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HANS LOEWALD, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND THE PROJECT OF AUTONOMY

For some time psychoanalysts have tended to view Freud's cultural writings—concerning modernity, secularism, science, and religion—disparagingly, seeing them as the unscientific speculations of a misguided genius. But the questions Freud explored in those works are pressing topics that deserve serious attention. Just as fascism provided the historical context in which the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School developed a psychoanalytic social theory in the 1930s and 1940s, so the rise of fundamentalism demands a similar effort today. The "project of autonomy" conceptualized by the psychoanalyst-philosopher Castoriadis can be used to situate psychoanalysis in its broader historical context, as part of the emancipatory movement of modernity, and to elucidate fundamentalism as an attempt to turn back that project and reinstate the values of premodern traditional societies. Because the widespread aversion to secularism today is in no small degree the responsibility of secularists themselves—Freud's relatively crude and simplistic disregard of some of the deepest yearnings of humankind is a case in point—it is time to formulate, using the work of Hans Loewald, a more sensitive and sophisticated psychoanalytic view of religion. Yet psychoanalytic secularists must avoid overcompensating for past mistakes by giving too much ground to antisecularists. The legitimate desire to do justice to religion must not trump the need to advance the project of autonomy as a first priority.

When I first read Freud's confession that life had "become interesting again" and "recovered its full content" as a result of the First World War, I was taken aback (1915, p. 291). How could he be so

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callous, I wondered, especially with sons serving in the Austrian Army? But after 9/11 I find it possible to be more sympathetic to the point I think Freud was making. The attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon showed us that history and politics are not going to go away—despite the post–Cold War predictions of certain triumphalist think-tank intellectuals. Indeed, even while the unreality of dot.com mania, fellatio in high places, and Seinfeld's relentlessly ironical celebration of vacuousness distracted us from what was going on away from our corner of the world, the disavowal could never be complete. In some split-off part of our psyches, most of us sensed that the massive global inequities in wealth, the assault on the planet's ecosystems and depletion of its resources, the festering conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, the toleration of genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, the spooky emergence of new strains of virulent viruses like HIV and Ebola, and the vulnerability of the former Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal would come back to haunt us. And they have. While the "new real" may be terrifying, it is certainly real.

In the time that has passed since that unforgettable day in 2001, there is another lesson we analysts should have learned: namely, that the questions Freud raised in his cultural writings concerning religion and the foundations of culture, as well as the historical contest between Eros and Thanatos, should not be dismissed, the admonitions of our more prudent colleagues notwithstanding. Indeed, the political issues that exploded in our faces on September 11, 2001, and the questions Freud raised regarding modernity, science, secularism, and religion are often one and the same.[1] Further, because of the field's extensive firsthand knowledge of unconscious-instinctual life—the irrational and demonic—psychoanalysis has a unique contribution to make to the understanding of the epochal questions confronting us (Kernberg 2003a,b).

For this reason, it is time to return to the field of psychoanalytically oriented social theory, a field that was initiated with Freud's cultural writings, but that has lain relatively dormant for some time. To this end, in addition to Freud, I will examine the work of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, who used psychoanalysis to help them understand the threat posed by fascism, the crisis of their day; of Cornelius Castoriadis, whose comprehensive theory of modernity can help us conceptualize the phenomenon of contemporary fundamentalism; and of Hans Loewald,

[1]Mark Edmundson (2007) presents a strong case for the timeliness of Freud's cultural writings in *The Death of Sigmund Freud: The Legacy of His Last Days*.

whose sympathetic discussion of religion can help us begin to correct psychoanalysis's embarrassing mishandling of the subject.

FREUD AND THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL: A NATURAL AFFINITY

The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School were the first academically based scholars to take Freud seriously. In the conservative world of the German university, this act itself would have been viewed as scandalous. But this group of philosophers and social scientists, affiliated with the Institute for Social Research, went further and had the audacity to place the founder of psychoanalysis on an equal footing with the titans of German thought. Along with Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, and Weber, Freud was made a pillar of their interdisciplinary research project, which sought to provide a critical analysis of the pathologies of modern capitalist society. (For histories of the Frankfurt School, see Jay 1973; Wiggershhaus 1994.)

The critical theorists' support for Freud and psychoanalysis was practical as well as theoretical. The Institute for Social Research established the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute as a "guest institute" under its auspices. Indeed, the two groups not only shared the same building on the Viktoria-Alee, but also taught in the same classrooms. The young Erich Fromm—who educated the critical theorists in psychoanalysis—was a member of both institutes, and the philosopher Max Horkheimer, director of the Institute for Social Research, also sat on the board of the Psychoanalytic Institute.[2] The two groups jointly sponsored public lectures by such psychoanalytic luminaries as Paul Federn, Hanns Sachs, Siegfried Bernfeld, and Anna Freud, and they both championed Freud's candidacy for the Goethe Prize. As an aging Gymnasium alumnus steeped in the classics, Freud was deeply grateful for the support and wrote Horkheimer two letters of thanks. (For a more detailed history, see Whitebook 1995, 2004b).

The deep and natural affinity between critical theory and psychoanalysis is not difficult to understand. Both are products of the same cultural movement that arose when modernizing Central European Jews encountered the world of German *Kultur*. Their idealizing, even

[2]The organizationally adept Horkheimer also played an important role in establishing the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt after the Second World War.

fetishizing, love for *Bildung, Humanität,* and the *Aufklärung* may have been "unrequited" and ended tragically, but it was extraordinarily productive (see Arendt 1983, p. 184; Scholem 1976, pp. 61–70). Indeed, the outpouring of creativity by Jewish writers, philosophers, composers, musicians, artists, scientists, and social scientists in roughly the hundred years between emancipation in 1848 and the Holocaust has been compared to the "golden years" of the Jews on the Iberian Peninsula.

