
Psychoanalysis and Social Theory: The Hobbesian Problem Revisited

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I

A sociologically trained social psychologist engaged in theoretical and clinical work in psychoanalysis is likely on occasion to be asked by his sociologist colleagues to account for what sometimes appears to them to be an eccentric, if not slightly suspect preoccupation on the part of a sociologist and to explain how he manages or fails to reconcile two paradigms often regarded as unrelated or even antithetical. Recently, for example, I was asked by a colleague to speak to her class on the topic of "the relevance of Freud for students of social theory." On reflection it occurred to me that this manner of formulating the topic could be regarded as expressing a degree of skepticism regarding the thesis I was expected to defend--a skepticism that may well be representative of the attitude of many sociologists toward psychoanalysis. By way of comparison, it is rather unlikely that anyone would be asked to discuss the relevance of Marx or Weber for students of social theory for in most quarters this is taken for granted. Yet, although Freud is acknowledged as one of the architects of modern thought and sensibility, and despite the important work of a wide range of psychoanalytically oriented sociologists, he is a somewhat unsung hero-- perhaps even an antihero--in sociology. [#1](#) Freud remains a figure more likely to be honored through the rituals of refutation than those of affirmation, or honored only indirectly, and often with considerable distortion, in the work of his self-styled followers in Freudo-Marxism and critical theory. [#2](#)

Since I for one cannot see how psychoanalysis can avoid being of central

importance in the study of man in society and society in man, #3 let me begin by attempting to justify this conviction. If by a psychology we mean a theory of human motivation, a model of human nature, or an image of man, then, as has been argued by a range of thinkers from Kant to Buber (1947) and Macpherson (1962), it is evident that every social theory contains and is ultimately founded upon some more or less implicit psychology in the form of a set of assumptions about allegedly fundamental human motives--such as, for example, the desires for pleasure, possessions, prestige or belonging--assumptions which serve as first premises upon which elaborate theoretical and ideological superstructures are constructed. Because I believe this to be true even when a social theory explicitly denies the existence of any universal human nature--thus assuming a psychology of man as a "denatured," unfinished, or "world-open" and self-creating creature (Berger and Luckmann, 1967)--I find it possible to affirm the following statement by Freud (1933): "For sociology too, dealing as it does with the behaviour of people in society, cannot be anything but applied psychology. Strictly speaking there are only two sciences: psychology, pure and applied, and natural science" (p.179). Freud is not here referring to the special discipline of psychology, but employing the term in a general sense to refer to an image of man or theory of human motivation capable of specifying something of the deeper wellsprings and meanings of human action in varying circumstances and which is to be distinguished from natural science precisely insofar as its subject matter is human subjectivity.

If every social theory rests upon a more or less taken-for-granted psychology and it is thus essential in the critical study of a social theory to expose its implicit assumptions about human nature, then the converse of this proposition is equally true: any psychology has crucial implications for social theory. For this reason, and not only because of its far-reaching impact upon twentieth-century society and institutions, psychoanalytic psychology, which Rieff (1959) has described as "the most important body of thought committed to paper in the twentieth century" (p.xx), is of central sociological interest. As one of the most influential psychologies of our time and culture, it is important for us to comprehend the fundamental image of man presented by psychoanalysis and to explore its sociological, political, moral, and philosophical implications.

To take only one of the many possible avenues of approach to this question, we could decide to bring psychoanalysis to bear upon that central issue in classical social theory that Wrong (1961) has described as the Hobbesian problem, and ask if human nature is as Freud describes it, what limits and constraints does this place upon social organization and what does it imply

about the need for, threats to and consequences of social order? It is precisely because of its central relevance to the ideologically sensitive issue of "human nature and the social order" (Cooley, 1902) that Freud's work, especially his *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), has been the object of such fascination by major social theorists at whatever point on the political spectrum they may be located. For whatever one may think of Freud's own conclusions, one cannot avoid struggling with these questions: Is there a human nature? If so, what constraints does it place upon social organization? What effect does social order have upon our human nature? Is society repressive? Must it be? Can man be permitted to be "natural"? What is "natural" for man? Anyone interested in these issues-- and anyone interested in social theory must be--must become a student of Freud, if only to refute him.

We have seen that for Freud sociology must amount to applied psychology. In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), he expresses the corollary of this view:

The contrast between individual psychology and social or group psychology, which at first glance may seem to be full of significance, loses a great deal of its sharpness when it is examined more closely. It is true that individual psychology is concerned with the individual man and explores the paths by which he seeks to find satisfaction for his instinctual impulses; but only rarely and under certain exceptional circumstances is individual psychology in a position to disregard the relations of this individual to others. In the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, an object, as a helper, as an opponent; and so from the very first individual psychology, in this extended but entirely justifiable sense of the words, is at the same time social psychology as well. The relations of an individual to his parents and to his brothers and sisters, to the object of his love, and to the physician--in fact all the relations which have hitherto been the chief subject of psychoanalytic research--may claim to be considered as social phenomena ... [pp. 69- 70].

Hence, if all sociology is psychology, the reverse is also largely true: psychoanalytic psychology at least is a social psychology; it is a study of social, especially familial experience. #4 The merest glance at one of the central concepts of Freudian theory makes this abundantly clear, for the Oedipus complex is an interpersonal (triadic group) phenomenon involving

social processes such as competition and rivalry and such social emotions as love, hate, jealousy, envy, guilt and fear of punishment--social processes and emotions the enduring influence of which upon later stages of the life cycle is metaphorically conceived as the process of "internalization" and the formation of psychic "structure." In this light, the conviction of members of the "culturistic school" (Mullahy, 1948) that a sociological dimension needs to be added to psychoanalysis must be significantly qualified. For when the latter is properly understood in its totality (and notwithstanding certain sociologically naive assumptions regarding the "natural" individual in Freud's more philosophical works), a social or "object-relational" dimension is seen to have been present from the beginning.

To become convinced of the absolute centrality of Freudian theory to research on key issues in sociology and social psychology, one need only approach the subject of sex-role socialization and the function of the nuclear family in the maintenance and reproduction of our patriarchal culture. For as a range of feminist scholars, not all of whom were initially predisposed to look favorably upon psychoanalysis, have concluded (e.g., Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1970b; Miller, 1973; Strouse, 1974; and especially Mitchell, 1974), it is not possible to understand the deeper consequences of such acculturation processes and the pervasiveness of patriarchal assumptions and their profound resistance to change when our viewpoint is restricted to a psychology of consciousness untutored by psychoanalytic insights into the constitution of the unconscious.

One need not accept Mitchell's idealization of Freud and her denial of his ambiguous biological reductionism to appreciate the fact that, whether he himself clearly recognized it or not, Freud gave us a depth sociology of the family under patriarchy, a penetrating analysis of socialization into the phallogentric patriarchal culture by the patriarchal nuclear family, an acculturation process in which the central rites of passage are the Oedipus and castration complexes which are instrumental in inducting little males and females into the sex-role system ("masculinity" and "femininity") of patriarchy. Despite Mitchell's attempts to suppress the quite obvious fact that Freud often described psychosexual development as a predominantly natural or biological unfolding, it is also true that at times Freud was aware he was describing culturally influenced psychological (as opposed to psychobiological) development.

But whatever ambiguity existed in Freud's interpretation of his discoveries, his recognition and conceptualization of the pre-oedipal and oedipal constellations of psychosexuality constitutes a depth sociology of the family

and socialization under patriarchy which, unlike our surface sociologies of consciousness, provides insight into the sociocultural constitution of the subject on the unconscious level--a sociology of the unconscious, of unconscious ideology or "false unconsciousness" which is the indispensable complement to our insights into the role of conscious ideology and false consciousness in social life. In this perspective, if we are to take our project of "consciousness-raising" seriously and liberate ourselves from the unconscious as well as the conscious dimensions of our sexism, a further project of "unconsciousness-raising" is essential--a project which is none other than psychoanalysis itself. In the course of this enterprise we discover ourselves as members of the patriarchy and in our castration fear, castrative wishes, penis envy and other phallogocentric attitudes and stereotypes we encounter our unconscious commitment to this identity--a commitment which in becoming conscious is for the first time open to revision.

II

C. Wright Mills (1961, p.8) once characterized the sociological imagination as entailing the transformation of private troubles into public issues. In this formulation, Mills intended to assert the superiority of the sociological over the psychological imagination, the latter being represented as serving the interests of the sociopolitical status quo by depoliticizing intellectual discourse and undermining social criticism by misrepresenting societal deficiencies as individual ones. But despite the validity of this insight into a widespread ideological abuse of psychology, it ultimately rests upon a false dichotomy and an insufficiently dialectical view of the relationship between the private and the public, the self and society. For even when we forego the sociologistic reduction of the psychological to the political, or the subjective to the objective, in favor of a penetrating self-reflexive inquiry into the depths of subjectivity, we inevitably discover that the most intimate truths have an almost universal reference. It is only superficial psychologizing that blinds us to our common plight, just as it is only superficial sociologizing that is oblivious to the inner depths of the man behind the social mask. If we require a social psychology, we are even more in need of a depth sociology.

With this in mind, let us return to the Hobbesian problem. In this central question of classical social theory, we are concerned with the nature of the process of socialization in which the essentially prehuman but potentially human little animal is rendered capable of and acceptable for participation in the communal life of his society and with such questions as: What are the costs of acculturation? How does human nature become tractable to social

discipline? What is it in man that resists socialization? Does such a thing as a human essence exist and if so what is its nature? How can we best conceptualize the conflict between individual and society? And how has so much of contemporary social science managed to experience in relation to these questions what Wittgenstein (Pears, 1971, p.122) referred to as the intellectual catastrophe of "loss of problems" in which, as Wrong (1961) has explained, a pseudo-solution--in this case an oversocialized conception of man--annihilates the very problem it appears to solve? In contrast, any approach to a genuine resolution that preserves and enhances the importance of the issue in question by providing it with a meaningful elucidation can no longer afford to remain oblivious to the forces that resist socialization and the conflicts between desire and duty, passion and restraint, freedom and authority.

But if, with a keen sense of the problematic nature of social adjustment and the inner conflicts of the individual discontented in civilization, one approaches the study of social theory, one may well be disappointed with what one finds. On the key issue of "human nature and the social order," the sociological tradition seems determined to deny the existence of any human nature that is not itself entirely a product of the social order. Whereas Cooley (1902, 1909) recognizes a universal human nature in the social sentiments, these are conceived as by-products and accompaniments of group life as such and in no way are conceptualized as forces in the individual capable of clashing with and exploding the very fabric of the primary group. Whereas Mead (1934) recognizes a creative, spontaneous and, as the unknown knower, ultimately unknowable "I" in addition to the socially derived "me" or self-image that together constitute the self, he is rather vague about its nature and, although recognizing its potential conflicts with the "me," stresses their happy cooperation as an inner reflection of his rather optimistic, liberal vision of the outer world of social reality.

