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PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE PROBLEM OF VALUE

I

This paper deals with the problem of value in the psychoanalytic theory of human nature and culture. In particular, it is concerned with this problem in the theory as it was expounded by Freud. First, I shall show how the problem of value is an integral part of the therapeutic situation which Freud encountered. In regard to Freud's own assessment of the problem, I shall point out some difficulties of a cognitive and a moral nature for which his theory must, but cannot, account. In the second part of the paper I shall show how the problem of value is an indispensable component of Freud's overall theory of man and culture, what may be called his "general theory." This part will be concerned with its peculiar normative *and* scientific status. I shall try to show how descriptive and prescriptive ethics are (1) confused in Freud's theory and (2) that it is a confusion that cannot be avoided if the theory is to serve the purpose that Freud seemed to believe it must serve, namely, as a science not only of what man is but also of what man *ought* not to be.

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In his letters to Oskar Pfister, a Swiss who was both a Protestant minister and a psychoanalyst, Freud occasionally touched on the problem of value in therapy:

What weighs on me in his case is my belief that unless the outcome is very bad indeed; what I mean is that he would commit suicide without any hesitation. I shall therefore do all in my power to avert that eventuality [1].

Freud later wrote to Pfister about the same problem in more general terms:

... our patients have to find in humanity what we are unable to promise them from above and are unable to supply them with ourselves. Things are therefore much more difficult for us and in the resolution of the transference many of our successes come to grief...[2]

It is clear from the observations above that Freud does not commend suicide as a solution of a human problem. In his disapproval of it he advocates facing up to reality, so to speak, and solving the problem, whatever it may be and however difficult it may be. He also espouses a thoroughgoing autonomy in that he expects the patient to decide about and face his problems on purely naturalistic grounds. That is to say, he works with the assumption that the psychoanalytic therapist cannot appeal to sources of value that are not based upon empirical evidence and knowledge about the world and human nature. In this respect the autonomy of the patient as person is so heavily emphasized that the analyst may have to run the risk that many of the patients "come to grief."

On the basis of the above, Freud's theory of therapy can lead

[1] Heinrich Meng and Ernst L. Freud (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister,* (New York, 1964) pp. 101-102. See also Maurice Natenberg, *Freudian Psycho-antics: Fact and Fraud in Psychoanalysis,* (Chicago, 1953) p. 95. Natenberg cites evidence to show that Freud was indifferent to suicide on the part of his patients. However, the latter is based upon hearsay evidence and should not be credited without further and more reliable documentation. At best Natenberg's account is consistent with Freud's keener interest in theory and research as opposed to therapy.

[2] *Psychoanalysis and Faith,* p. 16.

to a conflict of values for the patient and the therapist. The analyst attempts to help the patient. For example, he tries to prevent him from committing suicide if he begins to express such a desire or display suicidal tendencies. But how can autonomy be sought at the risk of the patient coming to grief? If, let us assume, the grief is so overwhelming that the patient is driven to commit suicide, could the analyst claim that autonomy was an important enough value in the psychoanalytic view of human existence that the scientific nature of therapy would have to reconcile itself to that fact? Autonomy is undoubtedly a major, if not possibly the major, constituent of being human, but it is also context-dependent and not an unqualified, absolute value that a person must cultivate. That is to say, that in certain situations, the therapeutic situation, for instance, it might be more realistic and objective to measure the value of autonomy in terms of the person rather than the person in terms of autonomy. The person after all is primary and not the value, for the value is meaningless apart from the person who supposedly is in need of it.

There is also another problem here that deserves attention: how does a change in the value system of the person affect his relation to other persons? To get at this aspect of the problem, let us suppose that a patient who has been analysed successfully learns "to find in humanity" what the psychoanalysts "are unable to promise them from above," and he is "cured." As a further result of his newly acquired autonomy, he begins to bring the same relief to others. For a start, he works upon his own wife and children and refuses to allow them to believe anything that is not based upon reliable evidence, or to live for ideals that do not have some objective foundation in the world of observable reality. Gradually, he begins to work upon his friends, all of whom are "idealistic" intellectuals who believe in the goodness of man and his perfectibility. Over a period of time, he is divorced, loses all of his friends, and aside from the ability he has acquired to face up to all this, his "cured" state is worse than his "neurotic" state. To sum up the import of the example, we can say that he learns to see the world as it really is and achieves an autonomy that he always lacked. But his realistic attitude makes his interpersonal relations to other people worse than they ever were and destructive of the very aims the therapy was undertaken

for. (In connection with the latter remark, I should point out that I take it for granted that a person goes into therapy in order to find out what is wrong with himself and his relation to other people and to learn how to improve or better himself in these respects.) Are we to say that such a person has been "cured" or "converted?" Furthermore, whether he has been cured or converted, is the change in either case for the better?

