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International Library of Group Psychotherapy
and Group Process

Freud and Society

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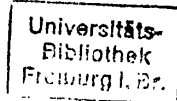
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lation. It is for this reason that all these contradictions and ambiguities must be kept alive rather than concealed and repressed, in the hope that they will be transcended through their constant confrontation with reality.

Chapters 12 and 13 conclude earlier arguments by presenting a novel interpretation of contemporary culture which overcomes some of the difficulties encountered by other authors. As I mentioned earlier, this interpretation is by necessity brief and focuses on a limited number of selected phenomena of which bureaucratization and narcissism are the outstanding ones; although the discussion is more speculative than the rest of this work, I believe that there is considerable support for its general theme, that although our culture has softened the discontents of earlier culture arising from guilt and sexual frustration, it nevertheless generates a new complex of discontents and illusions which, as in previous eras, reinforce each other.

Chapter 8

The first radicalization of Freud: Reich and Fromm, the optimistic utopians

Reich and Fromm belong to the last generation of psychoanalysts to emerge during Freud's lifetime. In their different ways, they were both impressed by the new horizons in human self-knowledge opened by psychoanalysis, and they both mobilized psychoanalytic insights in their interpretations of contemporary social phenomena, outstanding among which was the rise of fascism, not only as a political system but as a social phenomenon and a mass movement. Fascism did not merely shock and horrify Reich and Fromm – it brought to light new and previously unsuspected manifestations of the human psyche, new adventures in communal violence and the emergence of an ideology which combined a novel glorification of racial and masculine virility with an unqualified acceptance of an authoritarian ethos. Both Reich and Fromm felt that psychoanalysis could be brought in to elucidate these phenomena; but neither stopped at this point, for they both took very seriously Marx's final thesis on Feuerbach, according to which philosophers have sought to interpret the world when the point is to change it. Reich and Fromm sought, therefore, to stretch psychoanalysis into a strategy for changing the world, and in the case in hand, into a strategy for combating the rise of fascism. In so doing, Reich and Fromm undertook two of the earliest attempts at bridging the gap between Marx and Freud. In their view, dialectical materialism and psychoanalysis were ideally suited for each other – the former lacked a psychology, while the latter lacked a sociology and a politic. Marx's analyses of economic exploitation and social oppression had failed to recognize the extent to which these phenomena had shaped and become entrenched in human souls. Alienation under capitalism did not stop at feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness and lack of fulfilment; nor did alienation merely distort an otherwise sound consciousness. Alienation totally moulded human beings into accepting and indeed liking their oppression, it paralysed all resistances, it dissolved all criticism and it eliminated all visions and desires pointing to a future of freedom, fulfilment and happiness. A social revolution could not lead to a genuine revolutionary emancipation of mankind, as long as it aimed purely at the destruction and overcoming of capitalist institutions. Even if successful, such a revolution would leave the deformed crippled capitalist souls intact, and sooner or later would be doomed to resurrect the capitalist institutions in new guises with new rhetorics. It is at this point that both Reich and Fromm sought to introduce psychoanalysis as the radical complement to



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Marxism in understanding the world and drawing a revolutionary programme for changing it.

In order for psychoanalysis to fulfil this role it had to undergo a thorough purge. While both Reich and Fromm were impressed by Freud's clinical theories (in spite of their diametrically different understanding of them), they were troubled by what they saw as Freud's insensitivity towards cultural factors and their effect on the formation of personality, by his resigned acceptance of the inevitability of repression and renunciation, and by his postulation of the death instinct as a feature of man's biological constitution. Contrary to the conclusions reached in Part I of this study, Reich and Fromm believed that Freud had abstracted the individual not only from the interactive context of the family where 'early socialization' takes place, but also from the broader cultural and historical conditions. For these reasons, they criticized Freud's metapsychology (i) for generalizing from a limited range of clinical observations, drawn mostly from middle-class, fin-de-siècle, Viennese neurotics from authoritarian families, and (ii) for allowing his own personality, and especially his well-known pessimism, to influence his arguments.¹ In this way they made it their task to cleanse psychoanalysis from Freud's idiosyncrasies and to provide it with a sociological backbone by linking it with the edifice of historical materialism.

As we saw in Chapter 2, the concept through which both Reich and Fromm try to bridge Marxism and psychoanalysis is that of 'character-structure'. The notion of psychic character had first been used by Abraham and Freud to denote the organization of libido, which is composed of 'instincts that have been fixed since childhood, of constructions achieved by means of sublimation, and of other constructions, employed for effectively holding in check perverse impulses' (1905d:7:238).² By contrast, Reich and Fromm use character in a different way, to denote relatively stable patterns of observable behaviour traits, which, in their view, develop out of the process of early socialization.³ In spite of their very different understanding of the psychological nature of character-structures, both Reich and Fromm see them as the psychical level in which ideologies become embedded; they both agree that because ideologies become engraved in this way in the constitution of individuals, they cannot correspond on a one-to-one basis to the conditions of the 'material basis' of society; the economic conditions prevailing in a social system may change without bringing about an automatic change in the dominant ideologies. Moreover, the transformations and modifications of character-structures follow certain rules of a psychological nature and do not merely echo the laws of historical development. Thus not only do ideas lag behind the developments of social relations, but they enjoy a relative autonomy. It follows that a political revolution cannot succeed in emancipating humanity, unless there is an independent effort to undo and modify pre-revolutionary character-structures.

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But why revolution? it may be asked. Apart from their conviction in the revolutionary message of Marx, both men were deeply influenced by Freud's view of the psyche as an arena of painful conflicts, compromises and renunciations; at the same time, they pursued the utopian implications of psychoanalysis (examined in Chapter 6) with far greater fervour than Freud, and argued with unqualified optimism that the restrictive and repressive nature of our society is a historical characteristic, not a theoretical necessity; in their view, all of Freud's statements on the relation between the individual and society are statements of fact, not statements of essence, and they envisaged not only a possibility of harmony between man and man, but also between the individual and society and between the individual and him/herself. Harmony, or at least the potential for harmony, can be seen as the *idée fixe* of both Reich and Fromm and this may be a strange fixation in thinkers fascinated by Marx and Freud; in order to establish this potential for harmony as an objective possibility, Reich and Fromm devoted extensive parts of their works to showing that there is no ultimate antinomy between individual and society, man and man, culture and nature. In this way, both Reich and Fromm emerge with imageries of human nature capable of fulfilment, pleasure and self-realization through participation in a social whole; this human nature is, at present, concealed behind the oppressive armour of character-structures, which, as we saw, reflect the social relations of oppression and exploitation. Thus, in the work of both of these theorists we have the nucleus of the now fashionable theories of 'authenticity', according to which there exists an unpolluted human core, a noble savage, underneath the oppressive layers of socialization in every individual. In spite of the atrocities that they were witnessing, Reich and Fromm were prepared to argue that human nature is fundamentally noble and altruistic, trying desperately to break through the oppressive shell of character in order to achieve fulfilment through a harmonious coexistence in society. The twin preconditions for this liberation of the human essence are the dissolution of oppressive social relationships and of oppressive character-structures. The former is the task of political revolution, the second is the task of therapy, and note how both tasks are tasks of undoing. It is interesting that both Reich and Fromm gradually shifted their emphasis from the first to the second of these preconditions, and developed therapeutics whose scope and ambition went far beyond those of psychoanalysis.⁴

But if human essence is good, how could Reich and Fromm explain the persistence of the oppressive political structures and character-structures and the suffering to which they led? And how, in the first place, could good human nature have created a cruel, inhumane and oppressive social and psychic world for itself? It is interesting that both writers searched for the answers to these questions in the notion of fear, which they regarded as the lever through which human nature is



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repressed, fear of instinct according to Reich and fear of freedom according to Fromm.⁵ Moreover, both Reich and Fromm saw the family as the institution which uses the leverage of fear during childhood, i.e. when the individual is most dependent and vulnerable, to repress the child's human nature and to establish within him/her the oppressive forms of social relations in the shape of oppressive character-structures.