Like Freud, the critical theorists had adopted the Ur-norms of the German Enlightenment, the *Aufklärung,* especially as they were articulated by Kant—maturity, autonomy, and individuation—and tried to provide these relatively abstract and philosophical concepts with concrete practical meaning. Freud's famous epigram, "Where id was, there shall ego become" (1933, p. 80; translation altered), encapsulates the developmental program he thought necessary for the psychological achievement of those norms.[3] The Frankfurt School in turn carried the empirical concretization of the Enlightenment values one step further, and tried to determine the sociohistorical conditions that were essential for their full realization (see Whitebook 1995, chap. 3).

In 1936, the Institute for Social Research published its groundbreaking collective research project on authority and the family, whose goal was to integrate a psychoanalytic perspective into an interdisciplinary study of contemporary family structures and character formations. Though still Marxian in a rather general sense, this work already represented a significant departure from that tradition, which held psychological factors to be simply an epiphenomenon of "material conditions." Some five years later, however—when Horkheimer and his close friend and colleague Theodor Adorno, who had escaped the Nazis and were living in self-imposed exile in California—critical theory took an even more radical turn. Shaken by the deteriorating situation in Europe, early reports that the final solution was being implemented, and especially the suicide of their brilliant colleague Walter Benjamin—who had killed himself after failing to escape over the border from France into Spain—these two "marooned Mandarins" (Armstrong in press) concluded that the situation

[3]In this sense Stanley Cavell (1987) has argued that psychoanalysis, and not the proletariat, is the true heir of classical German philosophy. Castoriadis (1987) makes a similar point: "Freud proposes an effective way to attain what, for philosophers, had remained an 'ideal' accessible through abstract knowledge" (p. 102).

required a fundamental rethinking of their position (see Rabinbach 1997). They came to see their new task as nothing less than explaining why humanity—instead of entering "a truly human state," as the Enlightenment notion of progress had predicted—was "sinking into a new kind of barbarism" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1947, p. xi).

As a result of their radical reconceptualization of critical theory, Horkheimer and Adorno could no longer view the Enlightenment—with its notions of rationality and the autonomous subject—as an unambiguous medium of progress and truth. Rather, they came to implicate it in the current catastrophe. And because the pathologies of reason were themselves in question, the two critical theorists could no longer rely on conventional forms of "scientific" theorizing for their investigations. This is the point where they turned to Freud's cultural writings to help them fashion a new kind of depth-psychological theory—which was simultaneously a depth-anthropological theory—that could serve the function they needed it to serve. Drawing on Freud's analyses of civilization, their magnum opus, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—jointly composed in the early forties under the palm trees in Southern California—attempted to write a "prehistory" *(Urgeschicte)* of reason and the subject, which would allow them to diagnose how and why things had gone so dreadfully wrong.

In a move that constituted a fundamental break with the idealist tradition in philosophy, Horkheimer and Adorno maintained that it was necessary for their "genealogy" of reason and the subject to incorporate the "subterranean history" that lies "beneath the known history of Europe" and pertains to "the fate of the human instincts and passions repressed and distorted by civilization" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1947, p. 192). By moving "the domination of inner nature," as they called it, to the center of their analysis, and linking it to "the domination of outer nature"—that is, the development of science, technology, and the market economy—Horkheimer and Adorno created a new form of psychoanalytic social theory that had an enormous influence on postwar culture up through the 1960s.

However, by the seventies—at a time when most clinical analysts had moved away from the broad cultural interests of their forebears and were focusing on urgent questions of technique connected with treating the "postclassical" patient—Jürgen Habermas, leader of the second generation of the Frankfurt School, was moving critical theory away from psychoanalysis. To be sure, his early study of Freud in *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Habermas 1971, chaps. 10–12) was a major contribution

to the philosophical literature on psychoanalysis. But Habermas's more sanguine political outlook, itself a reflection of the optimism accompanying West Germany's postwar reconstruction, and his excessive rationalism made it next to inevitable that he would move away from Freud and embrace the progressive and cognitivist learning theories of Piaget and Kohlberg. He swapped the messiness and unpredictability of the unconscious-instinctual life for the orderly stages of intellectual and moral development. Largely as a result of the impact of Habermas's thinking, the once intense and fertile field of psychoanalysis and critical theory has lain fallow for roughly three decades.

But the ground has shifted again. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the attacks on the World Trade Center, the postwar order has come to an end, and we find ourselves facing another historical constellation. And just as fascism provided the historical horizon within which the classical Frankfurt School developed its position, I would suggest that the worldwide rise of fundamentalism—of antisecular antimodernism—defines the context within which psychoanalytically oriented social theorists must develop theirs today. And, like Horkheimer and Adorno, who enlisted the depth-psychological resources of psychoanalysis to comprehend the madness that was confronting them, we must employ the same resources to grasp the widespread irrationalism that marks our time.

CASTORIADIS AND THE PROJECT OF AUTONOMY

The theory of the late philosopher and psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis (1984, 1987, 1997) provides a framework within which we can conceptualize fundamentalism. Castoriadis—who was raised in Athens before the Second World War and spent his adult life in Paris—argues that modernity is constituted by two equally essential projects. He refers to them as the "project of the unlimited expansion of pseudo-rational mastery"—I will simply call it the "project of instrumentalization"—and "the project of autonomy" (see, e.g., Castoriadis 1997, pp. 36–39). "Instrumentalization"[4] refers to the specifically modern phenomenon wherein modern science and technology, propelled by the expansive

[4]The notion of instrumentalization, which I am borrowing from the Frankfurt School, belongs to the same cluster of concepts as as Marx's "commodification," Weber's "rationalization," Lukacs's "reification," and Heidegger's "technification." They were all used to try to conceptualize the nature of modern capitalist society.

dynamic of the capitalist economy, has been applied to the outer world in order to dominate external nature and to the social world to achieve the bureaucratic and technocratic domination of psychological and societal processes in the interest of profit and power. The project of instrumentalization appears to be unlimited because of the seeming limitlessness of economic expansion. But, as we are quickly finding out, the constitution of the natural world imposes inherent limits to this sort of growth, which in fact renders this supposedly rational project deeply irrational.