The point of the above example is that a psychoanalytic therapist, who subscribes to Freud's view of humanity and its bearing upon how the patient is to be helped, undoubtedly has the *right* to approach the problems of the patient and his conflicts in that way, but only to the extent that he has evidence that it in fact does help and will not result eventually in the patient coming to grief. Just as Freud claimed in his letter to Pfister that he would do everything in his power to prevent the patient from committing suicide, he also has the *obligation* to do everything possible to prevent him from coming to grief. A therapeutic cure depends more upon what is good and evil, right and wrong, than a medical cure. In the case of therapy, it is not just a question of the therapist providing what he thinks or believes to be correct in the light of his theory of human nature. He must also help the patient to establish what the patient considers to be correct. The values of both the therapist and the patient are part of the therapeutic situation. Autonomy is to be achieved by each coming to see what it is that *he* ought to be autonomous in relation to. The therapist, of course, may be clearer on such matters and it is for this reason that he must bring the patient to the same level of clarity but not to the same set of values. A psychoanalyst like Freud, or of Freudian persuasion, may disagree with the validity of giving the patient "help from above" but he cannot a priori exclude the possibility that there can be autonomy, though it is based on a view of the "above." Such views, it should be pointed out, are not necessarily incompatible with or antagonistic to those based upon "humanity." Freud would reply, however, that his position is based upon facts and, as a science of values or a scientific approach to values, psychoanalytic therapy cannot resort to such dubious means. Moreover, he might add that the success of the psychoanalytic aim, what it attempts to accomplish, depends upon the rejection of such means.

What is it, however, that the analyst tries to accomplish? In his "Postscript to a Discussion on Lay Analysis" Freud referred to the analyst as a "secular spiritual guide."[3] In the same article he attempted, among other things, to distinguish the aim of the analyst from the accidental successes that the clergy and Adlerians were able to achieve.

> We who are analysts set before us as our aim the most complete and profoundest possible analysis of whoever may be our patient. We do not seek to bring him relief by receiving him into the catholic, protestant, or socialist community. We seek rather to enrich him from his own internal sources, by putting at the disposal of his ego those energies which, owing to regression, are inaccessibly confined in his unconscious, as well as those which his ego is obliged to squander in the fruitless task of maintaining these repressions. Such work as this is spiritual guidance in the best sense of the words.[4]

The above quotation clearly shows that Freud again has the autonomy of the patient in view as *the* value which can be realized and ought to be aimed at in therapy. But there are some questions that must be raised about this autonomy, despite the fact that one may agree wholeheartedly on its desiderability. It is necessary to ask whether or not one joins instead the psychoanalytic community? The question is not intended as a *tu quoque* argument in any sense, but as a pertinent reminder to the analyst of Freud's (or any other) persuasion that dogmatism is less a matter of intention than performance. What criteria can and do the psychoanalysts provide that demonstrate that any analysed person is concerned more with his internal than his external sources? Though no one may doubt that analysts are capable of being "secular spiritual guides," the question remains of how they differ from priests, ministers, and "true believers," who bring relief through the

[3] Freud, "Postscript to a Discussion of Lay Analysis," trans. James Strachey, *Collected Papers*, London, 1953, vol. V, pp. 210-211. Hereinafter *Collected Papers* will be cited as *C.P.*

[4] Freud, *C.P.*, V, p. 211. For a significant contrast to this view, see Freud, "Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" (Part III), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, XVI, ed. James Strachey (London, 1953), p. 386: "I also learnt then to stand obstinately by my suspicions till I had overcome the patient's disingenuousness and compelled them to confirm my views." Hereinafter *The Standard Edition* will be cited as *S.E.*

external source of acceptance into a catholic, protestant or socialistic community.

The distinction between internal and external sources alone will not suffice. For one thing it is possible that these other approaches are able to get at " internal sources " by a more reliable and a more efficient method than psychoanalysis possesses. Secondly, according to Freud himself, there are apparently insoluble problems bound up with the unconscious of both the analyst and the analysand. These problems, in turn, affect the efficacy and permanency of the relief that comes with the mastery of "internal sources". Freud also claimed in *The Ego and the Id* that the analyst only wants to give the patient the freedom to decide. And then it would seem that he could decide for the *external* sources. " .... after all, analysis does not set out to make pathological reactions impossible but to give the patient's ego *freedom* to decide one way or the other."[5] But obviously patients must decide in the light of the psychoanalytic view about "communities" and other things, so that the "freedom" here is qualified somewhat. Lastly, we also know that alternative approaches, both therapeutic and others, prove equally, if not more, lasting in their beneficial effects. Below, I shall try to make the significance of all of the above remarks clearer by contrasting the "internal sources" of relief that a socialist could receive from his community with those of a person who has undergone psychoanalysis.

A socialist might make use of his internal sources through his committement to the idea that he is working for and dedicating his entire life to a future socialistic community. The ideals he lives for provide him with what Freud calls internal sources. But what shall we say about the person who has been psychoanalysed? He is, it seems, enriched by virtue of the fact that he undergoes analysis. His ideals or beliefs become unrepressed and he is then the source of his own relief. But how can this be known? Either the patient alone must provide the confirmation of Freud's claim (very poor evidence given the suggestive aspects of the therapeutic situation) or it must come from the further claim that psychoanalysis accomplishes its aim, because it is a scientific and not the non-scientific, possibly unscientific approach of catholic, protestant,

[5] Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (New York, 1960), p. 69, Italics in text.

socialistic and other communities. But there is no empirical way to test this difference. The experiences of the socialist are as conclusive as those of the analysand. To this objection, however, Freud has an answer.