Parents - unconsciously at the behest of authoritarian, mechanized society - repress the sexuality of infants and adolescents. Since the children find their way to vital activity blocked by ascetism . . . they develop a sticky kind of parent fixation characterized by helplessness and guilt feelings. This in turn prevents their growing out of the infantile situation with all its sexual anxieties and inhibitions. Children thus brought up become character-neurotic adults and re-create their illness in their own children. And so it goes on from generation to generation. In this way, conservative tradition, a tradition which is afraid of life, is perpetuated. (Reich 1968:200)

The parents . . . transmit to the child what may be called the psychological spirit or atmosphere of a society just by being as they are - namely representatives of this spirit. *The family thus may be considered to be the psychological agent of society.* (Fromm 1966:314-15)

Reich's and Fromm's view concerning the socializing and tension-relieving functions of the family as a social agent owes nothing to Freud's formulations of the traumatic drama of the Oedipal confrontation - the child carries neither incestuous desires nor murderous rivalries but is a confused and frightened innocent who is going to be moulded through the visible interaction which takes place within the family embrace. Although Reich's and Fromm's views on early socialization through the family interaction had a considerable influence on later sociologists, they were stripped of their undeniable pathos which looked at the child both as the innocent victim of socializing manipulation and as the innocent fool who carries the promise of redemption without knowing it. It is this doubly dramatic quality which is undoubtedly lost in later theories of socialization, since for Reich and Fromm this process involves not merely the induction of the infant into culture's rules and norms but also into culture's pathologies. Yet, contrary to the conclusions reached by recent advocates of 'anti-psychiatry', neither Reich nor Fromm advocated the abolition of the family as a means towards the dissolution of repressive character-structures; they both insisted that these functions of the family are historically specific to patriarchal nuclear families of capitalist societies, and advocated the matriarchal family as a unit which would promote the individual's potential instead of instilling authoritarian and renunciatory

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traits. Malinowski's anthropological research was a strong influence on both writers, even though the messages they each derived from his encounter with the Trobrianders were quite different.

The similarities in the works of Fromm and Reich are striking; however, they are even more striking when we consider their diametrically opposed psychologies. While they broadly agree on the functions of character, their views of human nature looming underneath the character-structures could not be more different - where Reich discovers a biological human essence glorified in genitality, Fromm discovers a highly symbolic human essence striving for identity, meaning and freedom. While Reich found his paradigm of human happiness and fulfilment in uninhibited orgasms, Fromm found it in free self-realization through creative work and love. Thus the two writers represent opposed trends in the first of the six problematics examined in Part I (body-mind), they represent similar positions in the second, third and fourth problematics (individual-society, therapy and morality), they have limited interest in the fifth (science-philosophy), and although both investigate and extend the utopian potential of psycho-analysis they end up with rather different utopian imageries. In order to assess their views and the plausibility of their common departure from Freud we will now have to look at their general theories separately. Of course, the sections which follow should not be seen as exhaustive studies of the thought of the theorists concerned - there are already dozens of volumes dealing with the thought of Reich alone, its development, peaks and absurdities. My concern here is to highlight the departures of these two thinkers from the Freudian discourse and their relevance for an interpretation of contemporary social and cultural phenomena.

WILHELM REICH

Reich's interest in sexology came before his acquaintance with the work of Freud.⁶ What attracted him to Freud's views of sexuality were two interconnected ideas - first, that sexuality goes far beyond procreation and becomes manifested in diverse symptoms, some of which are of a non-sexual character; second, that for Freud, unlike for earlier writers on sex, libido did not mean 'a conscious desire for sexual activity' (1968:51) but was an instinctual energy underlying all the manifestations of sexuality. From these two points, it immediately becomes apparent why the orgasm emerged as Reich's principal pre-occupation, a kind of monomania, and why he fundamentally misunderstood the nature of the unconscious, which he saw merely as the reservoir of energy. The orgasm was, in Reich's view, the only healthy and natural way of discharging libidinal energies; while Freud had seen anal eroticism, sublimation in work and art, oral fixations, feelings of 'tender love', identifi-



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cations and even narcissism as legitimate and 'normal' manifestations of sexuality, Reich regarded them as profoundly abnormal manifestations of an inability to derive satisfaction through genital sexuality. Moreover, he believed that erectile and ejaculatory potential did not coincide with normality, unless it led to 'full orgasmic potency', a concept which is central to his theory:

Orgasmic potency is the capacity for surrender to the flow of biological energy without any inhibition, the capacity for complete discharge of all dammed-up sexual excitation through involuntary pleasurable contractions of the body. (114)

Failure to achieve orgasmic potency meant that the accumulated libido was not totally released through the sexual climax, thus making itself available for pathological manifestations, which stand further in the way of successful release. This is what Reich defined as neurosis, and insisted that 'not a single neurotic individual possesses orgasmic potency' (ibid.).

Reich saw the libidinal discharge which takes place during the orgasm as a purely biological phenomenon, centred on the genital region, and he regarded phantasies both as an indication of the failure to reach orgasmic potency and as an obstacle of libidinal discharge - at the moment of the orgasm, the world, including the awareness of one's sexual partner and even of one's own body, must sink into oblivion, and all attention, all sensation, all feeling and all experience must be concentrated to the genital. The orgasm is the moment of truth, the moment to which everything that went on before has been leading, the moment that sentences all that has gone on before to oblivion. The orgasm both justifies and annihilates the foreplay, just as the moment of truth in the corrida both justifies the teasing game of the picadors and reveals its hollowness - at the moment of truth, the arena, the spectators, the music disappear, indeed the man and the bull disappear, and the whole world is reduced to the experience of death delivered by a sword.

