

The Political Meaning of Some Recent Revisions of Freud

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Author's Note: *In the following remarks I trust that I can keep differentiated those judgments that depend on general social and cultural awareness from those that require special clinical experience, which I do not have. I am not a psychoanalyst. But the social role of analysis has recently come so much to the fore, and the new revisions of the Freudian doctrine are so politically tendentious—mostly to the right, but in one excellent case (Reich) to the left—that I feel the readers of this magazine should be informed of what is at stake.—P.G.*

THERE are at least four causes for the current enormous interest in the social role of psychotherapy. (1) The staggering number of psychological rejects in the draft both before and after induction into the army; and the even greater number of those who are suffering or will be suffering from what is now euphemistically called "war neurosis." (2) The consequent reflection on the conditions of peacetime existence that generate the "neurotic personality of our time." (3) The manufacture of propaganda for psychological warfare for both domestic and foreign consumption, whence studies of the "character structure of the Japanese" etc. (4) And more specially, the attempted analysis, particularly by middle European refugees, of the psychological framework of the Nazi state. These causes have led to new practices and new theories. What is alarming is not their deviation from the orthodox Freudian sociology and implied politics, in which a good deal is faulty, but the fact that most of these deviations lead step by step to a psychology of non-revolutionary social adjustment that is precisely the political ideal (by no means the political action) of the New Deal, the Beveridge Plan, Stalinism, etc.

1

First, briefly, apropos of new practices, I should like to comment on a recent paper by Franz Alexander, director of the orthodox Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis.¹ Dr. Alexander finds that "particularly in acute and incipient cases, briefer methods of psychotherapy can be successfully utilized," e.g. fewer interviews and repeated interruptions rather than the orthodox two years of daily analysis. This means, of course, giving up the infantile recollection. For this the doctor would substitute the "emotional training of the Ego" that "takes place in that experimental personal interrelationship between the patient and the physician which is called transference." "The goal of psychotherapy is to increase the Ego's efficiency in fulfilling its task of finding such gratification for a person's subjective needs as is in harmony with the standards and ideals of the person and with existing conditions." (The same renunciation of the infantile recollection, plus an even

stronger intervention of the analyst, is advocated *a fortiori* by those who revise the theory as well as the practice.)

This position is certainly un-Freudian. "It is nonsensical," Freud said in his last major work, "to maintain that psychoanalysis is practiced if these early periods of life are excluded from one's investigation." Those analysts, again, who emphasize the role of the analyst and base their treatment on following up the resistances to treatment, but who insist on the primacy of instinctual gratification, insist also on the primacy of the infantile scene. I doubt very much whether Freud would have called instinctual gratification "a person's subjective needs." As I understand it, the point of the infantile recollection is not merely to live out the emotional distress involved in the early associations but also to give to the Ego, thru understanding, a *control* of these associations, in order then to face the existing situation unimpeded, the instinctual drives being part of the objective situation. (Whether or not even this control constitutes a cure is a question.) There is here no question of "harmony", but of enlightened choice and if need be struggle. But it is just this concept of harmony between the subjective personality and the objective conditions that we shall soon discuss in its full political efflorescence.

But the real bother with Dr. Alexander's argument is the social reasons he assigns for the briefer treatment. First, he says, these emotionally disturbed and incipient cases are walking around active in life as foremen, laborers, statesmen, lawyers, etc. etc., and have "an incalculable effect on society." Second, "life in our machine-age is becoming more and more complex", setting up an unbearable conflict of interdependence on the one hand and competitive rivalry on the other; therefore "to help contemporary man to find his place in this structure without falling victim . . . is the great future function of psychiatry." Thirdly, in the face of the imminent huge number of cases, if the qualified therapist does not "acquire methods which can be applied on a large scale . . . there will be a fiasco of the first magnitude."

Is it possible to draw any other conclusion from this reasoning than that the goal of therapy is the smooth running of the social machine *as it exists*? What a fantastic proposal, when a society creates emotional tensions, to reorient not the society but the people! as if indeed it were possible to change the people without changing the daily pattern and therefore both the economic relations and the nature of the work. And what familiar name shall we call a "therapy" that pretends to create harmony on a mass scale? I take it that Dr. Alexander does not really know what he is asserting.

The need does exist in its millions—and there are, for instance, 250 Freudian analysts in the United States! Given all schools of psychiatry and all the new methods you will

(including the Army's narco-synthesis), there will be a fiasco; but the society that has maneuvered itself into two world wars is used to fiascos. Who can deny that the only practical mass method is to strike at the institutions and inhibiting mores and to give our sick generation, if not an era of peace, at least a war of liberation?

