally ignorant or are being *made* ignorant by their daily intake of information and entertainment. It is with a new ease that terror is assimilated with normality, and destructiveness with construction. Still, progress continues, and continues to narrow the basis of repression. At the height of its progressive achievements, domination not only undermines its own foundations, but also corrupts and liquidates the opposition against domination. What remains is the negativity of reason, which impels wealth and power and generates a climate in which the instinctual roots of the performance principle are drying up.

The alienation of labor is almost complete. The mechanics of the assembly line, the routine of the office, the ritual of buying and selling are freed from any connection with human potentialities. Work relations have become to a great extent relations between persons as exchangeable objects of scientific management and efficiency experts. To be sure, the still prevailing competitiveness requires a certain degree of individuality and spontaneity; but these features have become just as superficial and illusory as the com-

petitiveness to which they belong. Individuality is literally in name only, in the specific representation of types²⁷ (such as vamp, housewife, Ondine, he-man, career woman, struggling young couple), just as competition tends to be reduced to prearranged varieties in the production of gadgets, wrappings, flavors, colors, and so on. Beneath this illusory surface, the whole work-world and its recreation have become a system of animate and inanimate things—all equally subject to administration. The human existence in this world is mere stuff, matter, material, which does not have the principle of its movement in itself. This state of ossification also affects the instincts, their inhibitions and modifications. Their original dynamic becomes static: the interactions between ego, superego, and id congeal into automatic reactions. Corporealization of the super-ego is accompanied by corporealization of the ego, manifest in the frozen traits and gestures, produced at the appropriate occasions and hours. Consciousness, increasingly less burdened by autonomy, tends to be reduced to the task of regulating the co-ordination of the individual with the whole.

This co-ordination is effective to such a degree that the general unhappiness has decreased rather than increased. We have suggested²⁸ that the individual's awareness of the prevailing repression is blunted by the manipulated restriction of his consciousness. This process alters the contents of happiness. The concept denotes a more-than-private,

²⁷ See Leo Lowenthal, "International Who's Who 1937," in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* (formerly *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*), VIII (1939), 262ff.; and "Historical Perspectives of Popular Culture," in *American Journal of Sociology*, LV (1950), 323ff.

²⁸ See page 94 above.

more-than-subjective condition;²⁹ happiness is not in the mere feeling of satisfaction but in the reality of freedom and satisfaction. Happiness involves knowledge: it is the prerogative of the *animal rationale*. With the decline in consciousness, with the control of information, with the absorption of individual into mass communication, knowledge is administered and confined. The individual does not really know what is going on; the overpowering machine of education and entertainment unites him with all the others in a state of anaesthesia from which all detrimental ideas tend to be excluded. And since knowledge of the whole truth is hardly conducive to happiness, such general anaesthesia makes individuals happy. If anxiety is more than a general malaise, if it is an existential condition, then this so-called "age of anxiety" is distinguished by the extent to which anxiety has disappeared from expression.

These trends seem to suggest that the expenditure of energy and effort for developing one's own inhibitions is greatly diminished. *The living links between the individual and his culture are loosened.* This culture was, in and for the individual, the system of inhibitions that generated and regenerated the predominant values and institutions. Now, the repressive force of the reality principle seems no longer renewed and rejuvenated by the repressed individuals. The less they function as the agents and victims of their own life, the less is the reality principle strengthened through "creative" identifications and sublimations, which enrich and at the same time protect the household of culture.

²⁹ See Herbert Marcuse, "Zur Kritik des Hedonismus," in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, VII (1938), 55ff.

The groups and group ideals, the philosophies, the works of art and literature that still express without compromise the fears and hopes of humanity stand against the prevailing reality principle: they are its absolute denunciation.