Regarding the project of autonomy, Castoriadis argues that the convergence of certain historical factors—including the rise of the market economy, urban culture, global exploration, secularization, and modern science—produced a radical rupture in early modern Europe that sets modern Western society apart from all premodern or traditional social formations. Castoriadis's defense of modernity consists in asserting the project of autonomy against the project of instrumentalization in order to contain and control the latter, and subject it to democratic regulation.

Let us begin by considering traditional societies, which according to Castoriadis are characterized by four features:

Traditional societies deny their groundlessness. All human societies, institutions, and laws, Castoriadis argues, are purely contingent human creations, resting on no foundations outside of themselves. At their outer limits they are surrounded by contingency or, as the Greeks called it, Chaos, which is always threatening to break through, on the individual as well as the social level, and disrupt psychological and social integration. Traditional societies typically manage this threat by denying that they are groundless.

Traditional societies are heteronomous. They cover over the fact of the radical essential contingency of society by positing external structures that supposedly support them—the Great Tortoise, mythical ancestors, the gods, God, the laws of history, or what have you.

Traditional societies exist in a state of closure. The foundational beliefs of the group are consigned to the sacred core of the society. The divine aura surrounding the essential "idols of the tribe" not only provides them their legitimacy, but also seals them off from scrutiny and contestation. In other words, if a law or institution is sanctioned by tradition, it is ipso facto legitimate. To question it is sacrilege.

Traditional societies tend to produce heteronomous individuals who, like the society, exist in a state of closure. In other words, there is a close functional fit between the belief system of the group and the

superegos and ego ideals of its members. Unlike Hamlet, for example—a quintessentially modern man tortured by the question of his identity—it is difficult to imagine an Athenian citizen, a medieval knight, an Ottoman pasha, a Comanche warrior, or a Chinese Maoist ruminating about theirs.

According to Castoriadis, an autonomous society began to emerge when the "new men" of early modern Europe—the city dwellers, the burghers, the bourgeoisie—started to fight for a different form of life. They did not simply criticize the particular authority of the Church or of the feudal system; they challenged the notion of traditional authority as such. In the act of providing a naturalistic account of the origins of civil society, for example, Hobbes was also laying claim to the right of the open-ended interrogation of the foundations of human association strictly on its own terms, without reference to transcendent entities.

The fact, moreover, that Hobbes modeled his analysis on the new physics points to the ambivalent nature of modern science, which is a manifestation of the ambivalence of modernity itself. Insofar as modern science was mathematical, it contained the potential for modern technology and carried the seeds of the domination of nature within it. Thus it became essential to the project of instrumentalization. But to the extent that modern science rejected all appeals to authority and dogma in the justification of truth-claims and maintained that all assertions—about the polis as well as about nature—must be validated by argument and demonstration, it became an essential part of the project of autonomy.

The emergence of modernity marked a rupture of the closure that characterized all previously existing societies and initiated a program for the creation of a new, autonomous form of society. Partly as a result of the exploration of the globe and the encounter with foreign cultures that were undeniably civilized—the relativity of civilized culture was dramatized in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*—and partly as a result of the scientific disenchantment of the world, it was gradually recognized that human societies and their beliefs, customs, laws, values, and institutions are purely human creations and rest on no external foundations. The "death of god"—in the sense of the death of all ultimate supports for human endeavors—became and remains the touchstone of modernity. Whatever else they have to say on the subject, this is a fact that contemporary theorists of religion cannot ignore.

Furthermore, when human societies are seen as contingent human creations, it is difficult to enforce the sacred taboos that prohibit the questioning of their foundations. The right to "free and open examination," as

Kant called it—which became a defining right of modernity—was established for social as well as for natural phenomena. This is why Kant (1781) could say, "Our age . . . is the age of criticism" (p. 9n).

We will not be surprised to learn that autonomous societies tend to create autonomous individuals. Just as the society as a whole no longer rests on incontestable, a priori identity structures, so individual identities are no longer secured by the predefined roles of a status society. In other words, autonomous societies do not manifest the same degree of convergence between the meaning structures of the society and the identity structures of the individual that we witnessed in heteronomous societies. To a large degree, members of the society can, and must, fashion their own identities. At the same time as this loosening of identity structures results in greater possibilities for individual freedom and creativity, it also results in a new potential for psychopathology. This is where psychoanalysis enters the scene.

We must stress that Castoriadis is not claiming that a fully autonomous society has been established in Western modernity. He is arguing only that in the West the program of autonomy has been recognized as legitimate and has been partially realized. According to him, the task—the project—is to promote the more complete realization of that program. He views the emancipatory movements for democracy, socialism, and human rights—as well as the aesthetic avant-garde—as chapters in that struggle.

Something most be said about "genealogical critique" of the project of autonomy. Because it arose and has been most fully realized in the West, so the argument goes, the project of autonomy is mired in Eurocentric prejudices, which is to say it is hopelessly relativist and valid only for our ethnos. The fact, however, that the project of autonomy had a specific genesis does not necessarily invalidate it. Were that the case, there would be no valid ideas, for all ideas—including the supposedly timeless ideas of geometry and logic—have a genesis. The relevant question in a situation like this is, Does an idea possess a significance that transcends the conditions of its birth?

In our case, does the project of autonomy, as I would claim, represent an anthropological potential for humanity as a whole, which happened to be discovered in the West? And if this question is answered in the positive, two others must be raised. One is normative: Should the actualization of that potential be pursued, and, if so, for whom? The other is empirical: Do societies that have not followed the Western path of development possess the necessary conditions for realizing that potential?

It must be admitted that today the project of instrumentalization seems to have gained the upper hand. Despite its deeply repugnant nature, communism served at least one function: it put a check on capitalist expansion. But since 1989, instrumentalization in the form of unchecked capitalist globalization—which destroys the natural habitat and tears traditional cultures apart—has proceeded at an almost dizzying pace.[5] For a large part of the world, the West is identified with the near-ubiquity of American popular culture, the exploitation of Third World "markets," and a reliance on cruise missiles and secret police, rather than with human rights, democracy, and growing prosperity. It is not difficult to understand why there is so much anger directed at us.