It is in genital sexuality, consummated in uninhibited orgasms, that Reich discovers the essential goodness in human nature - everything else is pathological. As we can imagine, Reich's theory of neurosis owes its origin to Freud's theory of the actual neuroses, such as neurasthenia, anxiety-neurosis and hypochondria, whose aetiology was linked to the amounts of uncathexed libido being converted to anxiety or symptoms. What, however, distinguishes Reich's view is his constant insistence that the only avenue for full sexual gratification and complete discharge is monogamous, heterosexual intercourse. By shifting attention from transference neuroses to the actual neuroses, renaming them stasis neuroses, and ultimately dissolving all neurotic conditions to this category, Reich did not merely emphasize the economic factor in the aetiology of neuroses, but in fact loses sight of psychic conflict altogether. Neurosis repre-

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sents an irregularity in libidinal economics which manifests itself in the form of a moral inhibition, whose function is obscure and unnecessary. It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that Reich gradually abandoned psychoanalysis for bio-energetics, concentrating exclusively on the economic mechanisms of neurosis - repression, anxiety, inhibition, symptoms gradually recede in his analysis. The unconscious becomes merely the reservoir of biological energy, the virgin human core in which unpolliuted genitality resides.⁷

Reich's pre-occupation with sexual economics has two consequences, a negative and a positive one. The negative one is the enormous and often naive simplification of large areas of Freud's thought, especially in what concerns psychic conflict, processes involving phantasies and polymorphous perversity, the relation between symptoms and inhibition. For these failures Reich has been criticized ad nauseam, and it is not my intention to reiterate these criticisms, which should be obvious to most readers of his work.⁸ The question now arises of how Reich, having bulldozed the subtleties of Freud's mental dynamics, can account for neurosis and the failure of orgasmic potency. Reich's answer lies, of course, in his theory of character-structure, and it is in his tentative and incomplete attempt to relate oppressive psychic structures to exploitative social relations that the positive consequence of his pre-occupation with sexual economics lies. His theory of character-structure not only earned him a considerable reputation among psychoanalysts but is still part of Neo-Freudian orthodoxy.⁹

Reich was led to his theory of character by the observation that his patients' resistances seemed to be organized around specific traits, which they found particularly hard to overcome. He observed a considerable range of such traits, including politeness, orderliness, muscular contractions and rigidities, nervous twitches. Unlike Freud and others who had seen such behavioural traits as symptomatic of certain organizations and sublimations of libido (what Freud understood by the term 'character'), Reich reached the conclusion that they co-incided with the resistance themselves. The sum-total of a person's character traits formed a protective armour around the person, an armour which prevented him, among other things, from reaching orgasmic potency. The aim of Reich's therapy was, therefore, to confront the patient's armour in a head-on collision, undo the character-traits which make it up, and make their energy available for orgasmic discharge. In this way, in 'Character Analysis', Reich challenged the central Freudian doctrine in psychotherapy, that confronting the symptoms directly does not lead to the lifting of the resistances, nor to the dissolution of the repressions, but, at best, may replace old symptoms with new (more innocuous) ones. Reich argued that repression is nothing but the channelling of genitality to character resistances which inhibit genital fulfilment, and if these resistances could be broken down then the neurotic condition was automatically



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lifted. It can be seen quite clearly, I think, that the question of what function was fulfilled by the character-armour within the context of the individual did not bother Reich, and he never sought to explain what this armour was intended to protect the individual from. As far as he was concerned, this armour was a quite redundant structure (talking always from the point of view of the individual) which could be removed through appropriate therapeutic manipulation. Freud's critique may almost have been addressed at Reich personally:

The expectation that every neurotic phenomenon can be cured may, I suspect, be derived from the layman's belief that the neuroses are something quite unnecessary which have no right whatever to exist. (1933a:22:153)

While this is a cardinal omission in Reich's theory and it led him to a naive optimism concerning the potential of psychotherapy, it had a rather fortunate theoretical consequence. While character-structures were regarded as quite redundant in terms of the individual, Reich insisted that they were central for the existence and reproduction of a social system based on exploitative and authoritarian relationships. The character-structures, so to speak, were both the outcomes of exploitative and authoritarian social relationships and, at the same time, they reinforced and cemented these relationships, by engraving them in the individuals' psychological make-ups and reproducing them intergenerationally. This was perhaps Reich's supreme and undeniably genial discovery: the authoritarian, exploitative and exploited individual is the sexually frustrated individual, and vice versa. The meaning Reich attached to sexual frustration was too narrow in its attachment to genitality, but otherwise his discovery was of supreme importance, and it remains supremely important today long after the 'decline' of fascism.

It is by becoming engraved in character-structures that ideologies become, in Reich's view, material forces, insofar as they inhibit the natural flow of biological energies towards discharge, and re-channel them along socially expedient but pathological paths. It is unclear whether Reich envisaged any ideology capable of promoting sexual fulfilment and social emancipation, but almost invariably he referred to them, as well as to phantasies and, eventually, all symbolic functions, as obstacles to sexual discharge. It is in this way that the whole symbolic edifice of society, what one feels tempted to call 'culture', becomes a material force opposing what is good in man – his capacity for uninhibited sexual enjoyment. 'Sexual inhibition changes the structure of economically suppressed man in such a way that he acts, feels, and thinks contrary to his own material interests' (1970:66).

Reich saw the family as the principal agent of suppression of the child's 'vital life-impulses'; yet, he did not think that all forms of family carried out this brutal function, which was a

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'relatively late' development associated with the rise of 'authoritarian patriarchy'. Nor did Reich think that the family suppressed the child's sexuality in its own interests, for he was firmly convinced that the authoritarian-patriarchal family was an agent of the capitalist economic system. In what way, then, did Reich see the suppression of sexuality as functional to capitalism? The suppression of the child's natural sexual impulses

makes the child afraid, shy, fearful of authority, obedient, 'good', and 'docile' in the authoritarian sense of the words. It has a crippling effect on man's rebellious forces because every vital life-impulse is now burdened with severe fear; and since sex is a forbidden subject, thought in general and man's critical faculty also become inhibited. In short, morality's aim is to produce acquiescent subjects who, despite distress and humiliation, are adjusted to the authoritarian order. Thus, the family is the authoritarian state in miniature, to which the child must learn to adapt himself as a preparation for the general social adjustment required of him later. *Man's authoritarian structure* – this must clearly be established – is basically produced by the embedding of sexual inhibitions and fear in the living substance of sexual impulses. (1970:64)

In this outstanding passage, Reich demonstrates the enormous critical potential of Freud's concept of the super-ego as the psychic basis of fascistic and authoritarian individuals, in a way which could not have displeased Freud himself. Where Reich goes beyond Freud is in that his critique of bourgeois morality is linked to the social requirements of authoritarian cultures – once again, an extension that Freud, no great admirer of the super-ego himself, would not have disapproved of.¹⁰ But Reich's extension of his argument did displease Freud: if authoritarian traits and their expression in aggressive, insecure, submissive, uncritical, rigid and sadistic behaviour are instilled in the earliest years of childhood by the patriarchal family in the interest of the capitalist system of social and economic oppression, the postulation of a primary death instinct becomes unfounded and redundant. For these reasons, Reich rejected Freud's argument that aggression in its diverse manifestations has an instinctual basis – for Reich, it is the outcome of the suppression of sexuality by family and civilization. The death instinct is a historical phenomenon with no foundation in the biological constitution of human beings – this, as we saw earlier, contains nothing but genitality. It was this disagreement over the death instinct that precipitated Reich's split from Freud.

