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FREUDIANISM, MICROSOCIOLOGY, AND EXISTENTIALISM

The morbidly elevated interest in the unconscious and in its role in the destinies of the individual and of mankind, seen in a number of West European and American countries, is a direct consequence of fear and helplessness in the face of the elemental forces of capitalist society.

In the Soviet literature it has repeatedly been demonstrated that the concept of the unconscious as a dominant level in the life of the individual and of society is the common platform that unites various irrationalist theories.

The conditions of existence in capitalist countries lead to denial of moral values and ideals, and to fear and lack of confidence in the future. The apologetics for the unconscious are the result of the extreme decadence of bourgeois culture. The theory of the father complex is exploited with particular avidity. Its primary purpose is to justify the moral decline of modern youth, but neither this theory nor other, similar ones can explain and reveal the truth. André Maurois (1) speaks with conviction about the real reasons for the orgies of despair among youth in capitalist society in the postwar years: "The youth is appalled by the senselessness of its lot. It has been told, on the very threshold of life: everyone may soon be killed. When one bears this threat in mind it is easier to understand why youth suddenly begins to go to extremes and why it does not ascribe more significance to moral codes that failed to prevent the older generation from reaching this insanity."

The neo-Freudians and existentialists are compelled to talk about the progressive decline of values, the end of ideologies and hopes, the loneliness of man, and the irreconcilable contradiction between the individual and his environment. In capitalist society, freedom of initiative and "individual freedom" become money-grubbing, narcotics addiction, and crime. The personal freedom that has been proclaimed resolves itself, in fact, to a system of abasement of human dignity.

Psychiatry in the capitalist countries (as well as many other branches of science) is greatly influenced by the theories of Freud. This influence is manifested not only in the view held on the origin of mental disease, but in the pretensions of psychiatrists to be peacemakers and

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The writer is from the city of Astrakhan'. [No other information is given. — Ed.]

healers of the sick world of the day. Anglo-American psychiatrists have more than once announced their willingness to undertake to cure human relationships and social conflicts.

In a number of Western countries, homage to the unconscious has become a sign of intellectual refinement. Thus, for example, the surrealists assert that the artist must immerse himself, by the force of his images, in the sphere of the unconscious, the instinctive, the world of insanity. (2) The surrealist abandons reason, logic. Salvador Dali states that the unstable and suspicious objective world must be "discredited" by a delusional mode of thought. If ideas are in conflict with the outside world, the worse for the latter. Abstractionism goes even farther. Artistic creation, say its spokesmen, is called upon to express the instinctive, subconscious experiences of the artist himself. (3)

The theory of I. P. Pavlov is the direct antithesis of that of Freud and of existentialist, psychobiological, and sociometric dualism, as well as of all other notions of the disconnectedness of mental systems, levels of cerebral activity, and of the helplessness of reason. Pavlov was not only not inclined to underestimate the human mind and human personality but, on the contrary, pictured them as magnificent forces. "Man," he said, "is, ...within the horizon of our present scientific vision, a system unique in the heights of self-regulation attained.... And, from a progressive viewpoint, is not man the apex of nature ...not the realization of its powerful and as yet unplumbed laws?" And from this, Pavlov continued, there arises the possibility "and duty that I know myself and constantly, making use of this knowledge, maintain myself at the highest level attainable by my capacities." (4, pp. 571, 572)

The methods employed in the psychoanalytical analysis of the shaping of the personality, including the neurotic and psychopathic personality, are amazingly meager. In psychodynamics, in analysis of "interpersonal relations," in sociometry, and in the original theories of Freud or neo-Freudian theory, psychological and psychopathological problems are reduced, in the final analysis, to a handful of concepts and propositions bearing on the relationships between children and parents. The role of resistance to the father's authority or of a striving to identify with the father appears with special frequency. In accordance with this there arises either a conflict of the "ego" or "super-ego," an aggressive attitude, a feeling of guilt, fear, a transfer of the conflict into society, and antisocial behavior, or — according to a second variant — peace and quiet in the sphere of interests and of human relations. J. Donnelly, (5) in a review of the literature of "psychodynamics" on matters of psychopathy, emphasizes the tendency to look upon the shaping of a psychopathological personality from the viewpoint of identification or absence of identification with parents, in accordance with the structure of the "super-ego," aggressiveness, hostility, guilt or fear and a hidden desire to engage in behavior that will bring punishment. The opinion is expressed that parents have an unconscious desire to see their children carry out their own hidden, suppressed, antisocial impulses. It is asserted that certain psychopaths of middle or advanced age undergo a return to their personalities at the time of the death of a parent with respect to whom there had been a conflict situation, or with whom the psychopath had identified himself. There is also reference to the "transference" mechanism, expressing the need, after a change in the family situation — for example as a result of the death of a parent — to find new objects to which to transfer the feelings thus liberated. Alcoholism, schizoid regression, or long hospitalization arise as a consequence.