He would argue that, if a person did not receive from analysis what it is able and attempts to provide, then it must be that the person has not successfully undergone treatment. *Successfully* is the key word here and it can mean a number of things. It can mean that the analyst possibly has made some mistakes. It might be that the "transference" was not properly undergone and worked through. It could be that the patient was still resisting; he was not serious and was merely interested in the social fad and sophistication associated with undergoing analysis. There may be still other ways to account for such a failure, but there is one thing it does not mean. For Freud and the orthodox Freudians it *cannot* mean that the method is defective or the theory of therapy inadequate. For even if the latter were the case, it would only be defective or inadequate for the particular person in question.

This point about success requires further explanation. A major difficulty with psychoanalysis since its inception has been that it cannot be falsified. Evidence that might count against its theory, such as patients whom its therapeutic method cannot cure, is either discounted as irrelevant or explained away by the theory itself. Cases of failure are looked upon as examples of resistance which, in turn, are caused by the severity of the individual's repressions. Objections to the theory are disposed of similarly. Everything that confirms the theory is acceptable but anything that does not can be explained by the theory, e.g., defence-mechanisms. For this reason Freud's psychoanalytic method must always be successful. But its claim that it is superior because it gets at "internal sources" by means of which the person is enriched is defensible only as a dogma, such as the catholic or protestant, or an ideology such as the Adlerian will to power that can be cured by socialism. That is to say, its defense consists in admitting no evidence to the contrary.

Nevertheless, the method can be criticized and the point behind the example of the person who lives for the ideals of a socialistic community used to show the question-begging character of Freud's

position. His argument against the religious and Adlerian communities is based on an unwarranted assumption about what enriches a person. Due to the stress that psychoanalysis puts upon knowledge about the unconscious and "internal sources" of the person, the fullest possible awareness is made a prerequisite for proper relief. However, this assumption is unwarranted because it is impratical even as an ideal to be approximated and factually false, unless the psychoanalytic theory of human nature is true. By "internal sources" Freud means just this sort of awareness. Thus, by definition of the terms of the theory, it can maintain that it, in contrast to other approaches, always seeks to enrich the patient by means of his own internal sources. It will be helpful to take a closer look at this ideal of conscious awareness.

Knowledge about unconscious influences, which cause repressions, functions as an ideal standard but also serves, according to Freud, to bring out the profound and significant difference between psychoanalysis and "communities." An analysed person, as described in the above example, has not yet mastered successfully these influences which control his behavior. In contrast, the socialist, we shall assume, is deceived and unconsciously attempts to satisfy the guilt feelings of his Oedipus complex and dedicates his life to the ideals of a more equal distribution of wealth and justice for mankind as a whole. In effect, he is but sublimating in a socially approved, and what is more important for Freud's theory, a shareable manner the sexual desire he had to sleep with his mother, and the aggression he stored up as a result of his unconscious hostility towards his father, who prevented the realization of this incestuous desire. The socialist wants to get rid of all aggression (the guilt for the hostility towards his father) and to extend his love to all (a reaction-formation against the desire for his mother which is still determining his nature behavior). In short, he lacks complete awareness of the motives that dictate to and determine his behavior.

But the use made of the assumption about the fullest possible awareness of unconscious motivation will not work for a number of reasons. First, what has happened to the socialist as a child does not necessarily invalidate the reasons he has for dedicating his life to the ideals of a socialistic community. Freud must appeal to a psychoanalytic criterion here which evaluates what the

person does only in terms of what has happened to the person. The psychoanalytic account of the behavior of the socialist may help to explain the fervor and the intensity of his dedication to his ideals, but these ideals, which are reasonable and worthwhile values in themselves, have an independent status that also must be accounted for. By means of psychoanalytic theory we may acquire some insight into why someone believes *in* certain values but nothing about the fact that he believes *that* these are worthwhile values. The latter distinction is imporant; it is not always made clear in psychoanalytic explanations. But it must be made clear if psychoanalysis is supposedly a science of values and not a normative theory of values. As a science, it confuses the motivation for values with their justification.

The socialist considers his belief worthwhile, a source of good for humanity, and a philosophy of values that can tap internal sources of relief. The socialist, however vaguely, might have a psychoanalytic understanding of himself. He might, for example, be fully aware of the fact that he was born into miserable and degrading poverty or that the restrictive moral values of his parents were heavily determined by instinctual repression. He may "realize" that this conditioning, so to speak, led him to the advocacy of socialistic ideals. But he may also know that he wants to put an end to such poverty and puritanism (something that Freud in a more indirect way also wanted to do) and bring about these changes for a greater number of people than psychoanalysis can ever reach, and put them on a firmer social foundation than psychoanalysis ever can. Thus, what he chooses to do in life may be determined considerably, perhaps completely, by what happened to him in the course of his childhood development, but it is nevertheless what he does as a mature person that counts. There is also the more general point that, even if the unconscious is accepted as a valid heuristic hypothesis, it by no means guarantees that anyone in becoming more conscious of his repressions is automatically enabled to direct his own behavior. Freud lends his own support to this last point.[6]

