

# The Ambivalence of Psychoanalysis

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*Almost since the beginning of the century, psychoanalysis has sat like an undigested meal in the collective stomach. Unable finally either to assimilate or eliminate it writers have endlessly churned over its merits and demerits. The list of books on psychoanalysis which are offered to the public year after year never ceases to amaze. For, as well as being one of the most daring and radical ideas ever put forward, psychoanalysis is also part of a deadening and conformist apparatus. This paradox, which underlies the permanently troubled relationship between psychoanalysis and the Left is the subject of the article, condensed from "Psychoanalysis Groups Politics Culture" edited by the Radical Science Collective Free Association, 1984.*

## The Essential Ambivalence

WITHOUT doubt it is the ambiguous political message of psychoanalysis which has kept the discussion open so long. If it were possible to classify it once and for all as 'progressive' or 'reactionary', the issue would long since have been dropped. Writing a political character reference for psychoanalysis is no easy matter. So deep are the contradictions involved that one comes to mistrust anybody who has arrived at a simple conclusion 'for' or 'against'.

The political arguments against are well known. As a therapy, psychoanalysis can be authoritarian to the point of 'brainwashing' its patients; and concerned both with 'inner' factors to the exclusion of 'outer' ones, and with adjusting the individual to the *status quo*, rather than society to its inhabitants. As a theory, it is reductionistic, ignoring social factors and obscuring political tensions, and embodies many conservative and socially pessimistic assumptions. When this theory becomes disseminated as a popular world-view, we are in the grip of an ideology which stifles political action even before it can be expressed.

Yet as often as it is vilified, psychoanalysis is redeemed by leftist (and feminist) enthusiasts who come to its rescue. In the Frankfurt School tradition, it offers, first, a critique of the collective psychoanalysis which makes capitalism tick (Reich, Adorno, Marcuse); and, second, a mode of analysis—'critical self-reflection'—which provides a paradigm for 'emancipatory' thought (Habermas). In French structuralism (Lacan, Althusser), it decentres human subjectivity away from the Cartesian ego, in a paradigm shift as radical as that achieved by Copernicus four centuries before. For those seeking to give content to the slogan, 'the personal is political', it reaches beneath the banality of everyday consciousness to grasp the processes which underly the power-structure of relationships. Lacking any serious competitors on this terrain, psychoanalysis is likely to survive any denunciation its critics heap upon it.

We are not likely to find which side psychoanalysis is 'really' on by scrutiny of Freud's own political views. Aside from the fact that quotations can be dredged from his writings which show him in any light 'one pleases, the assumption on which such a search is based is a faulty one; there may be little correspondence between an individual's conscious attitudes to society and the message which speaks through their writings and actions.

The truth is, as I shall attempt to show in this essay, that the political character of psychoanalysis is *inherently* ambivalent; this is due, not only to the fact that different readings of it can be produced which argue in different directions, but also to certain contradictions built into its practice and theory.

## Psychoanalysis As Therapy

The strongest criticisms of psychoanalysis as a set of practices arise from the fact that these practices are part of a system, labelled by Kovel (1980) the 'mental health industry', which

basically exists because of its effectiveness in maintaining social order. Psychoanalysis shares with other types of 'mental welfare' concern to adapt or adjust individuals to their allotted place in society, by reference to an hypostasised set of norms of 'mature' human behaviour. Like them, it 'blames the victim' for his or her breakdown, leaving unscathed the larger social framework within which breakdowns occur. Seeing itself as a technology, it dehumanises its patients by submitting them to a rigid set of rules and modes of understanding; it infantilises them, the better to be able to control their development.

The same criticisms can be made of virtually any other aspect of the mental welfare system. It is a convenient oversimplification to say that this is because the system is based on psychoanalysis; in reality, the system is formed out of many different theories and practices, and what is visible of psychoanalysis within it is only the lowest common denominator which it shares with these other approaches. Berger (1955) may be right in claiming that, if Freud had not existed, American society would have had to invent him, but what this means in fact is that the success of psychoanalysis within the mental health system was (to use a favourite term of Freud's) overdetermined. Some of the determinants had little to do with Freud, and much more with the demands of the system.

That system, to a large extent, can be identified with psychiatry, but we must not overlook the dialectical change which psychiatry and psychoanalysis wrought upon each other. Unfortunately, most of the political critiques of psychiatry are focussed on precisely those parts of it which resisted this transformation; anti-psychiatry, and accounts of 'the medicalisation of deviance', have as their point of departure State-run, asylum-based, and physically oriented methods of treatment. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, normally takes place with a private contractual relationship between client and professional; it is seldom institutional; and its method is purely verbal. Moreover, far from being something that can be imposed on people, it in fact demands from them a level of motivation which leaves many patients emotionally and financially exhausted. The continuity with nineteenth-century asylum psychiatry is an illusion; in reality, psychoanalysis resolved a profound crisis in mental welfare, by providing the *savoir* for new forms of intervention aimed at the population *outside* the asylum. Freud, of course, was not a psychiatrist but a neurologist, and from his out-patient practice he brought into psychiatry a method of dissecting everyday lives which the asylum doctors, with their largely cadaverous population of 'subjects', could never have developed.