2

Let us now turn to a new revisionism in theory advocated most popularly by Karen Horney and with the most intellectual influence by Erich Fromm. Many of the propositions of this school look like the ancient deviation of Adler, but their principle is different and their conclusions, as I hope to show, aim at adjustment not so much to existent society as to the kind of rationalized sociolatriy towards which the imperialist nations are headed in their *domestic* policy. (Let me reintroduce the Comtean term, *sociolatriy*—i.e., “religion of society”—to refer to the ways in which natural energies are absorbed, sublimated, and verbally gratified in our corporative industrial states.)

To state their position in the most general way, Horney and Fromm diminish the role of instinctual drives to the vanishing point; they find that character *directly* reflects the social pattern and that the source of neurosis is “irrational authority”; they explain anxiety, which with the Freudians they consider the central point in neurosis, solely as fear of such authority; and they regard mental health as the “free” and “spontaneous” action of “personality.” I shall try to show that, from a revolutionary standpoint, even when the political slogans resulting from this position are unexceptionable—so that even sound anarchists like Herbert Read have been taken in by them—they are purely *formal*; they have been deprived of all psychological dynamism; and when we examine the concrete social applications, to find a content for the forms, we find nothing but a roseate New Deal both in peace and war.

Both Fromm and Horney are still at the stage where they find it necessary again and again to show where Freud is in error. In summary:³ (1) Freud was too biologically-minded to understand that differing cultural patterns lead to differing character-structures. (2) He was physiological and hedonistic and traced everything to pleasures and frustrations. (3) He was individualistic and considered man as “primarily self-sufficient and only secondarily in need of others to satisfy his instinctual needs.” But “individual psychology is fundamentally social-psychology — the psychology, as Sullivan would say, of interpersonal relationships.” (4) Freud misinterpreted the relation between character-structure and the infantile life, the erogenous zones, etc., when he thought that the latter caused the former. (On the basis of this critique, Fromm and Horney reject the importance of infantile sexuality, the sexual Oedipus complex, the Freudian characterology and analysis of the perversions, the therapeutic recollection, the psychic apparatus of the Id and the Ego, the theory of the libido, the importance of the unconscious in healthy persons, etc., etc. Yet still they insist that Freud is their great inspirer, etc.)

Without following Freud in every detail, I think it can be shown that every part of this general indictment is either wrong or absurd. But the upshot of it is that, after all the retrenchments and rejections have been made,

Horney and Fromm commence their own psychologizing with the following residue: (1) On the one hand the inherited instincts are much diminished; in a remarkable passage Karen Horney “equates” the “Freudian instincts” with what she calls “neurotic trends.” (2) But on the other hand there exists a “personality” apparently sprung from nowhere — for I do not think that any one would say that a speechless child had a personality, and yet they reject the meticulous Freudian history of the forming of personality from the data of prehistory and the cradle.

Now Horney and Fromm—the latter especially moved by the memories of Nazism—turn to the neurotic personality of our time, and they find the key in “irrational” authority. The threats of “irrational” authority put the “personality” in fear of his self-expression; this rouses anxiety; and subsequent behavior is the attempt to regain security by various means, for instance submissiveness, will-to-power, competitiveness, renunciation, suffering, etc.⁵ Let me quote:

Freud states that the Oedipus complex is justifiably regarded as the kernel of neurosis. I believe that the statement is the most fundamental one which can be made about the origin of neurosis, but I think it needs to be qualified and reinterpreted in a frame of reference different from the one Freud had in mind. What Freud meant in his statement was this: because of the sexual desire the little boy, let us say, has for his mother, he becomes the rival of his father, and the neurotic development consists in the failure to cope with the anxiety rooted in this rivalry in a satisfactory way. I believe that Freud touched upon the most elementary root of neurosis in pointing to the conflict between the child and parental authority and the failure of the child to solve this conflict satisfactorily. But I do not think that this conflict is brought about by the sexual rivalry, but that it results from the child's reaction to the pressure of parental authority, the child's fear of it and submission to it. Before I go on elaborating this point, I should like to differentiate between two kinds of authority. One is objective, based on the competency of the person in authority to function properly with respect to the task of guidance he has to perform. This kind of authority may be called rational authority. In contrast to it is what may be called irrational authority, which is based on the power which the authority has over those subjected to it and on the fear and awe with which the latter reciprocate.⁶