Even urinary incontinence in children is interpreted as a result of the unsuccessful relations between an infant and the "dominant parent."

The neo-Freudians gladly disclaim Freud's notions of transformation of libidinous energy and of the Oedipus complex, kites to which the psychoanalysis of neuroses and the psychology of human relations were attached. However, they retain the idea of the parent as a ghost that inexorably follows an individual throughout his life. Depending upon the needs of the given interpreter, the attitude toward the father, the struggle against him, guilt before him, and so forth,

become means of explaining anything one wishes: war, revolution, conservatism, religious sentiments, crimes, and the need for punishment. Erich Fromm asserts that the German people identified the fascist leaders with their fathers and therefore submitted to them. It should be recalled that Freudians had, along the same lines, developed a "theory" that revolutions were a transference of the struggle against fathers to political figures and other authorities.

All these psychological contrivances have the purpose of demonstrating that an elemental principle is dominant in the life of the individual and of society, and of affirming the primacy of the biological over the social and of counterposing this conception to the materialist theory of the rising role of active consciousness in personal and societal life, of hiding in a fog of confused theories the real causes of the social changes occurring in the contemporary world.

The effort of the psychoanalysts to examine the life of society and social events from a psychological point of view is combined with plans to cure social conflicts by freeing social groups from the burden of unconscious impulses.

The palm for being the first to invent means of psychotherapy for social collisions goes to J. Moreno. (6-9) This founder of sociometry names three revolutions in psychiatry: the first one associated with the name of Pinel (1792), and the second with Freud (1893), which led to two further trends — Pavlov's conditioned reflexes (1904), and the psychobiology of A. Meyer (1906). Now, however, according to Moreno, we are in the midst of a third revolution, in which psychoanalysis is facing a serious crisis, and the forerunners of a new era are the theoreticians of interpersonal relations, microsociology and sociometry with group psychotherapy, psychodrama, sociodrama, psychosomatic medicine, and psychopharmacology. As we see, Moreno credits his own efforts with the greatest share in effectuation of the new revolution. The theories of sociometry, psychodrama, and sociodrama are his. He counts on mass-participation theatrical performances with the participation of patients to facilitate overcoming their social conflicts and individual tendencies.

In 1961 Moreno published a "role conception," worked out in detail, which he regards as the bridge between psychiatry and sociology. (9) The roles in which unconscious convictions and conflicts may be realized and outgrown are divided into psychosomatic, psychodramatic, and social. Psychosomatic roles include those of the eater (glutton) and those of a sexual nature; a psychodramatic role may be built upon "identification with the mirror image of a situation or with depiction of the opposite image." The goal is to order the unconscious. Each individual has a number of roles in which he himself finds expression, and a number of counter-roles in which he sees others. Moreno introduces the concept of the co-unconscious, which embraces members of one's family, occupational groups, groups participating in wars and revolutions, inmates of concentration camps, and groups comprising religious congregations.

Moreno lists the roles suitable for psycho- and sociodramas: roles from classical plays, social roles (depictions of policemen, judges, doctors, etc.) and, further, roles appropriate to situations that arise, planned in advance. In the latter case, observation is made of the reactions of participating individuals, unfamiliar to each other, in unanticipated situations (for example, when a hostile parachutist lands near a group of soldiers). In this manner, a "sociogram" of the ability and inclinations of the participating individuals is established.

The function of psychodrama lies, says Moreno, in the prevention and cure of psychoses, neuroses, and violations of interpersonal relations, and in the capacity to adapt oneself to contemporary society.