A critique which can encompass psychoanalytic practice has to take as its starting-point a whole system for the management and surveillance of social life, the 'psy complex', of which traditional psychiatry forms only the backstop. The psy complex is an ensemble of agencies, including clinical, educational, developmental and industrial psychology, psychotherapy, and social work, whose discourses are not confined to particular sites of professional intervention, but which traverse the family, school

and work-place—indeed, 'the social' itself. The most effective ways of analysing this system have come not from anti-psychiatry, but from the 'post-structuralist' writers surrounding Foucault: Castel, Donzelot, Deleuze and Guattari.

Apart from the fact that these writers adopt a much broader definition of the mental health system than the anti-psychiatrists did, they diverge from the latter on three fundamental issues. The first concerns the relation between professionals and the State: whereas anti-psychiatry saw the former as agents of the latter — a kind of mental police force — writers on the psy complex emphasise its disorganised nature and its tendency to create its own goals. The second difference concerns the nature of the power exercised: for anti-psychiatry, this was essentially repressive, being concerned to stop people doing things they weren't supposed to. Post-structuralists, however, stress 'productive power' — the dissemination of discourses among a receptive population, discourses which shape and structure new forms of subjectivity. Lastly, whereas, for anti-psychiatry, the medical model and positivism played key roles in the legitimisation of psychiatric interventions, the post-structuralists treat with contempt the notion of ideology and ideology-critique.

At least on the first two points, the post-structuralists' approach to the psy complex seems far more relevant for understanding psychoanalysis. (This is hardly surprising, for these authors to a great extent approached the subject by way of psychoanalysis.) For them, the growth of interventions in mental welfare has to be seen in the context of a gradual transfer of power from the family to other agencies.

With the decline of patriarchal power under capitalism, many of the traditional functions of the family in controlling and caring for individuals could no longer be exercised. The welfare state came into being through the piecemeal replacement of these functions by public agencies. Important among these, of course, was asylum psychiatry; but this came to be seen as not only an ineffective response to social ills, but one which came too late. Just as good drainage and physical hygiene had improved the physical health of the population, so analogous measures would guarantee its mental (and moral) health. The breeding-ground of all disorders came to be seen as the family, and it was on this site that measures were concentrated.

As Donzelot shows, a large apparatus was set up to monitor and deal with the 'failures' of family life, opening up in the process new avenues of intervention into the family itself. The achievement of psychoanalysis was to provide a systematic theory, a set of norms and a technology for regulating private lives. Some of its major advances were in fact made in the context of the two World Wars, when new opportunities arose to develop psychological remedies for military problems. Psychoanalysis achieved its dominant position within American psychiatry, however, by riding in on the wave of the Mental Hygiene Movement, which sought a radical reform and broadening of mental welfare services. This approach, with its emphasis on detection and prevention of mental disorder at an early stage, called into being a system as much concerned with socialisation as with care and relief.

The precise role of psychoanalysis within this system is perhaps the key issue that most sharply divides its supporters and detractors on the Left. According to Althusser (1971, p. 178), the French Communist Party's rejection of psychoanalysis was based on a failure to recognise the travesty which American psychiatry had made of it: 'the "dominant" ideas, in this case, were playing their "dominating" role to perfection, ruling unrecognised over the very minds that were trying to fight them'. Lacan's more authentic reading would show that the biological and medical interpretation of psychoanalysis was, in fact, a heretical departure. Jacoby (1975) repeated what the Frankfurt

School had argued all along, that psychoanalysis was not about 'nature' so much as 'second nature', quoting Marcuse (1962) as follows: "Freud's theory is in its very substance 'sociological', and no new cultural or sociological orientation is needed to reveal this substance." According to Jacoby, the authentic gloom of Freud's analysis of modern life had been excised for the American market, and replaced by a view in which achieving harmony between individual and society was merely a technical problem.

It is indeed true, as Paul Hirst points out (1981), that psychoanalysis has been by no means as universally influential in the formation of the psy complex as Donzelot and others assume. However, the mere fact that analysis remains a minority treatment should not blind us to the enormous influence that Freudian ideas have had on a wide range of forms of intervention. Even where an approach was adopted (such as learning theory) which nominally opposed psychoanalysis, such alternatives were fashioned in debate with psychoanalysis — a debate conducted in its own terms. And to complain that psychoanalysis was unwillingly co-opted into the mental welfare system is to ignore the prodigious efforts made by Freud himself to gain a foothold for it in the USA (see Castel, 1982, p.324).