So impressed is Mead with the human being's capacity to transcend egocentrism via symbolic communication that he is insufficiently sensitive to the danger of *altercentrism* constituted by the very ability to see oneself as an object ("me") from the imagined perspective of the other via reflexive role-taking. Not only does Mead downplay the possibility of self-estrangement as the alienation of the "me" from the "I"--a phenomenon resembling Sartre's (1943) concept of "bad faith" (disavowal of the "I" as free subjectivity), Lacan's (1977) notion of the birth of the ego in a state of alienation in "the mirror phase," as well as Buddhist descriptions of man's unenlightened state of fixation upon the conceptual and ignorance of the existential self--but he is also oblivious to the possible existence of a range

of unconscious "me's" or self-concepts in conflict and sometimes interfering with the conscious, socialized self-image in a disguised return of the repressed. But whereas Mead at least gives us concepts that invite extrapolation in existential and psychoanalytic directions, his self-styled followers in "symbolic interactionism" (Manis and Meltzer, 1978) have largely dropped the concept of the "I" (as well as continuing to ignore the unconscious) and succumbed to an oversocialized conception of man (Wrong, 1961, 1964, 1976; Carveth, 1977a, 1977b).

Although in the writings, particularly (but by no means exclusively) the early works, of Marx there exist invaluable insights into the alienation of man from himself, his fellows and the products of his labor in capitalist society and into the ideological reification as "human nature" of various of man's historical and social forms (Bottomore, 1964; Bottomore and Rubel, 1964), such insights remain somewhat abstract and distant from the more immediate and pressing emotional conflicts and tensions of the individual unable to be at ease in Zion. The vulgar Marxist reduction of all individual conflict and despair to the status of a by-product of an unjust socioeconomic system is just too simplistic an hypothesis to be entertained for long, denying as it does the existential elements of the human predicament that lend it whatever dignity and tragic dimension it possesses. Whereas Sartre's (1960) existential neo-Marxism offers a fruitful dialectical surpassing of the twin dangers of an unhistorical subjectivism and a mechanistic objectivism, most Freudo-Marxist attempts to employ psychoanalysis as a source of that subjectivity, which is then superadded to a Marxist objectivity, fail to achieve any truly dialectical synthesis of these elements and often end in a type of syncretism which artificially combines without surpassing the limitations of both Freudian and Marxian positivism.

Sartre's (1943) early existentialism, although in one sense rejecting oversocialized views of human nature, appears to succumb, like certain trends within psychoanalysis in a rather different way, to the opposite fallacy and to present an *undersocialized* conception of man: in its view of society or the other as mainly thwarting, objectifying or tempting man to bad faith rather than in some way also nurturing and constituting him as human, this perspective, however insightful in other respects, seems one-sided. Although contributing a valuable conception of the self as an ongoing accomplishment or commitment, a view congruent with Mead's conception of "selfing" as a symboling activity, Sartre's important counterargument to all Aristotelian views of "the self" as a thing or a structure which, like buried treasure, can be discovered or actualized through some inward search--or which, as in Kohut's (1971, 1977) self

psychology, is either cohesive or prone to fragmentation--is nevertheless lacking in Mead's, and later Lacan's, appreciation of the essential social and linguistic dimension of all symboling and selfing activity. And despite his later, far more sociologically adequate conception of the social and historical conditioning of human subjectivity and his attempts at a rapprochement with psychoanalysis as well as with Marxism, Sartre's understanding of human reality still needs to be supplemented with the type of insight into the infantile and unconscious dimensions of human praxis that is only to be found in the work of Freud and his followers.

In contrast to the sophistication of the foregoing perspectives, conceptions of man as the manager of impressions (Goffman, 1959), the conformer to expectations and/or enactor of internalized norms (Wrong, 1961), the alienated adherent of socially constructed belief systems in flight from anomie (Berger, 1969), the ongoing accomplisher of social routines (Garfinkel, 1967)--or, in a very different vein, the environmentally reinforced organism (Skinner, 1971), or the phylogenetically preprogrammed animal (Wilson, 1975)--all seem not only in varying degrees mutually exclusive and one-sided, but also lacking in any imaginative comprehension of the complexity of human reality. It seems that to whatever tradition of theory and research in social science one turns, aside from some notable exceptions, the most that can be found are suggestive but extremely limited partial truths and exaggerations being cultivated in sublime indifference to alternative theoretical perspectives.

III

By way of contrast, in Freud's writing we are offered an imaginative and bold synthesis providing startling insights into the wellsprings of human motivation and conflict. In the instinct theory and the structural concept of the id, man's creaturely needs and passions are represented. In the concept of the superego, sociocultural and familial influences on personality development are taken into account. And in the Freudian ego psychology not only are the pressures of immediate physical and social reality acknowledged but also the uniquely human psychological functions of memory, anticipation, delay of action, deliberation and future-orientation. The conception of the Oedipus complex provides a thoroughly interpersonal perspective on the shaping of character and inner conflict; and in the theory of psychosexual development the environmental channeling of instinctual drives in regard to their aims and objects is represented. In addition to this, we are offered a theory of the mechanisms of self-deception; insights into the origins of civilization and the incest taboo; and a penetrating view of the

psychic foundations of religion in infantile dependency, idealization of the parental imago and transference of this grandiose image onto charismatic leaders and the universe at large. This list of generative insights could be extended indefinitely. Here at last we seem to have a comprehensive conceptual scheme capable of providing the desperately needed unifying focus for the fragmented sciences of man as well as a unique research instrument, at once explorative and therapeutic, capable of achieving intimate knowledge of the human heart and mind.

For one schooled in the oversocialized conceptions of man as a social product and performer which have tended to predominate in social science, the major initial appeal of psychoanalysis may well be in its guise as an id psychology and instinct theory. It is interesting to note that this is the aspect of psychoanalysis most influential among academic scholars, even while the analysts themselves were extending Freud's later initiatives in the areas of ego psychology (Anna Freud, 1936; Hartmann, 1939, 1964; Blanck and Blanck, 1974) and object-relations theory (Guntrip, 1971; Kernberg, 1976). Hence, psychoanalytic philosophers such as Brown (1959) and Marcuse (1955a), neglecting the alternative Freuds upon whom mainstream psychoanalysis was building, chose to focus exclusively upon Freud the instinct theorist and endeavored to modify the Freudian psychobiology in the direction of Rousseauian romanticism and away from the Hobbesian pessimism of the master. The salient point at this juncture is simply that there are several Freuds (as we shall see more clearly later on) for the simple reason that the founder's genius exceeded his consistency as a theorist. Although he openly altered his views on many occasions, many inconsistencies and alternative and incompatible types of theorizing were left unreconciled by Freud himself, requiring the work of selection, synthesis and criticism by his followers. It simply makes no sense to say one is for or against psychoanalysis, pro-Freudian or anti-Freudian, unless one precisely specifies which aspect, phase, or component of psychoanalytic theory is at issue.

But the point with which we are presently concerned is the appeal of psychoanalysis as a theory of instincts to be posited as countervailing forces in the individual personality clashing with the socially produced or internalized components of character and thus accounting for the experience of intrapsychic conflict. As Wrong (1961) has pointed out, whereas the social sciences have tended to portray man as either all superego (moral man of internalized norms; Riesman's (1950) "inner-directed" man of the internal moral gyroscope) or all ego (Goffman's manipulator of impressions; the diviner of and conformer to social expectations in pursuit of self-esteem

through attaining status in the eyes of significant others; Riesman's "other-directed" radar man), it now appears that such facets of human functioning have to be seen as pitted against an unruly and essentially asocial and passionate instinctual core of the personality: the Freudian id. In the resulting conflicts between the ego-superego and the id, it seems there can be found both illuminating and intellectually viable explanations for man's inner conflicts, various types of deviant behavior, the inner costs of outward adjustment, problems of conscious and unconscious guilt, anxiety and self-punishment and many other hitherto incompletely comprehended human phenomena.

In the words of Rieff (1959): "Freud, himself--through his mythology of the instincts--kept some part of character safe from society, restoring to the idea of human nature a hard core, not easily warped or reshaped by social experience" (pp.34-35). In this way, psychoanalysis is seen to offer a conception of nature (human nature) as a counterpart to culture, an instinctual individual self in tension with the social self and, hence, an initially appealing (and seductive) conceptualization of socialization as a struggle between the collective domesticating pressures and the willful and imperious drives of the natural man. Here it seems is a theory suited to the task of drawing attention to the pain and sacrifice entailed in submission to civilization, man's enduring ambivalence regarding the bargain he reluctantly strikes with the social order, and the threat to individual liberty represented by the collectivity (Freud, 1930). Such gains appear substantial in the context of those sociological perspectives that blandly assure the individual that, far from depriving him in any sense, the social order so thoroughly creates him that whatever it might seem to take away it has itself first given--views which imply that any resentment the individual harbors against the society which nurtures him amounts to sheer ingratitude, or at least a gross failure to comprehend the obvious fact of the inseparability of individual and society as two aspects of a single reality. It is a measure of the almost total eclipse of libertarian individualism in modern social theory that such varieties of sociological determinism have been able to dominate the field virtually unchallenged for so long. #5

Thus, in the psychoanalytic dualism of culture versus nature and ego versus instinct (Yankelovich and Barrett, 1970), the libertarian thinker appears to find a solid basis for his defense of the embattled individual and his critique of an oppressive and repressive social order. Such a defense would be a defense of nature against the artificial and unreasonable demands of culture and, depending upon one's view of human nature, would take the form either of a neo-Rousseauian call for the liberation of the healthy instincts of

the noble savage (as in Reich and Brown), or of that far more subtle, ambivalent and tragic-ironic perspective which was Freud's own and which recognizes in human nature both the inclination toward libidinal exuberance and a degree of destructiveness incompatible with the existence of a viable human community (Freud, 1927, 1930; Herberg, 1957; Niebuhr, 1957; Kaufmann, 1963; Schafer, 1976b). In this latter perspective both the terrible price exacted by civilization from the instinctual individual and the necessity for him to pay it are represented.

In the work of Marcuse (1955a), we see an attempt to avoid the romanticism of the former view as well as the ambivalent conservatism of the latter through an elaboration of Freud's own distinction (1927, pp.10-12) between a *basic repression* necessary for the very existence of civilized order and a *surplus repression* above and beyond this unavoidable minimum induced by the exigencies of class exploitation. But whereas Marcuse accepted Freud's view of man's sexual and aggressive passions as instinctual, he overlooked the fact that for Freud it was sublimated or aim-inhibited (as opposed to simply released) Eros which was capable of binding aggression. #6 Furthermore, Marcuse's whole attempt to relativize as a product of specific socioeconomic conditions human conflicts and discontents which, although they may not arise from "instinctual" sources are certainly irreducible to sociohistorical factors alone, is characteristic of that more subtle variety of romanticism (disguised as hardheaded realism), which is utopian Freudo-Marxism.

But without entering any further into such philosophical and political arguments, it is sufficient to notice that they all rest on the common acceptance of some version of the Freudian theory of the instincts and, hence, upon an instinctivist view of human nature. Whether natural man is conceived in the terms of innate innocence or innate depravity, or some combination of the two, and whether the solution is seen to be instinctual liberation or the more temperate path of sublimation and rational suppression, all these outlooks operate within the culture versus nature duality and the *centaur model of man* (Erikson, 1950, p.192) that Freud (1923) enshrined in his structural theory of the mental apparatus as the duality of ego-superego versus id.