FREUD AND THE PROJECT OF AUTONOMY

Though it has become common to write Freud off as a positivist, he is in fact a major figure in the project of autonomy precisely because of his commitment to science. If we demythologize the account given in *Totem and Taboo* and cut through its Eurocentric philosophy of history, it becomes clear that Freud does not identify science—in the emphatic sense of *Wissenschaft*—with the particular, methodological tenets of nineteenth-century positivism. Rather, he defines science as the sustained methodical struggle against magical thinking, that is, against our inborn tendency to create illusions to shield our narcissism. As such, Freud believes that science, by its very nature critical and iconoclastic, entails the criticism of false idols.[6]

[5]China may turn out to be the prototype of one-sided modernist development. It is perfectly conceivable that China will develop a society that has a thriving capitalist economy and a sophisticated system of bureaucratic administration but no democracy—where the project of instrumentalization will have triumphed and the project of autonomy have vanished.

[6]To understand what I am getting at, it would be helpful to situate Freud in the Dark Enlightenment. According to Yovel (1989), the members of the Dark Enlightenment—Spinoza, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Darwin, Nietzsche, and Marx, as well as Freud—seek to understand the human species in its entirety as part of the natural world by providing an exhaustive naturalistic or "immanentistic" account of it. This means they also strive to provide an unflinching picture of human beings as they actually are—animality and all—and not as we wish them to be. Contrary to what might be expected, the Dark Enlightenment has a liberating side, which saves it from misanthropic nihilism. Because it challenges "accepted self-images and enshrined cultural identities," Yovel argues, the Dark Enlightenment is "a movement of emancipation, serving to inspire a richer and more lucid self-knowledge in man, even at the price of unflattering consequences which often shock and dismay" (p. 136). To be sure, this is not the emancipation of the utopian socialists, but it is a form of emancipation nonetheless.

The charge of absolutism—the quest for certainty—is often leveled at science. But, for Freud, scientific thought—as opposed to religion and philosophy—represents thinking from the standpoint of finitude. As opposed to religion, science is decentered, which means it understands itself as one system of thought among many and recognizes that in principle it can be proven wrong. "Everything science teaches," Freud (1933) writes, "is only provisionally true: what is praised to-day as the highest wisdom will be rejected tomorrow and replaced by something else, though once more only tentatively" (p. 172). Indeed, Freud—who lived through the crisis of authority in the crumbling Hapsburg Empire, where the Emperor's sheer longevity seemed to provide the only source of legitimacy—believed that the scientific project entailed the repudiation of traditional authority and, as a result, liberated "theoretical curiosity" (see Blumenberg 1983, part 3). For Freud, Leonardo was "the first modern natural scientist" in that he rejected the authority of tradition and claimed the right "to probe the secrets of nature"—which, for him, includes human nature—"while relying solely on observation and . . . judgement" (1910, p. 122).

And unlike philosophy—which is similar to paranoia in this respect—science is not totalizing. Scientists, says Freud, accept the existence of gaps in our experience and, in contrast to the philosophers, do not attempt to fill them in with magically created false connections or with, as Heine puts it, "the bits and bonnets of [their] pyjamas" (1910, p. 131n). Similarly, while the philosopher is free to spin speculative systems out of pure thought, Freud insists that the scientist works with observations—from the ground up, in a step-by-step way that can never achieve completeness.

In addition to being taken as a positivist, Freud is often viewed as a political conservative, with *Totem and Taboo* being read as a Hobbesian argument against the possibility of the radical transformation of society (see Marcuse 1966, pp. 3–10). But this reading misses a deeper point. As Castoriadis (1984) argues, "Freud, by virtue of his authorship of *Totem and Taboo* . . . belongs to the democratic and egalitarian tradition," that is, to the project of autonomy (p. 62).The murder of the primal father vacates the place of omnipotence, and any attempt to reoccupy it will be stopped by the collective strength of the band of brothers. This is the significance of their pact. To put it in Lacanian language, no individual can possess the Phallus. Because the brothers' omnipotence is tempered through their renunciation of murder and incest, decisions about collective social arrangements must henceforth be arrived at from the decentered standpoint

of finitude. That is, they must be worked out between the brothers—and the means of working them out must simultaneously be worked out—without access to any external supports.

FUNDAMENTALISM

To avoid the difficulties surrounding the term *fundamentalism,* I will define it in a specific way: namely, as the attempt to undo the rupture that occurred with modernity, reoccupy the place of omnipotence, and reinstate the closure of heteronomous society (see Juergensmeyer 2000, pp. 4–8). Thus, in speaking of fundamentalism, I am not referring to any particular movement or group. Rather, what I have in mind is a way of thinking that burst onto the historical stage in the 1970s within Islam, Judaism, and Christianity alike.[7]

Despite their obvious differences, these movements share an essential feature, namely, a deep-seated hostility toward secular modernity. The following example drives this fact home. Mark Juergensmeyer (2000) reports that Rabbi Meir Kahane, the Jewish ultranationalist, "had a certain admiration for the Ayatollah Khomeini." Indeed, Kahane told Juergensmeyer "that he felt closer to Khomeini and other militant Muslims than he did to such framers of secular political thought as John Locke or even to secular Jews." His reason? "Khomeini believed in the relevance of religion to everyday life and especially in the importance of religion in shaping a nation's morality and communal destiny." For Kahane, "that belief was far more important than any politically expedient secular arrangement, even if it privileged one religious group over another" (p. 55).

It must be stressed that fundamentalism is not traditionalism. It is instead an attempt to reinstate the closure of traditionalism by creating or re-creating a mythical community that is supposedly not contaminated by the evils of modernity (see Bohleber 2003; Kakar 1996). To foreclose critique, the society's dogmatic foundation often takes the form of a literal reading of the group's primary text (see Crapanzano 2000).