This widespread dissemination of psychoanalysis, however, was indeed accompanied by a transformation of its original principles. Freud's ideas were only taken up in so far as they suited the aims of the psy complex; it would be as misleading to read off his views from the practices which purport to be based on them, as to try and infer Piaget's thought from the 'child-centred pedagogy' which claims him as its mascot (Walkerline, 1984). In both cases, the take-up was selective, and one can imagine other uses to which the theories could have been put. To decide what psychoanalysis 'really' is, is like speculating about what Jill would be like if she hadn't married Jack twenty years ago; Jill may have had characteristics before the marriage which seem to have disappeared now, but on what grounds can we claim that this was the 'real' Jill? Nevertheless, in concentrating on the lowest common denominator which psychoanalysis shares with the rest of the psy complex, we may miss more essential features which set it apart.

The very lowest of these common denominators is something so obvious that one may easily overlook it — the *individualism* of psychoanalysis; the fact that it treats problems arising on social life in terms of the properties of individual subjects. It is the defining feature of all psychology that it takes the individual as the unit of analysis; Henriques et al. (1984) see this as intrinsically connected with psychology's functions of surveillance and regulation.

At the next level of specificity, which sets psychoanalysis apart from organic or genetic theories of personality, but leaves it undifferentiated from other environmentalist approaches, is the conviction that the determinants of individual dispositions are to be found in childhood, and that treatment can modify these dispositions. This, it will be noted, says nothing about the unconscious, or about sexuality, therapeutic technique, or the discontents of civilisation. To that extent it overlaps with the principles of behaviourist learning theory: Castel (1982, p.51) points out that, so far from being sworn enemies, psychoanalysis and behaviourism in the USA have often made a fruitful partnership. (It was J.B. Watson himself who suggested that 'any man in a position to serve in high public office should be obliged to submit to psychoanalysis'.) But only a superficial acquaintance with the content of the two theories is required to see how much of Freud's thought must be set aside to make such a partnership possible.

Whereas the focus of intervention for the asylum system had been insanity, twentieth-century forms of mental welfare

concerned themselves with malfunctioning in everyday settings — 'failure to cope' (Armstrong, 1980). Such failures were encoded via the theoretical construct, 'neurosis', which — in the new sense which he gave to it — was Freud's chief gift to the psy complex. The concept of the unconscious, on the other hand, was taken up somewhat selectively by American psychiatrists. Rather than furnishing them with a critical perspective on bourgeois society, or a 'decentering of the human subject', it mainly served to reassure them that they could safely adopt a psychological approach without giving up their traditional claim, as doctors, to know better than the patient what was wrong with them. The notion of the unconscious thus played a central part in building a professional ideology for the psy complex (Scull, 1979). A theory which relegated the patient's own views about what was going on to the status of fantasy, and which took disagreement, or 'resistance', as a sure sign that the professional was in the right, did wonders for professionals anxious to secure their cognitive authority as experts on the field of human subjectivity.

As I have remarked above, classical Freudian therapy was by no means the main contribution of psychoanalysis to the psy complex. Such treatment was too expensive and time-consuming to be suited to more than a tiny minority of cases: for other patients, and other fields of intervention, new 'psychodynamic' methods had to be evolved. The most obviously recognisable are the post-Freudian, neo-Freudian, and even anti-Freudian forms of individual therapy, which sprouted prolifically in the fertile soil of the American market. In addition, Freudian principles were extrapolated to the construction of institutional regimes, of which group therapy was the mainstay; in this case, the object of transference became the group, rather than the doctor running it. When such methods were employed in the construction of therapeutic communities, we see a remarkable revival of the moral treatment pioneered over a century before by Tuke and Pinel. The aim of both treatments was to recreate the family environment in which disorders had supposedly arisen, this time under strict technical control, so that the deep-seated problems could be 'worked through' in a new context.

Other forms of intervention did not use Freud's prescriptions regarding therapy, but instead took his notions about development and family life as their guiding principles. Social workers, for example, did not ask their clients to free-associate or produce dreams, but they commonly understood the client's attitude to them in terms of 'transference', and attributed their problems to the insidious workings of unconscious fantasy — rather than to real social difficulties, which they had no mandate to remove. Agencies concerned with the promotion of norms of family life (such as family or juvenile courts) looked to psychoanalysis for the normative principles which defined a 'healthy' upbringing (e.g. the notion that boys need a father in order to grow into men). The wide range of services designed to monitor and regulate the environment of early socialisation (child guidance clinics, parent education courses, early detection schemes) was founded on the Freudian dogma of the infantile origins of neurosis — even though actual psychoanalytic theory was from time to time deemed unfashionable. John Bowlby's 'attachment theory', for example, is a set of ideas which have been highly influential in forming pedagogic attitudes and public policy, based on a bowdlerised — or should one say Bowlbyised? — version of analytic theory.

Wider afield, we may note the influence of psychoanalysis on marketing, on industrial organisation, and educational practices. Finally, there is the dissemination of Freudian ideas into popular culture. This process, which by-passes the professional nexus, is an aspect of what Brinkgreve et al. (1979) term 'proto-professionalisation', and is perhaps the most far-reaching of the effects of psychoanalysis. In the USA, it has not merely restruc-

tured people's ideas about what would constitute an adequate response to personal difficulties; it has become a world-view. As Castel (1982, p.261) puts it, 'Psychoanalysis was the main instrument for the reduction of social issues in general to questions of psychology.'