One may agree with Moreno that each individual performs a certain role in the course of his lifetime, and conceives for himself other possible roles constituting the goal of his strivings. Nor is there any doubt that, in childhood, the ability to live various roles is great indeed. Moreover, anyone, entranced by a book, a play in the theater, a movie, will identify himself with certain characters, is repelled by other, negative personages, and thereby gets over his sorrows, losses, failures, unrealized dreams, and strivings. A boy shares the lives of the bold musketeers, the heroes of military actions, or

those who discover groups of spies or robbers. One fails, however, to understand why these phenomena demand for their explanation the notion of the unconscious realization of a family complex and that of transference into a new situation of feelings with respect to one's father.

With respect to psychodramas and sociodramas claiming to cure neuroses, psychoses, interpersonal relations, and social maladjustment, one can hardly doubt the inefficacy and practical inapplicability of such a therapy even for neurotics. When one turns to the treatment of social conflicts, we again encounter the widely employed tactic of interpreting social phenomena from psychological, biological standpoints. Moreno's views are dealt with in fuller detail in a critical survey by V. M. Morozov devoted to microsociology. (10)

Moreno's writings leave a peculiar impression. Sometimes one feels that Moreno is employing mannered pretentiousness to deal with simple matters, and seeks to give an affected profundity to his statements. He is not inclined to express his ideas as hypotheses or, even less, to doubt the possibility of resolving broad historical problems and social questions by the methods he proposes. He has willing recourse to devices of the order of literary sensation; he gives Karl Marx a patronizing pat on the back while pointing to "omissions" in his writings (filled in by him, Moreno), creates a science of space and time (locometry), examines problems of public administration, forecasts the return of man's lost fidelity to religion, promises to prevent unsuccessful marriages with the aid of sociometry, and so forth. Incidentally, this last undertaking is covered in a chapter titled "Predicting and Planning Success in Marriage."

Moreno engages constantly in the re-naming of ordinary phenomena. While willingly communicating the details of the formation of his world view, he holds that he happily combined in himself the influences of psychoanalysis, Marxism, and Spinoza's theology. Moreno is plagued by an uncontrollable urge to utter aphorisms, and does not suffer from excessive modesty in this regard.

Microsociology, he affirms, can do anything. Psychodrama as a method of analysis and therapy seeks to restore calm to individuals and social groups torn by unconscious conflicts, and to free them from internal tension. "We can escape theoretical error," he writes, "by replacing the theory of socialism by that of sociometry, and we avoid practical error by replacing the world socio-economic, proletarian revolution by 'small' sociometric revolutions." (8, p. 219)

Thus, once again (this time in sociometry) it is declared that the motive forces of society are individual intra-familial fixations and controversies, which are then transferable to the broad canvas of social conflicts or social harmonization. It is in play situations, psychodramas, that revolutionary tendencies should find outlet. Race conflicts in the United States are being subjected to Moreno's type of therapy. Participants in the play are allegedly capable of being freed from their painful experiences by joining in the action and becoming improvisers in a situation that is played out. A rising in Harlem was used as the situation in one such play. The production consisted of the following. A Negro asks for a job. He is answered that there is none because he is colored. Excitement builds up, which is sustained by individuals planted in the audience. Thus, the psychodrama, in the form of theatrical reaction, promises not only liberation from neuroses, from a feeling of hopelessness and fears, but also from intense social emotions, from national and class conflicts. The author compares the psychodrama to release (catharsis) during confession. The purpose of this shameful therapeutic comedy requires no explanation. In Moreno's opinion, (6) psychotherapy, to justify its name (literally "deserving of the name"), can have no less a goal than the healing of mankind.