To the fundamentalist, the modern notions of autonomy and emancipation do not represent cultural advances. On the contrary, they are seen

[7]Limitations of space prevent me from addressing the critical question of why these movements arose more or less at the same time. For a discussion of this problem, see Juergensmeyer 2000, p. 152.

as pathological products of human hubris. Typically, a fundamentalist will argue that autonomy constitutes a fall from humility, community, faith, and a life saturated with meaning and order.

Fundamentalists tend to believe, moreover, that the open-ended interrogation of their belief system—indeed, at times, the very exercise of the imagination—is a dangerous and heretical enterprise that inevitably ends in disorientation, alienation, and anomie.

THE DESECULARIZATION OF THE WORLD

Today partisans of the project of autonomy are admittedly on the defensive. And for good reason. The "desecularization of the world" caught them almost completely by surprise and eradicated one of their major tenets (see Berger 1999). Over the past several centuries, progressive thinkers, with few exceptions, have tended to treat the so-called secularization thesis—that is, the idea that secularization will spread inexorably to all domains of life around the globe—as an article of faith (for a highly nuanced account of secularization, see Casanova 1994, part 1). But the worldwide resurgence of religion has proven them embarrassingly wrong. In retrospect, the fact that so many important thinkers were mistaken is more difficult to explain than the religious resurgence itself.

Admittedly, the dramatic deficiencies of the Enlightenment's understanding of religion bear no small part of the responsibility for this development. A major culprit is Freud himself, who failed to consider the possibility that the need for illusion may be a piece of nature, namely, of human nature—and that the belief that that illuision can be eliminated is itself an illusion.

Indeed, there is a glaring contradiction in Freud's discussion of the nature of religion (1927), which, tellingly, he does not feel compelled to address. On the one hand, he acknowledges that religion derives from the "oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind" (p. 30). On the other, he not only contends that these infantile wishes should be given up but also that, through the "education to reality," they will eventually wither away. "Surely," he exclaims, "men cannot remain children forever" (p. 49).

Partly to make up for the shortcomings of Freud's position, a new coziness with religion has developed within psychoanalysis, which represents a break with the field's largely atheistic history. In recent controversies—which parallel controversies in the culture at large—the antisecularists

often attempt to turn the received view on its head. Not only do they argue that science is simply one belief system among many, perhaps on a par with religion; they also maintain that secularists are in fact dogmatists who have been imposing their humanist worldview—in effect, their "religion"—on nonbelievers. Thus, in a stunning reversal, secularists become the "oppressors" and believers the "oppressed."

Unfortunately, because of their bad conscience over the field's former offenses against religion, many secularist analysts are vulnerable to this sort of sophistry and so do not challenge it aggressively enough.

The following argument, explicit or not, is often at work in the antisecularist critique of the critique of religion: Given that the Enlightenment critique of religion has proven insufficient, it follows that the validity of the religious position prior to the critique—the status quo ante—ought to be reinstated.

But the logic of this inference does not hold. As Freud (1927) points out to his interlocutor in *The Future of an Illusion,* "The weakness of my cause does not imply a strengthening of yours" (p. 53). It is possible to acknowledge the serious defects of the Enlightenment's criticisms of religion and to still hold out for a nuanced critique and robust defense of secularism.

The really hard question that honest contemporary secularists—psychoanalytic and otherwise—must confront has to do with the fate of the "oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind" that Freud pointed to. If we can no longer assume that those "infantile" wishes will magically "wither away"—or, more important, if we now understand that it would be disastrous for that to occur—it becomes incumbent on self-respecting secularists to propose an alternative way of pursuing those powerful archaic desires within the framework of a secular society. After the critique of secularism, this is an area where secularists must concentrate their creative energies.

LOEWALD'S REDEMPTIVE CRITIQUE OF FREUD

Hans Loewald was one of the few Freudian analysts to take humankind's religious yearnings seriously, and it is fitting to begin this exploration of the cluster of concepts surrounding the disenchantment of the world and the death of God with his work (for overviews, see Whitebook 2004a; Cooper 1988; Fogel 1991; Lear 2000). Before becoming a physician and psychoanalyst, Loewald had studied philosophy with Martin Heidegger (see Loewald 1980, pp. viii–ix). And while Heidegger was Adorno's

archnemesis (see Adorno 1973), both men were addressing the same philosophical and cultural problems concerning the problem of modernity, but from different ends of the political spectrum.

Loewald's theoretical program consists in a sustained redemptive critique of Freud. Eschewing a delegitimizing critique that seeks to debunk Freud, Loewald attempts to redeem the truth-content and deeper meaning of Freud's position—often by reading the master against himself. Typically, Loewald distinguishes an "official" and an "unofficial" position in Freud's thinking. Then, after he has criticized the official position—often in no uncertain terms—he turns to Freud's unofficial position to find the solution to the difficulty he has identified; this is accomplished through a radical reinterpretation of Freud himself. As we are about to see, this is the strategy Loewald follows in critiquing Freud's hostility to religion, which, of course, was a centerpiece of the official position.

Freud's official positions tend to be "Kantian" in the pejorative, dualistic sense of the term. He sets up a series of loosely coordinated doublets—pleasure principle vs. reality principle, primary processes vs. secondary processes, unconscious vs. conscious, preoedipal vs. oedipal, fantasy vs. reality, advanced vs. primitive, ego vs. id.[8] Officially, Freud sees the goal of both development and psychoanalytic treatment as the progressive conquest of the first term in each pair by the second.

The unofficial position, in contrast, envisages the establishment of a new relation between the two terms: not the defeat of the first by the second but the integration of the two terms into a higher synthesis, which is richer in that it is broader, more differentiated, and more flexible.

In a crucial insight, Loewald (1952) recognizes that Freud's official position results from his "restricted definition of defense," which in turn is a corollary of the constancy hypothesis (p. 27). Freud's commitment to the tension reduction model[9] pushes him to view the function of the psychic apparatus as keeping excitation to a minimum. This in turn causes him to see the job of defense almost exclusively as discharging stimuli—which by definition pose a threat to the ego—rather than as shaping, channeling, representing, mastering, and integrating them.