The difficulty is that this premise, upon which so many towering philosophical and political *weltanschauungen* have been erected, is, to say the least, highly questionable. Freud (1933, p. 95) himself half recognized this when he wrote "The theory of the instincts is so to say our mythology" and admitted that "Instincts are mythical entities, magnificent in their

indefiniteness." His statement that whereas "In our work we cannot for a moment disregard them, yet we are never sure that we are seeing them clearly," surely justifies our skepticism concerning the psychoanalytic "biologizing" of human passion. The evidence seems to indicate that, when all semantic quibbles and desperate argumentation are finally set aside and the simple facts allowed to stake a claim to our reluctant recognition, *man is the instinct-less animal*. #7

IV

Drawing upon the biological perspectives of Jacob von Uexkull, F.J.J. Buytendijk and Adolf Portmann and evaluations of these views in terms of philosophical anthropology by Hellmuth Plessner and Arnold Gehlen (Grene, 1969), Berger and Luckmann (1967, pp.47-52) have drawn attention to man's peculiar position in the animal kingdom as a "biologically insufficient" creature characterized by "world-openness" as a result of a unique ontogenetic development characterized by a period of "postnatal foetalization." Because of the essentially premature birth of the human neonate and its prolonged dependency upon its significant others, the infant gradually acquires from its "surrogate ego" and its "facilitating social environment" a capacity to replace its missing instincts with a symbolic and self-reflexive linguistic facility and a distinctive type of ego-functioning that elevates the human being to a fundamentally emergent and superorganic level of being. #8

But whereas many social scientists and philosophers have presented a view of man as "animal symbolicum" (Cassirer, 1944, p. 26; White, 1949, ch.2; Langer, 1951) and of human conduct as mediated by a distinctive process of self-interaction or self-reflexive inner dialogue (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Habermas, 1971), few have recognized in man's "world-openness," symbolic consciousness and self-reflexive ego-functioning the essence of what Sartre (1943) presented in his early existential phenomenology as the free and nihilating consciousness of *being-for-itself*. Such has been the pervasive influence of determinism in the social sciences that even those thinkers who have recognized man's existence on the emergent level of self-reflection and symbolic interaction and who have described the human agent as building up his action over time in terms of his definitions of the situation and his processes of self-indication--rather than seeing him as merely reacting to various determinants--have nevertheless been reluctant to extend their humanism and voluntarism as far as the early Sartre's (1943) radical existentialist assertion of human freedom. #9

The person does possess a body that, with its natural appetites and

functions, roots him in nature and he comes into the world with various reflexes. But reflexes, appetites, and functions are not instincts in the sense of phylogenetically predetermined, spontaneously self-renewing, peremptory, biologically fixed and relatively complex patterns of action such as we ordinarily assume in the case of the alleged human hunger instinct and the food-seeking behavior to which it is thought to give rise. The limitations of the instinct model even here are immediately apparent when we reflect upon such phenomena as anorexia nervosa, political hunger strikes, dieting and even the everyday human capacity to delay and manage responses to hunger in accordance with social schedules and the requisites of cultural codes of etiquette. For these reasons, although it is necessary to admit the existence of phylogenetically determined appetites and even of a range of automatic predispositions to react in specific ways to certain stimuli (such as, for example, the aggressive arousal consequent upon frustration or threat), it is essential to recognize that man's choice of action with respect to these appetites and predispositions--for example, whether to gratify and enact them or to frustrate and inhibit them--is a defining feature of his being. For this reason we cannot even say that man has a natural need for food or any other alleged necessities. For on reflection we must recognize that something can only qualify as a need in relation to a specific end and, hence, for example, that one only needs food to the extent that he has chosen biological survival as his project.

Man lacks an instinct of self-preservation, as every suicide proves. This is not to deny that man may well have a natural appetite for self-preservation but only to insist that this may sometimes be subordinated to other aims. To object that man's instincts can be deranged or inhibited is to remove the most important connotation of the idea of instinct as an innate and unalterable behavioral pattern. An "instinct" that can be contradicted may well be a wish or an appetite for we know that these can be nihilated in favor of incompatible wishes and appetites, but it is no instinct. That something as thoroughly symbolically mediated as human sexuality in which such phenomena as printed pages, a woman's slipper and the prospect of pain and humiliation can evoke an orgasmic response is still regarded by some psychoanalysts as well as by the culture at large as an instinctual-biological phenomenon is an intellectual scandal of major proportions. There must be strong emotional and ideological reasons why intelligent theorists cling to such obviously inappropriate concepts.

Having attempted to preserve the instinct theory for a considerable time, I am familiar with the standard ploys. As many writers have pointed out (e.g., Fenichel, 1945, ch. 2; Waelder, 1960, ch.5; Parsons, 1962; Hartmann,

1964, ch.4; Carveth, 1977a, 1977b), Freud did not use the German word *instinkt* implying fixed and unchangeable animal instinct, but the term *trieb* conveying the idea of an impulse or drive influenced in aim and object by the social environment. #10 Certainly psychoanalysis is all about such social, especially familial, influences upon the "instinctual drives." However, when Freud (1915b, p.122; 1915c, p.177) states that an instinct, though having its source somewhere in the body, can only be known via its attached mental representation, we are led to suspect that the mental representation which supposedly betrays the presence of an instinct might well be the essence of the phenomenon: that what Freud refers to in his concept of instinct is nothing other than human purposive or intentional action of an affective sort carried on either overtly or in imagination and either consciously, preconsciously or unconsciously.

Freud described human passion and desire as if they were biologically based instincts. Owing to his commitment to nineteenth-century scientific materialism and positivism (Yankelovich & Barrett, 1970), Freud sought to "materialize" human purposes by somehow attaching them to man's physiology. While recognizing that many of such "instinctual drives" are entirely learned or acquired and describing the interpersonal situations and events that shape them in aim and object, Freud still felt the need to speculate about their alleged somatic sources and claim for them the sort of material as opposed to psychological reality that, despite his establishment of the idea of psychic reality, remained for the positivist the only form of the really real. #11

Far from being a merely semantic distinction and philosophical nicety, this difference between the conception of human motivation as biologically based instinctual drive or as intentional, future-oriented, meaningful human action is theoretically crucial and has wide-ranging implications. #12 Take as merely one example the nature of human sexuality. It is evident that our traditional way of thinking of sexuality as primarily a bodily, animal, biophysiological and instinctual phenomenon, rather than as a primarily mental or psychological process, has obscured the fact that in this metaphor-mad, symboling animal, man, far from "bubbling up from the body," human sexuality is more accurately a process that "trickles down from the mind." Contrary to the misleading implications of such psychoanalytic terms as those of the oral, anal, phallic and urethral *zones*, rather than *meanings*--terms that imply that a human passion arises from its somatic vehicle rather than expressing itself through the body as the instrument of a human project--it is quite evident that the real somatic origin of Eros in *animal symbolicum* lies somewhere in the cerebral cortex. For therein lies the

material foundation for the multifaceted erotic imagery and complex and subtle personal and interpersonal plots, in the service of which we enlist our bodies as props and so exploit their capacity for sensual and sexual responsiveness in our pursuit of purposes ranging from the temporary loss of an intolerable individuality, to aggressive domination or masochistic submission, to friendly play, the reproduction of the species, or the pursuit of self-esteem.

Fortunately, Freud and his followers have always demonstrated a healthy capacity to disregard the mechanistic metapsychology in the interests of psychoanalytic psychology and to prevent abstract theoretical preaching from seriously hampering concrete analytic practice. If this were not the case and analysts actually took the instinct theory seriously analysis would necessarily cease whenever it encountered what it believed to be the manifestations of an irreducible and unanalyzable instinctual drive. The hermeneutic psychoanalytic enterprise, [#13](#) this relentless probing for subtle and secret meanings and motives, would (if metapsychology were valid) be rendered futile in the face of the instinctual bedrock of human nature.

But the fact that metapsychology is antianalytical has seldom deterred the analyst from analysis. Hence, rather than interpreting a young man's passion for a married woman as a natural expression of the sexual instinct, analysis is alive to possibilities such as that what appears to be a sexual passion for a woman might, in addition, reflect an aggressive aim toward the cuckolded man, or even a homosexual wish for sexual contact with the man by means of the bridge provided by the woman he possesses. Things are often not what they seem. Aggression often disguises itself as love and vice versa. Psychoanalytic psychology teaches us this; psychoanalytic metapsychology obscures it. In the existential view, the human body, rather than being the natural source of instinctual drives, is an ensemble of means for the expression of diverse ends--some of which may entail the most "unnatural" uses of this vehicle or even its destruction.

Far from being an instinct-dominated creature, man is an instinctless but meaning- and metaphor-ridden animal (Mills, 1939, 1940; Bruyn, 1966; Burke, 1968; Duncan, 1968, 1969; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). As the existentialists have argued, man is in one sense a denatured animal, condemned to be within nature and yet in some ways inevitably outside it (Fromm, 1941), moved by organismic appetites and yet able both to nihilate them and imaginatively extend them to infinity in visions of total and perfect gratification which evoke dissatisfaction with merely finite

pleasures. [#14](#)

According to Sartre, man's possession of a nihilating consciousness enables him to say "No." Though psychoanalysis has long been aware of the negativism that often characterizes the anal phase of psychosexual development and its significance in the development of the capacity for autonomy and active mastery, with a few exceptions (e.g., Erikson, 1968, pp.107-114), it has generally been unwilling to recognize in these developments the foundation of human freedom, albeit in its negative form. Without subscribing to a naive existentialist metaphysics of free will and its usual accompanying moralism, it would appear necessary to recognize that "development produces a marked qualitative shift somewhere around the rapprochement subphase" (Blanck and Blanck, 1979, p.73) of separation-individuation: a "point of fulcrum" associated with the development of language. Having attained the emergent level of symbolic action and interaction, the child is no longer an infrahuman (but potentially human) *reagent* restricted to the inorganic and organic worlds of *process*, but a person or human *agent* acting on the superorganic level of human *praxis*.

When the insights of Sartre are combined with those of Mead, we recognize that man's capacity for symboling constitutes him as the "inventor of the negative" (Burke, 1968, p.9), enables him to imagine "what is not" and compare it to "what is," to posit various "Thou shalt nots" and to "secrete a nothingness" (Sartre, 1943, pp.33-85) between his situation and his reaction to it (i.e., himself)--an act of nihilation that transforms "reaction" into "action" in the proper sense. At the point at which, like Helen Keller in that moment of realization that words refer to things and that everything has a name (Cassirer, 1944, pp.33-36; White, 1949, pp.36-39), man crosses the emergent evolutionary boundary between the prehuman and the human condition, he acquires the freedom to refuse; to delay his response to stimuli; to replace an overt response by a covert symbolic action; to distance himself from immediate influences; to compare what is with what was, will be, or might be; to deny the truth; and to repress his wishes--even to die rather than submit to the force of circumstance.

Such negative freedom means that insofar as we are concerned with man's distinctively human action (as opposed to his nature as a material and biological organism), such concepts as "instinct" and "cause" are no longer unequivocal. When a person can nihilate the "instinct" of self-preservation by committing suicide, it can no longer be seen as an instinct. When a person can refuse to act to relieve his hunger by reminding himself that it is not yet time for lunch, or that he is on a diet, or that he is committed to a

political hunger strike and is willing to die of starvation rather than submit, we can no longer speak of a hunger instinct. Man is an animal capable of pretending he is not an animal--and in so denying his creatureliness he proves that he truly is something more, or at least something very different, than any other creature.