The positive aspects of progressive alienation show forth. The human energies which sustained the performance principle are becoming increasingly dispensable. The automatization of necessity and waste, of labor and entertainment, precludes the realization of individual potentialities in this realm. It repels libidinal cathexis. The ideology of scarcity, of the productivity of toil, domination, and renunciation, is dislodged from its instinctual as well as rational ground. The theory of alienation demonstrated the fact that man does not realize himself in his labor, that his life has become an instrument of labor, that his work and its products have assumed a form and power independent of him as an individual. But the liberation from this state seems to require, not the arrest of alienation, but its consummation, not the reactivation of the repressed and productive personality but its abolition. The elimination of human potentialities from the world of (alienated) labor creates the preconditions for the elimination of labor from the world of human potentialities.

Philosophical Interlude

Freud's theory of civilization grows out of his psychological theory: its insights into the historical process are derived from the analysis of the mental apparatus of the individuals who are the living substance of history. This approach penetrates the protective ideology in so far as it views the cultural institutions in terms of what they have made of the individuals through whom they function. But the psychological approach seems to fail at a decisive point: history has progressed "behind the back" and over the individuals, and the laws of the historical process have been those governing the reified institutions rather than the individuals.¹ Against this criticism we have argued that Freud's psychology reaches into a dimension of the mental apparatus where the individual is still the genus, the present still the past. Freud's theory reveals the biological de-individualization beneath the sociological one — the former proceeding under the pleasure and Nirvana principles, the latter under the reality principle. By virtue of this generic conception, Freud's psychology of the individual is *per se* psychology of the genus. And his generic psychology un-

¹ See Theodor W. Adorno, "Psychoanalyse und Soziologie," in *Sociologica* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1955). *Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie*, Vol. I.

folds the vicissitudes of the instincts as historical vicissitudes: the recurrent dynamic of the struggle between Eros and death instinct, of the building and destruction of culture, of repression and the return of the repressed, is released and organized by the historical conditions under which mankind develops.

But the metapsychological implications of Freud's theory go even beyond the framework of sociology. The primary instincts pertain to life and death — that is to say, to organic matter as such. And they link organic matter back with unorganic matter, and forward with its higher mental manifestations. In other words, Freud's theory contains certain assumptions on the structure of the principal modes of being: it contains *ontological* implications. This chapter attempts to show that these implications are more than formal — that they pertain to the basic context of Western philosophy.

According to Freud, civilization begins with the methodical inhibition of the primary instincts. Two chief modes of instinctual organization may be distinguished: (a) the inhibition of sexuality, ensuing in durable and expanding group relations, and (b) the inhibition of the destructive instincts, leading to the mastery of man and nature, to individual and social morality. As the combination of these two forces sustains ever more effectively the life of ever larger groups, Eros gains over his adversary: social utilization presses the death instinct into the service of the life instincts. But the very progress of civilization increases the scope of sublimation and of controlled aggression; on both accounts, Eros is weakened and destructiveness is released.

This would suggest that progress remains committed to a regressive trend in the instinctual structure (in the last analysis, to the death instinct), that the growth of civilization is counteracted by the persistent (though repressed) impulse to come to rest in final gratification. Domination, and the enhancement of power and productivity, proceed through destruction beyond rational necessity. The quest for liberation is darkened by the quest for Nirvana.

The sinister hypothesis that culture, via the socially utilized impulses, stands under the rule of the Nirvana principle has often haunted psychoanalysis. Progress "contains" regression. From his notion of the *trauma of birth*, Otto Rank came to the conclusion that culture establishes on an ever larger scale "protective shells" which reproduce the intra-uterine state:

Every "comfort" that civilization and technical knowledge continually strive to increase only tries to replace by durable substitutes the primal goal from which . . . it becomes ever further removed.² Ferenczi's theory, especially his idea of a "genito-fugal" libido,³ tends to the same conclusion, and Géza Róheim considered the danger of "object-loss, of being left in the dark," as one of the decisive instinctual motives in the evolution of culture.⁴

The persistent strength of the Nirvana principle in civilization illuminates the scope of the constraints placed upon the culture-building power of Eros. Eros creates culture in his struggle against the death instinct: he strives to pre-

² *The Trauma of Birth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), p. 99; see also p. 103.