[8]This scheme aims at a disenchantment not only of the world but also of the self, and has little conceptual space in which to locate religious phenomena. Rational (or scientific) truth versus irrational illusion seems to exhaust the possibilities of the field.

[9]This is a consequence of the Helmholtzian legacy in Freud's thinking.

Loewald argues, contra Freud, that the ego thus conceptualized is not a strong psychic agency but a relatively weak one. In fact, the supposed strength of this exclusionary ego is actually its weakness (1960, p. 241). It is purchased, Loewald argues, by the narrowness of its boundaries, which exclude everything foreign to it, and by the compulsive rigidity with which it must police those boundaries—that is, by isolation from its unconscious-instinctual life. Loewald observes that, "in its dominant current"—which includes the official Freud and many of the ego psychologists of his day—a pathological form of self-formation, namely, the obsessional self, is elevated into the healthy self. Thus, "psychoanalytic theory has unwittingly taken over much of the obsessive neurotic's experience and conception of reality and has taken it for granted as 'the objective reality'" (Loewald 1952, p. 30).

Hypostatizing the obsessional self into the normal self is one of the negative consequences of Freud's idealization of science.[10] He considered "scientific man"—who has supposedly renounced omnipotence, magic, and the pleasure principle and is therefore able to perceive himself and the world objectively (Freud 1912–1913, pp. 86–90)—to be "the most advanced form of human development" (Loewald 1960, p. 228). If one makes this assumption, certain goals for psychoanalysis follow. Patients should be transformed into quasi-scientific observers, who, like the Zuider Zee, have been cleansed of all the distorting forces of the unconscious, fantasy, and transference, and can therefore perceive themselves and the world objectively. This view also leads to the quite remarkable conclusion that transference, understood as the investment of the world with fantasy from one's past, is "a mark of man's immaturity" that ought to be eliminated at the termination of a "successful" analysis.

Loewald rejects this picture. He believes that it is "necessary and timely to question the assumption that the scientific approach to the world and the self represents a higher and more mature evolutionary stage of man than the religious way of life." Indeed, he goes further and argues that the "pathological degree of isolation between unconscious and preconscious"

[10]To avoid confusion here, the science Loewald is referring to is the positivism of the nineteenth century, that is, science qua instrumental reason. While Freud for a time may have adhered to the tenets of positivism, he was more interested, as I have argued, in science in the sense of *Wissenschaft*—which could be used to criticize positivism.

(1960, p. 253)—between reason and affect, the advanced and the primitive, cognition and fantasy, and so on—which was in fact aimed at nineteenth-century science's conception of "mechanical objectivity" (see Daston and Gallison 2007, chaps. 3–4)—represents "the disease of our age" (Loewald 1975, p. 364).

And the remedy follows from the diagnosis. The goal of development as well as of treatment, he argues, ought not to be the isolation of reality from fantasy, of the ego from unconscious-instinctual life, but the establishment of "the optimal communication" between them (Loewald 1971, p. 108).

Given that Loewald had studied with Heidegger—a philosopher whose antimodernism and penchant for the archaic led him to a serious if relatively brief collaboration with the Nazis—it must be stressed that what he is suggesting has nothing to do with mysticism or irrationalism. In his remarkably balanced review of the Freud/Jung letters, for example, Loewald (1977) makes it clear that he sides with Freud when it comes to the murkier side of Jung's thinking:

> Freud, in my view, was right in profoundly distrusting the undisciplined mystical-visionary inclinations that led Jung into nebulous regions of alchemy, astrology, and the occult, regions from which it is hard to return with a clear mind. To Freud, this smacked too much of obscurantism and an evasion of and hypocritical embellishment of the "exigencies of life," man's troubled existence—an attitude that Freud abhorred [p. 408].

Rather than rejecting rationality, Loewald is rejecting a narrow scientistic (instrumentalist) conception of it, in the hope that the insights of psychoanalysis will aid us in the development of a richer, more comprehensive, and suppler conception of reason—and the self.

As one would expect, Loewald locates an alternative unofficial conception of the ego and the psychic apparatus in Freud's writings. He views Freud's discussion of the archaeological stratification of Rome, in the first chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents,* as an attempt to envision an "inclusive" picture of the psyche, in which things are "preserved" and integrated, rather than discharged and gotten rid of (Freud 1930, pp. 69–73).

Freud's depiction of Rome as a layered archaeological site is meant to demonstrate how material from different strata of historical development—ancient, republican, imperial, Christian, and modern—can exist together in an internally differentiated unity. Indeed, Freud argues that the ability for things to coexist is even greater in the psyche than in the urban site, for the

former is not limited by the conditions of physical space. Unlike the earlier, stimulus-reduction theory of the psychic apparatus, in which the self is seen as a narrow undifferentiated unity and excitation is to be discharged rather than bound, this theory explains how tension can be tolerated so that psychic material can be elaborated into ever larger unities that enrich the self.[11]

Loewald uses this inclusionary conception of the psychic apparatus to oppose Freud's official concept that "the so-called fully developed, mature ego" is "one that has become fixated at the presumably highest or latest stage of development" and has "left the others behind it." He maintains, rather, that in a truly mature ego, "the earlier and deeper levels of ego-reality integration remain alive as dynamic sources of higher organization," so that the more advanced strata of the psyche continuously communicate with the more archaic (Loewald 1951, p. 20).[12] Maturity does not consist in a "power grab" by the ego, to use Castoriadis's phrase, but in the establishment of "another relation" between the ego and unconscious-instinctual life, "in a profound modification" of the mix between the advanced and the archaic (1987, p. 20).[13]

RELIGION AND RECONCILIATION IN LOEWALD

Loewald does not present a systematically developed theory of religion. Most of what he has to say about the subject is, with one exception, scattered throughout his works (see Loewald 1978b, chap. 3). His views on religion are in fact part of his general notion of human flourishing and psychic well-being—closely aligned, for example, with his ideas about

[11]Jonathan Lear (1998a,b)—who was the first to develop the erotic nature of Loewald's theory—shows that Plato's scheme for achieving the integration of the ideal polis was repressive or exclusionary and therefore resulted in an *undifferentiated unity*. Plato sought to achieve it by banishing the poets—as the representatives of the appetites (the drives, in Freudian parlance) and the imagination—from the Republic. Lear did not, however, take the next step and explore how the appetites and imagination might be integrated into a less repressive polity—and psyche. This was not the problem he was concerned with. But the situation we find ourselves in, I have been arguing, requires us to take the next step and ask whether they *can* be integrated into a flourishing psyche and polis.