But why does the child *fear* the parental authority if not because he is being deprived of something? What he is being deprived of is continuous attention, breast-feeding, loud shouting, immediate elimination, the opportunity of being continually present and prying, (later) masturbation, etc. All this is the motor of the Oedipus complex, but it is the instinctual life from which these authors resolutely turn away. To Freud the “root” is not in the rivalry, but in the repression, as is proved by his repeated statement that in every psychoneurosis there is a core of *actual-neurosis*, the term applied to anxiety that is the direct transformation of repressed libido.⁷ Consider a child in a tantrum: would one say that this is fear or rage at frustration? It is just the energy of the frustration that explains the energy of the fear. One does not see that a small child fears a big man with a gruff voice any more than he would a tree, until he comes to associate the image with a de-

privation. The neurotic, says Horney in a typical passage, seeks desperately to be loved because he thinks, if you love me, then you will not hurt me.⁹ Yes, says Freud, but this is because it was originally the fact that they didn't love him that hurt him, and he is trying not only to be safe now but even more to make up for the past deprivation. If the inheritance of the infant, as I have been arguing, is socially colored thru and thru—and this must follow from the fact that the human child is so long helpless and yet has managed to survive — then every withdrawal of love or continuous attention must gravely wound not the personality (that comes later) but the whole body of the instincts. This is just what Freud expresses when he says that very many of the instincts are erotic; eros is the impulse of object-union even prior to the organization of the Ego.

The child's free personality, say Horney and Fromm, is endangered by the irrational authority, therefore he is anxious. On the contrary, says Freud, there is as yet no definite personality, but deprivation is inevitable by *any* authority, rational or not and whether embodied in single persons or not; the result of these very deprivations is that now the Ego, retrenching to avoid further suffering, is constituted as a closed system *against* the instincts, by repressing the instincts. Hitherto the Ego was a part of the Id, it was the agent, the artist, the informant, and the social-interpreter of the instincts: this is "the strength of the Ego." Now, having repressed the instincts, and especially when it has incorporated the external authority into itself (the super-Ego, heir of the Oedipus complex), it fears the instincts foreign to it: this is "the weakness of the Ego".¹⁰ Neurotic anxiety is the threat against the Ego by the instincts that burst free from repression.

According to Fromm, the obstacle to general psychological health is the presence, in the family and the culture, of irrational authority. According to Freud, the obstacle is the presence, in all civilization — so he thinks — of instinctual deprivation.

2 (a) *The "Free Personality" as the Social Unit*

What then is mental health? Practically, according to Freud, it is the opening-out of the Ego, and the relaxation of the demands of the super-Ego, sufficiently to come to recognize the irrepressible instinct as its own. Ideally—though I do not recall that Freud goes this far — it would be the opening out and flexibility of the Ego to recognize every demand of the unconscious and adjudicate its claims, remembering always that it is only an agent.

According to Fromm and Horney, mental health is primarily the absence of irrational authority; what is then given is "independent personality", a "free character structure." Since I am not sure what this means, and since it is the jumping-off point for the social philosophy, let me quote some further descriptions. It is "a person who has emancipated himself from oppressing authority, who does not submit nor is an automaton conforming to other people's expectations; he has attained the strength and integration to be himself."¹¹ He has "a conviction of his own integrity and thereby his identity, based on a self which is unique and indestructible because it is rooted in his own genuine and 'original' act of being."¹² (Is not this nar-

cissism?) "The individual's greatest strength is based on the maximum of integration of his personality, and that means also the maximum of transparency to himself."¹³ He is spontaneous: "Spontaneous activity is free activity of the self. . . . Only if a man does not repress parts of his self, only if he has become transparent to himself, is spontaneous activity possible."¹⁴ (Are we to conclude from these sentences that the free person has no unconscious? This is indeed the end of psychoanalysis!) As *examples* of free character-structure, Fromm mentions artists and uninhibited children; but these examples are preposterous: what artist would say that his good work is *his* work or that, as a creator, he is transparent to himself? and what is more clear, in the behavior of a child, than that it wells from the unconscious and is not "integrated?"

But if the Id, with its dark infinity, is absent from the psychic apparatus of the free personality, where is the *content* rather than the form, of the spontaneity to come from? In Freudian terms, spontaneity — e.g. spontaneous wit—is the emergence of contents of the id called forth by and transforming some objective reality;¹⁵ this is a process familiar to every artist. But the "free personality" is known through and through.