Reich's optimism, expressed in his conviction that human nature is 'biologically' good, may appear paradoxical given that Reich was developing his theories during the years of the rise of fascism in Europe – he personally suffered great persecution, before he finally was forced to settle in the United States. Yet,



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it is precisely in his studies of fascism that he showed his brilliance as a practical thinker of concrete social situations. In 'The Mass Psychology of Fascism' (still one of the best works on the subject), he demonstrated how authoritarian character-structures are mass-produced by the families of intermediate and displaced social classes; the father's economic insecurities, being trapped between the ideologies of big business and a class-conscious proletariat, result in an 'identification with state power' (1970:80), as embodied in the Fuehrer, and replicate this relation within his own family. He becomes a little Fuehrer, expecting obedience, respect and admiration. It is in this way that the family, by suppressing genitality, provides the psychic infra-structure of the fascist movement, reproduces authoritarian ideologies and prepares individuals for unquestioning submission to authority, even if this implies the execution of atrocious acts.

Reich's discussion of fascism tries to establish fascism as a political movement with mass support and not as a mere political manoeuvre of the ruling class. Nor did fascism represent merely 'false consciousness' - its success was due to its emotional appeal to the masses and its ability to establish itself on a massive re-orientation of instinctual energies; this was something that most of Reich's contemporary Marxists, with their mechanistic theories of fascism, refused to accept, thus being taken by one surprise after another. At the same time, Reich's analysis of fascism sought to deny any connection between authoritarian violence and any innate instinct of destruction; the fuel for fascism was seen as suppressed genitality alone. These arguments tend to support a view which has frequently been expressed apropos of Reich - that he gradually moved to a Manichean position, according to which everything related to the id, the instincts, the body and biology was good and everything related to the ego, the character, the mind and sociology/psychology was bad. And yet, Reich's Manicheism seems to lack the vital ingredient, the struggle between good and evil, and it is here that the crucial weakness in his argument lies. In his eagerness to demonstrate the non-instinctual character of aggression and the possibility of harmony within the individual and between the individual and society, Reich falls victim to his own harmonistic views, for he was left without a vehicle for social change. In order to prove that sexual repression serves capitalist society and especially fascism rather than that it is inherent to all societies (Freud), in order to establish the possibility of sexual fulfilment in society as an objective possibility, Reich developed such neat and convincing correlations between psychological and ideological structures that he emerged with a picture of complete socio-psychological integration, the only tension coming from biology. It was the ironic predicament of the first theorist bold enough to attempt to synthesize Marx and Freud that he should end up without the one common ingredient of the two original theories, conflict; he thus emerged with a Marxism without politics and

a psychology without psyche.

In Reich's Manichean world, the evil has already gained total supremacy, and it is left to the activist visionary spirits of Marx and Freud to remind us of the old adversary. It is equally ironic that Reich's theory, starting from an optimistic view of human nature as libido, leads to a far more hopeless conclusion than Freud's far darker and dualistic view of human nature. It is truly remarkable that in spite of these implications of his theories and in spite of the vicious persecution which he faced throughout his life Reich retained both his optimistic attitude towards human nature and his fighting spirit.

Both his optimism and his fighting spirit must have been motivated by a belief that in his theory of the orgasm he had discovered, at last, the long-awaited solution to the problem of human suffering. His zeal was quite literally a missionary zeal, for he was preaching not merely to a world of unenlightened, but to a world content in its alienation. Had it not been for this brilliant insight, that the sexually repressed fascist may actually enjoy his alienation, I would have suggested that the twentieth century is unlikely to produce an intellectual Quixote quite like Reich - his nobility of feeling and extraordinary flashes of genius were only matched by his disarming inability to justify his own position in the world.

ERICH FROMM

Like Reich, Erich Fromm was in the first place impressed by what he saw as Freud's discovery of a hidden self.

Freud discovered a new method which enabled him to study the total personality and to understand what makes man act as he does. This method, the analysis of free associations, dreams, errors, transference, is an approach by which hitherto 'private' data, open to self-knowledge and introspection, are made 'public' and demonstrable in the communication between subject and analyst. The psychoanalytic method has gained access to phenomena which do not otherwise lend themselves to observation. At the same time it uncovered many emotional experiences which could not be recognized even by introspection because they were repressed, divorced from consciousness. (1947:40-1)

While, however, Reich believed that Freud's method had revealed man as a sensuous being frustrated by cultural forces, Fromm rejected out of hand Freud's theories of instincts, which he regarded as a remnant of nineteenth-century biologism.¹¹ The image of man that Fromm receives from Freud's interpretative method is that of an irrational, confused, emotional being deeply frustrated by his present conditions of social existence; yet, the needs which are presently frustrated have little to do with the



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desires that arise from Freud's theory of instincts and are more reminiscent of Mayo's 'social man'. In place of the Freudian theory of instinctual vicissitudes, Fromm, at the outset of his work, postulates three a priori inter-related needs: self-preservation, work and sociability (1966: 32ff). Given Freud's extreme caution and his painstaking research into instinctual theory, Fromm's way of establishing these primary needs on a quasi-existential basis appears positively flimsy, and involves no discussion of clinical data whatever. Having shifted the motivational parameters to this quasi-existential basis, Fromm establishes what he regards as the main problem in psychology, the problem of 'relatedness' between the individual and his/her world as they historically develop, and proposes that

man, the more he gains freedom in the sense of emerging from the original oneness with man and nature and the more he becomes an 'individual', has no choice but to unite himself with the world in the spontaneous activities of love and productive work or also seek a kind of security by such ties with the world as to destroy his freedom and the integrity of his individual self. (37)

In shifting psychoanalysis in this direction, Fromm was not only influenced by the theories of Horney and Sullivan, but also by Marx's newly-discovered early theory of alienation and Weber's account of the Protestant ethic; at a deeper level, he was influenced by the attempts of his colleagues of the Frankfurt School to provide an explanation for the phenomenon of Nazism, its terror and authoritarianism as well as its frightening appeal to the masses.

Like Reich (and probably influenced by Reich's work on fascism), Fromm developed a theory of character to account for the archetypal fascist traits. But unlike Reich, Fromm did not regard the authoritarian character-structure as the product of sexual frustration (since he rejected sexuality as a primary motivational principle), but as the result of an existential fear – a fear of transcending the negative condition of freedom from the bonds and constraints of primitive unindividuated life through the positive freedom to engage in the spontaneous activities of love and productive work. Having emerged as an individual free from the constraints of nature and of overbearing collectivist culture, the individual must seek to infuse his/her life with meaning and to develop his/her creative energies in a free relationship with other individuals. This, in Fromm's view, is a fearful prospect, and failure to rise to the challenge leads to a deep sense of aloneness and anxiety. The next step is for the individual to take recourse in one of the escape mechanisms, seeking consolation and comfort (155). The premium is heavy: the individual has lost his/her freedom. Enter character.

Fromm identifies three mechanisms of escape: authoritarianism (sadism and masochism), destructiveness and automaton conform-

ity. These along with love constitute Fromm's four orientations towards socialization, which is one of the two aspects of the original problem, the relationship between individual and society (relatedness).¹² The authoritarian character corresponds to the individual whose escape from freedom is achieved through sado-masochistic relations with his fellow humans, although it may also comprise traits from the other two escape mechanisms, destructiveness and automaton conformity. Thus, like Reich, Fromm approaches character as a representative of visible patterns of behaviour, through which men and women interact with the world. But while Reich sees character (and especially authoritarian character) as the product of sexual repression (not only through childhood but during the entire life of an individual) based upon fear of the instincts, Fromm regards character as the product of an escape from freedom necessitated by the individual's inability to cope with his existential condition.