[12]For Loewald, the "avowal," the taking ownership of one's instinctual-unconscious life, is a central value of the psychoanalytic ethos (1979a, chap. 1; 1979b, p. 392).

[13]The greatness of Bach's music does not derive solely from its sophisticated and complex contrapuntal logic. Nor is it only the result of its ability to invoke powerful primitive affective states. Bach's greatness requires both these accomplishments in equal measure.

ethics or art. Loewald believes that the preoedipal turn taken by psychoanalysis after the Second World War, with its exploration of the infant-mother relationship and early undifferentiated experience—a domain Freud admitted he had little aptitude for—uncovered an essential truth that cannot be denied, despite its fitting "badly with our rational world-view and quest for objectivity" (Loewald 1979b, p. 396). It is this: The "quest" for the "irrational nondifferentiation of subject and object," deriving from the earliest layers of development, is, for all intents and purposes, the origin of the religious quest. Just as Freud thinks that our sense of perfection derives from the memory of the plenum-like state of primary narcissism, Loewald believes that our intimation of the sacred has its roots in the infant's memory traces of the "original intimate unity" with the mother. (Obviously, the two ideas are closely related.)

However, even as Loewald recognizes the legitimacy and power of the individual's wish "to recover" the experience of oceanic unity, he registers a caveat. The lost unity cannot be reestablished in its original, immediate, and undifferentiated form. Theoretically, if this were to happen, the result would be manic psychosis (see Chasseguet-Smirgel 1984). Rather, it must be projected "before him" and refound on a higher, more differentiated, and more articulated level (see Freud 1914, p. 94).[14] Seen in this context, one of the central functions of the oedipus complex becomes apparent: it propels development forward. By foreclosing the possibility of the regressive solution, that is, of merger with the original incestuous parent, the prohibition compels the individual to develop and approximate that sense of perfection with a displaced postoedipal object.

For Loewald, the most successful moments of human flourishing occur when the archaic and advanced are united in a felicitous way. This kind of

[14]Castoriadis (1987) points out the thoroughly ambivalent nature of the striving for unity. On the one had, when it is sublimated and established in a differentiated way, the drive for oneness can lead to the highest accomplishments of the human spirit: "The sperm of reason," he argues, "is contained in the impulse" to restore the original situation. "An essential dimension of religion . . . but also an essential dimension of philosophy and of science derive from this" striving. "Whether it is the philosopher or the scientist, the final and dominant intention [of reason]—to find, across difference and otherness, manifestations of the *same* . . . in phenomenal diversity—is based on the same schema of a . . . primary unity." On the other hand, the striving for unification, when pursued in an unsublimated and undifferentiated way, can lead to fundamentalism precisely in the sense we are discussing it. That is, "the monster of unifying madness" can lead to the attempt to create a closed, homogeneous, and unified world, where all otherness—which is by definition bad and dangerous—is excluded (pp. 298–299).

synthetic, which is to say erotic, achievement can occur in religion—and in art, science, intimate relationships, and clinical experience as well.

A consideration of Loewald's theory of language will help us understand his position better. One of the ways that the unity of the earliest developmental phase is transmitted to the infant is through the mother's voice. Her "baby talk"—which for the child is closer to music than to discursive speech—engulfs the infant in "the global mother-child interaction" (Loewald 1978a, p. 180). Not only are primary processes, which characterize this phase, the earliest form of mentation, but, according to Loewald, they always retain something of its undifferentiated nature and primal density.

Likewise, not only do secondary processes emerge later—in tandem with subject-object differentiation—but they are also characterized by "duality and multiplicity [having become] dominant." The "unitary, global unstructured oneness" of the original situation is, Loewald argues, divided, differentiated, and split up into articulated and repeatable units that make discursive thought and speech possible (1978a, p. 196). While this is obviously an enormous advance in mental development, a high price has to be paid for it, namely, the loss of the original oneness.

Loewald presents a linguistic variation of Weber's "rationalization process." As civilization develops, the protean nature of human language, as both a medium for communicating archaic affects and a vehicle for articulated expression, becomes simplified, and "the density of the primary processes gives way to the discursiveness and articulation of secondary processes" (Loewald 1978a, p. 203). The situation when "language goes on holiday"—to borrow a phrase that Freud's fellow Viennese antiphilosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953, p. 19e), used in a different context—and loses its mooring in affects and primary processes, can be as problematic as its opposite, that is, when rational thought processes become overwhelmed by unconscious fantasy (see Freud 1915, p. 200; Forrester 1980, pp. 57–58).

For Loewald the desideratum is the unification of primary process experience with secondary process expression at a higher level of organization. This would create a "new synthetic organization" that would be differentiated and articulated, and would regain a density that resonates a depth of affect and meaning. Loewald believes that this sort of synthesis is achieved in "the most creative forms of language, such as in its authentic religious use, oratory, poetry, and dramatic art," as well as

in the "propitious moments [that] may happen in a psychoanalytic hour" (1978a, pp. 203–204). For Loewald these synthetic achievements can be considered religious insofar as they reconcile what the civilizing process has sundered—archaic and advanced, subject and object, ego and drive, thought and feeling.