³ See Chapter 10 below.

⁴ *The Origin and Function of Culture* (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph No. 69, 1943), p. 77.

serve being on an ever larger and richer scale in order to satisfy the life instincts, to protect them from the threat of non-fulfillment, extinction. It is the *failure* of Eros, lack of fulfillment in life, which enhances the instinctual value of death. The manifold forms of regression are unconscious protest against the insufficiency of civilization: against the prevalence of toil over pleasure, performance over gratification. An innermost tendency in the organism militates against the principle which has governed civilization and insists on return from alienation. The derivatives of the death instinct join the neurotic and perverted manifestations of Eros in this rebellion. Time and again, Freud's theory of civilization points up these countertrends. Destructive as they appear in the light of the established culture, they testify to the destructiveness of what they strive to destroy: repression. They aim not only against the reality principle, at non-being, but also beyond the reality principle — at another mode of being. They betoken the historical character of the reality principle, the limits of its validity and necessity.

At this point, Freud's metapsychology meets a mainstream of Western philosophy.

As the scientific rationality of Western civilization began to bear its full fruit, it became increasingly conscious of its psychical implications. The ego which undertook the rational transformation of the human and natural environment revealed itself as an essentially aggressive, offensive subject, whose thoughts and actions were designed for mastering objects. It was a subject *against* an object. This

a priori antagonistic experience defined the *ego cogitans* as well as the *ego agens*. Nature (its own as well as the external world) were "given" to the ego as something that had to be fought, conquered, and even violated — such was the precondition for self-preservation and self-development.

The struggle begins with the perpetual internal conquest of the "lower" faculties of the individual: his sensuous and appetitive faculties. Their subjugation is, at least since Plato, regarded as a constitutive element of human reason, which is thus in its very function repressive. The struggle culminates in the conquest of external nature, which must be perpetually attacked, curbed, and exploited in order to yield to human needs. The ego experiences being as "provocation,"⁵ as "project";⁶ it experiences each existential condition as a restraint that has to be overcome, transformed into another one. The ego becomes preconditioned for mastering action and productivity even prior to any specific occasion that calls for such an attitude. Max Scheler has pointed out that the "conscious or unconscious impulse or will to power over nature is the *primum movens*" in the relation of the modern individual to being, and that it structurally precedes modern science and technology — a "pre-and-a-logical" antecedent before scientific thought and intuition.⁷ Nature is *a priori* experienced by an organism bent to domination and therefore experienced as susceptible to mastery and control.⁸ And consequently work is *a priori*

⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves* (Paris: José Corti, 1942), p. 214.

⁶ J. P. Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), *passim*.

⁷ *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft* (Leipzig, 1926), pp. 234–235.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 298–299. Scheler refers to "herrschaftswilliges Lebewesen."

power and provocation in the struggle with nature; it is overcoming of resistance. In such work-attitude, the images of the objective world appear as "symbols for points of aggression"; action appears as domination, and reality *per se* as "resistance."⁹ Scheler calls this mode of thought "knowledge geared to domination and achievement" and sees in it the specific mode of knowledge which has guided the development of modern civilization.¹⁰ It has shaped the predominant notion not only of the ego, the thinking and acting subject, but also of its objective world — the notion of being as such.

Whatever the implications of the original Greek conception of Logos as the essence of being, since the canonization of the Aristotelian logic the term merges with the idea of ordering, classifying, mastering reason. And this idea of reason becomes increasingly antagonistic to those faculties and attitudes which are receptive rather than productive, which tend toward gratification rather than transcendence — which remain strongly committed to the pleasure principle. They appear as the unreasonable and irrational that must be conquered and contained in order to serve the progress of reason. Reason is to insure, through the ever more effective transformation and exploitation of nature, the fulfillment of the human potentialities. But in the process the end seems to recede before the means: the time devoted to alienated labor absorbs the time for individual needs — and defines the needs themselves. The Logos shows forth as the logic of domination. When logic then reduces the units of thought to signs and symbols, the laws

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 459, 461.