Essentially the same reasoning applies in the case of causality. Causal determinism implies a necessary link between antecedent conditions and consequent effects such that given the former the latter must follow. Although such mechanical causation certainly affects man insofar as he is a material object and a biological organism subject to the laws that govern the inorganic (pre-biological) and organic (biological) levels of reality (*lithosphere* and *biosphere* respectively), when we turn our attention to the uniquely human, superorganic (post-biological) realm of mind, meaning and action (the *noosphere* [Huxley, 1927, 1947]), causality is a controversial concept.

For the early Sartre (1943, 1948), if a prisoner confesses when his interrogator holds a gun to his head and threatens to shoot him unless he complies, he is in bad faith if he claims he had no choice. While his *positive or practical freedom* ("freedom to" do, be, or have whatever he wants) is radically restricted in such a situation--as it is in the lives of most persons owing to the limitations of poverty, ignorance, disease, social powerlessness and the like--the prisoner's *negative or psychological freedom* ("freedom from" mechanical determination) remains absolute: he could have chosen to die rather than confess. Although he never abandoned this insistence upon man's psychological (negative) freedom from mechanical determination, the later Sartre (1960, 1969, 1977, 1980) came to recognize the overwhelming power of our psychological conditioning in childhood by family, class, and culture--all of which constitute for us a kind of "predestination" he concluded. [#15](#) Nevertheless, Sartre continued to believe that, to the extent that we remain human, capable of the complex symboling processes entailed in minding and selfing, we retain an "I" in addition to a "me"--a degree of subjective freedom to reflect upon our conditioned selves and in this way purchase some degree of liberating distance from them. Such emancipatory self-reflection is, after all, what clinical psychoanalysis is all about.

It must be emphasized that in all this insistence upon man's symboling functions, his freedom from instinct and from mechanical determinism (insofar as his action rather than his material reality or rudimentary reflexes is concerned), there is no attempt to deny the fact of the human body, its natural appetites and functions, or the fact that man is subjected to various

happenings beyond his control and various conditions which severely limit his positive or practical freedom to realize his wishes. Man's finitude, creatureliness and mortality are inescapable aspects of his being and even his very subjectivity is conditioned by psychosocial forces that shape his very definition of the situation within which he must act. But the fact remains that as a human being, as *Homo sapiens* or animal symbolicum, as *being-for-itself* at the same time as he is immersed in *being-in-itself*, man is "condemned to be free" (Sartre, 1946, p.34), at least in the limited sense that as long as his nihilating consciousness is not eliminated or subjected to control through physical or chemical techniques (which, in effect, render him a thing rather than a person), he retains that minimal degree of psychological freedom to refuse at whatever cost and to "make something out of what is made of him" (Sartre, 1969, p.45), if only by reflecting upon and choosing his attitude toward this.

In rebuttal of the argument (Hanly, 1979) that the existentialist rejection of instinct theory and total psychic determinism and its insistence on the reality of some degree of human freedom is a reflection on the level of theory of the narcissistic mania for autonomy and consequent hostility to the instincts that insult the "autarchic phantasy" of the self as *causa sui*, one need only point out that such ad hominem arguments, as Freud (1931) pointed out to his feminist critics, are like the sword which cuts both ways: the existentialist can argue that the insistence on determinism is nothing more than an intellectualized escape from freedom and a rationalization of bad faith--or a symptom of incomplete separation-individuation and an unresolved oedipal fantasy of embeddedness in Mother Nature. In Freud's (1931) words: "The use of analysis as a weapon of controversy obviously leads to no decision" (p.223).

On the other hand, since we cannot abandon ad hominem interpretation without abandoning analysis itself, it must be admitted that the ad hominem critique of voluntarism acquires a good deal of plausibility when applied to radical assertions of free will which pass beyond an insistence upon man's subjective freedom from mechanical or biological determinism to a denial of the fact that the human mind is frequently unconsciously governed by a range of controlling myths and metaphors. For psychoanalysis, a view of man as both an intending agent and a pawn of the unconscious phantasies that often govern his choices and intentions is essential--the former because as analytic hermeneuts we seek to engage in "the reading of intentionality" (Klein, 1976, p.23) and do justice to the fact of a considerable degree of human freedom and responsibility; the latter because we recognize that such highly esteemed attainments of the human spirit are

precarious. They are often subordinated and sometimes eclipsed entirely by the domination of our feeble rationality by the powerful unconscious images and associations that constitute the "web of Maya" which holds us in its net and binds us to what Buddhists call the "wheel of birth and death," a phenomenon that Nietzsche (1886) perhaps intuited in his doctrine of the "eternal recurrence" and Freud (1920) explained as "the compulsion to repeat."

V

The traditional psychoanalytic account (and dismissal) of our conscious conviction of the reality of free will is to regard this conviction as an illusion born of the fact that the determining causes of our behavior are unconscious (Freud, 1916-17, pp.49, 106; Hanly, 1979, ch.5). Having demonstrated that a range of human phenomena (parapraxes, dreams, neurotic symptoms, etc.) hitherto miscategorized as purposeless or nonintentional happenings are in fact meaningful expressions of unconscious aims, Freud immediately undermines his insight by proceeding to describe such unconscious projects in a mechanistic and deterministic language that is appropriate only for the description of caused events rather than motivated actions. In this way, the language of psychoanalytic metapsychology colludes with the disclaimer of responsibility: the subject's rationalizations and metapsychological theory are at one in describing the neurotic symptom as a determined event rather than a motivated action.

But Freud was often aware that far from being mere mechanical *causes*, unconscious processes entail intelligent and often ingenious purposive projects pursued for intelligible human *reasons*. In this view, what is unconscious is not a determining cause (exploding our conscious conviction of free will), but an unconscious intention that reveals hitherto disavowed additional reasons for undertaking the action we have chosen to enact. This is a view of "the unconscious," not as a container of mechanical forces, causes and instinctual drives, but as a system of intelligible human projects. In Schafer's (1976, 1978) perspective, "the unconscious" does not exist, but only human action pursued consciously, preconsciously and unconsciously.

In this view of unconscious processes as intentional human action enacted unconsciously, there is a return of sorts to Freud's earliest manner of speaking. In the earliest phase of psychoanalytic theory, Freud frequently employed a "humanistic" as opposed to a mechanistic language--a language he never entirely abandoned, particularly in his case histories. In these writings, the repressed is composed of unconscious ideas that persons

disavow because they in some way conflict with the self-image. At this time, Freud frequently spoke (in a way Sartre could only applaud) of persons choosing to repress certain unpleasant ideas in order to evade anxiety or preserve self-esteem (Yankelovich & Barrett, 1970, ch.1). But gradually this psychological language which recognizes the distinctively human and ideational character of unconscious mental activity and the personal motives for choosing repression gave way to an increasingly depersonalized and mechanistic language of instincts, energies, forces and structures--a metapsychological positivism that was eventually enshrined in the structural theory of the relations among ego, superego and id, the three component "structures" of the mental "apparatus." In this light, the call for the development of an "action language" for psychoanalysis is a call for a return to the earlier "humanistic" (some would say pre-psychoanalytic) language of psychoanalysis.

But why is there such resistance to a view of "the unconscious" as composed of intentional actions undertaken for intelligible reasons, rather than as a reservoir of unintentional happenings? Why the reluctance to relinquish the view of the id as "a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations" (Freud, 1933, p.73) in favor of a view of the person as pursuing intelligible projects consciously, preconsciously and unconsciously for intelligible reasons? Schafer (1976, p.154) has suggested one interpretation: our fear of freedom and flight from the responsibility entailed in acknowledging the degree to which we choose our destinies (albeit often unconsciously).

But despite the fact that people often disavow their agency and misrepresent their doings as happenings and their choices as compulsions--and often complement such excessive disclaiming of responsibility with excessive claiming as well--it is also true that people quite often base their chosen (claimed or disclaimed) actions upon fundamental assumptions, taken-for-granted world-views and hitherto unquestioned root metaphors and myths for which they are sometimes truly nonresponsible in that they have never had the opportunity or occasion to become conscious of the fact that their thinking and action are governed by such unconscious attitudes. In this light the conviction on the part of many writers (Anscombe 1981; Barratt, 1978; Brenner, 1980; Meissner, 1979, 1981; Modell, 1981) that in some way Schafer's approach (like other radically voluntaristic perspectives) entails a denial of the unconscious is not so easily set aside.

The way toward a possible resolution of this issue appears to lie in the recognition that we may have been thinking in the grip of a false and

unnecessary either/or. (Were we free to avoid this error before it came to our attention?) We have supposed that either man is "lived by" unconscious forces of an essentially mechanistic and impersonal sort (in which case he is determined), or he consciously engages in meaningful personal action (in which case he is free). In this view, freedom is equated with conscious personal action and determinism with compulsion by impersonal, unconscious energies and forces. Both the free will and determinist positions are considered in this view to have validity in that behavior is entirely determined unless and until it becomes conscious, at which moment it is transformed into free personal action.

But two possibilities are overlooked in this perspective: first, that free choice and action can sometimes be carried out unconsciously; and second, that our behavior may be determined, not by depersonalized mechanisms, dynamisms, energies and forces, but by cognitive sets, assumptions, phantasies and metaphors that unconsciously govern our experience and action. Certainly Freud required us to accept the fact of "unconscious choice." In the Introductory Lectures (1916-17) he writes that psychoanalysis "cannot accept the identity of the conscious and the mental" and that "it defines what is mental as processes such as feeling, thinking and willing, and it is obliged to maintain that there is unconscious thinking and unapprehended willing" (p.22). Hence, Schafer is in good company in speaking of thinking, feeling, choosing and acting unconsciously and in conceiving of the unconscious in such "humanistic" and existential terms. Those traditionalists who reject the idea of unconscious choice are denying a significant aspect of unconscious mentation as Freud conceived it. On the other hand, Freud often spoke of psychic determinism as a kind of "possession" of the mind, not by reified and dehumanized forces, but by unconscious ideas and phantasies.

It would seem that in rejecting Freud's mechanistic *metapsychological* model of psychic determinism, critics of metapsychology may (like the early Sartre) have unnecessarily thrown out Freud's *psychological* model of psychic determinism as well. For it would appear to be simply the case that human behavior is in a real sense unfree and determined unless and until its unconscious determinants become conscious. But in this psychological model, these unconscious determinants are not impersonal forces, energies, mechanisms or drives, but unconscious assumptions, phantasies, myths and metaphors that govern experience and action as long as they go unrecognized and remain exempt from critical self-reflection.

The human agent is very often "lived by" the unconscious myths and metaphors that in a fundamental sense determine the very definition of the situation upon which he bases the actions in which he chooses to engage. Such a view is compatible with both a "humanistic" view of the person acting for reasons and with the classical Freudian view of man as, in part, "lived by" his unconscious. For here we see man acting, but frequently on the basis of unconscious ideas that "possess" him. It remains true that one is the agent, not only of his actions but also of his act of construing or interpreting his situation in line with the ideas by which he is "possessed." But the point is that one is sometimes unfree to construe in any other way. In practice it will be extremely difficult to tell whether a person really is unfree to construe in any other way, or whether he has glimpsed other possibilities but intentionally disavows or represses them because of a wish to maintain the psychic status quo. However, our clinical familiarity with defensive or motivated ignorance should never blind us to the existence of the genuine article.