"A character-structure characterized by freedom." Now it is axiomatic with both Horney and Fromm that a character-structure and its attitudes can be defined independently of past causes, (e.g. sadistic-anal); and likewise independently of present acts; thus "love is a lingering quality in a personality which refers in its manifestations to certain 'objects' but which is not brought into existence by these objects."¹⁶ Then, apart from causes and effects, what is the free character as such? It is free, spontaneous, capable of love and productiveness; it can promise and contract; it is imbued with rational faith. Freedom is—to depend on oneself. And spontaneity is—to be oneself. Love is "the passionate affirmation of another on a basis of equality with mutual respect for each other's integrity";¹⁷ does not this sound like loving oneself? But on what else could love crystallize if we have severed the arc extending from the unknown past through the self into the present? To promise is—to remain identical with oneself. Ah, but the proper object of rational faith is the triumph of the democratic ideals!

So it is this independent personality, this pure freedom, absolutely without a past and conceivably without a present, characterized neither by bodily traits nor by social experience, without an unconscious and transparent through and through, and with a very thin collection of instincts (for the "Freudian" instincts are neurotic trends)—it is this figment that is the unit of a free society? With what content is this negation to be filled?

2 (b) *"Rational Authority" and Democratic Ideals"*

Let us turn to the rational authority which is congenial to the free character-structure. It is "objective, based on

¹¹Lest the reader think this paragraph unfair, let him ponder on this sentence of Horney: "Generally speaking, the striving for reassurance not only may be as strong as instinctual drives, but may yield an equally strong satisfaction."¹² That is to say, the satisfaction it gives is of the order of an orgasm. Can one avoid calling "personality" a narcissistic object?

the competency of the person in authority to function properly with respect to the task of guidance he has to perform." The acceptance of his leadership is rooted in "the conviction based on their own thinking and critical appraisal of the ideas presented." Further, "there is no society, and could scarcely be one, without authority and leadership."¹⁹

First, how is a child supposed to decide on the competency on objective grounds? Children are certainly very astute and intuitive in assessing affection and even honesty, but this is done by emotional rapport (it is just here that adults, more inhibited, go astray); surely an objective test is beyond them: to them a rational authority is simply an authority. But secondly, when the authority is far off, hedged round with special and technical knowledge, in a system beyond any one man's experience, does even an adult feel that he can decide competency? We are recently well acquainted with authorities that on objective grounds of military expediency, or the grounds that careless public criticism might create international complications, have been unable to present their "ideas." Does the free personality still extend his trust? *for how long?* But are we to assume that Fromm is speaking of simple matters, in everybody's ken and which a frank fearless gaze cannot fail to penetrate? Not at all! "The Nazis," he says, "will presently discover that the modern industrial system is incompatible with irrational kinds of faith."²⁰ It is the *modern industrial system* in which a free personality is supposed to put his trust in competent authority! a system which in itself, under whatever authority, would be tolerated for a moment only by such long habituated maniacs as ourselves. Is not the content of the free character-structure becoming familiar?

There is only one kind of matter that the frank fearless gaze of a child or of a sane man can infallibly penetrate: his strong desires and daily acts. Is he hungry? sexually satisfied? is the work of his hands immediately satisfactory? It is the direct action of these immediate instincts that has the power to make a revolutionary change; there is no need to mediate these things through the formal questions of whether the authority is rational and whether one is technically free. The social cohesion exists prior to the delegation of authority. Authority is delegated *pro tempore* whether to a man or to a system of institutions. Freedom consists not, as Fromm says, in the agreement to participate as an equal member in a vast social system, even if it were known through and through (which it is not and will not be), but in the continuing revolution of new demands and ideas as they emerge from the depths, called forth by and transforming the reality, including the institutions. A free society is one that is peacefully permeable by this revolution.

"As long as mankind has not attained a state of organization in which the interest of the individual and that of society are identical, the aims of society have to be attained at a greater or lesser expense of the freedom and spontaneity of the individual. This aim is performed by the process of child-training and education. . . . It is the belief of the progressive forces in society that such a state is possible, that the interest of society and the individual need not be antagonistic forever."²⁰ What is the desirability, or the meaning, of having the interest of an individ-

ual and a society *identical*? But the important point is what to do about the antagonism: is there not the possibility that masses of people might regain freedom and spontaneity, full of content, by resisting the greater or lesser exploitation? In such a case might it not be, from time to time, precisely the disorganization of society, rather than the increasing organization, that is called for? Why do the aims of society *have* to be attained? I am not raising an idle question, for the answer to it determines, for instance, the curricula of different progressive schools. And is it not really an error to speak of men and Society, with a big S (I am not referring to the natural societies of families and friends), as equipollent?—for the freedom and spontaneity of men are natural, but the institutions have been made.