¹⁰ *Die Formen des Wissens und die Bildung* (Bonn, 1925), p. 33. Scheler's phrase is "Herrschafts- und Leistungswissen."

of thought have finally become techniques of calculation and manipulation.

But the logic of domination does not triumph unchallenged. The philosophy which epitomizes the antagonistic relation between subject and object also retains the image of their reconciliation. The restless labor of the transcending subject terminates in the ultimate unity of subject and object: the idea of "being-in-and-for-itself," existing in its own fulfillment. The Logos of gratification contradicts the Logos of alienation: the effort to harmonize the two animates the inner history of Western metaphysics. It obtains its classical formulation in the Aristotelian hierarchy of the modes of being, which culminates in the *nous theos*: its existence is no longer defined and confined by anything other than itself but is entirely itself in all states and conditions. The ascending curve of becoming is bent in the circle which moves in itself; past, present, and future are enclosed in the ring. According to Aristotle, this mode of being is reserved to the god; and the movement of thought, pure thinking, is its sole "empirical" approximation. Otherwise the empirical world does not partake of such fulfillment; only a yearning, "Eros-like," connects this world with its end-in-itself. The Aristotelian conception is not a religious one. The *nous theos* is, as it were, *part* of the universe, neither its creator nor its lord nor its savior, but a mode of being in which all potentiality is actuality, in which the "project" of being has been fulfilled.

The Aristotelian conception remains alive through all subsequent transformations. When, at the end of the Age

of Reason, with Hegel, Western thought makes its last and greatest attempt to demonstrate the validity of its categories and of the principles which govern its world, it concludes again with the *nous theos*. Again, fulfillment is relegated to the absolute idea and to absolute knowledge. Again, the movement of the circle ends the painful process of destructive and productive transcendence. Now the circle comprises the whole: all alienation is justified and at the same time canceled in the universal ring of reason which is the world. But now philosophy comprehends the concrete historical ground on which the edifice of reason is erected.

The *Phenomenology of the Spirit* unfolds the structure of reason as the structure of domination — and as the overcoming of domination. Reason develops through the developing self-consciousness of man who conquers the natural and historical world and makes it the material of his self-realization. When mere consciousness reaches the stage of self-consciousness, it finds itself as *ego*, and the ego is first *desire*: it can become conscious of itself only through satisfying itself in and by an "other." But such satisfaction involves the "negation" of the other, for the ego has to prove itself by truly "being-for-itself" *against* all "otherness."¹¹ This is the notion of the individual which must constantly assert and affirm himself in order to be real, which is set off against the world as his "negativity," as *denying* his freedom, so that he can exist only by incessantly winning and testing his existence *against* something or someone which contests it. The ego must become *free*, but if the world has the "character of negativity," then the ego's free-

¹¹ This and the following according to the *Phenomenology* (B, IV, A).

dom depends on being "recognized," "acknowledged" as master — and such recognition can only be tendered by another ego, another self-conscious subject. Objects are not alive; the overcoming of their resistance cannot satisfy or "test" the power of the ego: "Self-consciousness can attain its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness." The aggressive attitude toward the object-world, the domination of nature, thus ultimately aims at the domination of man by man. It is aggressiveness toward the other subjects: satisfaction of the ego is conditioned upon its "negative relation" to another ego:

The relation of both self-consciousnesses is in this way so constituted that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. . . . And it is solely by risking life, that freedom is obtained . . .¹²

Freedom involves the risk of life, not because it involves liberation from servitude, but because the very content of human freedom is defined by the mutual "negative relation" to the other. And since this negative relation affects the totality of life, freedom can be "tested" only by staking life itself. Death and anxiety — not as "fear for this element or that, not for this or that moment of time," but as fear for one's 'entire being' "¹³ — are the essential terms of human freedom and satisfaction. From the negative structure of self-consciousness results the relation of master and servant, domination and servitude. This relation is the consequence of the specific nature of self-consciousness and the consequence of its specific attitude toward the other (object and subject).