Certain other therapies, which have not become as sensational as Moreno's, are distinguished by originality of a very dubious quality. F. Dolto (11) has suggested a new means of treatment of psychopathically unstable children (and, subsequently, of adults). On the view that they have remained at the "oral level of libidinal development," they are given dolls representing a human body with a flower in place of a head. After a certain period of attachment and interest in it, the child directs its destructive tendencies

against it, curses at it, and then destroys it. The author asserts that his method yields splendid results. L. Duhl (12) hastens to inform his readers that he undertook, for therapeutic purposes, to use baby bottles to feed schizophrenics with the need for regression. M. Braude (13) asserts that schizophrenic regression is a "reinforcement of the life line," an escape to a state of pure gratification and irresponsibility, and that an epileptic falls into a twilight zone of consciousness so as to release an instinctive impulse, the impulse to kill. A. F. Meyer et al. (14) come to the conclusion that a murder committed by a schizophrenic is an unconsciously effectuated, symbolic act of devouring prey. The psychoanalyst Mott, (15) having discovered a mystery of the cosmos, finds a sexual structure in the very nature of the universe. He called his philosophical system biosynthesis. The universe, this author affirms, is constructed on principles of relationships between male and female entities (male "nuclear energy," "integrating around itself a spherical — female — shell"). (15, p. 660) An infant occupies a nuclear, central position in its mother. Birth violates the integration of the focus. With its first breath, the infant experiences a libidinous need to return to the womb it has left. This need is substituted for by the activity of the gastro-intestinal tract during the act of sucking, and this establishes a substitution situation for the prenatal condition. But at a certain time, the "configurational energy" abandons the intestines and activates the genitalia. Then the spinal canal is activated and, finally, the configurational energy reaches the brain, where the womb situation is reconstructed. A "configurational focus" appears. The brain is in a bath just as the infant formerly was in the mother's water. Then adults find themselves with an impulse to unite with the cosmos. In general, energy flows from the cosmos to the womb and back through the head into the cosmos. The libido retains its essence at all stages. This is the "biosynthesis" of man and the universe.

The psychoanalysts ascribe to man an inherent aggressiveness more pronounced than even that of the predatory animals. L. Bender engaged in a search for "the genesis of hatred in children" and found that, inherent in all children, is an instinctively destructive and aggressively hostile attitude to the mother, to her insides, her children born and unborn, and to all relations. Holding this fact to be proved, she exclaims triumphantly: "It is amazing why we strive for a better future if man is a born destroyer." (16)

Crimes are explained by Freudians as a consequence of a displaced aggression, as a delayed protest against the authority of the father, as the desire to kill oneself in someone else, etc. Recently they have been ascribing increasing significance to the combination of guilt and outbursts of aggression. Wars, crimes, murders, suicides, and psychoses are explained in this manner.

Certain psychoanalytical writings are devoted to the genesis of fascism and fascist atrocities during World War II.

Thus, one of the most prominent American Freudians, L. Alexander, (17) asserts that the actions of the fascists provided an outlet for the unconscious destructive strivings latent in the human mind. "All these destructive impulses are displaced and sublimated in mature individuals." He asserts that the ego, as a part of the personality, was underdeveloped in the German fascists, as a consequence of which the "primary motivational stimulus was that of the super-ego and the id." "I am of the opinion," says the author, "that the fundamental trouble with the structure of social psychology in Germany is a disordered ego" (p. 175, 176).

The attempt on the part of the psychoanalysts to demonstrate that human impulses are bestial in nature cannot claim originality. The father of these man-hating views is Nietzsche. In his Thus Spake Zarathustra, the immoral essence of man is proclaimed. (18) We cite several characteristic aphorisms: "The earth has a skin, and the skin has sores. One of these sores is called man" (p. 181). "To him who is ridden by a devil, I will whisper this in his ear: you will do better if you make your devil grow bigger" (p. 120). One must ignore the "rabble" who "babble in your ear about the folk and the peoples" (p. 293); one must love peace "as a means to new

wars" (p. 61). It is affirmed, by Zarathustra's words, that everything is permitted to the chosen, that it is necessary to overcome "the luck of the majority" (pp. 365, 367), and that compassion is shameful (pp. 365, 120).

The difference between the Nietzschean apology for the devil principle in man and similar assertions by the Freudians and their fellow-travelers lies in the fact that Nietzsche seeks to liberate the bestial in man and lauds this in the name of enslavement of the weak by the strong (p. 293). He glorifies wars, cruelty, and affirms the right to trample on moral principles and to drive out the voice of conscience. The Freudians, however, do not believe direct release of the devil principle of the unconscious to be possible. In their opinion, the striving for revenge, aggression, the overturn of authorities, and war takes a more roundabout path.