Fromm elaborated this theme in 'Man for Himself', in which he distinguished between historical and existential dichotomies. The former can be overcome through courage and knowledge, even though those who benefit from them will seek to present them as an inherent part of the human condition. Existential dichotomies, on the other hand, are parts of the human condition and cannot be avoided – death and the necessity of living in the historical era in which one is born are such dichotomies.

Reading Fromm's postulation of the existential needs, we are once again struck by the total absence of empirical and clinical data and the rather superficial nature of his theoretical discussion. Just as the fixed needs were introduced in 'Escape from Freedom', the existential dichotomies are invoked on an almost ad hoc basis; it is never quite clear in Fromm's work why needs like self-preservation, work and sociability, and constraints like death and the historical period in which each individual happens to be born, are part of human nature and human condition. Moreover, it is not quite clear why these needs, even assuming that they exist, have a primary character. Freud, for instance, had argued that there is no primary self-preservation instinct but that a need for survival may arise out of the complex vicissitudes of sexuality; likewise, individualist philosophers since Hobbes had sought to demonstrate that sociability is not a 'natural' characteristic of mankind; nor should work be seen as a primary need or as a derivative of the need to live, for, even if such need existed, it could equally be satisfied by the subordination and work of other human beings – no ancient Greek philosopher ever even considered work as a worthy activity for a free individual. Similar questions can be raised against Fromm's postulation of existential constraints like death or one's social environment; death, for instance, is only experienced as a constraint when individuals develop a fear of death during their lifetime. It is possible, for example, to argue that the fear of death is simply the product of a life deprived of fulfilment and satisfaction; as Brown has suggested:



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Anxiety about death does not have an ontological status, as existentialist theologians claim. It has a historical status only, and is relative to the repression of the human body; the horror of death is the horror of dying with what Rilke called un-lived lives in our bodies. (1959:108)¹³

Now, one need not necessarily agree with Brown's account of how death comes to be experienced as a terrifying constraint (and Wagner's ecstatic vision of the Liebestod suggests precisely the opposite – death as the final transcendence of un-lived lives). Nor does one have to agree with the individualist philosophers' arguments that man is not naturally sociable, or with Freud's (and Nietzsche's) arguments that there are many things dearer to life than life itself. Yet, all these arguments raise serious doubts about Fromm's existential needs and dichotomies, postulated in the brief space of a dozen pages or so of 'Man for Himself' (47-58), in which Freud's meticulous investigations into instinctual vicissitudes are dismissed.

On the basis of his speculations on the existential condition of man, Fromm develops an imagery of man's essential nature, just as Reich had developed an equivalent imagery through his theory of the orgasm. And just like Reich, Fromm sought to use this imagery to fill what he saw as the 'missing link' in Marxism. In Jay's words:

[Fromm] argued that Marx's psychological premises were few – fewer than Fromm was later to assert himself. Man to Marx has certain basic drives (hunger, love, and so forth), which seek gratification; acquisitiveness was merely a product of specific social conditions. Marxism was, however, in need of additional psychological insights, which such Marxists as Kautsky and Bernstein, with their naive, idealistic belief in inborn moral instincts, had failed to provide. Psychoanalysis could provide the missing link between ideological super-structure and socio-economic base. In short, it could flesh out materialism's notion of man's essential nature. (1973:92)

Now Reich's image of 'man's essential nature', based on the theory of the orgasm, may not have provided the missing link satisfactorily, but it was certainly rooted in one tradition of psychoanalysis; the same cannot be said of Fromm's image, which shares more common features with the theological traditions referred to by Brown, than with Freud's. All that Fromm's theory seems to have in common with Freud's is the view that the individual is deeply frustrated and fails to realize his/her potential.

It is now quite instructive to turn to Fromm's precise image of human nature in greater detail, for his persistent use of this term – in a period when Marxists and Freudians alike, with the single exception of Reich, rejected it out of hand – singles him out.¹⁴ Perhaps the most compelling feature of his image of

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human nature as far as Marxists were concerned was his emphasis on man as a social animal; after all, it was Marx himself who had said that 'man is in the most literal sense of the word a zoon politicon, not only a social animal, but an animal which develops into an individual only in society' (1904:268). Although Marx refrains from using the word 'nature' in this passage, the relevant passage of his source is liberally sprinkled with the word:

what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse or a family. Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best. Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. . . . The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature. ('Ethnics', Book 1, Ch. 2)

Aristotle's characteristically dynamic (and teleological) use of the concept of nature may be thought of as providing the basis for Fromm's conceptualization (and perhaps Marx's?). Jay, for instance, has argued that 'at all times Fromm affirmed the reality of human nature. It was, however, not a fixed concept like the Roman *natura*, but rather an idea of man's potential nature similar to the Greek *physis*' (1973:89). Now, it is quite true that Fromm's diverse needs have a transcendental character – work unleashes new and unsuspected creative energies and creates new and unsuspected needs, love affords new and unsuspected emotional and sensuous experiences, sociability reveals new and unsuspected ways of realizing one's potential through participation in a social group. It is for such reasons that Fromm consistently refers to life as an art, since art is par excellence the human activity which brings out new potentials, unknown to the artist before he/she embarked on a creative project. Yet, this potential is a fixed potential in Fromm's formulations; this is not the case either for Marx or for Aristotle, both of whom realized the inaccessibility of the realm of freedom, the realm of the unmoved mover or the transcending subject, to the powers of our sciences. Not so for Fromm – just as Reich articulated his utopian vision in the 'science' of bio-energetics, Fromm articulated his utopian vision in his 'humanistic ethics: the applied science of the art of living'. This rather tenuous concept reveals a central ambiguity in Fromm's thought, which arises from the fact that he both wishes to see life as a transcendental process, as an art, and at the same time to articulate the norms of this art as a science, i.e. he wishes to see life both as the application of a scientific system of ethical norms and as a transcendental



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art form. This contradiction is, I think, irreconcilable since art, after all, constantly transcends the stylistic criteria of aestheticians and discovers new and unsuspected forms of beauty; looking at life as an art, when he seeks to define moral behavior scientifically, Fromm is doing as much injustice to life as he does to art.

The contradiction in Fromm's conceptualization of human nature and human life is not accidental, but seems to stem from his efforts to remain both a social critic and a psychotherapist. As a social critic he held a transcendental view of mankind, striving collectively to realize an unknown potential; yet, as a psychotherapist, he was concerned with the concrete problems, anxieties and delusions of individuals, and ended up by seeing neurotic conditions as indicative of 'moral failure' (1947:v). I understand this to mean that the neurotic's suffering is the result of his having made an incorrect 'value judgment' or having failed to resolve a 'moral problem', through ignorance of the good life. Fromm's humanistic ethics aim at enabling the neurotic to correct his error by providing him with 'scientific' information of the good life. Contrary to Freud, Fromm believes that he can conclusively cure neurosis by educating the patient, by helping him understand his moral problem and solve it in accordance with the knowledge he has received. But is the solution of the neurotic's problem possible and if so how can the solution be assessed? Of course, one way of assessing the solution would be to see whether it has enabled the patient to re-adjust himself successfully in society, and lead a 'normal' life. Yet, Fromm explicitly denounces adjustment as a criterion of therapeutic success - adjustment may signify nothing more than what he had defined as 'automaton conformity' (1966:208ff), an orientation which is motivated by fear of freedom not by striving towards freedom.