What, according to Fromm, is the social structure that would make possible a free character-structure? First, he says, we must have the Rights already achieved: "the fundamental right of representative government"—the Bill of Rights—and the new right that "society is responsible for all its members; no one shall be frightened into submission and lose his human pride through fear of unemployment and starvation."²¹ A psychologist who lays all his emphasis on the relation of man to society, finds that representative, not direct, government, is a fundamental political act! And a progressive who looks for the end of the exploiting system finds that society is responsible for its members and not that they must learn to be responsible for themselves!

Secondly: "The irrational and planless character of society must be replaced by a planned economy that represents the concerted effort of society as such. Society must master (!) the social problem as rationally as it has mastered nature." This is the language of an anti-authoritarian. "Today the vast majority of people have little chance to develop genuine initiative at the particular job they are doing. Only in a planned economy in which the whole nation has rationally mastered the economic and social forces, can the individual share responsibility and use creative intelligence in his work."²² This is simply false. The experience of anarchist groups, wherever they have had a chance, disproves it.²² What he pictures is Stakhanovism. If he gave the slightest thought to actual conditions of industry he would realize that the initiative and ingenuity of the individual worker require precisely the loosening and decentralizing of the economy, which in most ways is already overplanned. "Unless planning from the top," he goes on to say, "is blended with active participation from below, a planned economy will lead to renewed manipulation of the people."²³ Why need there be a blend? Why cannot the economy be primarily and progressively managed from below, as in the proposals of the anarcho-syndicalists? (Is one supposed to think that Fromm is honestly ignorant of such possibilities?)

2(c) *The System of Sociolatriy*

The method of Fromm and Horney is to empty out the soul and then fill it. It is filled with social unanimity and rational faith: "The aims of the individual and society are identical."

By deciding in principle that character-structure is the institutional pattern, rather than the effect of conflict be-

tween instinct, including social instinct, and the institutional pattern, it then becomes easy to conceive a "free society" that does not oppress the "free personalities." Easy, so long as the discussion is purely formal and juridical. But: (1) what if the political content of the structure then proves to be the Four Freedoms and "modern industrial life?" And (2) what meanwhile has happened to the revolutionary dynamism of instinctual conflict to bring about any institutional change at all?

On the one side we have the free personality: by definition it is not neurotic, for it has neither conflict nor dream. Its desires, such as they are, are transparent, for they are just what institutional approval keeps in the forefront of consciousness; another institutional pattern would alter their number and intensity; there is little in them that is natural, irreducible, or culturally dangerous. But *on the other side*, the social bond itself is nothing but the mutual reflection of these self-secure integrities. Recall the definition of love. Is not this the very picture of a small academic? Where is there a place in this hall of mirrors for either personality or fraternity?

What is rational faith?

"To survive man needs faith. To survive in the world of the present and the evolving future, every one will need rational faith. It is only in a social order in which the democratic ideals are being more and more fully realized that the needed rational faith can develop and prevail."

"In the course of the development of mankind the objects of faith have become more and more rational and have come into an increasing close relation to practical questions of social and political organization."

"While solidarity and mutual obligation receive considerable stress in time of war, the tendency in peace time has been to develop irresponsible egotism."²⁴

We need not go far, I think, to find what is meant by rationality, solidarity, and responsibility (where have we heard this word?): it is what the democratic regimes have more and more been tending toward on the whole, and the war-time morale that you may feel by stepping outside without a raincoat is a quite good sample.

What is the content of rational faith? it is the extension of the *attitude* of freedom. And what is the act of the attitude of freedom? it is the *attitude* of participation in the social solidarity. And what is the goal of the attitude of participation? it is the *attitude* of mutual respect for each other's integrity. . . . At no point in this rigmarole is there *ever* any content!

Meanwhile the content is clear as day: *it is the continued and more efficient working, without nervous breakdowns, of the modern industrial system, war and peace.* This is taken for granted!

Now nearly a century ago, in the time of Louis Napoleon, the heir of the revolution of '48 (yes! just as the super-Ego is the heir of the Oedipus complex)—a great man, Auguste Comte, with far more psychological inventiveness than your Fromms and Horneys, conceived of his *System of Sociolatriy*, a rational faith for the spiritual organization of men, so that the modern industrial system could continue to work more efficiently, war and peace. Compared to the Sociolatriy, Fromm's system is as yet a pale imitation.