To describe the political character of psychoanalysis, however, it is not simply to list the types of intervention which it informed, without describing the content of the interventions. What sort of values and social ideology were associated with the name of psychoanalysis?

Here we reach the kernel of the contradiction which forms the topic of this essay. For to characterise psychoanalysis simply as 'conformist' or 'libertarian', 'progressive' or 'reactionary', 'pro-family' or 'anti-family', is impossible; in reality, it is all of these things. This ambivalence can be traced to the essential paradox of the welfare system of which psychoanalysis forms a part. For at the same time as it maintains and reinforces traditional forms of social life — in particular, the family—the psy complex undermines their very basis, by taking away their rights to self-determination. To adopt a global metaphor, it props up the ailing regime of the family, by turning it into a puppet dictatorship or client state with no real autonomy. Thus, the psy complex does not simply reinforce the family, nor simply undermine it. In a subtle holding operation, it manages to do *both*.

This point is made most effectively by Donzelot (1979), who compares Freud's role in the social realm to that of Keynes in the economic. Just as Keynesian economics maintained the mainspring of capitalism—the profit motive—but brought it under political control with a system of checks and balances, so Freud devised a technology which enhanced individual autonomy in some respects, yet retained the family as 'the horizon of all individual paths' (op. cit., p.232). In doing so, he struck the necessary balance between 'the necessity of imposing social norms of health and education, and that of maintaining the autonomy of individuals and the ambition of families as a principle of free enterprise' (ibid.). (There is a further parallel between Freud and Keynes, which Donzelot does not remark, but which is pointed out by Hirst (1981): that the doctrines of both were significantly distorted by the agencies which took them up.)

Though Marxists have long emphasised the role of the family in physically reproducing and servicing producers and consumers, Donzelot's emphasis on the family as a generator of 'ambition' (what we might call 'the Dallas principle') points to individual identity and motivation. Ambition, in fact, is not quite an adequate term to describe the scenarios and compulsions which the family bequeathes to its offspring. We must also take into account the mechanisms described by Chodorow (1979), through which the urge to mother reproduces itself, and also the general process of appropriation of cultural resources posited by Vygotsky and elaborated by the Berlin school of 'critical psychology' (see Elbers). The more we study these processes, the more illusory becomes the opposition of individual autonomy and family structure; the two are, in fact, mutually constitutive.

The ambivalence of psychoanalysis in relation to the family lies in the fact that it can unmask, and potentially dismantle, the mechanisms which hold the family together; it can untie the sacred bonds which hold fast man and woman, parent and child, in its stifling embrace. Yet it can also use this knowledge to tie the bonds even tighter, if it chooses. The wealthy intelligentsia who were the first clients of psychoanalysis (and will probably be its last) sought an escape from conventions of family life and sexual morality which were seen as no longer functional (what would nowadays be called 'getting rid of your hang-ups'). Castel (1982, p.32) claims that the first adherents of psychoanalysis in the USA were 'in rebellion against New England puritanism and

moral conformity', and no doubt Freud served them well. Yet the extent to which such an escape was permitted was circumscribed by psychoanalysis itself; and there is little doubt that, especially in the versions produced for consumption lower down the market, psychoanalysis defended more traditional values than it opposed.

It did so chiefly by reducing the elements of human existence to the nuclear family (what Deleuze and Guattari (1977) term the 'mama-papa matrix'), and by insisting on the inevitability and universality of certain emotional patterns, notably the Oedipus Complex. (If you were unfortunate enough not to have an Oedipus Complex to start with, Deleuze and Guattari wryly note, the analyst would start by installing one for you.) In addition, the dominant American version of psychoanalysis (ego psychology) emphasised the reinforcement of the ego, that is, of the 'reality principle', which is as much concerned with social realities as with physical ones. By conflating the two sorts into one absolute and unquestioned principle, psychoanalysis reified the social order into a timeless law. Thus, the conservative effects of psychoanalysis were closely bound up with the theory underlying it—a topic we shall deal with in the next section.

We may analyse the political stance of psychoanalysis, not only in its attitude to family structure, but also through its dealings with the individual subject. Here, criticisms relate to the power-relationship between analyst and patient, and the picture (once again) is by no means straightforward.

The commonest criticism, from a liberal standpoint, is that psychoanalytic technique is authoritarian and manipulative; it exercises a kind of totalitarian power that treats the patient as an object, or at best a sort of child. Castel (1972) stresses that, despite the liberal connotations of 'free association', the power-relationship between analyst and patient is highly asymmetrical; the analyst, in the name of 'technique', banishes certain topics by treating them only as masks for other topics. Any questioning of the way the analyst exercises his or her powers, for example, is treated as material for interpretation only. This one-sided relationship parallels that to be found between professionals and clients throughout the rest of psy. complex. Elsewhere (Ingleby, in press) I have argued that the power of these professions is very largely based on the parental nature of the relationship which is on offer. (To this it should be added parenthetically that the *style* of parenting offered has changed in recent years, away from an autocratic and omniscient posture towards a more democratic and 'client-centred' one.)