Finally, a person who has been analysed may suffer simply from the inactivity that therapeutic treatment, such as psychoanalysis

[6] Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," trans. Joan Rivière, *C.P.*, V, pp. 316-357.

provides, can lead to. Psychoanalytic treatment is preoccupied with the various nuances and subleties of meaning and purpose in human behavior. An inactivity consequent upon excessive reflection about internal sources might be its results and what, in the final analysis, the therapy has to cure. This point about excessive reflection and inactivtiy also should help to underscore the fact that an extensive and profound knowledge about unconscious influences is not an essential prerequisite for the relief or enrichment of the patient. Furthermore, this is pertinent to showing that one's entrance into a religious, socialistic, or other community does not *necessarily* lead to making use of external sources only, but, as with psychoanalysis, "success" and "failure" vary with the individual.

But it might be further objected to the above that it is not the state of awareness that is important to Freud but what the awareness is based upon.

> If a patient of ours is suffering from a sense of guilt, as though he had committed a serious crime, we do not recommend him to dismiss his qualms of conscience; he himself has often tried to do so without success. What we do is to remind him that such a strong and persistent feeling must after all be based on *something real*, which it may perhaps be possible to discover. [7]

The difference in this context is that psychoanalysis knows what is real in regard to mental life and provides ways and means to determine whether feelings are in accord with reality. The claim about reality and its relation to guilt or qualms of conscience presupposes that the psychoanalytic conception of reality is scientific. It is thus a more reliable index of the meaning and purpose of human behavior and the foundation of its values. As a scientific conception, it is objective, and therein consists its superiority over artistic, religious and philosophical conceptions. Such a claim may well be correct, but it rests upon the further claim that scientific knowledge is the only reliable, cognitive foundation for determining the relation between reality and feelings of guilt. But this claim too is a matter of knowledge and it requires support independent of both science and psychoanalysis, if it is to be

[7] Freud, "The Question of Lay Analysis," *S.E.*, XX, p. 190, Italics added.

considered reliable knowledge. However, if this task were accomplished, it would show that non-scientific knowledge is not only possible but also reliable and put to the question Freud's solution of the problem of "qualms of conscience."

The further problem is what each, either the analyst or the patient, takes to be *real*. The analyst, we can safely and reasonably assume, takes the world of empirically observable reality to be the real world. The empirical world provides a proper realistic foundation for guilt. The patient, of course, is oriented more towards the psychical or mental world. But the psychoanalyst takes this to be a "real world" too, the sort that can cause neuroses and the sort from which he must free the patient. The analyst, therefore, must straddle both of these "real worlds" and must adjudicate between the demands that both make upon human values. To do so, he must leave the world of fact for the world of value. Thus, the discipline of psychoanalysis becomes a science that attempts to investigate the place of fact in the world of human value, for example, the relation of moral values to the "real" empirically observable world.

Hence, values can and must enter into therapy because one of its central aims is to provide a more realistic foundation for what is traditionally considered the moral character and values of the person. The development of character, or internal sanctions for what is morally good, according to Freud, are too superficial and external since they seemingly are based on conscious awareness but are really dependent upon unconscious motivations and purposes. The moral values of the person are at the mercy of repressed emotional influences. They are not an integral part of his conscious awareness. For this reason Freud could make the following reply to charges that psychoanalysis was immoral or that it sanctioned sexual freedom:

> As regards the sexual instincts in the narrower sense, there is the further point that in most people they are tamed insufficiently and in a manner which is psychologically wrong and are therefore readier than the rest to break loose. [8]

[8] Freud, "Resistances to Psychoanalysis," trans. James Strachey, *C.P.*, V., p. 171.

A more specific illustration of the above thesis about values in psychoanalysis would be the psychical determinism which is an essential presupposition of Freud's theory, if it is not constitutive of its entire theory of human behavior. According to the theory, human behavior is caused, that is, determined, in the same manner as are events in the physical world. In this respect it also bears upon questions of freedom, obligation, and responsibility, which are relevant to ethical theory.[9] For example, on the basis of the hypothesis of the unconscious, Freud has to maintain that for the most part patients in analysis would not act as they do, or be the kind of persons they are, if they had fuller knowledge about the repressed instinctual forces that dictate to their behavior. This implies that such people are not responsible for their actions because they are not responsible for their character. Usually when we know that X has done Y and consciously intended to do Y, it is assumed that X may be held responsible for his actions. We do judge some actions to be the result of deliberate choice. But the psychoanalytic account of human behavior puts in question any claim about such responsibility. Conscious behavior is a product of unconscious influences. The extent to which we are responsible for our actions depends upon the extent to which we are able to control and master these influences. This deterministic account of human behavior is not only applicable to Freud's theory of therapy but also to his overall theory of human nature.[10]

But even if his claim that human behavior is so thoroughly determined were the case only in regard to therapy, it would mean at least that there is a class of persons who are not responsible for their actions in the usual legal, social, moral, and everyday sense of responsibility. The importance of this contention would consist in the fact that we blame people on the basis of conscious stand-

[9] Freud is a determinist but it is not clear whether his deterministic view is compatible with freedom and moral responsibility. This seems to be the case in the practice of his therapy since patients presumably are enabled to alter their character and their behavior as a result of analytic treatment. In his theory of human nature and culture, however, Freud seems to hold the view that even the behavior of the so-called "normal" person is hopelessly determined. This seeming inconsistency cannot be fully discussed here. For some incisive comments on this problem in Freud's theory, see A. C. MacIntyre, *The Unconscious: A Conceptual Analysis* (London, 1958), pp. 89-95.