But if mental health (and ipso facto moral virtue) is not equivalent to adjustment, it can only correspond to the realization of man's thwarted potential, which Fromm has identified rightly or wrongly with spontaneous activities, such as love, productive work and play; and it is here, of course, that the contradiction re-appears, for Fromm (like Reich), speaking as a therapist, envisages the possibility of individual self-realization within the present social context; speaking as a social critic he insists that the present civilization thwarts human potential and that only collectively can mankind transcend its present condition of alienation; as a therapist he looks at human suffering not as an integral part of the social system, but as the result of individual moral failure (and ignorance). As a social critic he indicts present society for permitting precious few avenues for self-realization; as a therapist he expresses surprise at how many people are healthy. What he does not seem to realize is that the meaning of the word 'healthy' changes every time he changes hats.

Fromm the therapist:

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It might seem that the psychoanalyst, who is in the position of observing the tenacity and stubbornness of irrational strivings, would take a pessimistic view with regard to man's ability to govern himself and to free himself from the bondage of irrational passions. I must confess that during my analytic work I have become increasingly impressed by the opposite phenomenon: by the strength of the strivings for happiness and health, which are part of the natural equipment of man. 'Curing' means removing the obstacles which prevent them from becoming effective. Indeed there is less reason to be puzzled by the fact that there are so many neurotic people than by the phenomenon that most people are relatively healthy in spite of the many adverse influences they are exposed to. (1947:vii)

And Fromm the social critic:

I have always upheld the same point that man's capacity for freedom, love etc., depends almost entirely on the given socio-economic conditions, and that only exceptionally can we find, . . . that there is love in a society whose principle is the very opposite. (Quoted in Jay 1973:100, from personal communication)

Fromm, unlike Reich, never retracted on his belief that the realization of human potential requires a radical re-organization of the social and economic system; yet, like Reich, his therapeutic endeavours led him to a rather optimistic position concerning the possibilities of health within this system. His confidence in his therapeutic cures, like Reich's confidence in his contrasts sharply with Freud's persistent reservations concerning the therapeutic potential of psychoanalysis, even though the therapeutic goals that both Reich and Fromm set for themselves were far more ambitious than Freud's. There can be little doubt that both as a social critic and as a therapist Fromm underestimated society's coercive influence on the individual by overemphasizing social control through internalized structures. He thus failed to see that society will punish spontaneous activity because such activity poses a threat to the principle of cohesion of a society based on a bureaucratic ethos of blind obedience to impersonal rules, just as uninhibited orgasms pose a threat to a society based on sexual renunciation.¹⁵ The punishment usually takes the form of isolation, either direct (in mental asylums and prisons) or indirect. Eccentricity may be encouraged only insofar as it does not threaten the reality principle - the long tradition of British eccentricity may show that the exceptions do occasionally re-inforce the rule; yet, when eccentricity threatens the reality principle, the social bond or conventional 'rationality', by refusing to accept itself as eccentricity, it is classified as psychosis. This important insight, which we find in embryo in Freud's works on 'the distortion of the sense of reality', was developed by the



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Frankfurt School and eventually provided the foundation stone of R.D. Laing's 'anti-psychiatry' - yet, it seems to have escaped Fromm. By identifying mental health with rationality, he fails to see that a society based on the blocking of self-realization, and which establishes this blockage as its reality principle, will consider 'strivings for health and self-realization' as deeply irrational, even if they are propelled by the 'sciences' of Fromm's humanistic ethics or Reich's bio-energetics.

CONCLUSIONS

This brief review of the works of Reich and Fromm has revealed extensive similarities in practically every aspect of their theories, with the important exception of the psychologies. In postulating what I referred to as a 'personality core', they each moved in opposite directions from Freud, setting out the two extreme positions of the body-mind problematic. Reich and Fromm probed underneath what they saw as a character-structure; Reich discovered a sensuous being, dominated by biological forces, striving towards bodily pleasure through sexual discharge, while Fromm discovered a deeply symbolic being, in constant pursuit of meaning, identity and freedom. While Reich reduced Freud's complex unity of 'psycho-sexuality' (1910k:11) to a simple unity of undifferentiated genitality, Fromm saw sexuality as an animal instinct not worthy of the human individual (1966: 48), and substituted it with a complex of a priori existential strivings and constraints which motivate life. Yet, there are considerable similarities, even in their psychologies. They both rejected the death instinct, which they sought to reduce to some variant of the frustration/aggression automatism.¹⁶ They both interpreted the period of early socialization in terms of actual, visible interpersonal relations between the parents and the child, involving actual threats, punishments, rewards, etc., while minimizing the importance of phantasies, desires and primary processes. By focusing on character and by developing theories of 'personality', both Reich and Fromm stressed the essential unity of the human psyche, contrary to Freud's emphasis on the different mental institutions and their diverse interests, conflicts and compromises. Freud had explicitly criticized the view of the individual as personality in a letter to Abraham:

Personality . . . is a loosely defined term from surface psychology that does nothing in particular to increase understanding of the real processes, that is to say, metapsychologically it says nothing. But it is easy to believe that one is saying something meaningful in using it. (Quoted in Jacoby 1975: 30-1)

Freud had looked at the ego's sense of self as an illusion, an

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ego, a mirage; the ego, caught among numerous pressures and subject to endless determinations, imagines itself to be all-powerful and free; it imagines itself to be a transcendental subject. In reality, the ego is torn and fragmented; its constitution involves a social component as well as a biological one, a conscious component as well as an unconscious one, a narcissistic component as well as an altruistic one, a libidinal component as well as a destructive one.

In contrast to Freud's fragmented view of the individual, Reich's and Fromm's theories of character entail a view of the individual over-integrated in his/her alienation, just as their imageries of a personality core entail a view of the individual over-integrated in his/her freedom. The same harmonistic perspective characterizes Reich's and Fromm's views on the relationship between the individual and society, in that they underplay the depth and strength of present conflicts. Having discarded the possibility of instinctual antinomy within the individual, they both envisage a utopian society within reach of the present civilization. While they both insist (though they often seem to forget) that this society requires radical re-organization, they remain optimistic, for in spite of their different understanding of the way in which character emerges, they both regard character as part of the psychic superstructure - human emancipation requires only a revolution in the social base and superstructure and in the psychic superstructure, it need not touch the psychic base. Indeed, it is the psychic base, the essential goodness in human nature, that stages the revolution against the oppressive orders imposed from above (psychic superstructure) and from outside (the social system). For Reich and Fromm, the psychic base is not part of society; it is its victim and needs to become its master.