Man in capitalist society has lost faith in a good life. Like a sponge, he sucks up gloomy expectations, predictions of wars, vivid descriptions of mankind writhing in torment, a burnt-out earth, degenerating generations. He gets this in unlimited quantity from the press, literature, movies, and television. Like a narcotics addict who steadily increases his dose; he is greedy for sharp messages and stimulating themes. He is afraid of his future and is drawn into a world of ominous images, temptations, and the slough of the unconscious. This is the origin of the motif of loneliness, abandonment, emptiness of soul, that attracts both the neo-Freudians and the existentialists.

Men, they say, are alone, isolated and helpless against the hammer of history hanging over their heads. This is the explanation they give for the unprecedented increase in the number of neurotics. In their opinion, medicine faces the possibility of a neurosis of all of mankind.

A. G. Myslivchenko (19) notes a tendency toward synthesis of existentialism and Freudianism. They are both products of philosophical irrationalism and pessimism. Let us remember that in Freud's teachings a major place was taken, during the final period of his life, by the idea of the "attraction" toward death coming from the depths of the "id."

The existentialists proclaim falsely that the individual person enjoys unlimited rights, which is a Nietzschean individualism. Some of them propose a system of "existential analysis" that is strongly reminiscent of psychoanalysis. Like the Freudians, the existentialists offer psychological interpretations of social phenomena. They speak of the individual's right to choose, under whatever conditions of existence, a standard of values suggested to him intuitively. For the existentialist there are no objective criteria of good and evil. One cannot but be reminded of the Freudian concept of the unconscious as a level that knows no moral standards, is asocial, anarchic, and archaic.

Renunciation and a compensatory feeling of one's own greatness, a fateful hopelessness of existence, fear and, at the same time, a constant drive for freedom — this is the existentialists' notion of man. (35) Their statements, like those of the Freudians, often echo the themes we hear in the philosophical concept of A. Bergson [sic.] with respect to the life drive, creative evolution, and the line of cognition through intuition. Husserl and Heidegger assert that the truth is cognized by direct observation. They deny ideation, mediate reflection of reality, the capacity actually to penetrate into the forms of existence of being. Unlike Kant's things in themselves, incapable of being disclosed by human knowledge, for the existentialists knowledge is possible, but only in the direct act of observation. This is the origin of the entire ideological construct that gives preference to irrationalism in the sphere of cognition. (36)

If we accept the existentialist standpoint, science, which is a product of human thought, is a confusion: only a particle of truth is accessible to it, as distinct from the real truth that is open to pre-logical direct perception, the voice of sensations and inclinations. One asks: what then is the existentialist philosophy itself? On what basis does it deny the power of knowledge through thought, while it affirms the capacity of direct observation to penetrate to the essence of things? For these are intellectual conclusions. The irrational, as we know, does not fit into logical formulas. Consequently, the philosophy of

existentialism itself is false from the viewpoint of its own understanding of the true and the false.

The identity of Freudianism and existentialism becomes evident no matter from what direction one approaches them — in the denigration of reason and consciousness, in the denial of evolution of higher nervous activity and of the second signal system — in that both ignore the socio-historical regularities underlying ethical standards of behavior. There is similarity also in the fact that the laws inherent in individual internal conflicts and neuroses are transferred to the field of pedagogics, sociology, art, etc. Both currents are deeply pessimistic; they find a tragic poetry in fear, abandonment, death.

The two trends — Freudianism and existentialism — are most explicitly joined in the notions of Erich Fromm. For him man is alone, helpless, depressed, lacking perspectives; he is the creature of his inclinations. Reason, however, is the servant of the unconscious, and is confused with respect to its own freedom. (37)

The appearance of the philosophy of existentialism is itself indubitably a sign of depression, and of the dead end into which the contemporary intelligentsia of the capitalist countries has been driven. It is no accident that the existentialists repeat, as do certain Freudians, that man unconsciously dreams of returning to the womb (a goal allegedly attainable by certain mentally ill persons who maintain a catatonic position reminiscent of that of the foetus in the womb), and that insanity is a state of reconciliation, of nirvana. In his day, Otto Rank, one of the orthodox Freudians, found in folk myths and sayings the same dream of the lost heaven and of the mother's womb (Mutterleibphantasie).