The type of psychoanalytic humanism [#16](#) recommended here avoids both the reductionist reification of the unconscious into a range of depersonalized structures, functions, energies and drives and the naive and often moralistic existentialist exaggeration of the extent of human intentionality and free agency. Freud's *centaur model of man* (Erikson, 1950, p.192) as a human ego-superego attached to a beastly id is clearly surpassed in favor of a "humanistic" view of man as an instinctless and world-open being who engages in personal action consciously, preconsciously and unconsciously. At the same time, it is recognized that although it is psychologically free from mechanical causation, human mentation and action are frequently governed by a uniquely human type of symbolic determination. While in no way instinct-dominated, man is frequently metaphor-ridden. Although, psychologically, man is not "lived by" the mechanistic and materialistic determinants governing much of infrahuman life, his conduct is frequently conditioned by the system of literalized metaphors, phantasies and associations that "possess" his mind and in a real sense "live" him, in that they constitute the foundational assumptions about the world and the self upon which he bases his chosen actions and that will only cease to govern his experience and behavior when, in self-reflection, he discovers their existence and subjects them to critique (see ch.2).

Perhaps we are now in a position to discover another, less valid, reason for resistance to the critique of Freudian metapsychology and especially of the concepts of instinctual drive and of the id. For this critique completely undermines the *culture versus nature* dichotomy that is so central in

psychoanalytic theory and philosophy and upon which such elaborate ideological edifices have been constructed, including the psychoanalytic critique of the oversocialized conceptions of man purveyed by the antipsychoanalytic proponents of sociologism and their "revisionist" allies of the "culturistic school" of neo-Freudian analysis (Mullahy, 1948).

Perhaps partly as a result of the neo-Freudian critique of the libido and instinct theories and the reductionism to which they often seemed to give rise, the culture versus nature or ego versus instinct duality was quietly being radically revised in the thinking of many of the leading contributors to psychoanalytic ego psychology, even without the added impetus of the criticisms of the existentialists, the object-relations theorists and the action theorists. In the work of Hartmann (1939; 1964) ego and id were seen to resemble each other far more closely than had first appeared. Whereas the ego had been seen as an essentially artificial growth upon the innate and instinctually given id under the pressure of the clash with reality, it was now discovered to have an innate basis of its own: the apparatuses of primary ego autonomy. At the same time, Hartmann (1964, ch.4) stressed the distinction between *instinkt* and *trieb* and argued that man's instinctual drives are fundamentally unlike those of other animal species in being uniquely deregulated and in need of environmental canalization and direction by the ego in order to promote adaptation. In the concept of the initial *undifferentiated matrix* out of which both ego and id develop, we are confronted with a complete breakdown of the earlier dualism and the idea that not only do both parties possess an innate basis, but both develop under environmental influence and in the context of interpersonal relations and cultural pressures. In this idea of *id development* paralleling ego development, we have the origin of Parsons' (1959, 1962, 1964) later conceptualization of the id, not as "pure instinct" but as structured through the internalized object relations of the pre-oedipal phases of socialization.

[#17](#)

Despite their many differences, certain trends within psychoanalytic ego psychology, British object-relations theory, existential analysis and contemporary action theory all tend to forego (to a greater or lesser extent and with more or less consistency) mechanistic, biologicistic and materialistic conceptions of the psyche in favor of a "humanistic" conception of unconscious mental life in terms of human meaning, phantasy, imagery, representation, affect and action--an approach grounded in the "humanistic" and truly psychological (as opposed to metapsychological) aspects of Freud's work. Although separated over many important theoretical and technical issues--such as, for example, that of the extension of the autonomy

of the ego by ego psychologists such as Rapaport (1957), a development bitterly opposed by Lacan (1977) who, perhaps not entirely without justification, sensed in it a resistance to Freud's revolutionary narcissistic insult to the pretensions of the rational ego and a regressive reassertion of a pre-psychoanalytic voluntarism--all of these perspectives, including Lacan's, are distinguishable from Freud's psychobiology by their essentially psychological or mentalistic conceptualization of the unconscious and their opposition to biologism and reductionism. Lacan's divergence from some of the other antireductionist perspectives lies in his recognition that a reduction of the unconscious to the terms of voluntarism is in no way superior to its reduction to the terms of biologism and in his provision of a psychological (semiotic) model of psychic determinism to replace the abandoned metapsychological (mechanistic and biologicistic) model that he regarded as Freud's mystification of his own central discovery of man's decentered ego.

In criticizing the instinctualism or biologism of Freudian theory, there is no intention here to in any way cast doubt upon the existence of infantile sexual, aggressive and narcissistic phantasies and projects. While rejecting the concepts of instinct, libido and psychic energy and translating the valid content of the theory developed in these terms into a "humanistic" language representing the oral, anal, phallic, oedipal and other *meanings* unconsciously influencing human action, this perspective retains the classical Freudian emphasis upon the role of psychic reality as the individual's symbolic transformation of the objective situation that faces him. Freud's libido theory, the theory of instincts and infantile sexuality, which he adopted at the time of his conclusion that the traumatic sexual seductions #18 to which his hysterical patients traced their neuroses reflected infantile sexual phantasy and desire rather than environmental actuality, was the positivistic and biologicistic form in which he cast his insight into the origin of neurosis in personal, albeit unconscious phantasies and aims. Even those of us who feel that the pendulum may have swung too far in the direction of psychic reality, thus underplaying the role of the environment in the causation of psychopathology, would not wish to abandon Freud's central insight into the role of phantasy and symbolic transformation in human experience and behavior.

For present purposes, however, it is only important to note the general demise of the culture versus nature or ego versus instinct dichotomy in much current psychoanalytic thinking. This is not to say that psychoanalysis has abandoned its preoccupation with psychic conflict, but only that the conceptualization of the terms of such conflict has, for many, been altered. Repression and unconscious mental life remain a central focus

of any psychoanalytic thinking worthy of the name, but what is repressed is not unacceptable instinct (the primitive urgings of Old Adam, the "natural man" within us), but sexual, aggressive and narcissistic phantasies, wishes and projects of various sorts. These include uniquely human wishes for empathic mirroring (Winnicott, 1965; Kohut, 1971, 1977), acceptance and confirmation of one's simple being which, when insufficiently responded to, contribute to the anxiety, rage and projects of defense and revenge (some of which Freud mistook for innately given instincts) that are themselves repressed more or less satisfactorily in the name of social adjustment.

Thus, what clashes with culture or the socially adapted self is not nature or a biologically determined natural self, but a range of personal longings, defensive compensations, "disintegration products" (Kohut, 1977), phantasies and myths unconsciously both disguised and expressed in our everyday lives. Hence, socialization usually does entail a considerable degree of repression, as Freud believed. However, this is not because of any inevitable clash between instinct and civilization, but rather because the anxieties, cravings (frequently frustrated and inflamed), phantasies and reactive passions and defenses of the instinctless creature--such being, in varying degrees of intensity, the universal outcome of our "psychological birth" as symboling subjects, subjected to symbols--are simply incompatible with the requisites of adult social adjustment.

In my earliest work (Carveth, 1977a, 1977b), I attempted to find in Mead's "I," which he sometimes equated with what he called "the biologic individual," a parallel to the Freudian id and, hence, evidence of a theoretical convergence of Mead and Freud upon a conception of psychic conflict as a reflection in the individual of the clashing forces of nature and culture. Although I was at pains to resist any simple resort to instinctualism and the body in search of a countervailing individuality to posit against socially deterministic theories of the self, I was unable at that time to achieve any truly satisfactory solution and, hence, ultimately resorted to biologism as a basis for my opposition to sociologism. It is now my belief that in neither sociologism nor biologism, nor as a resultant of the clash of biological and social factors, can any adequate conception of human individuality be found. The personal cannot be located in nor derived from the vicissitudes of impersonal social and biological forces.

In our passionate conviction that we are not merely our social roles and social selves, we can easily make the mistake of thinking that our protest against social pressures (and oversocialized conceptions of man) is founded in loyalty to "the biologic individual" and the repressed "instinctual drives"

of the Freudian id. However, on further reflection, we are forced to recognize, not only the reductive biologism of the psychoanalytic theory of the instincts and the reification and depersonalization inherent in the concept of the id but also to see that, although certainly embodied, our individuality is equally capable of insisting that it is not merely its biological vehicle. In fact, we know that in various extreme situations people are capable of asserting their individuality and preserving their personal integrity through a sacrifice of all "instinctual" and merely biological values and even of life itself.

Although he sometimes seemed to associate it with "the biologic individual," Mead more often appeared to regard the "I" as a sort of "transcendental ego" or unknown knower who is capable of knowing what he is not, but who, as Mead (1934) himself explained, is ultimately incapable of "knowing" himself as subject ("I"), since the object of knowledge is precisely that--an object, a "me," a concept of the self as known and never the self as knowing subject. Yet, for Mead, the self is never merely "I" nor "me," but always both in interaction--just as for Sartre (1943) man is inevitably a free subject as well as a conditioned object, "bad faith" entailing the denial of either aspect of one's being. It is precisely our sensitivity to these varieties of self-deception that leads us to regard as pathological those grandiose, narcissistic, obsessional, sadistic and schizoid persons (Laing, 1960) who attempt to be pure transcendent subjects unconditioned by their bodies and the views of others, as well as those depressive, hysterical, masochistic and "pathologically normal" characters (McDougall, 1980, ch.13) who represent themselves either as total victims and helpless objects or as utterly identical to and defined by their conventional social identity. For similar reasons, we must reject all conceptions of the self and all images of man that fail to accurately represent our paradoxical being as subjective objects or objective subjects.

The oversocialized conception of the self as a product of mirroring by others is inadequate, not because it ignores the id as a container of instinctual drives, but because it is oblivious both to the "I" who, as knower of the self in the mirror, can never be identical to it, as well as to that range of unconscious "me's" or self-conceptions, derived from earlier real or phantasied mirrorings, that often return from the repressed in disguised forms that disrupt our attempts to be exclusively our social (or antisocial) selves. In supplementing that naive existentialism that would reduce the unconscious to intentional action engaged in unconsciously by the recognition that man's conscious, preconscious and unconscious intentionality very often is controlled by various root metaphors, phantasies

or constructions of reality that in a real sense "possess" him--at least until he becomes reflectively aware of them--we have rejected one of the forms taken by the undersocialized conception of man, for many of such controlling myths and metaphors are acquired in socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), whereas others are idiosyncratically constructed.

It would seem that psychoanalysis (like social analysis) is perpetually in danger of conflating phenomenology (or psychology) with ontology, the description of what people imagine to be the case with statements of what is in fact the case. For example, Freud (1933) moves in the space of one page from discussing "The girl's recognition of the fact of her being without a penis," to the statement that "The discovery that she is castrated is a turning-point in a girl's growth" (pp.125-126). It is essential to realize that her recognition of the fact of her being without a penis is by no means the discovery that she is castrated. How could she "discover" she is castrated when she is not? Yet the phantasy that the fact of her being without a penis means she is castrated plays a very significant role in the psychological development of many women. The trouble is that Freud not only discovered and described the castration phantasy of these women, but he agreed with it.