[10] Freud, " Civilization," *S.E.*, XXI, pp. 141-144.

ards, but only because we lack knowledge about the unconscious determinants of their behavior. From the psychoanalytic standpoint, they could not have acted otherwise than they did, and in such cases blame ought to be replaced by understanding (at least from the moral if not from the psycoanalytic point of view). These considerations also make it clear that psychoanalysis is deeply involved in problems about the nature and purpose of human values. Its theory on such matters raises a host of other problems about how the psychoanalytic account is to be related to what we believe we know about values in terms of other alternatives. In order to show what is the primary source of the problem, it will be helpful to look at it in the broader context of Freud's theory of man and culture.

II

Freud also made use of his theory about the causes of neurosis in order to account for the relation of the individual to culture. He explains this relation in terms of an inevitable and possibly irreconcilable conflict of moral purposes. On this level psychoanalytic theory provides an objective, scientific account of the function of morality for the individual and for culture. Its own normative assessment of moral and other values is stated straightforwardly. However, this extrapolation of the theory is often dismissed as being merely speculative and not a basic part of Freud's scientific theory. It is claimed that the general theory can be distinguished from what should be called "Freudianism." For example, Philip Rieff in *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* characterized the overall claim of Freudianism as a "subtle acceptance of things as they are which changes the very conditions to which one becomes resigned."[11]

This interpretation, however, emphasizes the nonclinical side of Freud and it fails to distinguish between Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Freudianism as a normative doctrine. With regard to the latter, Rieff's position is justified, while in Freud's clinical papers a more activist

[11] Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (New York, Doubleday Anchor Edition, 1959), p. 358.

position is described by him as the proper one for an individual to maintain. [12]

Wohl's distinction is a helpful one, but it does not go far enough. It can be strengthened by the further qualification that the theory has to be distinguished from the method used in therapy. The method, which makes use of free association, dream analysis, transference, countertransference and the various defence-mechanisms, does not require an acceptance of what, according to the theory, the method is intended or ought to accomplish. The psychoanalytic method can be severed from the interpretations that the theory of Freud imposes upon it. This further qualification would also help to explain how the psychoanalytic method can be used in conjunction with other theories about neurosis and the conflict between man and culture, such as the Neo-Freudians, Rogerians, and existential psychoanalysts. It does not show, as Wohl claims, that "Freudianism" as non-clinical is distinguishable from Freud's clinical psychoanalytic theory. I shall explain below how Freud's "Freudianism" or speculative views are linked up with his clinical findings and theory.

In his *Autobiography* Freud twice remarked on the speculative tendencies of his later period:

> ... Nevertheless it would be true to say that, since I put forward my hypothesis of the existence of the two classes of instinct (Eros and death instinct) and since I proposed a division of the mental personality into an ego, a super-ego, and an id (1923b), I have made no further decisive contributions to psycho-analysis; what I have written on the subject since then has been unessential or would soon have been supplied by someone else. This circumstance is connected with an alteration in myself, with what might be described as a phase of regressive development. My interest, after making a life-long *detour* through the natural sciences, medicine and psychotherapy, returned to the cultural problems which had fascinated me long before, when I was a youth scarcely old enough for thinking.[13]

Earlier in the *Autobiography*, however, Freud gave a different opinion. Throughout his career he worried about the speculative

[12] Julian Wohl, "Introduction to a Critique of the Reality Concept," *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review*, XLIX (Fall 1962), p. 111.

[13] Freud, "An Autobiographical Study," *S.E.*, XX, p. 72.

aspects of psychoanalysis, or what he refers to below as "contact with philosophy proper."

> ... I should not like to create an impression that during this last period of my work I have turned my back entirely to speculation. I have on the contrary always remained in the closest touch with analytic material and have never ceased working at detailed points of clinical or technical importance. Even when I have carefully avoided any contact with philosophy proper. [14]

The above remarks give rise to a problem of how Freud's theory suggests some attitude towards life. Or, if he "always remained in the closest touch with the analytic material" and "never ceased working at detailed points of clinical or technical importance," it is equally plausible that this work influenced his speculation. Furthermore, if we consider the historical development of psychoanalysis, it would seem that Freud and his earlier disciples were correct in their evaluation of a proposal made by an American psychologist J.J. Putnam, who was deeply interested in psychoanalysis. Putnam proposed that the theory be linked up with an ethical position, a philosophical view of morality, but he was not successful in convincing others in the movement. "The decisive reason for the rejection of Putnam's proposal was the doubt as to which of the countless philosophical systems should be accepted since they all rested upon an equally insecure basis."[15] However, the development of psychoanalysis under Freud and since him has forced upon it a number of "particular attitudes towards life."