Yet it is too simple to regard psychoanalysts as paternalistic in the same sense as priests, doctors or social workers. What is unique in analysis is the fact that this 'transference' is quite explicit and becomes, indeed, the main vehicle and topic of the therapy. Though it looks as if the analysts are merely aiming to install themselves in the parent's place, the better to control their patients, it is paradoxically the aim of analysis to destroy the very scenario on which it is built. Analysts are supposed to act as a 'blink screen', in order to reveal the images being projected on to them. They are, in effect, playing at not being there, in order to demonstrate that the patient's attitude to them is not based on reality, and must therefore be given up. So, far from telling patients what to think or do, much of their efforts go into sidestepping the patients' attempts to get them to do just this.

In psychoanalysis, then, transference is like a ladder which is thrown away when the goal is reached; not to have 'worked through' it thoroughly is the tell-tale sign of an 'incomplete' analysis. The aim of analysis is a relationship thoroughly cleansed of all parental undertones, which enables the patient to dismantle the familial scenarios which have previously struc-

tured and dominated his or her life. Doesn't this sound like emancipation?

The critics, however, are not attacking the ideal outcomes of analysis, but what goes on within it, which is rather like a game of football played on a sloping pitch. What is constitutive of dialogue is the equality of the speakers—the fact that both sides respond to each other's utterances according to the same rules, and accept a commitment to respect each other's communicative intentions. A situation in which everything one partner says is routinely reduced by the other to the status of material for interpretation is clearly incompatible with this ideal. Indeed, as Lomas (1982) points out, it is probably rather bad for people—especially if they find relationships problematic in the first place. The lack of reciprocity between analyst and patient makes the relationship less than a human one: Freud's 'rule of abstinence' specifically forbids analysts from presenting themselves to their patients as *persons*.

Psychoanalysis, however, never set out to be a humanistic or phenomenological method. It is true that understanding another's point of view requires treating them as an equal in the dialogue; but if you want such a therapy, the analysts would say, you are free to choose another variety such as client-centered therapy or (better still) co-counselling. Psychoanalysis, as Ricoeur (1970) pointed out, is not a species of phenomenology, and its method can never be purely hermeneutical; its systematic mistrust of the patient's viewpoint is required in order to gain a leverage on resistance and to reveal the patient's compulsion to lie about certain topics. One doesn't enter into negotiations with the Unconscious. To be liberated from one's own self-deceptions, which is the sort of emancipation Habermas (1972) sees in psychoanalysis, one has therefore to forego the 'unconditional positive regard' enjoined on therapists by Carl Rogers.

But the problem with this ideal of critical self-reflection is: where do the criticisms come from? If they come from an authority regarded as absolute, the so-called emancipation leads straight back into domination. (This, in fact, is the basic criticism of 'critical theory'). Now insofar as the criticism of one's self-perceptions comes from the analyst in person, we have seen that the authority ascribed to this figure is but a symptom of immaturity, which is fostered only in order to eradicate it. The 'full analysed' patient is free to treat the analyst as a cognitive equal, whose interpretations may reasonably be rejected if one can come up with better ones.

To see the analyst in *person* as the locus of authority, however, is a basic error. As we have seen, technique requires that the analyst's person should be kept totally hidden (witness the placing of the chair behind the patient's head); the interpretations come, in fact, from the doctrines of psychoanalysis, which the analyst represents in much the same way that the priest represents the doctrines of the Church, ('Not I, but Freud within me. . .') Thus it comes as no surprise that the patient's interpretations can stand on equal terms with the analyst's; the acceptability of *both* depends on their conformity with the framework of psychoanalysis. What the patient submits to, is not the rule of the analyst; but the rule of *analysis*, to which the analyst is every bit as subject. The real authoritarianism of psychoanalysis lies, not in the domination of patient by analyst, but in the domination of both by a analytic doctrine.

This is not mere hair-splitting: it is the resolution of the paradox that 'working through the transference' abolishes the analyst's authority, while building up that of psychoanalysis itself. I would submit further that the relationship to psychoanalysis itself is also ruled by irrational, unconscious processes, and that *this* form of transference is never worked through, since the analyst is likely to be as thoroughly immersed in it as the patient. That psychoanalysis is a supernatural

authority of analysts, as well as for patients, is betrayed by the curious behaviour of its practitioners towards their profession. To some extent their protectiveness is justified by the necessity of defending it from the real enemies that surround it; but their belief in its intellectual omnipotence, their obsessional preservation of its rituals (see Lacan, 1973), their scornful attitude to outside criticism and internal heresy—all these are more the hallmark of religion, than of a practice that claims to be the quintessence of rationalism. What the analytic community fails to understand is that it is not the truth of its beliefs which needs defending, but the grounds on which they are arrived at. Psychoanalysis can never claim legitimate authority if it is presented as a divine revelation.

We thus arrive at the conclusion that, although psychoanalysis is concerned with raising consciousness, and thus with raising certain powers of the self, it does so by attenuating certain other powers. Though productive, in Foucault's sense, it is also repressive; it demonstrates how wrong it is to regard productive power as *replacing* the repressive sort.