Similarly, Kohut (1971, 1977) observed that many analysands suffering from narcissistic problems think of their "selves" as prone to fragmentation, disintegration or enfeeblement under certain circumstances. It is one thing to describe such fragmentation phantasies; it is quite another to evolve a psychology of the self in which "the self" is actually thought of as some "thing" that can either cohere or fragment (Slap and Levine, 1978; Schafer, 1981). This sort of thing should not be called psychoanalysis, for nothing is being analyzed. Instead, the analysand's (and frequently the analyst's) unanalyzed phantasies are presented as psychoanalytic psychology.

But critics of this practice should be careful that they themselves are not engaged in it. For example, whereas classical Freudianism has tended to elevate the analysand's phantasy of himself as a victim of psychological compulsion into a metaphysical determinism (even while attempting to "cure" the "patient" of his "compulsions"), the critics of this metaphysical determinism may seek to elevate their or their analysands' phantasy of free action into a metaphysical philosophy of free will. It is probably not possible to leave ontology to the ontologists while getting on with the work of psychology. Certainly the view of man as an instinctless, meaning-creating and metaphor-ridden being is itself a metaphysical statement of the ultimate nature of human nature. Nevertheless, it would seem valuable for theorists to be aware of the distinction between phenomenology and

ontology so as to be able consciously to decide whether they wish to engage in the one activity or the other.

VI

Sociological and existentialist views of man as the denatured animal, as "biologically insufficient" and instinctless or lacking any species-specific instinctual preadaptation and as characterized by "world-openness" as a result of his prolonged dependency and "postnatal foetalization" (Fromm, 1941; Sartre, 1943; Berger and Luckmann, 1967), appear to be fundamentally correct. [#19](#) Unlike other animals that are "lived by" nature, man must construct a way of life and accomplish his relation to nature, his body and others. The traditional sociological rejection of biologism in favor of a "humanistic" image of man as a symboling, reality-constructing, self-presenting and role-enacting agent (Manis and Meltzer, 1978) offers a far more secure foundation for social psychology than those theories of a "substantial self" defined in biologicistic terms that serve to reify history and culture as "nature" and claim to find in the body or the psyche some blueprint for an "authentic" identity from which a given society either "alienates" us or helps us to "actualize." [#20](#)

On the other hand, what such sociological perspectives generally ignore is the fact that very often man plays his social games, follows his rules, mounts his performances and constructs his realities unconsciously, that his unconsciously enacted myths and identities may be congruent or incongruent with his conscious beliefs and presentations, and that man's unconscious agendas are often phantastic, "perverse," and related to earlier phases of his biography. Psychoanalysis is the hermeneutic science of the unconscious symboling and selfing of mankind. Whereas psychoanalysts must learn from the symbolic interactionists that man is a self-reflexive and meaning-creating (rather than an instinctual) creature, the latter must learn from the former that symbolic action and interaction are carried on unconsciously and preconsciously as well as consciously.

Although correctly representing man's existential predicament as an instinctless and world-open creature who must symbolically create the order and orientation that nature has failed to impose upon him, sociologism generally manages to interpret these facts in such a way that man is seen as a fundamentally passive and pliable recipient of whatever form is favored by the sociocultural mold that shapes him. What nature has withheld, society will provide. What this ignores is the range of infantile phantasies, beliefs and motives in which the symbolic function of the instinctless animal

is expressed. In the projects, passions, myths and motives that human beings enact unconsciously--and that Freud mistook for innately given human instincts of sex and aggression--lie the sources of intrapsychic conflict, of the resistance to socialization and of man's discontent in civilization.

Although there exist no instincts to oppose the sociocultural programming, the latter does not simply take the place of the former--man's social nature does not simply replace his missing human nature. Rather, the rules, roles and rituals of the established social order with which a person may consciously identify and seek to affirm are often opposed by his simultaneous, but unconscious, commitment to an alternative vision of reality and identity. To say this is but to restate Freud's (1900) original distinction between the dream and normal (reality-adapted) consciousness and the primary and secondary thought processes that are characteristic of each. To object that reality itself is but a dream--or perhaps "a tale told by an idiot"--is to make an important point, provided one remembers the distinction between those phantasies which are consensually validated and socially institutionalized and those private myths which, however autistic and dissociated, often profoundly influence our social adjustment or lack thereof and even our very perception and definition of social reality. For all their emphasis upon role-taking as the mediator of social interaction, Mead and his followers never sufficiently addressed the problem of distortions in social perception caused by unconscious processes such as transference and projection and related incursions of the private myth into public life.

From this standpoint, rather than representing the allegedly contradictory claims of culture on the one hand and nature on the other--the conflict between which is seen as the origin of psychic conflict and the essence of the problem of society versus the individual--sociology and psychoanalysis appear as related hermeneutic or semiotic sciences. For reality is constructed both socially and personally, on more than one level of consciousness and at each point in the individual life cycle. In this view intrapsychic conflict, far from manifesting a clash between instinct and civilization, represents the competing claims of socially adapted versus idiosyncratic narratives, as well as the contradictions among various personal myths associated with different moments of the individual life cycle. Hence, to alter a phrase of Parsons' (1962, p.74), individual personality is now seen to be more adequately represented as "a complex interlarded `layer-cake'" of *interpretations*, rather than of *interpenetrations* of nature and culture.

As the observation and interpretation of socially and personally constructed realities, sociology and psychoanalysis alike are called upon to at times forego ontology for phenomenology. The enterprise is inherently relativizing, for the aim is less to define Reality, than how "reality" is defined. This is no task for the fainthearted, for it requires a degree of detachment (perhaps "nonattachment" would be a better word) attainable only by those whose "nostalgia for the absolute" (Steiner, 1974) is well under control. To some this version of human science may seem inherently irresponsible and even nihilistic. In reply we not only can reflect upon this *weltanschauung* of urgency and earnest (perhaps authoritarian?) concern but also point out that nihilism is no privileged doctrine--like relativism itself it must be relativized along with all the other "isms."

Eventually, it is true, we do have to live in the real world, protest real injustice and make genuine commitments. The attitude of Pontius Pilate ("What is truth?") is, at best, a heuristic one. Nevertheless, in our serious daily round of crucifying and being crucified, we must set aside some time for analysis--time to momentarily suspend our personal and social identities, to meditate upon our myths and metaphors (including that of crucifying and being crucified) and to relativize our religions--time, in other words, to experience a little therapeutic anomie (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), while avoiding raising that to a new (negative) absolute by relativizing it as well. A little relativism is a dangerous thing: it can leave us stranded, without gods, in a wasteland that we absolutize as Reality. When practiced more thoroughly, however, relativism will save us from such premature conclusions--perhaps even from conclusions as such. [#21](#)

As an instance of such a failure of relativism, let us examine a particularly seductive ideology founded upon the very image of man as the instinctless and world-open animal that has been advocated in this essay: the ontology of anxiety or anomie. It can be argued that man's very freedom from instinctual preadaptation, together with extended infantile dependence, conditions the helplessness anxiety of the uprooted human creature that, in this view, enters the world in a painful state of anomie or chaos from which it ever after seeks to escape through the use of various personal and social mechanisms which function as defensive "shields against terror" (Berger, 1969, p.22; Carveth, 1977b). In this view, the social construction of reality is viewed as the creation of a "nomos" or social order in the face of chaos and anomie--while, in a psychoanalytic perspective, the various "neurotic styles" (Shapiro, 1965) are seen as alternative defensive strategies for coping with a universally human separation or helplessness anxiety, however intensified this may be in particular individuals as a result of the

"surplus anxiety" arising from their unique circumstances.

It is often overlooked that Freud himself contributed to this perspective while developing an argument for his sociological views that is quite distinct from his instinctualism. In his later works and especially in "Civilization and Its Discontents" (1930, ch.2) in which he set forth his culture versus nature argument most explicitly, Freud also draws attention to the problem of anxiety, not in the face of man's instincts or their punishment by the superego, but to his creaturely anxiety in the face of disease, accident, aging, the cruelty of others and finally of death itself. Here is the all-too-seldom recognized existentialist Freud who, aside from all instinctualist and biologicistic considerations, is here calling our attention to man's ontological predicament. Earlier, in "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" (1926), Freud had taken a giant step away from his instinctualist psychobiology when he replaced his earlier view of anxiety as transformed libidinal energy with a humanistic theory of anxiety as an intelligible human response to a danger situation and went on to enumerate the archaic fears of loss of the loved object, loss of the object's love, castration and superego condemnation.

While basing his thinking primarily on the work of Otto Rank and Norman O. Brown, Becker (1973) later developed these Freudian themes in his provocative essay, *The Denial of Death*. But whereas Becker assumed that man suffers from a primary death anxiety stemming from his awareness of death and irreducible to infantile fears, Freud (1923, pp.64-66; 1926) argued that since the nature of death must of necessity remain a mystery to the living thinker, whatever attitudes we have toward it are likely to be influenced by unconscious phantasy and, hence, will tend to vary with the nature of the phantasy underlying them. When death is phantasied as the ultimate abandonment and helplessness, it assumes a terrifying aspect in light of our displaced separation anxiety. Similarly, when phantasied as the ultimate castration or superego punishment, death becomes an uncanny and horrifying prospect. One need not minimize the significance of man's unique situation as an animal burdened with the knowledge of its impending demise in order to accept the psychoanalytic idea that our attitudes toward our mysterious fate are significantly influenced by unconscious phantasy.

In reading Becker, one soon becomes aware of the terribly one-sided nature of his argumentation: not only death, but man's anality, the human body and even life itself are always represented negatively as frightening, disgusting or absurd phenomena and never is there the slightest recognition that sometimes people delight in their bodies, secretly enjoy their anal functions

and even have been known to be "half in love with easeful death." In the latter instance, it would seem that death is phantasied as the final reunion and blissful refusion with the primal mother: going into the ground is returning at long last to final rest and peace in the symbiotic embrace of mother earth. But in its systematic rejection of all attitudes discordant with its litany of despair and in its depressed and angry bitterness toward human existence, Becker's work might better have been titled "the denial of life." It is not that this work has not captured important truths, but these insights are all of such a partial and one-sided nature that they eclipse one whole side of our paradoxical experience.

Becker argues that man's primary death anxiety necessarily drives him to distraction. Repression, if not imposed by civilization, would be self-imposed as a result of man's need to deny his body that, rotting and dying, is a constant reminder of the mortality he cannot face. Society offers a range of possibilities for heroism in which death can be denied and an illusion of immortality constructed. The traditional psychoanalytic animus against Marxism here reaches a new pitch of intensity as Becker asks what new distractions a revolutionary society would offer its liberated proletarians to keep them from going mad.