3

What a pleasure it is to turn from this philistine ethical culture to a Freudian deviation to the left! I am referring to the work of Wilhelm Reich, expelled in 1933 from the International Psychoanalytical Association because of his insistence on carrying into social action the obvious implications of the original instinct theory (along with related revolutionary economic demands). This insistence has not endeared him to the Marxists either, though he is a Marxist. Whether or not one follows Reich in all his theoretic deviations—and it seems to me that, lacking in Freud's beautiful intuitive centrality among the sciences of Man, he misses the point of the complexity of Freud's discussion of the psychic apparatus—nevertheless, in what refers to immediate social agitation, he applies what is so fundamental and undeniable in Freud to evils that are so glaring in society, that one must agree absolutely. Considering the appalling proportion of neurosis on any criterion, and which on his own criterion of "true orgasmic potency" and the orgasm reflex includes the *vast majority of the population*,²⁵ Reich shows the futility of medical treatment of a few cases; he argues that analysts who do not lend their authority to immediate general sex-liberation in education, morals, and marriage, are no true doctors. He demonstrates in case reports that persons restored to sexual health and animal spirits simply will not tolerate the mechanical and routine jobs they have been working at, but turn (at whatever general inconvenience) to work that is spontaneous and directly meaningful.

"If the work in which they were engaged lent itself to the absorption of real interest, they blossomed out. If, however, their work was mechanical as e.g. that of an employee, a merchant, or a clerk, it became an almost unbearable burden. The difficulty which now made its appearance was hard to overcome. For the world was not geared to a consideration of human interest in work. Teachers who, though liberal, had not been particularly critical of present-day education, began to feel the usual manner of handling children as painful and intolerable."

"The changes occurring in my patients were both positively and negatively ambiguous. Their new attitude seemed to follow laws which had nothing in common with the usual moral concepts and demands, laws which were new to me. The picture presented at the end by all of them was that of *a different kind of society*."

"The individual with a 'moral' structure appears to follow the rigid laws of the moral world; in fact he only adjusts outwardly and rebels inwardly. Thus he is exposed in the highest degree to an unconscious compulsive and impulsive anti-sociality. The healthy self-regulated individual does not adjust himself to the irrational part of the world and insists on his natural rights."²⁶

He concludes that the repression of infantile and adolescent sexuality by family, school, and church, and by such conditions as inadequate housing and economically forced abstinence, is *the direct cause of the submissiveness of the people to present political rule of whatever kind*; but that unrepressed people will provide for themselves a society that is peaceable and orderly enough; more generally,

"The participation of the industrial workers in the *management* of production and distribution, in con-

trast to a representation of their interests by parties or trade unions, in which the workers themselves remain passive."²¹

How does he come to all this?

First he returns to Freud's original observation of the libido-economy: *the energy of anxiety is the energy of repressed sexuality*. In the condition of actual-neurosis (brought on e.g. by habitual interrupted coition or a sudden renunciation of masturbation) it is the entire cause of the anxiety, and in every psychoneurosis there is a core of actual-neurosis. This is the position that Freud later declared to be, not false, but of secondary importance,²² when he came to lay the emphasis on the fearful perception of the punishing authority and the systematizing of the Ego against the instincts (and Horney, as we have seen, took this second position and left out the cause of the fear). But Reich argues as follows: it is the *core of actual-anxiety* that makes vivid the anticipation of punishment, for one cannot have a vivid *image* without a source of energy from within; then the fearful anticipation leads to a repetition of the inhibition and this of course redoubles the actual-anxiety, and so forth; thus, actual-neurosis leads to psychoneurosis.

To turn the fright of a really experienced punishment into an habitual state of fearfulness and submissiveness takes very little deprivation to begin with, *unless the circle is broken by positive gratification*. It is not sufficient to reduce the unconscious associations; unless the patient has positive sexual satisfaction, if only by masturbation, the cycle of anxiety will recommence. To avoid the inner tension and the anxiety, the child then tenses his muscles and holds his breath and literally constructs a character-armor against his sexuality: this becomes, as many thickens as are added, the "moral character" described above.²³ Therefore, by an analysis of character and neurosis, we see how Reich must be led to consider the vast majority as sick, and to hold that there must be a revolution in morals and economy, perhaps especially with regard to adolescence, for it is then that the instincts resurge through the armor and give the possibility of real gratification. Likewise, in medical therapy itself Reich adds to the Freudian goal of uncovering and reliving the conflicts, the absolute need of actively effectuating orgasmic potency and gratification. A moment's reflection will show how profoundly this must alter the role of the physician.