¹² *The Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Modern Library, 1953), p. 402.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

But the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* would not be the self-interpretation of Western civilization if it were nothing more than the development of the logic of domination. The *Phenomenology of the Spirit* leads to the overcoming of that form of freedom which derives from the antagonistic relation to the other. And the true mode of freedom is, not the incessant activity of conquest, but its coming to rest in the transparent knowledge and gratification of being. The ontological climate which prevails at the end of the *Phenomenology* is the very opposite of the Promethean dynamic:

The wounds of the Spirit heal without leaving scars; the deed is not everlasting; the Spirit takes it back into itself, and the aspect of particularity (individuality) present in it . . . immediately passes away.¹⁴

Mutual acknowledgment and recognition are still the test for the reality of freedom, but the terms are now forgiveness and reconciliation:

The word of reconciliation is the (objectively) existent Spirit which apprehends in its opposite the pure knowledge of itself *qua* universal essence . . . a mutual recognition which is Absolute Spirit.¹⁵

These formulations occur at the decisive place where Hegel's analysis of the manifestations of the spirit has reached the position of the "self-conscious spirit" — its be-

¹⁴ "Die Wunden des Geistes heilen, ohne dass Narben bleiben; die Tat ist nicht das Unvergängliche, sondern wird von dem Geiste in sich zurückgenommen, und die Seite der Einzelheit . . . ist das unmittelbar Verschwindende." *The Phenomenology of the Mind*, transl. J. B. Baillie (London: Sven Sonnenschein, 1910), II, 679. (Translation changed.)

¹⁵ "Das Wort der Versöhnung ist der daseiende Geist, der das reine Wissen seiner selbst als allgemeines Wesen in seinem Gegenteile . . . anschaut, — ein gegenseitiges Anerkennen, welches der absolute Geist ist." *Ibid.*, p. 680 (with a minor change in translation).

ing-in-and-for-itself. Here, the "negative relation to the other" is ultimately, in the existence of the spirit as *nous*, transformed into productivity which is receptivity, activity which is fulfillment. Hegel's presentation of his system in his *Encyclopedia* ends on the word "enjoys." The philosophy of Western civilization culminates in the idea that the truth lies in the negation of the principle that governs this civilization — negation in the twofold sense that freedom appears as real only in the idea, and that the endlessly projecting and transcending productivity of being comes to fruition in the perpetual peace of self-conscious receptivity.

The *Phenomenology of the Spirit* throughout preserves the tension between the ontological and the historical content: the manifestations of the spirit *are* the main stages of Western civilization, but these historical manifestations remain affected with negativity; the spirit comes to itself only in and as absolute knowledge. It is at the same time the true form of thought and the true form of being. Being is in its very essence reason. But the highest form of reason is, to Hegel, almost the opposite of the prevailing form: it is attained and sustained fulfillment, the transparent unity of subject and object, of the universal and the individual — a dynamic rather than static unity in which all becoming is free self-externalization (*Entäusserung*), release and "enjoyment" of potentialities. The labor of history comes to rest in history: alienation is canceled, and with it transcendence and the flux of time. The spirit "overcomes its temporal form; negates Time."¹⁶ But the "end" of history recaptures its content: the force which accomplishes the

¹⁶ "... hebt seine Zeitform auf; tilgt die Zeit." *Ibid.*, p. 821.

conquest of time is remembrance (re-collection). Absolute knowledge, in which the spirit attains its truth, is the spirit "entering into its real self, whereby it abandons its (extraneous) existence and entrusts its Gestalt to remembrance."¹⁷ Being is no longer the painful transcendence toward the future but the peaceful recapture of the past. Remembrance, which has preserved everything that was, is "the inner and the actually higher form of the substance."¹⁸