THE QUESTION "IS NOT TO BE FORMULATED"

From Schleiermacher to James, defenders of religion have often moved to the same fallback position when confronted with the scientific criticism of their beliefs (Proudfoot 1985). Religion, they argue, is not primarily in the business of making factual claims. Its main concern, rather, is with religious experience and/or the creation of meaning. The question of when the earth was created is, in short, beside the point. To evaluate religion as though it were a primitive proto-science making truth claims—as Freud did—is to commit a category error and miss the nature of the phenomenon.

In an effort to correct the field's mistreatment of religion, a number of psychoanalysts have recently advanced a version of this argument that draws on Winnicott's concept of the transitional object (see Jones 1991, 2002). Winnicott himself famously maintained that religion is a transitional phenomenon, neither subjective nor objective—neither "created" nor "found"—but belonging to a third, intermediate realm. And because religious experience, so the argument goes, belongs to the transitional realm, it is inappropriate to inquire into its epistemic status. As with the transitional object, the question of whether religion is true or false "is not to be formulated" (Winnicott 1971, p. 12). In fact, to do so would destroy its nature as a transitional experience. One can see, however, that the effect of enlisting Winnicott for the defense of religion is to put the topic beyond the reach of rational evaluation.

The fact that religion, by virtue of its being a transitional object, is considered beyond scrutiny should remind us of another phenomenon we have examined: namely, the sacred core of a heteronomous society, which, for systematic reasons, cannot be called into question. And this association in turn should raise our critical antennae with respect to the Winnicottian defense of religion.

There is little doubt that Winnicott's concept of transitional phenomena—one of the great discoveries in psychoanalysis—can prove enormously

productive in elucidating the nature of religious experience. Nevertheless, to claim that religious experience is a transitional phenomenon is to say it is a psychological phenomenon—albeit conceived in terms of a "two-person" psychology—and to remain within the realm of psychology. Moreover, because by definition no assertions can be made about religion's epistemic status, no claims can be made for its transcendent nature. And religion without transcendence, so it strikes me, is a weird bird indeed.

During more or less normal times, when a culture is functioning relatively smoothly, it can afford to tolerate a good deal of latitude regarding the truth status of many of its less reality-oriented beliefs. But during periods of deep collective crisis, which can threaten the identity or even the existence of the group, it is another matter entirely. At those times, "epistemological tough-mindedness" is called for, and a culture may not have the luxury to leave the truth or falsity of religious beliefs in abeyance (see La Barre 1972, p. 108).[15] They must be put into question. Not to do so would be maladaptive at best and self-destructive at worst.

As with individuals, massive anxiety can cause cultures to react regressively when confronted with identity-threatening situations. It is not going too far, I would argue, to say that recent history bears this out. After the trauma of 9/11, in an unprecedented development, it has become requisite that candidates pursuing political office, on the left no less than on the right, were required to come before the public and profess their faith. Indeed, at times, the question of a candidate's faith seemed to have taken priority over his or her position on terrorism, torture, or economic crises. Faith was embraced as a talisman to magically ward off dangers that were experienced as too enormous and terrifying to contain and think about.

At the same time as faith was elevated into a criterion of political legitimacy, a politically motivated effort was launched to discredit science. This attempt to discredit science as only "one belief system among many" is motivated not only by the wish to enhance the importance of faith. It is also meant to disqualify the role of science in the public sphere, thereby neutralizing it as a powerful weapon in political debate. If the testimony of the scientific community is discredited, it will

[15]La Barre was an important psychoanalytically oriented anthropologist who has largely been forgotten. I suggest that a reconsideration of his works would be enormously useful for psychoanalysts in their attempt to rethink the question of religion.

be easier to mask the dangers of global warming, the genetic engineering of food, and the stockpiling of nuclear waste, as well as the epidemic of posttraumatic stress disorder among veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As these lines are being written, we are at a critical turning point in American political life, and it remains to be seen whether this trend will be reversed.

I want to conclude with two points. First, as for the defenders of religion who argue that it is concerned with experience and not with truth claims, Freud would want to hold their feet to the fire with respect to at least one factual question. Where do they stand on the question of consolation? That is, do they believe there is any ultimate compensation for the suffering, injustice, and apparent meaninglessness we experience in human life? For Freud, a religion is essentially a theodicy—a belief system that promises precisely this recompense—and theodicies are unequivocally false.[16] Moreover, as a member of the Dark Enlightenment, Freud believed that coming to terms with the disconsolate nature of human life and our minuscule position in an indifferent universe is liberating and beneficial. Not only does it increase our maturity and capacity for independent thinking; it also redirects our "liberated energies" to the real satisfactions available to us as finite beings—"as honest smallholders on this earth" (Freud 1927, p. 50). It is not surprising that one rarely, if ever, hears the new defenders of religion addressing the question of consolation. They want to avoid it at all costs.

Second, I am concerned that the crucial task of correcting the Enlightenment's one-sided position on religion and doing justice to the religious longings of humanity may trump the project of autonomy, that is, the institutionalization of the right of open-ended interrogation and critique. In their eagerness to atone for the sins of the fathers—which often is motivated by a confused sense of crimes the West has committed against the non-Western world—the new antisecularists often lose sight

[16]The following line from the end of *Civilization and Its Discontents* is famous: "Thus I have not the courage to rise up before my fellow-men as a prophet, and I bow to their reproach that I can offer them no consolation: for at bottom that is what they are all demanding—the wildest revolutionaries no less passionately than the most virtuous believers" (Freud 1930, p. 145). What is less well known is how early and decisively Freud had rejected any notion of redemption. Reporting on the Catholic atmosphere he found in Rome, Freud wrote to Fliess in 1901, "I found it difficult to tolerate the lie concerning man's redemption . . . for I could not cast off the thought of my own misery and all the other misery I know about" (Masson 1985, p. 449).

of one point: namely, that the establishment of this right is one of the great achievements of human history. Along with this, the antisecularists regularly fail to recognize that this achievement is intimately connected to the West's democratic and scientific traditions. Whatever the sins of Western imperialism—and they are immense—the preservation of the right to open-ended inquiry and critique should be maintained as a first priority, if only to criticize imperialism.

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