(In order to base a "different kind of society" on instinctual liberation alone, Reich gives a picture of the instinctual life which, it seems to me, is excessively simple and Rousseauian. But *at the present moment* this picture is perfectly adequate as a kind of "minimum demand" that broad masses can unite on.)

4

Let me summarize the argument of this essay: I have tried to show how, in the present situation of admitted mass neurosis, three different theories of neurosis directly imply three different political philosophies:

1. HORNEY-FROMM: The core of neurosis is the defeat of personality in the conflict with irrational authority; therapy is the reduction of such authority; and free society is the competent rule of representatives of free personalities. The

instincts are largely out of the picture. We saw that such a society is only formally desirable; that like any juridical formula it is true as a negative check, e.g. against exploitation; that such content as is indicated seems very like the ideal of the industrial status quo; and all revolutionary dynamics to bring about any change has vanished. This is the psychology of the coming sociolatriy. (In Freudian terms: *erotized Ego*.)

2. REICH: Here the core of neurosis is in the deprivation of instinctual satisfaction, and the aim of therapy is to give instinctual satisfaction. Orgastically potent people will not tolerate authority or present-day industrial forms, but will instinctually create new forms. The role of the judging and deciding Ego is left largely out of account, and the instincts are considered correspondingly simple and compatible. At present, such a theory is acceptable in every *positive* detail (though not always in what it denies); it has enormous revolutionary dynamism. It is the psychology of the revolution. (*Rationalized Id.*)

3. FREUD: The core of the neurosis is the defense of the Ego against the instincts, and the aim of therapy is to make the Ego again part of the Id. Good society (as we shall immediately discuss it) is the maximum of happiness possible to the non-rational Id, whose instincts are part social, part anti-social, part inventive, part archaic; culture is an art and science of the ego as the interpreter of reality. But in fact, Freud should but does not say, such an art is possible only *after* a thoroughgoing liberation has set free natural alternatives to choose from. This is the psychology of the post-revolution. (*Ego as part of Id.*)

Postscript: Freud's Politics

I want to say something about the political writing of Freud.

There is a startling, almost uncanny, apparent contradiction between the therapeutic goals of Freud and his explicit political theory. His therapy is to liberate the instinct and to clarify all transferred and transformed eros to its original form. His politics emphasizes the need for repression of instinct (for even more repression than exists!) and for the sublimation of eros into the social bonds of brotherly love. But first, let us remember this: the environment of the therapy was a quiet conversation between a wise physician and a patient becoming wiser; then one might trust in reason to draw on nature. And the environment of the politics? *Civilization and Its Discontents* appeared in 1929, when the Nazis were getting their forces; when it was clear that the Russian revolution, for which Freud had had high hopes³⁰ was failing *from within*; when war was coming, yet still there was a struggle for a formula of peace. Then Freud, an admirer of Lenin, could say that Capitalism had at least the advantage that it was a not absolutely fatal outlet for hostile drives! He was 74 years old, and we know that he was ill and tired.*

Freud was a poor observer of our culture-patterns; one feels that his experience of social facts was second hand, as if from newspapers. All the more clear was his wonder-

*The earlier work, *Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, to my mind contains most of what is valuable in all the books on the psychology of authoritarian states.

ful central reflective feeling for the vast human culture that does not change with dynasties, but must be read in anthropology and the history of religions. Of course, by serious standards, he was not a scholar at all; I am not attempting to say that his speculations are correct; but that he knew, unlearned, by genius, the *kinds* of facts that were relevant, and the *weights* to be assigned; so that serious scholars employ Freud's categories. Now this kind of wisdom is useless in the practical affairs of the world, as things are; now there are crying abuses and we must turn to Reich. But they will be invaluable when one day there is peace and nature, just as they are invaluable today to artists and poets, who work with inner peace and nature. Then the problems of politics will be to increase the richness and deepen the color of happiness (the very happiness of which Freud despaired); then there will be no use for the simple formulas of a Reich, and we must turn to Freud. Let me give an example. Reich says we are to trust our liberated love: this will make a "society of a different kind". Good! True! But consider, for instance the case of Oedipus and sibling incest. Could there be a very elaborate culture if great masses of the people were incestuous and cemented with complete satisfaction the ties that already bind them so close to home? would they ever then really stir abroad? This great privilege of gods and pharaohs must perhaps then *not* be trusted, but sublimated: "The most maiming wound", says Freud, "ever inflicted through the ages on the erotic life of man". "Culture", says Freud, "obeys the laws of psychological economic necessity in making restrictions, for it obtains the great part of the mental energy it needs by subtracting it from sexuality. Culture behaves toward sexuality like a tribe in a population that has gained the upper hand and is exploiting the rest to its own advantage. Fear of a revolt among the oppressed then becomes the motive for even stricter regulation".³¹ This is not the wisdom needed today, but is it not useful for a people who are rational and natural *enough*, and want to live better still?