The fact that remembrance here appears as the decisive existential category for the highest form of being indicates the inner trend of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel replaces the idea of progress by that of a cyclical development which moves, self-sufficient, in the reproduction and consummation of what is. This development presupposes the entire history of man (his subjective and objective world) and the comprehension of his history — the remembrance of his past. The past remains present; it is the very life of the spirit; what has been decides on what is. Freedom implies reconciliation — redemption of the past. If the past is just left behind and forgotten, there will be no end to destructive transgression. Somehow the progress of transgression must be arrested. Hegel thought that "the wounds of the spirit heal without leaving scars." He believed that, on the attained level of civilization, with the triumph of reason, freedom had become a reality. But neither the state nor society embodies the ultimate form of freedom. No matter

¹⁷ "... sein Insichgehen, in welchem er sein Dasein verlässt und seine Gestalt der Erinnerung übergibt." *Ibid.* No English translation can render the connotation of the German term which takes *Er-innerung* as "turning into oneself," *re-turn* from externalization.

¹⁸ "... das Innere und die in der Tat höhere Form der Substanz."

how rationally they are organized, they are still afflicted with unfreedom. True freedom is only in the idea. Liberation thus is a spiritual event. Hegel's dialectic remains within the framework set by the established reality principle.

Western philosophy ends with the idea with which it began. At the beginning and at the end, in Aristotle and in Hegel, the supreme mode of being, the ultimate form of reason and freedom, appear as *nous*, spirit, *Geist*. At the end and at the beginning, the empirical world remains in negativity — the stuff and the tools of the spirit, or of its representatives on earth. In reality, neither remembrance nor absolute knowledge redeems that which was and is. Still, this philosophy testifies not only to the reality principle which governs the empirical world, but also to its negation. The consummation of being is, not the ascending curve, but the closing of the circle: the *re-turn* from alienation. Philosophy could conceive of such a state only as that of pure thought. Between the beginning and the end is the development of reason as the logic of domination — progress through alienation. The repressed liberation is upheld: in the idea and in the ideal.

After Hegel, the mainstream of Western philosophy is exhausted. The Logos of domination has built its system, and what follows is epilogue: philosophy survives as a special (and not very vital) function in the academic establishment. The new principles of thought develop outside this establishment: they are qualitatively novel and committed

to a different form of reason, to a different reality principle. In metaphysical terms, the change is expressed by the fact that the essence of being is no longer conceived as Logos. And, with this change in the basic experience of being, the logic of domination is challenged. When Schopenhauer defines the essence of being as *will*, it shows forth as unsatiable want and aggression which must be redeemed at all cost. To Schopenhauer, they are redeemable only in their absolute negation; will itself must come to rest — to an end. But the ideal of Nirvana contains the affirmation: the end is fulfillment, gratification. Nirvana is the image of the pleasure principle. As such it emerges, still in a repressive form, in Richard Wagner's music drama: repressive because (as in any good theology and morality) fulfillment here demands the sacrifice of earthly happiness. The *principium individuationis* itself is said to be at fault — fulfillment is only beyond its realm; the most orgastic *Liebestod* still celebrates the most orgastic renunciation.

Only Nietzsche's philosophy surmounts the ontological tradition, but his indictment of the Logos as repression and perversion of the will-to-power is so highly ambiguous that it has often blocked the understanding. First the indictment itself is ambiguous. Historically, the Logos of domination released rather than repressed the will-to-power; it was the *direction* of this will that was repressive — toward productive renunciation which made man the slave of his labor and the enemy of his own gratification. Moreover, the will-to-power is not Nietzsche's last word: "Will — this is the liberator and joybringer: thus I taught you, my friends!