The way in which psychoanalysis 'produces' new forms of subjectivity, both for patients and in the culture generally, is the same as the process by which those around the child create his or her subjectivity in the first place. To understand this process, it is necessary to introduce the ideas of Vygotsky or Mead rather than Freud himself. The disclosure of psychoanalysis provides a framework of interpretations and implicit responses, in terms of which individuals may orient and articulate themselves; it thus gives them a 'position' within a discourse, in which to exist as subjects. Autonomy and awareness come into being in the space between analyst and patient (Ingleby, 1983).

This process also describes the productive effects of psychoanalysis within the culture generally. According to Foucault (1978), sexuality was not 'repressed' in the Victorian era, but endlessly talked about at a professional level; Freud did not shatter a silence, but merely transformed one discourse into another one. The discourse about sexuality (which had its ultimate origin in the religious confessional) embodies the codes which structure and regulate social life. Though these codes function 'productively', they are nevertheless imposed in a thoroughly 'repressive' way—as is also true, incidentally, of the codes within which subjectivity originates in childhood. Every discourse has a non-negotiable foundation which must be accepted as a condition of participating in it. As English people know from birth, there are things one simply doesn't talk about, and things one simply doesn't do: the child soon discovers that to certain 'why?' questions, the only answer is 'because'. It is in the parts of itself that the discourse does not allow to be questioned that its repressive power is concealed. In psychoanalysis, these parts are rather extensive. As Donzelot puts it (1979, p.230), 'the discourse of the psy professions credits the family with being both the only model for socialisation and the source of all dissatisfaction: it enables them to circumscribe the position of their clients, to mark out its circuits and block it exists'.

### Psychoanalysis As a World-View

To bring in psychoanalytic theory at this point is not to change the subject: rather, to try to analyse the discourse of psychoanalysis as if it did not have an explicit and elaborate theoretical basis would be absurd. The theoretical counterpart of the 'familialism' embodied in psychoanalytic practice is the Freudian insistence on the elemental nature of certain types of family relation as the cradle of subjectivity. In this gaze, every influence on socialisation except that of the family is rendered invisible.

Not only does the family become 'the horizon of all in-

dividual paths', but it is a family frozen into the particular historical form in which Freud happened to find it. Marcuse may be right to argue that Freud's theory 'does not require the addition of a sociological dimension', in the sense that it places development firmly within the parameters of a basic social institution; but these parameters function exactly like constants in a physical law—they do not explain anything since they can never vary.

One might argue that Freud treated the social order of his time as a constant out of conscious conservatism, because he did not think there could be a better one; but in fact the theory that he wrought gave him very little choice, since it insists that this social order is the only possible one, given the 'human nature' out of which it has to be constructed. Freud did not see political ideals such as equality between the sexes, solidarity among mankind, or fulfilment in work as either practicable or desirable, save in minuscule amounts. This is because, on his view of human nature, alienation in all of its forms is inescapable. American psychiatry thus did not suppress the 'radical vision' of psychoanalysis, as Jacoby or Althusser would have us believe: there was no such vision to suppress.

### The Inevitability of Alienation

For Freud, civilised man was inescapably at loggerheads with himself and with other men—and increasingly so as civilisation progressed. Both intelligent behaviour and social organisation entailed conflicts with human nature which made frustration inevitable: in Freud's metapsychology, the relationship between Ego and Id was essentially one of colonisation. This set severe limits on what could be achieved by therapy, and the optimistic project of using psychoanalysis to produce a happy reconciliation between individual and society—as American Freudianism sought, by and large, to do—was a hollow travesty of Freud's own philosophy. 'Transforming hysterical misery into common unhappiness' was the most that Freud claimed to do for his patients (1984/1954). Neither, of course, could Marxism free us from our chains, for the chains were part of our humanity itself.

To mitigate the severity of Freud's diagnosis, Marcuse (1962) introduced a distinction between 'basic' and 'surplus' repression—the former being that which was required to maintain civilised behaviour generally, the latter being added to this by forms of social domination. As far as Freud was concerned, however, the removal of 'surplus' repression would make hardly a dent in the sum of human misery. In the following sections I shall examine the different ways in which psychoanalysis can be thought to imply the inevitability of conflict. Freud's belief in this inevitability was, as he would say, 'overdetermined'; several different lines of reasoning led him to the same conclusion.

### The Axiomatic Approach

Occasionally Freud makes it clear that for him, the opposition between 'reason' and 'instinct' is axiomatic, inherent in the concepts themselves. In accepting this presupposition, he was merely subscribing to the dominant conceptual framework of his time; that 'natural' desires were inherently 'unreasonable' ones was, for the average citizen of the nineteenth century, an unquestionable piece of wisdom, and we will be committing a pardonable solecism if we regard Freud as a typical Victorian in this respect. The dualism can of course be traced back to Descartes, and still further—although it was not without its critics, such as Rousseau, in the romantic epoch.