At present there are a variety of psychoanalytically oriented therapies and theories about the nature and genesis of man's neurotic difficulties with his own personal and cultural existence. There are orthodox Freudians such as Heinz, Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Ralph Lowenstein. None of the latter accepts Freud's theory unqualifiedly but they do work only within the overall structure provided by Freud. Their difference consists in the fact that they have developed much further Freud's later concern with

[14] Freud, *S.E.*, XX, p. 59.

[15] Freud, "Preface to J. J. Putnam's Addresses on Psychoanalysis," *S.E.*, XVIII, p. 270.

the Ego.[16] There are also the Neo-Freudians who stress the cultural and the *here and now* causes of neurosis. Though Fromm, Horney, and Sullivan differ on some points with one another, they are at one in (1) their rejection of what they call the "biological" emphasis in Freud and (2) the necessity for greater emphasis upon the social and cultural determinants of neurosis and human conflict.[17] A very recent theory, which like all of the above is Freudian to some extent, is based on a sort of linguistic analysis and has been set forth by Albert Ellis in *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*.[18] The stimulus for Ellis' theory is similar to the stimulus for all of the others: a dissatisfaction with the efficacy and correctness of the Freudian view of and approach to problems of frustration, aggression and general character disorders in human beings.

Furthermore, it is important to note that method is a less serious issue with these different "schools," so to speak. Defense mechanisms, free association, dream analysis and interpretation are made use of. The source of discontent is the validity of Freud's theory of character development and how it is related to neurosis. The difference, therefore, can be traced to disagreement about theoretical issues that are bound up with the normative problem of the sources and functions of human values. To paraphrase Wohl, it becomes in the end a question of what position is the proper one for an individual to maintain?

The main question here is whether the psychoanalytic view of Freud is related to any particular position which others, it would seem, find improper. Therapy can and must allow for various "proper" positions. The only "failure to distinguish" is the failure to distinguish between Freud's psychoanalytic method and his theory. The acceptance of the theory, or theories if one will, does lead to Freudianism as a normative doctrine.[19] The

[16] Robert Waedler, *Basic Theory of Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1960), pp. 90-93.

[17] J. A. C. Brown, *Freud and the Post-Freudians*, (London, Penguin Books, 1961), pp. 125-130.

[18] Albert Ellis, *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*, (New York, 1962), *passim*. Also of importance here is the work of Thomas S. Szasz, especially *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1965). Szasz argues that psychoanalysis is essentially ethical and that this is the correct interpretation of Freud's theory.

[19] This does not mean that Rieff is correct about the final effect of orthodox analytic therapy upon the person.

techniques and concepts involved in Freud's method may be employed but given a different normative interpretation. However, and this is most important, unlike a theory in the natural sciences, psychoanalytic theory is linked up with a view of life. It is based upon a fairly definite system of values that suggests, if it does not strictly imply, a moral philosophy. It also makes use of its own normative moral standards in its evaluation of empirical findings about patients and mankind in general. But as this point it will clarify matters if we look at what this attitude, or general theory of value, is.

According to Freud, the individual is driven by the instinctual forces of love and aggression. This instinctual energy is distributed among and regulated by the various divisions or agencies of the self, which Freud termed the id, the ego and the superego. Each agency is directed by its own purposes, desires and wishes, all of which in turn affect the proper channeling of the instinctual drives.[20] In addition, the purposes of all these agencies differ and, in their interaction with one another, frequently produce conflict and frustration. According to Freud's theory of man, it ought to be the case (at least ideally) that a normal and relatively happy individual should achieve a harmony among these conflicting purposes, a harmony that ought to be to the advantage of the ego. This harmony can be disrupted by the desires and wishes of the id gaining the upper hand, so to speak, as in the case of a psychosis. Or the demands and ideals of culture can thwart the attainment of this harmony. For example, due to the rigid moral demands of culture, a person may develop too severe or too mild a super-ego. The lack of an impersonal relation between the super-ego and the ego leads to frustration, disharmony or neurosis. This state of disharmony, Freud claims,[21] is the lot of the greater majority and only with a few does it manage to produce a saint or a hero. Human existence is for the most part a burden and, in the context of culture with its aims and hopes for mankind, it is

[20] On these views of Freud see *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1933), in particular, Chapter VII, "A Philosophy of Life;" "The Future of an Illusion" and "Civilization and Its Discontents," *S.E.*, XX; and "Resistances to Psychoanalysis" and "Why War?", *C.P.*, V.

[21] Freud, "Civilization", *S.E.*, XXI, p. 84; also, though written much earlier, "Some Character-types Met with in Psychoanalytic Work: (I) The Exception," *S.E.*, XIX, pp. 311-315.

perhaps not worth the suffering it entails. What is more, and for Freud we might say more saddening as well, human existence within the inescapable confinements of culture must not be a burden. The burden of life lived within cultural demands and ideals can be lessened and the quality of human existence improved.[22]

One area in which Freud felt and knew that there was considerable room for improvement was morality. Conscience, or what Freud prefers to call the super-ego, is the primary source, if not direct cause, of the individual's unhappiness. With the majority of people, conscience is either insufficiently developed or over-developed. Rarely, does anyone achieve the state that Freud deems desirable, namely, a careful and even distribution of moral conscience.