But now this also learn: the Will itself is still a prisoner."¹⁹ Will is still a prisoner because it has no power over time: the past not only remains unliberated but, unliberated, continues to mar all liberation. Unless the power of time over life is broken, there can be no freedom: the fact that time does not "recur" sustains the wound of bad conscience: it breeds vengeance and the need for punishment, which in turn perpetuate the past and the sickness to death. With the triumph of Christian morality, the life instincts were perverted and constrained; bad conscience was linked with a "guilt against God." In the human instincts were implanted "hostility, rebellion, insurrection against the 'master,' 'father,' the primal ancestor and origin of the world."²⁰ Repression and deprivation were thus justified and affirmed; they were made into the masterful and aggressive forces which determined the human existence. With their growing social utilization, progress became of necessity progressive repression. On this road, there is no alternative, and no spiritual and transcendental freedom can compensate for the repressive foundations of culture. The "wounds of the spirit," if they heal at all, do leave scars. The past becomes master over the present, and life a tribute to death:

And now cloud upon cloud rolled over the Spirit, until at last madness preached: "all things pass away, therefore all things deserve to pass away! And this is justice itself, this law of Time, that it must devour its children: thus preached madness."²¹

¹⁹ Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Part II ("On Redemption"), in *The Portable Nietzsche*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), p. 251. (Translation here and in the following quotations changed in part.)

²⁰ *The Genealogy of Morals*, Section II:22.

²¹ Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p. 25.

Nietzsche exposes the gigantic fallacy on which Western philosophy and morality were built — namely, the transformation of facts into essences, of historical into metaphysical conditions. The weakness and despondency of man, the inequality of power and wealth, injustice and suffering were attributed to some transcendental crime and guilt; rebellion became the original sin, disobedience against God; and the striving for gratification was concupiscence. Moreover, this whole series of fallacies culminated in the deification of time: because everything in the empirical world is passing, man is in his very essence a finite being, and death is in the very essence of life. Only the higher values are eternal, and therefore really real: the inner man, faith, and love which does not ask and does not desire. Nietzsche's attempt to uncover the historical roots of these transformations elucidates their twofold function: to pacify, compensate, and justify the underprivileged of the earth, and to protect those who made and left them underprivileged. The achievement snowballed and enveloped the masters and the slaves, the rulers and the ruled, in that upsurge of productive repression which advanced Western civilization to ever higher levels of efficacy. However, growing efficacy involved growing degeneration of the life instincts — the decline of man.

Nietzsche's critique is distinguished from all academic social psychology by the position from which it is undertaken: Nietzsche speaks in the name of a reality principle fundamentally antagonistic to that of Western civilization. The traditional form of reason is rejected on the basis of the experience of being-as-end-in-itself — as joy (*Lust*) and en-

joyment. The struggle against time is waged from this position: the tyranny of becoming over being must be broken if man is to come to himself in a world which is truly his own. As long as there is the uncomprehended and unconquered flux of time — senseless loss, the painful “it was” that will never be again — being contains the seed of destruction which perverts good to evil and vice versa. Man comes to himself only when the transcendence has been conquered — when eternity has become present in the here and now. Nietzsche’s conception terminates in the vision of the closed circle — not progress, but the “eternal return”:

All things pass, all things return; eternally turns the wheel of Being. All things die, all things blossom again, eternal is the year of Being. All things break, all things are joined anew; eternally the house of Being builds itself the same. All things part, all things welcome each other again; eternally the ring of Being abides by itself. In each Now, Being begins; round each Here turns the sphere of There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity.²²

The closed circle has appeared before: in Aristotle and Hegel, as the symbol of being-as-end-in-itself. But while Aristotle reserved it to the *nous theos*, while Hegel identified it with the absolute idea, Nietzsche envisages the eternal return of the finite exactly as it is — in its full concreteness and finiteness. This is the total affirmation of the life instincts, repelling all escape and negation. The eternal return is the will and vision of an *erotic* attitude toward being for which necessity and fulfillment coincide.

Shield of necessity!
Star-summit of Being!

²² *Ibid.*, Part III (“The Convalescent”), pp. 329–330.