It is quite ironic that Reich and Fromm, who criticized Freud for not paying enough attention to the 'social factor', end up by discovering a human core in each individual, which is totally unpolled by society; human nature is discovered in the profound depths of the individual's soul which are untouched by society (in spite of Fromm's 'existential' argument that man is a 'social animal'). This is something that Freud in his later work never does; nor does Freud have, properly speaking, an image of human nature as an underlying constant looming behind all his writings - his theory can account for kindness as well as for aggression, for strivings after meaning as well as for strivings after bodily pleasure, for egoism as well as for altruism, for 'normal' as well as for 'abnormal' sexuality, etc., without recourse to an invariant human nature. It is not accidental that in a period when the concept of human nature has become deeply suspect, Fromm and Reich have been among its most vigorous defendants, using it quite liberally in their writings. They defend it epistemologically as a valid scientific concept, and morally as a deeply good entity. For Reich, the human nature's goodness is located in biology; his is a religion of energy. For



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Fromm, it is located in the inexorable capacity to engage in the spontaneous activities of love and creative work and to strive towards health and self-realization; his religion is humanistic virtue.

Even at the peak of Nazi 'hysteria', both men were determined to argue that the pathology of mankind is limited to the superstructure of the psyche, to a sick character-structure. Underneath it, there exists in every individual and at all times the potential and objective possibility of health, freedom and happiness. Happiness is, if not at hand, just around the corner. It is not accidental that having discovered the goodness of human nature in the individual, they proceed to develop utopias based on the model of the analyst - analysand relationship. Human emancipation is a recapitulation of the patient's cure through therapy, it is a therapeutic emancipation writ large. Harmony among orgasmically potent individuals (for Reich) or among spontaneously creative individuals (for Fromm) is taken for granted at every stage; therapy (which both Fromm and Reich fail to explain as a historical force) becomes the real revolutionary agent in history.

Reich's and Fromm's harmonistic pre-occupations were not limited to their view of the individual and his/her relationship to society; they extended to their approaches towards theory. They both accomplished the uncomfortable marriage of Freud and Marx at the level of psychic and social superstructures. At this level, they discovered an interpenetration of the ideological and psychic structures of oppression - an interpenetration which allowed for a certain degree of autonomy. Yet, the relation between the social base and psychic base remains obscure in their work, or, to be exact, is dissolved. Psyche and society, at the level of their bases, remain unrelated and independent, each sui generis. It is by keeping these two entities separate that both Reich and Fromm tried to reconcile their twin roles as psychotherapists dealing with the sickness of the individual and as social critics dealing with the sickness of society. By keeping the sicknesses separate, they underestimated the depth and pervasiveness of them both, and hoped that there were direct cures for both of them, in a way which would have shocked not only Freud, but Marx himself.

Chapter 9

The discovery of the radical Freud: Marcuse and Brown, the pessimistic utopians

The two thinkers I will discuss in this chapter differ in this way from Reich and Fromm: they take seriously Freud's idea that harmony between the individual and society is deeply problematic and, certainly, not a simple matter of undoing social and psychic superstructures. Like Freud, they believe that the individual and society cannot be treated as independent entities having a single common interface. They constantly define each other at every analytical level, in a multi-faceted relationship which involves both concordance and contradiction. Moreover, like Freud, Marcuse and Brown believe that both the individual and society are deeply sick without there being an obvious solution in sight.

It comes as no surprise that both men moved towards Freud's work as their personal pessimism about the possibility of a cure for the human disease grew. Marcuse's and Brown's pessimism did not evolve in response to fascism, nor did they identify the human disease in terms of the contorted inhumanity of authoritarian personalities. Instead, they were deeply disturbed by the total quiescence of the masses in the industrialized countries of the 1950s, the apparent ability of the ruling class to buy worker militancy off by offering higher material standards of living, the increasing invisibility of power relations within corporate structures and the accompanying paralysis of social criticism in favour of a monopoly of technocratic reason, the ease with which the mass media seemed to generate artificial needs and induce political apathy, and the cynical inhumanity with which capitalism seemed to exploit the Third World both at home and abroad. The privatized manipulated world of suburbia in its blissful coexistence with the big bureaucratic and military machines which were deciding the fate of humanity seemed to herald for Marcuse and Brown the arrival of a new era of alienation, whose parameters had already been sketched in 'Brave New World' and '1984'. What is paradoxical perhaps is that, although Brown and Marcuse were led to Freud by their pessimism about the future of humanity, they each emerged with a utopian vision of the future. Although these utopias hardly mitigated their pessimism, they seemed to point at the possibility of a 'way out' of the apparently unstoppable path towards mankind's self-destruction.

Unlike Reich and Fromm, Marcuse and Brown see the sickness of mankind as reaching deeper than the psychic superstructure - they see it as having become part of the psychic base, part of



CHAPTER 7 PSYCHOANALYSIS AND CULTURE

- 1 Compare, for instance, Freud's abstract definitions with Russell's definition of matter as 'a convenient formula for describing what happens where it isn't' (quoted in Koestler 1972), or Eddington's 'that which is, is a shell floating in the infinitude of that which is not' (1935). It is as though modern physics after centuries of proceeding without precise definitions of some of its central terms has, during the twentieth century, decided to look at the pre-Socratics for its definitions. After all, Popper may indeed be paying Freud a compliment by drawing his parallel between Freud's concepts and the Homeric gods.
- 2 We must not forget that ancient audiences regularly joined in the lamentations of the chorus.
- 3 See 1900a:2-2:Ch. VI, Part D.
- 4 See, for example, Mannoni 1971:148.
- 5 This argument in no way implies that the agencies are articulated or defined solely through their relations to the external.
- 6 Thus, for example, the fear of the father becomes fear of horses.
- 7 The basic forms of such displacement may be found in the famous early paper *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894a).
- 8 See, for instance, Rieff 1959:VI, VII, and Billig 1976:26-43.
- 9 See Jahoda 1977:78-9.
- 10 For a similar argument see 1937c:23:240-1.
- 11 For a good account of Freud's Lamarckism, see Clark 1980:379ff, 437.
- 12 Malinowski's remains the clearest critique of Freud's anthropological speculations, when seen as literal accounts of real events. Malinowski reveals not only cases where his field research falsified Freud's account, but also several inconsistencies in this account; above all, he seeks to show that even if there was a primal murder, culture preceded it (1927:152ff).
- 13 My emphasis on the distinction between theory and myth does not clash with Feyerabend's splendid arguments on the similarity and inter-relation between myth and science; both intellectual integrity and common sense require that we should not defend psychoanalytic myths as science, but accept them for what they are. See 1975:295ff.