We see Freud elaborating this idea in his discussion of aggression in the case of Little Hans (1909/1956): Here, he refers to:

... a universal and indispensable attribute of all instincts and impulses—their 'impulsive' and dynamic character, what might be termed as their capacity for initiating motion (p. 28).

The attribute, Freud goes on to suggest, leads to all conduct an aggressive (and, by implication, anti-social) character.

Horowitz (1977) demonstrates the same sort of preconception in his assertion that human drives are inherently 'distant from reality' (p. 9). Having accepted this idea, of course, Horowitz commits himself to a form of 'basic repression' that effectively pre-empts much of his subsequent discussion. A little conceptual analysis, however, soon shows that this notion is not a logically necessary one. For if what we mean by 'instinct' is simply an end which the organism innately seeks, then instincts have to be controlled merely because they lack form—not because they have the *wrong* form. In this sense it is a category-mistake to see an opposition between reason and instinct, because they are logically not the kinds of entities that can be in conflict. Rationality is concerned with means, instinct with ends, and insofar as rationality provides the means of gratification of instinctual needs, it removes a conflict rather than creating one.

Clearly, there are no grounds here for regarding the relationship between Ego and Id as one of repression; the relationship between cognitive and motivational mechanisms is essentially one of cooperation, not competition. Opposition can only arise because instincts themselves conflict with one another, or because the human mind inherits irrational modes of thought in addition to instincts themselves. However, making this elementary point does not go very far towards refuting Freud's pessimism; precisely such postulates form the basis of his whole theoretical system.

Elsewhere (Ingleby, 1983) I have tried to show that Freud's failure to explain the origins of rationality and consciousness comes from looking in the wrong place—in the individual, instead of 'the ensemble of social relations', and that this reflects a contrast between two world-views, 'Enlightenment' and 'Romantic', in terms of which most psychology remains rooted in the former camp. A theory of the social construction of the ego is implicit in the *practice* of psychoanalysis, and can be articulated in theory with the help of constructs borrowed from Mead, Vygotsky, and recent developmental psychology inspired by these two.

### The Competitive Paradigm

I hope to have shown in the above that Freud approached the field of psychology with strong preconceptions about the inevitability of conflict between man and other men, nature and himself. (The conflict between man and woman is another part of the story, too, but one to which I have not been able to do much justice here. See however, Chodorow (1979, Ch.9).) In the case of libido, it is primarily because Freud assumes that the patriarchal nuclear family is inevitable that he sees frustration as necessary; primary process, however, constitutes an apparently innate mode of unreasonableness which militates against adaptation to *any* form of society. I have argued that it is the latter, cognitive postulate of Freud's which most seriously undermines a belief in social progress.

Though I am thus proposing that part of Freud's pessimism should be regarded as warranted, I have argued that most of it is not and it is therefore interesting to consider where his beliefs about human nature might have come from.

Chiefly, it would appear that it is Freud's tendency to ignore the social context of his observations that leads him to make the inferences he does. Freud's method was essentially ahistorical, in that he attempted to infer the nature of what had been repressed from its (unconscious) form after repression—without tak-

ing into account the possibility that whatever led to its being repressed in the first place might also have affected its form. Had he done so, the act of repression would have lost its self-justifying appearance, and Freud would have had to seek elsewhere the reasons for man's self-alienation.

For Freud characterises the Id in the same way that white Americans characterised the Red Indian, and colonial peoples generally have characterised the victims of their exploitation. The Indian had to be brutally repressed, so the myth ran, because his behaviour was lawless and wanton; likewise with the 'criminal violence' of the Algerians under the French—so coolly demythologised by Fanon (1967)—and so too with the lawlessness of children, mental patients, the working class ... and the Id.

But these myths can only be sustained by leaving out of view the political facts of the case; the restoration of historical perspective brings back the justice and intelligibility of what has been repressed. We see that the domination and exploitation of the colonised person *produces* the characteristics which are supposed, by entirely circular logic, to justify it. Thus, the behaviour of the Indians does not reflect the intrinsic character of their culture, but that of the oppression they experienced; likewise, the 'seething chaos' of the Unconscious does not reflect man's biological predispositions so much as the savage force by which they are suppressed.

In order to understand what Freud found in the Unconscious, then, we must bear in mind the violence with which nineteenth-century Europe exploited its citizens—something to which Freud was remarkably insensitive, as his discussion of the case of Schreber demonstrates (Shatzmann, 1973). (For all this, we must hastily disavow the attitude that Freud's observations were somehow unrepresentative of civilisation before and after.)

Thus, we can see that the myth of inherent opposition between nature and culture was congruent with Freud's own conventionally conservative politics; precisely because this myth renders invisible the objective contradictions in society. Viewed in this light, Freud's theories seem not so much a challenge to the received ideology of his time, as a new and sophisticated reformulation of it.