> ... The philosopher Kant once declared that nothing proved to him the greatness of God more convincingly than the starry heavens and the moral conscience within us. The stars are unquestionable superb, but where conscience is concerned God has been guilty of an uneven and careless piece of work, for a great many men have only a limited share of it or scarcely enough to be worth mentioning. [23]

His theory of the super-ego and his critique of the way in which it fails to provide the individual with the harmony that he ought to have also shows what he considered to be a more reasonable function of morality. Conscience fails as an adequate internal standard of moral values, because it has for the most part a negative function. Rather than providing the individual with happiness which is and ought to be the purpose of morality, it brings about the opposite, namely, pain and suffering. People strive to live according to the moral ideals of culture and society out of fear of the consequences involved if they do not do so. Man is a moral creature for external and superficial reasons. Freud's views on the matter of conscience were based upon his clinical findings and extended to cover humanity. It was on the basis of these convictions that he equated the function of the superego

[22] The failure to consider fully this aspect of Freud's reflections on culture and its relation to the individual results in a misunderstanding of the ambivalent (in the Freudian sense of "ambivalence") nature of Freud's moral theory.

[23] Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, p. 88.

with what he called "traditional morality." The same results were used further to recommend a revision of this "traditional morality." His theory proposed a morality based upon the ideal of harmony, a harmony that presumably could be brought about by means of a psychoanalytically enlightened use of reason. This is the particular attitude towards life that the theory leads to.

But is not the above what is called "Freudianism?" Is not this particular attitude simply the non-clinical side of Freud? It is without doubt the non-clinical side of Freud's theory but it is informed and supported by Freud's clinical findings. For example, the conflict that is ascribed to the different purposes that drive the individual and culture may or may not follow either directly or by implication from Freud's more "clinical view." But it cannot be denied that the conflict, as it is described and analyzed by Freud, is inextricably rooted in the observations, clinical and otherwise, that the theory made possible. It could, of course, be argued, without any appeal to the sort of data that psychoanalysis rests upon, that such a conflict separates the individual and culture. But Freud's presentation and interpretation of the conflict presupposes the psychoanalytic theory. Theories make observations possible and, in the case of Freud, his normative assessment of the individual in a clinical setting at least suggested his theory of moral conflict, if it did not lead directly to it. For this reason "Freudianism" and its "clinical side" are not easily separated. Despite the fact that variant views of man seem to be compatible with the psychoanalytic method of Freud, there is some connection between his theory and its speculations on the relation of man to culture and the function of values in both. When, as in the case of various "schools of psychoanalytic thought" such as the Neo-Freudian or the phenomenological and existential schools of psychoanalysis, a different view of man and his world is made use of, there seems little point in speaking of psychoanalysis. When the meaning and interpretation of Freud's theory undergo such radical changes, they result in alternatives to rather than alterations of psychoanalysis. This point could be supported further by the orthodoxy and distinctiveness that is still claimed by orthodox psychoanalysis.[24]

[24] Harper, *Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy: 36 Systems* (Englewood Cliffs, 1959) pp. 148-149.

In the preceding paragraphs I have attempted to show in what ways Freud's psychoanalysis is involved with the values of the person, in particular, his moral values. But Freud is not a moral philosopher and has no fully articulated view of morality. There is only a rudimentary moral philosophy, which results from his account of the development of human nature and the source and purpose of human conflict. His account of human nature steeped his creation in the problems of the moral life. But he would claim that his account of morality and values was purely scientific and to this matter we must now turn.

Anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists are concerned with descriptive ethics. In descriptive ethics no judgments, other than factual, are made (or at least should be made in theory) about the moral quality of the behavior investigated. Terms like good and evil, right and wrong, praise and blame, are irrelevant to the purpose of descriptive ethics, except for the sense in which they are made use of by the group or individuals investigated. Freud only intended to concern himself with descriptive ethics. However, it is contended that he concerned himself with meta-ethics, normative ethics and descriptive ethics. (1) He attempted to explain and to justify his own theory of what good and evil and right and wrong and value judgments mean. (2) He passed judgments, that were more than merely descriptive, on what is good, evil, reprehensible and praiseworthy in human behavior.[25] (3) He drew upon his own findings and the accounts of other investigators, such as his colleagues, scientists, poets, novelists, and others to provide a foundation for his views.

All of human behavior, according to Freud, is based upon the influences exerted upon the person by the unconscious. The degree of influence may vary but no one is free from them. Human beings may believe in terms of their conscious standards that certain actions are morally valuable because they are a realization of the qualities of man. However, these values have their source in motivations of envy, aggression, hostility and guilt. Moral values, ideals, standards and principles are more the result of the need to overcome the destructive, irrational unconscious strivings of the instinctual drives than of any conscious striving to attain

[25] Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 49: "... the ego ideal answer in every way to what is expected of the higher nature of man."

"the good life." This theory is supported by the psychoanalytic investigations of Freud and his early followers. But there is also an "anti-instinctualist" interpretation and the two must not be confused if we are to get at an exhaustive understanding of the theory.