The existentialists are occupied with the problem of "in-der-Welt-Sein." V. A. Korobkova (23) and others have emphasized that this term, which has acquired a specific meaning, has become the cornerstone of existentialist "anthropology."

For a number of psychiatrists, particularly in West Germany, existentialist philosophy has become the foundation of their quest in psychopathology. Naturally, they contend that only "particular" knowledge is possible in this regard. Renato de Rosa (24) warns of the danger of attempts to go beyond the limitation of the particularity of knowledge in psychopathology.

The basic principle of the existentialists in psychiatry is the thesis that mental disease is merely another mode of existence.

The existentialists have an irresistible urge for neologisms, which are created by connecting entire phrases by hyphens. Thus, Boss (25) creates the term "Mit-und-zu-den-Dingen-Sein" to describe modes of existence of the individual in his interrelationships with things. It is nothing more than this terminology that differentiates the statements of the German existentialists from the writings of their predecessors — the psychoanalytically oriented psychobiologists and psychosomaticians — in the field of psychiatry. Both regard psychoses as a refuge for the patient from a situation he cannot cope with. This idea is most avidly applied to schizophrenia. (38) H. Heimann (32) avers that the soul lies between body and reason, but that as such it can never be cognized in its entirety. Psychopathological disorders, he says, constitute a special form of existence.

The existentialists often descend to the style of psychological Novellen and philosophical pamphlets, which recall the style of certain moralist philosophers who give a philosophical coloration to banal judgments. One distinguished spokesman for existentialism, J. Zutt, has devoted an article to the role of the "order of existence," the order of the dwelling. (33) He discusses the feat of disturbing this ordered existence, which is part of one's private life as much as the walls and the roof. Man seeks to protect himself, his house, town, native country, and land, from strangers. The dwelling, along with its doors, steps, paths, its street, the locks, and his writing desk are an element of private life protected against strangers, their ears and eyes. This, in the author's opinion, is the "anthropological meaning" of a dwelling and of space. Further, he discusses his acquaintances, family, profession, religion, political communities, traditions, and the like, which also comprise elements of the customary order of life. The author emphasizes man's attachment to this order and the psychopathological consequences that ensue

when it is violated. For emphasis, he says that some persons find it harder to stand a common kitchen than bombing raids at night.

Many other psychological and sociological quests of the existentialists are of the same order. In them we find depicted the drama of existence (in-der-Welt-Sein) of the individual man, who protects his little fortress in various ways.

In their examination of psychopathological phenomena, the existentialists, as we have already observed, seek to find everywhere proof of the fact that a psychosis is a sort of shelter, a shield behind which a special world of free existence, quite independent of the demands of reality, is created. The mechanism of adaptation to difficult conditions of life is, as the existentialists understand it, identical for the normal individual and one who is mentally ill. The difference lies in the form of existence of the defense superstructures.

These attitudes result in erasure of the boundaries among psychoses, and the classification of psychoses is declared to have been discredited. And, of course, above all — as appears with particular clarity in the writings of L. Binswanger — "existential analysis" eliminates the differences between health and sickness, between psychosis and borderline conditions. Binswanger expressed these propositions with clarity in his book Three Forms of Unhappy Existence (Drei Formen missglückten Daseins). (34) These characteristics of behavior are examined by him within the framework of the structure of human existence or, in other words, by the technique of analysis of modes of "in-der-Welt-Sein." He holds that man does not so much seek "existence outside the world," in which "above and below, the concepts of near and far, before and after, are lacking." In his arrogance, man holds high his sense of existence. Man lives with eccentricities in his specific narrow situation, not taking the general situation into account. A structural shift "of anthropological proportions" occurs in the arrogant and the eccentric. Fear of existence and loss of confidence underlie mannered styles both in art and in schizophrenia. What is created is a sort of false self-affirmation which is, however, existentially contradictory and therefore creates the impression of falsity.

Footnotes

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35) Barrows Dunham (20) has vividly demonstrated the confusion of concepts among existentialists.

36) The existentialist theory of means of true and false cognition has been examined in detail by P. P. Gaidenko. (21)

37) See the detailed critical presentation of Fromm's views by H. K. Wells. (22)

38) The existentialist system of concepts has been examined in a number of critical surveys. (23, 26-31)