What is this ideology? I have called it the 'competitive paradigm', because it sees any gain to one individual as entailing a corresponding loss to another. This, of course, is also the ideology of 'possessive individualism' (see Macpherson, 1962); although this view of society has its roots in the eighteenth century, it has enjoyed a sudden and spectacular revival in recent years, as part of the philosophy of monetarism. The concept of 'free enterprise' embodies an implicit assumption that enterprise which is free is competitive, because human nature is such that people would never of their own accord enter into cooperative arrangements. (The fact that even under capitalism, they persist in doing so, is always conveniently overlooked.) 'Laissez-faire' economies, instead of being seen as the forced contrivances which they are, are implied by their very name to be the outcome of letting things happen 'naturally'.

The assumption that 'free' enterprise is competitive entails, in turn, that cooperation in the common interest must be coerced; thus, socialism is identified *a priori* with iron rule and the end of liberty. Christianity is regarded in much the same light: for Freud, 'love thy neighbour as thyself' was a ridiculous and repressive injunction. 'The commandment is impossible to fulfil; such an enormous inflation of love can only lower its value; not get rid of the difficulty' (Freud, 1930/1961, p. 80). In short, therefore, we do not need to seek the origins of Freud's beliefs in his discoveries, his private political views, or his personal state of mind; they were very much a part of his time; and of ours as well.

## The Necessity of 'Revisionism'

It should be clear by now that Freud's theories, in the form in which he left them, are not compatible with Marxism, or even with a liberal belief in progress. This raises problems for the 'new Freudians', who maintain that it is only subsequent 'misreadings' of Freud that have given rise to the impression of reactionary ideology. Jacoby (1975) sees Marcuse as 'unfolding' Freud's concepts into a revolutionary vision of history; but this 'unfolding' turns out to be of precisely the same kind as that of the conjuror who unfolds a handkerchief to reveal a flight of pigeons or a white rabbit. Jacoby is scathing in his attack on 'revisionist' versions of psychoanalysis—but without a substantial amount of revision, Freudian theory cannot legitimately be used for any but its traditional conservative purposes.

Of course, it may be the belief in progress which ought to be revised in the light of Freud; but in view of the foregoing discussion, I do not think Freud's arguments for the permanence of the existing order can be sustained—with the possible exception of 'primary process', to which I shall return below.

What would Freudian theory look like, then, if its more obviously ideological components were removed? I would argue that provided primary process remained intact, little of substance would be lost: the 'inertia principle' is neurologically false any way, the 'Death Instinct' is a speculative afterthought, and the inevitability of the patriarchal nuclear family was never a truly psychological postulate in the first place. A psychoanalytic account of child development which takes into account the infant's sociability already exists, in the British school of 'object-relations theory'. Obviously the question deserves a more careful answer than these few lines provide; but I do not think that the removal of ideological preconceptions from psychoanalysis would leave the theory either unrecognisable or unworkable. Unfortunately, until the necessity of this task is appreciated, progress on it is bound to be slow.

What of the remaining postulate, primary process? It could be argued that a species with such a talent for self-deception as Freud ascribes to the human race had but a miserable prospect of discovering a rational mode of social organisation, and could only make things worse if it tried to seek one.

However, primary process is not as incompatible with Marxism as this argument implies. Firstly, as we noted above, the theory that all thought is a delusion is self-refuting. Although Freud's theory of rationality is unsatisfactory, psychoanalysis needs such a theory in order not simply to be 'acceptably' optimistic, but to be coherent as a theory at all. Secondly, Marx himself (who incidentally shares this problem) places considerable emphasis on self-deception or 'false consciousness' in his account of the production and reproduction of social systems. Although self-deception for Freud operated primarily to maintain mental (rather than social) order, there is no reason why false-consciousness and emotional defences should not take the same form (the paradigm case being, perhaps, that of religion).

Hence, Freud is useful to a critical view of society not simply because he describes the inner conflicts of its members so faithfully—in contrast to the bland reassurances of 'humanistic' psychology; he also offers a detailed explanation of the compulsions and delusions which make people more at home in an oppressive society than they would be in a free one, and hence suggests what changes are necessary in order to make social progress psychologically possible. It is this psychological problem which Marxists after World War I, and feminists after the 1960s, turned to psychoanalysis to solve. Why was it that when the conditions for social change seemed ripe that people seemed emotionally incapable of accepting a new order? The Freud-Marxists answered this question in terms of the 'normal

neuroses' and compulsions which serve from one point of view, as emotional defences, and, from another, as social ideologies.

What Reich, Fromm, Marcuse *et al*, were essentially arguing was that a society which runs on fairy-tales requires that, in certain fundamental respects, its members should not grow up—particularly the less privileged ones; the task for radical psychoanalysis is to show how crippling compulsions arise in the course of normal socialisation, and persist because they serve so well the maintenance of oppressive institutions. Freud himself inevitably started this line of criticism by blurring the distinction between sanity and madness, arguing that religion, mass movements and character traits manifested the same structure (in psychological terms) as neuroses.

The development of a truly 'emancipatory' form of psychoanalysis, however, requires its disembedding from the system of practices—the spy complex—within whose constraints it must remain an individualist, adaptationist and essentially conservative form of praxis.

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