The "anti-instinctualist" view is the normative moral view of psychoanalysis. Although Freud scientifically looked upon man as a creature who is ruled by his passions, he claimed that he ought to be ruled by reason. When, for example, Freud says the "patient" in psychoanalysis ought to be given the "freedom to decide," he has no doubt of what he ought to decide in favor of, namely, autonomy, i.e., realistic ideals or prudent desires. In learning to choose freely (which, according to Freud, is to choose with as much awareness about the unconscious as is possible), the person can overcome to a significant degree the irrational unconscious influences of childhood which determine his mature behavior.

But how are the two interpretations related to one another? The instinctual account, which is also the more scientific one, provided Freud with empirical support and justification for the normative position that he embraced. It is clear that, if Freud's theory of human nature is correct, reason plays much too meagre a role in human affairs. Psychoanalysis shows the necessity for a thorough revision of morality. Moral demands should be adapted to what the human animal is capable of psychologically. Individual variability should receive more consideration. Such a revision, if carried out in the light of psychoanalytic knowledge, at least would lead to a relative happiness for man. The only alternative has only brought, and can only bring, about unnecessary suffering and pain.

Moreover, the two views are connected in that Freud did not intend to elevate reason to such a degree that the irrational side of human nature would be ignored. Though he preferred, to use his own terms, Eros against the death instinct, or love against aggression, his own ideal of reason would provide for the emotions.

Our best hope for the future is that the intellect—the scientific spirit, reason—should in time establish a dictatorship over the human mind. The very nature of reason is a guarantee that it would not fail to

concede to human emotions and to all that is determined by them, the position to which they are entitled. [26]

But Freud, to use one of his own terms, was also ambivalent about this "dictatorship."

... The ideal condition of things would, of course, be a community of men who had subordinated their instinctual life to the dictatorship of reason. Nothing else could unite men so completely and also tenaciously even if there were no emotional ties between them. But in all probability that is a utopian expectation. [28]

It is significant that he was doubtful about the possibility that men could live under a "dictatorship of reason." It points up an ambivalence that seems to extend throughout his entire theory. In regard to the conflict between the individual and culture, he was also doubtful about the primacy of the individual over culture and the actual necessary primacy of culture over the individual. Because of his own strongly (on the conscious level) individualistic attitude, he seems to have sympathized more with the individual, but at the same time he drew back from the hostility of the individual towards culture and its abstract ideals. Culture represents the force of Eros, the purpose of which is to bring men together. Eros is close to what Freud means by reason and is possibly its emotional manifestation. And despite the fact that Freud claimed on the basis of his theory that both the erotic and the aggressive drives were indispensable parts of the purposes of man and culture, he inclined more towards the purpose of culture in the end. Culture serves humanity and, in the final analysis, it provides a more valuable criterion for worthwhile values than the desire for personal, individual happiness. This is the sense and significance of the concluding remarks in *Civilization and Its Discontents.*

The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of

[26] Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, p. 253.

[27] Freud, "Why War?," trans. James Strachey, *C.P.*, V, p. 284.

aggression and self-destruction... Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man... And now it is to be expected that the other of the two "Heavenly Powers," external Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary. [28]

But in what sense is culture Eros and how does the purpose that the instinct of Eros serves become an ethical aim and ideal? Culture, we have seen, because of its demands, can be a cause of neurosis and suffering. The moral values that it fosters and encourages are somewhat responsible for the unhappiness of the individual. Freud is able to make this move with Eros because he has shown that this unhappiness is the result of a lack of knowledge about unconscious influences. Since psychoanalysis is able to fill this lack and show aggression distorts the true nature and value of Eros, Eros can be raised to the level of an ethical aim. Psychoanalytic knowledge makes it possible to come to limited terms with aggression in the individual and in culture. In this way the potentiality that Eros has to bind men into a unity of common interests and purpose can be exploited. Whether or not psychoanalysis will be thus used is another question, as the above quotation makes clear. But that psychoanalytic knowledge about Eros ought to be so used and that Eros is the force that men should seek to realize in culture and in their own personal lives is not another question but a simple statement of fact for Freud.

As a science, does psychoanalysis draw conclusions about the role of Eros and aggression in the moral life of culture and of the individual? Whether its conclusions, based on its view of the unconscious and instinctual drives, are warranted or not is a matter that is subject to the ordinary scientific procedures of testing and verification. As an ethical theory, psychoanalysis proposes that aggression in its various manifestations is to be eliminated, in the sense that its energy be channelled constructively onto the external world. This claim is made about aggression because it presumably follows from analysis that Eros and

[28] Freud, "Civilization," *S.E.*, XXI, p. 145. See also "Why War?," *C.P.*, V, p. 287: "But one thing we *can* say: whatever fosters the growth of culture works at the same time against war." Italics in text.

its various equivalents such as science, knowledge, reason, the reality principle and increased consciousness ought to play a greater role in human behavior and culture. In fact, Freud's science provides with him no basis for saying that culture is Eros or that Eros is an ethical standard. But his ethical theory does, except for the further fact that it is incompatible with the claim that psychoanalysis is a science. This means, however, that it is a normative science of what man ought not to be.

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