CHAPTER 8 THE FIRST RADICALIZATION OF FREUD: REICH AND FROMM, THE OPTIMISTIC UTOPIANS

- 1 The art of ad hominem criticisms of psychoanalysis by other psychoanalysts (in which Freud was the undisputed master) should not be rejected as logically fallacious given the nature and subject of psychoanalysis – scientific investigations are inextricably linked to the overcoming of inner resistances by the analyst himself. For Reich's interesting analysis of the ways in which Freud's own circumstances and superstitions entered his metapsychology, see 'Reich Speaks of Freud'; Fromm expresses similar views throughout his works; see, for instance, 1966:24ff, 294fn.
- 2 See 1905d:7:238 and 1908b.
- 3 See Thompson 1957:63ff.
- 4 Reich, of course, came to renounce political transformation altogether.
- 5 It should be pointed out that, unlike Anna Freud (1966:58, etc.), Reich saw this fear of instincts as a pathological condition, instilled through the patriarchal family, not as part of the ego's normal defences.
- 6 See 1968:Ch. 1.
- 7 The following extract suggests that Reich misunderstood Freud's concept of the unconscious, rather than modified it: 'It is altogether logical that the instinct itself cannot be conscious, because it is what governs us. We are its object' (1968:51). Reich, instead of looking at the instinct as the amount of energy attached to conscious and unconscious (repressed) ideas and desires, looks at the instinct as the unconscious force which is mani-

- 8 fested in conscious ideas and desires.
- 8 See Mitchell 1974, Robinson 1969, Rieff 1966, etc.
- 9 Robinson 1969:20 and Thompson 1957:189.
- 10 Reich's discovery of the intimate relationship between the harsh super-ego and morality with fascism and the atrocities of mass violence seems to have escaped as perceptive a social critic as Christopher Lasch, who has rightly been accused of looking nostalgically back at the pre-narcissistic days of the strong super-ego.
- 11 See 1966:24ff.
- 12 The second aspect of relatedness is 'assimilation', discussed in 'Man for Himself'. The five orientations towards assimilation are defined as receptive, exploitative, hoarding, marketing and productive.
- 13 It is very interesting that Fromm himself uses this same argument to show that destructiveness is not a 'natural' human characteristic, and to reduce Freud's death instinct to a variant of the frustration/aggression syndrome: 'The more the drive toward life is thwarted, the stronger is the drive towards destruction; the more life is realized, the less is the strength of destructiveness. *Destructiveness is the outcome of un-lived life!*' (1966:207). Does this argument not anticipate Marcuse's 'historicization' of the death instinct in 'Eros and Civilization'?
- 14 As we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, Freud always rejected distinctions of natural and unnatural manifestations of sexuality.
- 15 This theme will form the centre of my discussion in Chapter 8.
- 16 Fromm's attempt to account for aggressive behaviour is, as in most cases, far more thorough than Reich's – see 1964:24-61.

CHAPTER 9 THE DISCOVERY OF THE RADICAL FREUD: MARCUSE AND BROWN, THE PESSIMISTIC UTOPIANS

- 1 See Rieff 1959:237-9.
- 2 See, for instance, Brown 1959:307.
- 3 See Freud 1911b:12:225.
- 4 See Jones 1963:229f, for an account of the reception of 'The Interpretation of Dreams'.
- 5 Marcuse 1955:224, Brown 1959:155 and especially Freud 1933a:22:152.
- 6 Marcuse's critique shares many elements with a critique of Fromm's work raised by another of his Frankfurt School colleagues, Adorno. For a summary of this unpublished critique, see Jay 1973:103ff.
- 7 The Fromm-Marcuse debate did become something of a lengthy and sterile serial, which obscured both the differences and the common ground in their theories.
- 8 The quotation marks used by Freud around the word 'neurotic' remind us of the distinction of the two conceptions of neurosis, discussed in Part I.
- 9 See 1920g:18:50 and 1923b:19:54ff.
- 10 See also 1921c:18:115.
- 11 This sets Marcuse apart from Reich, Fromm, Brown and others who have provided detailed analyses of the particular kinds of repressions required by different reality principles, e.g. protestant, fascist, etc.
- 12 Mitchell's criticism of precisely this point is accurate (1974:410). I find it harder to understand and accept Therborn's (1970:89) praise of Marcuse's technological argument in 'Eros and Civilization'.
- 13 Marcuse has sometimes been accused, not altogether unfairly, of having lost faith in class struggle and the proletariat, and of prematurely heralding sexual pervers, black activists, the hippies and the women's movement as the vanguards of a new revolutionary agent.
- 14 In these sections Marcuse quotes approvingly classical idealist aesthetics, in an attempt to show that art is the only area in capitalist societies in which the pleasure principle prevails over the reality principle. In so far as good art arouses human sensuousness and excites the imagination, all good art is revolutionary. See 1955:Ch. 9.



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- in 1907. See Mannoni 1971:38 and Clark 1980:96, 220f.
- 13 It is perhaps in music that repetition as a symbolism of Fate has found its most emotionally compelling habitat. Notwithstanding the brilliant repetitious uses of short rhythmic motives by Beethoven, Mahler and Tchaikovsky in their 'Fate Symphonies', and by Verdi in 'The Force of Destiny', it is Wagner who perfected this technique to carry maximum emotional weight. Among countless cases, I note the thirteen-fold repetition of the brilliant Valhalla leitmotiv at the conclusion of Rheingold, which turns the gods' moment of supreme glory into the premonition of their inevitable doom.
 - 14 See pp. 46 and 230ff above.
 - 15 Following Durkheim, we may add that both adherence to rules and moral commitment are higher among officers than among enlisted men (1951:228ff).
 - 16 Of course even in this situation the death instinct is not absent, for through the super-ego, it ensures conformity with these values.
 - 17 See, for instance, Allison's intriguing analysis of the Cuban crisis, where according to one of his three theories, decisions were simply organizational outputs.
 - 18 See Harrison 1976.
 - 19 It is not accidental that in this chapter which has dealt with the vicissitudes of the death instinct not a word was said about the 'fear of death'. I am in agreement with Freud that this fear cannot be seen as a direct mental representative of the death instinct or as an immutable existential or psychological fact. Rather, the fear of death must be seen in conjunction with other fears, anxieties, insecurities and the type of malaise which characterize different cultures. In cultures founded on a ruthless super-ego, the fear of death was associated with the sense of guilt – defiance of death was the result of a total acceptance of the dictates of the super-ego. In our culture with much lesser reliance on the super-ego, the fear of death is related to the ego's narcissistic insecurities, which are discussed in Chapter 14.

APPENDIX

- 1 For details, see Parsons and Bales 1955:Ch. V.
- 2 Parsons' account of the relation between psychology and sociology is complemented on the side of psychoanalysis by Hartmann (1964), who refers approvingly to Parsons' work.
- 3 Parsons' account of the formation of the ego out of the original identification with the mother bears a great resemblance to Lacan's influential formulations concerning the formation of the 'je' out of what he calls 'the mirror phase', where the child identifies with himself in a mirror or in the image of his mother. The ego is thus formed through reference to the alter – the original identification gives rise to the ego. But, contrary to Parsons, Lacan regards the first recognition of the ego as a misrecognition, which derives from the contradiction between the child's felt helplessness and the image of an integrated gestalt. Instead of a cybernetic ego, Lacan views the ego as the product of a fundamental alienation; it is nothing but an imaginary imago invested with those desirable qualities which the ego would dearly love to possess but does not. See Lacan 1968.
- 4 See, for example, 1955:45ff.
- 5 See 1955:149.
- 6 For an extended critique of the view which concentrates on the functionalist element at the expense of the economic, see Chapter 5.
- 7 Mitchell has criticized Reich on precisely the same point. See 1974:165f, 185-6.
- 8 See Freud 1924b:19 and 1924e:19.
- 9 'The individual submits to society and this submission is the condition for his liberation' (Durkheim 1974:72).

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