There is still another melancholy reason for the defects in Freud's political thought and action. He was the father of the psychoanalytical movement, — how much a loving but somewhat awesome father one may surmise by

the violence and hostility with which some analysts broke with him (like Adler); the euphemistic laudations of others (like Horney) at the very time that they are turning everything upside down; and the touching reverence of others who try to prove they agree even when they disagree (like Reich). From the beginning psychoanalysis was the object of bitter attacks and personal slanders by the whole barrage of the social institutions it undermined. Freud protected his child; it was inevitable that he would over-protect it, imagining that it could survive by caution rather than by standing witness to the truth. Even when he was over eighty years old (1938), he was afraid to publish *Moses* in Vienna, lest the *Catholic Church* withdraw its "support" and crush the movement!³² This by the author of *The Future of an Illusion!* Would one not say that he was demented? Shame not on Freud, but shame on the world for bringing their old teacher to this confusion!

REFERENCES

1. "New Perspectives in Psychotherapy", *The New Republic*, Jan. 8, 1945.
2. "Moses and Monotheism" (1939), p. 114.
3. This summary is from E. Fromm "Escape from Freedom", pp. 290 ff., but it is identical in Horney's "New Ways in Psychoanalysis" *passim*.
4. "New Ways", p. 77.
5. These devices to regain security constitute the successive chapters of K. Horney "The Neurotic Personality of our Time".
6. Fromm: "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis", *Am. Soc. Rev.*, August 1944, p. 381.
7. E.g. "The Interpretation of Dreams", 3rd English Edition, (1933) p. 165.
8. "Neurotic Personality", p. 96.
9. Freud "The Problem of Anxiety", p. 29.
10. Fromm "Faith as a Character Trait", in *Psychiatry*, V, 3, Aug. 1942.
11. *ibid.*
12. "Escape from Freedom" p. 249.
13. *ibid.*, p. 258.
14. Freud "On Wit", Ch. 6
15. "Faith as a Character Trait".
16. *ibid.*
17. "The Neurotic Personality of our Time" p. 105.
18. "Faith as a Character Trait". And see likewise, "Individual and Social Origins"; these two papers are complementary.
19. *ibid.*
20. "Individual and Social Origins", p. 381 and p. 384.
21. "Escape", pp. 271 ff.
22. E.g. cf. "The Spanish Labyrinth" by Gerald Brenan.
23. "Escape", p. 275.
24. "Faith".
25. Wilhelm Reich "The Function of the Orgasm" (1942), p. 169.
26. *ibid.*, pp. 150-6.
27. "Living Productive Power", *Journ. of Sex Economy*, Oct. 1944, p. 161.
28. "The Problem of Anxiety", p. 105.
29. "Function", pp. 109-129.
30. "Function", p. 183, but cf. "Civilization and its Discontents", pp. 87 ff.
31. "Civilization", p. 74.
32. "Moses", p. 85.

The Responsibility of Peoples

Further Discussion

1. The "Rationality" of the Death Camps

I should like to comment on one issue raised by your valuable pamphlet, *The Responsibility of Peoples*. You state in the section entitled "The German war crimes are unique," that there is no "reason of policy or advantage" for the massacre of the Jews by the Nazis. The massacre does not seem to have the kind of "rational" justification that may be claimed, for example, for the bombing of cities in war. The explanation you offer is "paranoia" and "neurotic racial hatreds." I would suggest that the Nazis were following a "rational" policy rather than yielding to neurotic impulses. They had two motives:

1. They hoped that, in an inverted sort of way, the outrages against the Jews would stimulate anti-Semitism, at least as an immediate effect, and that anti-Semitism in turn would create a sympathetic attitude toward Nazi Germany. In this calculation they were not only "rational" but also shrewd.

2. I am willing to take at face value the repeated statements of Nazi leaders that they would solve the national, "racial," and minority problems of their European system by abolishing bodily some of the minorities, notably Jews and Poles. That a German party should have an anti-Semitic program and wish to seize parts of Poland is not in itself strange; but, given such policies, the Nazis would