Following Rank, Becker offers an existential psychoanalytic apology for religion as the least destructive form of the universal and necessary denial of death. Man needs his illusions we are told. His situation is so terrible that without them he must go mad. The despairing schizophrenic is in some ways more honest than we self-deceived and adjusted ones. This is a very old story. Several years before Becker published his psychoanalytic edition, Berger (1969, 1970; Carveth, 1977b) had developed a sociologicistic version in which man, the biologically insufficient animal, must resort to socially fabricated illusions in order to escape the nightmare truth of chaos and anomie.

But just as Freud's pessimistic and Hobbesian social philosophy (in which repression and its return in neurosis is the necessary price of civilized order) requires major revision in light of the collapse of its instinctualist foundation, so the neoconservative ideologies of Berger and Becker dissolve in the face of their refusal to recognize the other side of the ledger of human experience in which we find despair countered by delight, pain with pleasure, hate with love and bitterness with thanksgiving. These thinkers appear to work with depression as their major and unquestioned premise. While relativizing all positive attitudes toward human existence as illusory, they inevitably fail to relativize their own negative postulates. Why can

Berger not see that "anomie" is itself another "nomos"--an interpretation of experience as vulnerable to relativization as any other? Why was Becker unable to recognize the one-sidedness of his attitude of despair and disgust? If the psychoanalytic relativization of false claims to universal validity by tracing them to their origin in particular attitudes of specific personalities was ever necessary, it is called for here. For while capturing many valid insights into the dark side of the human condition, these perspectives become increasingly unreal in their exclusive adherence to one-sided constructions of reality.

In seeking to deconstruct Berger's and Becker's *metaphysics of absence*, their ontology of anxiety or basic mistrust, and their depressive outlook--as well as their gnostic type of religiosity that from a biblical point of view is heretical in its devaluation of the Creation (the organic, inorganic and superorganic levels of Being)--I in no way intend to reject their existentialist understanding of the unique predicament of man as a symboling and self-conscious being, but only their one-sided interpretation of the human situation. In viewing, as I do, the "rapprochement crisis" as the "fulcrum" in psychological development in which the human subject emerges from the pre-biological and biological levels of being into the post-biological realm of the *noosphere* as a symboling being self-consciously aware of its separateness and impending demise, I in way see such awareness as justification for a "leap" into a consolatory and gnostic religion of illusion. For the same symbolic consciousness that awakens us to a knowledge of our separateness and ultimate death at the same time awakens us to a knowledge of our connectedness and of the gift of life. While certainly opening up the potential for despair, symbolic consciousness at the same opens up the possibility of *jouissance*. In my view, such existentialism is far less compatible with the gnostic dualism that Judeo-Christianity has always sought to reject (even while being infected by it in the process), than it is with a demythologized, existentialist and "religionless" Christianity capable of affirming *both* Good Friday *and* Easter Sunday, without privileging either over the other (see chapters 10, 12 & 13).

VII

But if certain social theorists are required to relativize their ontologies of despair--Sartre (1980, p.398) eventually claimed that he had never personally known anguish despite its centrality in his early philosophy--then the psychoanalysts must outgrow what Freud (1933) himself referred to as "our mythology of the instincts" (p.95). For in the view adopted here the aim of both psychoanalysis and social science is to analyze mythology, not

to submit to or practice it. Accordingly, it becomes evident that our attitude toward the theoretical question that initiated these reflections, the Hobbesian problem concerning the conflict between the individual and the social order, may itself, like all other human attitudes, have been significantly influenced all along by unconscious phantasy.

On the oral level and in a positive mode society may be seen in terms of the displaced imago of the good mother of infancy, the Madonna who feeds, nurtures and provides that symbiotic union that vanquishes all spectres of anxious solitude; whereas in the negative mode it takes on the character of the destructive mother image, the menacing witch who threatens to smother, swallow, starve or poison. On the anal level and in a positive mode society may appear as the sympathetic other who receives and applauds our earliest gifts and creations; whereas in a negative mode it is the rigid taskmaster who expects the impossible, sadistically imposes incomprehensible demands and shames us when we fail to meet them, who dominates and overwhelms our incipient autonomy and to whom we either submit with sullen resentment or resist with stubborn retention and angry expulsion. Finally, on the phallic level, society may be experienced as the oedipal parent whom we secretly long to possess but whom, out of guilt and anxiety arising from this forbidden wish and anticipation of its punishment by the rival, we must resist and reject. Although in a positive mode social adjustment may represent fulfillment of the oedipal wish to possess and be possessed, a person's hostile and anxious sensitivity to the possibility of being dominated, trapped and emasculated by the social order may reflect his fear of the consequences of such an incestuous consummation. The metaphor of socialization as a bed of Procrustes is all too suggestive of castration.

It is now almost a century since Nietzsche (1886) delivered the following message that we have yet to appreciate fully: "Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir...." (p.13). Certainly a great deal of what passes for disinterested philosophy or objective social theory begs for psychoanalytic interpretation as projected, rationalized and intellectualized unconscious phantasy. But the same can be said about psychoanalytic theory itself. As we have seen, Freud (1931, p.223) likened ad hominem interpretation to the sword that cuts both ways. Certainly his own notion that civilization inevitably entails a painful degree of instinctual renunciation says as much or more about his particular sociohistorical milieu and his personal struggles with his sexuality, aggression and narcissism as it does about the human situation.

This is in no way to deny that all of us are required to undergo a similar struggle, but only to suggest that rather than arising from supposedly biologically based, impersonal and essentially asocial and antisocial instinctual drives forever in conflict with a civilized order to which they are inherently antagonistic, the basis of our predicament is considerably more complex. In my view it is to be located in the full range of reactions to our psychological (as distinct from merely biological) birth into the human condition as symboling and self-aware animals whose consciousness is constructed through such binary categories as PRESENCE/ABSENCE, BEING/NOTHINGNESS, FULL/EMPTY, STRONG/WEAK, HAVING/LACKING, PHALLIC/CASTRATED, and so on. Above and beyond the surplus frustrations that we as individuals have had to endure in our particular childhoods, there exists the level of *existential* frustration, conflict, anxiety, rage and guilt--and the level of our uniquely human *desire*, as distinct from the organic *need* with which Freud perpetually confused it.

As a number of Freud's more discerning critics have long recognized (Herberg, 1957; Niebuhr, 1957), the origin of human destructiveness is not to be located in the supposed "instincts" or "drives" of the id, but in the human "ego"--understood not in the metapsychological sense as one component of the mental "apparatus," but in the sense in which we speak of human egoism, that narcissistic obsession with the "self" ("me" or self-image) which estranges us both from others and ourselves ("I") and which arises as an assertion of our *being* in the face of our fantasy and fear of *nothingness*. Far from arising from "instinctual" sources, human desire, aggression and narcissism seem to originate in an inner sense of vacuity, incompleteness or brokenness that they defend against, compensate for or seek to remedy. In a classical psychoanalytic perspective this conviction of "lack" together with the compensatory strivings to which it gives rise would be seen as symptomatic of an unresolved castration complex, possibly complicated by pregenital, especially oral fixations--a "bedrock" level of psychopathology the very possibility of transcendence of which was doubted by an aging and increasingly pessimistic Freud (1937).

When phenomenology gives way to ontology the unconscious sense of "lack" is given philosophical expression in one or another version of the tragic sense of life: the Freudian myth of man's inevitable discontent in civilization or of his perpetual quest to "re-find" the lost object or to reestablish the oceanic bliss of primary narcissism (before "the fall"); the Lacanian myth of man's perpetual quest for an imaginary wholeness in evasion of the inevitable incompleteness and absence arising from the gap between the signifier and the signified; or the Sartrean myth of man's

anguish arising from his nihilating consciousness which condemns him to a freedom which he seeks to evade through his "useless passion" to be god (*being-in-itself-for-itself*) and to achieve the impossible combination of the stability and security of a thing with the freedom and consciousness of a person. From the standpoint of the Freudian and Lacanian ontologies any hope of fundamental transcendence or "cure" is met with skepticism and viewed as a regressive flight from a harsh reality and from "ordinary human unhappiness."

On the other hand, these tragic and pessimistic ontologies might themselves be diagnosed as symptomatic of an idealized (and unanalyzed) neurotic depression. According to Nietzsche (1886), "around the hero everything turns into a tragedy" (p.90). Refusing to rationalize his depressive sense of "lack" or congratulate himself on the heroism with which he faces it, the phenomenologist might seek to relativize the fantasy upon which rests the depression that requires tragic heroism as its narcissistic compensation. Once again, "the use of analysis as a weapon of controversy leads to no decision."

Whereas the Freudian and Lacanian perspectives define the "cure," not as overcoming the lack or cessation of desire, but as resignation to or acceptance of the human condition of lack and desire, Sartre (1943) hints at the possibility of "a self-recovery of being which was previously corrupted" (p.116) achievable through a "radical conversion" (p.34) by means of existential psychoanalysis employed "as a means of deliverance and salvation" (p.797). In relation to such salvation Sartre asks:

In particular is it possible for freedom to take itself for a value?... And in case it could will itself as its own possible and its determining value, what would this mean? What are we to understand by this being which wills itself to hold itself in awe, to be at a distance from itself? Is it a question of bad faith or of another fundamental attitude? And can one live this new aspect of being? [p. 798]

But despite the dramatic terminology, Sartre's salvational possibility, like those of Freud and Lacan, presumes a "lack" (that lack of being or nothingness which is man's freedom) which is real but accepted and embraced rather than evaded. An alternative and far more radical model of cure for the castration complex--and, paradoxically, one quite in keeping with a classical, clinical psychoanalytic outlook--would propose the analytic

discovery of the fundamental irreality (or merely psychic reality) of the notion of "lack" as unconscious fantasy. But what would that mean? Certainly not that one has "it", for such grandiosity merely compensates for and thus betrays a deeper sense of lack. What are we to understand by this being which bottoms out of the duality of "having" and "lacking"? "Is it a question of bad faith or of another fundamental attitude? And can one live this new aspect of being?" [#22](#)

Whatever answer one gives to the questions of the cause, nature and possibilities for transcendence of our universal sense of absence and our "nostalgia for the absolute" (Steiner, 1974), it is evident that our passions assume an intimately personal form, their roots deeply implanted in the idiosyncracies of a particular biography embedded within a specific sociohistorical setting. Hence, to understand the origins of the root metaphors upon which most theoretical systems rest, it will be necessary to subject both the theory and the theorist to both socio- and psychoanalysis. If we require a sociology and a psychoanalysis of sociology, we are equally in need of both a sociology and psychoanalysis of psychoanalysis.

Hopefully, psychoanalytic interpretation of the dilemma of the individual versus society, will lead not to that fruitless "loss of problems" of which we have spoken (and which itself may suggest castration), but supply an additional reflexive dimension of meaning to our elucidation of what is not merely a neurotic but an existential problem. Even when freed of unconscious and infantile associations which render it insoluble, the Hobbesian question remains as a real issue--but one which we may now hope to realistically confront, if not resolve. For the problem of the claims of individual liberty versus the requisites of social order is an enduring one, even when our thinking in this area has been liberated to an optimal degree from infantile fantasy and distortion.