Not reached by any wish,
not soiled by any No,
eternal Yes of Being:
I affirm you eternally,
for I love you, eternity.²³

Eternity, long since the ultimate consolation of an alienated existence, had been made into an instrument of repression by its relegation to a transcendental world — unreal reward for real suffering. Here, eternity is reclaimed for the fair earth — as the eternal return of its children, of the lily and the rose, of the sun on the mountains and lakes, of the lover and the beloved, of the fear for their life, of pain and happiness. Death *is*; it is conquered only if it is followed by the real rebirth of everything that was before death here on earth — not as a mere repetition but as willed and wanted re-creation. The eternal return thus includes the return of suffering, but suffering as a means for more gratification, for the aggrandizement of joy.²⁴ The horror of pain derives from the “instinct of weakness,” from the fact that pain overwhelms and becomes final and fatal. Suffering can be affirmed if man’s “power is sufficiently strong”²⁵ to make pain a stimulus for affirmation — a link in the chain of joy. The doctrine of the eternal return obtains all its meaning from the central proposition that “joy wants eternity” — wants itself and all things to be everlasting.

Nietzsche’s philosophy contains enough elements of the terrible past: his celebration of pain and power perpetuates features of the morality which he strives to overcome.

²³ “Ruhm und Ewigkeit,” in *Werke* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner, 1919), VIII, 436 (my translation).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, XIV, 301.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

However, the image of a new reality principle breaks the repressive context and anticipates the liberation from the archaic heritage. "The earth has all too long been a mad-house!"²⁶ For Nietzsche, the liberation depends on the reversal of the sense of guilt; mankind must come to associate the bad conscience not with the affirmation but with the denial of the life instincts, not with the rebellion but with the acceptance of the repressive ideals.²⁷

We have suggested certain nodal points in the development of Western philosophy which reveal the historical limitations of its system of reason — and the effort to surpass this system. The struggle appears in the antagonism between becoming and being, between the ascending curve and the closed circle, progress and eternal return, transcendence and rest in fulfillment.²⁸ It is the struggle between the logic of domination and the will to gratification. Both assert their claims for defining the reality principle. The traditional ontology is contested: against the conception of being in terms of Logos rises the conception of being in a-logical terms: will and joy. This countertrend strives to formulate its own Logos: the logic of gratification.

In its most advanced positions, Freud's theory partakes of this philosophical dynamic. His metapsychology, attempting to define the essence of being, defines it as Eros

²⁶ *The Genealogy of Morals*, Section II, 22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁸ The two antagonistic conceptions of time outlined here are discussed by Mircea Eliade in his book *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955). He contrasts the "cyclical" with the "linear" notion of time, the former characteristic of "traditional" (predominantly primitive) civilizations, the latter of "modern man."

— in contrast to its traditional definition as Logos. The death instinct affirms the principle of non-being (the negation of being) against Eros (the principle of being). The ubiquitous fusion of the two principles in Freud's conception corresponds to the traditional metaphysical fusion of being and non-being. To be sure, Freud's conception of Eros refers only to organic life. However, inorganic matter is, as the "end" of the death instinct, so inherently linked to organic matter that (as suggested above) it seems permissible to give his conception a general ontological meaning. Being is essentially the striving for pleasure. This striving becomes an "aim" in the human existence: the erotic impulse to combine living substance into ever larger and more durable units is the instinctual source of civilization. The sex instincts are *life* instincts: the impulse to preserve and enrich life by mastering nature in accordance with the developing vital needs is originally an erotic impulse. Ananke is experienced as the barrier against the satisfaction of the life instincts, which seek pleasure, not security. And the "struggle for existence" is originally a struggle for pleasure: culture begins with the collective implementation of this aim. Later, however, the struggle for existence is organized in the interest of domination: the erotic basis of culture is transformed. When philosophy conceives the essence of being as Logos, it is already the Logos of domination — commanding, mastering, directing reason, to which man and nature are to be subjected.

Freud's interpretation of being in terms of Eros recaptures the early stage of Plato's philosophy, which conceived of culture not as the repressive sublimation but as the free