Summary

While Wrong (1976) has recently stated what he regards as one of the central propositions of psychoanalysis as "In the beginning is the body" (p.53), we must insist that psychoanalysis is not primarily about the body at all, but about ideas about the body, mostly infantile, unconscious and phantastic ideas in fact. One of such infantile and irrational ideas which, being under its sway himself, Freud did as much to promulgate as to analyze is the notion that a female is essentially a castrated male. And this confusion of a phantasy about the body for an insight into the reality of

sexuality, performed the ideological function of grounding a particular set of social prejudices in a theory of universal human (in this case woman's) nature.

It has been one of the aims of this paper to criticize such attempts to locate in psychoanalysis--as in Marxism, structuralism, sociobiology or a range of other "substitute faiths" (Steiner, 1974)--a basis for an ideology of human nature which could serve both to reify our social values and palliate our nostalgia for the absolute. At the same time, I have sought to give some indication of the continuing relevance of Freud for students of social theory; to provide an account of the issues which have led one sociologist to become preoccupied with psychoanalysis; and to persuade fellow social psychologists of the importance of interdisciplinary attempts to articulate some degree of mutual interpenetration between paradigms and disciplines which seldom interact--a state of affairs which I believe is seriously to the detriment of progress in the human sciences.

Notes

1. In addition to the well-known work of sociologists such as Robert Bales, Lewis Feuer, Alex Inkeles, Benjamin Nelson, Talcott Parsons, Philip Rieff, David Riesman, John Seeley, Philip Slater, Neil Smelser, and Dennis Wrong, to mention only a few, see: Ruitenbeek (1962); and more recent works such as those by Weinstein and Platt (1973); Bocock (1976); Holland (1977); and Endleman (1982).
2. See Brown (1973); Fromm (1970); Habermas (1971); Jay (1973); Jacoby (1975); Marcuse (1955a); Reich (1973); Robinson (1969).
3. This description of the sociological enterprise derives from Berger's (1963) *Invitation to Sociology*, a work in which the widespread sociological hostility to psychoanalysis is clearly evident. In this and the following chapter I have opted to retain the generic usage of "man" to describe persons of both sexes employed when this material was first published. In more recent writings I have adopted gender inclusive terminology.
4. To view psychoanalysis as a social psychology is in no way to deny its profound divergence from behavioristic approaches in this field. For psychoanalysis, it is the *experience* of social relations--conscious, preconscious, and unconscious--that is of central interest, however much or little this psychic reality may differ from some hypothetical objective

reality.

5. Without in any way subscribing to that sociological determinism that would reduce the individual to a *tabula rasa* upon which society inscribes its text (a conception the unconscious basis of which itself requires psychoanalytic elucidation), it is one of the aims of this paper to suggest that notions such as those of "the pain and sacrifice entailed in submission to civilization" and "the resentment the individual harbors against the society which nurtures him" may well amount more to intellectualizations of unconscious phantasies than to objective sociological insights.

6. On this point, as well as for other criticisms of Marcuse, see Robinson (1969), as well as the early but still relevant debate on these issues between Marcuse (1955b, 1956) and Fromm (1955, 1956). In *Narcissism: Psychoanalytic Essays*, the French psychoanalyst Grunberger (1979) writes as follows of the uses to which Freud's (1920, 1930) theory of life and death instincts has been put by certain social theorists:

Thus certain Freudo-Marxist popularizers and other political manipulators of Freudian theory find a convenient and superficial schema that can be utilized without risk, but, most impressively, one that accredits them as analysts while at the same time permitting them to maintain absolute distance from the actual experience of analysis and from any deep investigation of the (i.e., their) unconscious. This comforting illusion is based on a veritable landslide of peri- and para-analytic literature, which threatens to block off forever the road toward true psychoanalytic research (p.12).

7. In referring to man as an "instinct-less" animal, I intend only to reject Freud's outmoded, hydraulic conception of the instinctual drive and not to deny man's animality or the role of biological factors influencing human behavior, particularly modern evolutionary biological conceptions of innate needs or patterns of behavior released by various stimuli, such as Bowlby's (1969-80) idea of an innate need for attachment.

8. For sensitive psychoanalytic studies of these early stages of development see: Guntrip (1961); Winnicott (1965); Mahler et. al. (1975). It is fascinating to compare Cooley's (1902) concept of the "looking-glass self" and Mead's (1934) notions of the "I" and the "me," with Sartre's (1943) concept of "the look of the other" and Lacan's (1977) distinction between

the "subject" and the "specular ego" arising in "the mirror phase." A close study of the congruities and incongruities among these social psychological, existentialist and psychoanalytic concepts is needed.

9. Such philosophical restraint is justified. A humanistic image of man as psychologically free from mechanical determinism need not be radicalized into a metaphysical doctrine of free will that denies the peculiar types of psychological, social and linguistic determination to which the human mind is to a considerable extent (but by no means completely) subject.

10. Bettelheim (1982), among others, has revived the argument that the view of Freud as a positivist, mechanist and reductionist is a distortion of his essential humanism brought about by James Strachey's attempts to transform Freud's "soul- study" into a medically respectable positive science of psychoanalysis by the miracle of free translation. The argument is appealing but it won't wash. Like the cultural milieu in which he worked, Freud suffered from the problem of "two souls in one breast": the romantic-humanist lived in continual tension with the positivist-reductionist. The result is the "mixed discourse" (Ricoeur, 1970) or "broken speech" of psychoanalysis.

11. On the debate between humanism and positivism in psychoanalytic theory see: Gill and Holzman (1976); Klein (1976); Schafer (1976b, 1978); Warne (1982).

12. On the importance of the convergence upon the concept of intentional action in European phenomenology and Anglo-American linguistic or analytic philosophy, see Roche (1973). Unfortunately, Roche seems unwilling to entertain the idea of intentional action carried on unconsciously. For the development of a psychoanalytic action theory and language influenced by both existential phenomenology and the analytical philosophy of mind and action, see Schafer (1976b, 1978). It is quite remarkable the extent to which Sartre's *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1939) anticipated the essential elements of the philosophic rehabilitation of psychoanalysis that only began to emerge within mainstream psychoanalysis several decades later.

13. On psychoanalysis as hermeneutics see: Ricoeur (1970); Habermas (1971); Klein (1976); Leavy (1980).

14. In such paradisiacal dreams a psychoanalytical consciousness may detect a profound nostalgia, if not for what Grunberger (1979, p.12) has posited as

"the fetal state of elation," then perhaps for that postnatal experience of "dual unity" or "symbiosis" that Mahler (1968) has described as existing in the earliest months before the beginning of the process of ejection from Eden in the differentiation subphase of separation-individuation and resulting in a qualitative shift in mental functioning in the "rapprochement crisis." In this psychoanalytic rendition of the Judeo-Christian myth of "the fall," as "world-open" creatures we will seek to fill the gap opened by our rupture with (mother) nature with that range of symbolic consolations known as culture.

On the other hand, were we to decide to psychologize rather than ontologize, we would rest content to analyze this myth of the primal "wound" and of man's alleged resulting "lack" (Lacan, 1977), rather than endowing it with validity. In fact, we could regard the central aim of psychoanalysis precisely as liberation from the hold that such metaphysical myths and metaphors so often have over the human mind (see chapter 2). For to reject the notion of man as an instinctually-driven creature is in no way to deny that he is often "possessed" and "lived by" his metaphors and myths. But even to regard man as an instinctless but metaphor-ridden being is itself an ontological statement regarding the ultimate nature of human nature.

15. The distinction between positive or practical and negative or psychological freedom is implicit in Sartre's philosophy, but it was explicitly stated in Fromm (1941, ch.2). On Sartre's progression from his early libertarian individualism to his later libertarian socialism, see Aronson (1980).

16. Given the association of "humanism" with anthropocentric, rationalistic and voluntaristic perspectives incompatible with psychoanalytic insight into man's "decentered ego," it may well be misleading to employ the term in the present context to characterize a psychoanalytic framework that while rejecting Freud's mechanistic, biologicistic and reductionistic metapsychology at the same time rejects naively voluntaristic frameworks that deny the determination of much human behavior by unconscious myths and metaphors. I have tried to indicate this by placing the term "humanism" in inverted commas.

17. Although it is true, as Parsons (1962) suggests, some notion of the development of the id and its structuring through internalization of early object relations is implicit in Freud's thought, this theme coexists with the dominant conception of the id as an innate, instinctual given. Parsons, like many others (Wrong, 1961, 1964; Carveth, 1977a, 1977b; Bettelheim,

1982), attempts to defend Freud against the charge of biologism arguing that the image of Freud as a biological reductionist is based upon a misinterpretation of psychoanalysis. This argument is, I now believe, untenable. Whereas Freud was not only a biological reductionist, neither was his ambiguous mixture of positivism and humanism, determinism and voluntarism, biologism and psychologism, entirely free of the biologicistic fallacy.

18. Today I would no longer employ the label "seduction theory" to describe what was clearly a theory of sexual abuse. It is not without significance that, for many years, this misleading euphemism was commonly employed in psychoanalytic discourse.

19. See note 7 above.

20. The concepts of "self-alienation" and "self-realization" can be given legitimate meaning once we recognize that although there exists no biologically given "true self" as a definable identity from which we are alienated or from knowledge of which we can derive a blueprint to guide our choices, there is our "going-on-being" (Winnicott, 1960) and an existential self ("I") in addition to the social or conceptual self ("me"), as well as a range of unconscious "me's," repressed phantasies, affects, wishes and defenses our estrangement from which it is the task of analysis to diminish. Among other components of the self from which we may be in varying degrees estranged are our biologically-grounded needs for attachment (Bowlby, 1969-80), "holding" (Winnicott, 1962, 1967) and empathic attunement and responsiveness on the part of the "selfobject" milieu (Kohut, 1977; Bacal, 1985).

21. Certainly I would not wish to reject entirely the much-abused concept of the "true self" (Winnicott, 1960) or to relativize it completely. Although rejecting the idea of a biologically built-in blueprint for "authentic" or "healthy" living, the fact remains that some people are in touch with a broader range of their feelings and thoughts than are others. At the same time, however, I would not wish to imply that the repressed feelings are ultimately "truer" than those which result from or maintain the repression.

As indicated in note 14 above, while I regard clinical psychoanalysis as a predominantly hermeneutic and deconstructive discipline, I believe it relies to a degree upon knowledge drawn from various biological and social sciences.

22. If the aim of psychoanalysis is the analysis of ideology, not its

assertion, then might the analysis of the ideology of "lack" (absence, castration) obviate the "need" for an absolute (breast, phallus) to fill it, thus transcending both our nostalgia and our "need" for palliatives? One might wonder whether this very question is itself a reflection of nostalgia and desire? However, to suggest that the Freudian, Lacanian and Sartrean versions of the tragic sense of life may embody a rationalized and unanalyzed depression, is in no way to deny that they at the same time convey fundamental insight into the essential ambivalence and instability of human reality so well represented in the Judeo-Christian symbolism of humanity's "fallenness" and "brokenness." Attempts to evade recognition of this existential reality by suggesting its description amounts only to a "narrative" or "ideology" open to analytic deconstruction and relativization truly are reflections of nostalgia and desire--and of defensive denial and phantasy formation. But to speak of our unavoidable existential ambivalence, such as that between hope and despair for example, is in no way to justify the privileging of the former over the latter, or vice versa, as in Sartre's (1943) despairing conclusion that "Thus it amounts to the same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations" (p.797).

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