

\$5.00

**Nature, Society, and Thought**

**Vol. 8, No. 1**

**1995**

(sent to press March 25, 1996)

**Special Issue**

**Marx and Freud**



EDITOR: Erwin Marquit (physics, Univ. of Minnesota)  
MANUSCRIPT EDITOR: Leo Auerbach (English education, retired,  
Jersey City State College)  
EDITORIAL STAFF: Gerald M. Erickson, April Ane Knutson, Doris  
Grieser Marquit (BOOK REVIEW EDITOR)

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Herbert Aptheker (history)  
Jan Carew (African-American studies, Lincoln Univ.)  
Gerald M. Erickson (classics, Univ. of Minnesota)  
Morton H. Frank (physiology)  
Angela Gilliam (anthropology, SUNY College at Old Westbury)  
Viktoria Hertling (German exile & Holocaust literature, Univ. of  
Nevada, Reno)  
Gerald A. Horne (African-American studies, Univ. of Calif., Santa  
Barbara)  
Leola A. Johnson (American studies, Univ. of Minnesota)  
April Ane Knutson (French literature, Univ. of Minnesota)  
Jack Kurzweil (electrical engineering, San Jose State Univ.)  
James Lawler (philosophy, State Univ. of New York, Buffalo)  
Sara Fletcher Luther (political sociology)  
Doris Grieser Marquit (women's studies, Univ. of Minnesota)  
Philip Moran (philosophy, Triton College)  
Michael Parenti (political science)  
Howard L. Parsons (philosophy, Univ. of Bridgeport)  
Epifanio San Juan, Jr. (ethnic studies, Bowling Green State Univ.)  
José A. Soler (labor education., Univ. of Massachusetts, Dartmouth)  
Ethel Tobach (comparative psychology, City Univ. of New York)

VOL. 8, NO. 1 (JANUARY 1995)

Sent to press 25 March 1996

Copyright © Marxist Educational Press

All rights reserved

Cover design by Prockat

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 1995

*NST: NATURE, SOCIETY, AND THOUGHT* (ISSN 0890-6130). Published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by MEP Publications, University of Minnesota, 116 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112. Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *NST: Nature, Society, and Thought*, University of Minnesota, 116 Church St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112.

*Subscriptions.* U.S.A./Great Britain, one year, individuals \$15/£12, institutions \$28/£18.50; two years, individuals \$28/£21, institutions \$56/£37. Other countries, add \$4 for postage for each year. Single copies: individuals \$5/£3, institutions \$10/£6.

Subscription and editorial address: *NST*, University of Minnesota, 116 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112 (tel. 612/922-7993).

Contents are indexed in *Sociological Abstracts* and *Alternative Press Index*.

### **Information for Contributors**

*Nature, Society, and Thought* welcomes contributions representing the creative application of methods of dialectical and historical materialism to all fields of study. We also welcome contributions not explicitly employing this methodology if the content or subject matter is in an area of special importance to our readers. Submissions will be reviewed in accordance with refereeing procedures established by the Editorial Board. Manuscripts will be acknowledged on receipt, but cannot be returned.

Submissions should be made in triplicate, typed, double-spaced, with at least 1-inch margins. Normal length of articles is between 3,000 and 10,000 words, with an abstract of about 100 words. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the MEP Publications Documentation Style Guide, which appears in *NST*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1994): 121–23. Citations should follow the author-date system, with limited use of endnotes for discursive matter, as specified in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition.

Unless otherwise arranged, manuscripts should be submitted with the understanding that upon acceptance for publication the authors will submit the manuscript on an IBM- or Macintosh-compatible diskette and transfer the copyright to *NST*, the authors retaining the right to include the submission in books under their authorship. Diskettes cannot be returned. Consult the *NST* office about the disk format before sending a diskette.

## CONTENTS

Editorial Note	5
Introduction by editor of special issue: Marxism, Psychology, and Psychoanalysis in the United States	7
ARTICLES	
<i>Howard L. Parsons</i> , Concepts of Human Reality in the Thought of Freud and Marx	21
<i>Antal F. Borbely</i> , Marx and Freud, a Reassessment: From the Industrial Age to the Information Age	55
<i>Irving J. Crain</i> , Philosophy, Politics, and Psychoanalysis	79
COMMENTARIES	
<i>Peter Feigenbaum</i> , A Marx-Freud Dialogue?	101
<i>John P. Pittman</i> , Comments on the Papers on Marx and Freud	110
Response by Antal F. Borbely	116
ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES (in English and French)	118



# **Introduction: Marxism, Psychology, and Psychoanalysis in the United States**

**Howard L. Parsons**

The stimulus for the following discussion on the relations between Marxism, psychology, and psychoanalysis came from the Benjamin Rush Society. In 1976 in New York City several psychoanalysts (Dr. Irving J. Crain, Dr. Antal F. Borbely, Dr. Francis H. Bartlett), Dr. Ethel Tobach, a comparative psychologist, and others (some of whom had been founding members) reactivated the society, which had existed from 1944 to 1952. The purpose of the renewed society was “the study of the psychological and behavioral sciences from the viewpoint of dialectical-historical materialism” (Harris 1983). One motif of the society’s deliberations in its nine-year existence was the problematic of the relation between the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and his followers and the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx and his followers—or, more broadly, the nature of consciousness and its relation to human activity in the social and natural world.

As this problematic is of great theoretical and practical import, it may prove illuminating to sketch some of the main events and stages of its long history. A more detailed historical study of the relations between psychology and Marxism has been given elsewhere (Bramel and Friend 1982). Because of space limitation, we have omitted an account of the rich and diversified developments in Russian and Soviet psychology and their interactions with psychology in the West.

Freud (1856–1939), as a founder of modern psychology and psychotherapy, and Marx (1818–1883), as the pioneer in the

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1995)

study of class history and political action, addressed different subject matters, used different methods, and arrived at different conclusions. Yet both made inclusive affirmations about humanity and put forward cures for its ills in nineteenth-century capitalist society. Freud was consistently hostile to socialism, and Marxists, particularly those in the Soviet Union, generally rejected Freudianism as subjectivist and reactionary. Alfred Adler (1870–1937), though retaining the Freudian notion of early childhood formation of individuality and lifestyle, argued for a cooperative social solution to the frustrations of power-driven individuals, and supported socialism.

Central to the argument between Marxism and Freudianism is the issue of consciousness, or the mind-body problem. Much Greek philosophy and Christian theology held that mind (or soul) is prior in reality to body and the material world and independent of them. Descartes in the seventeenth century reaffirmed this dualism. Both Marx and Freud understood the problem to be amenable to scientific investigation, but Marx came to it from political economy, and Freud, from neurophysiology.

### *Consciousness in Marxism in Europe*

Soon after the death of Engels in 1895, the movement to revise the fundamental principles in the thought of Marx and Engels set in. In Germany it was led by Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), who through his neo-Kantianism revived the traditional dualism of mind and the world. For him we know only the a priori forms of the mind transcendental to the world, and moral propositions and imperatives are entirely mental, isolated from the world of facts. Rejecting Marx's views of materialism, determinism, class division, deepening poverty, unmanageable capitalist crises, and the socialist revolution, Bernstein argued for the supreme role of consciousness in a gradual, educational, reformist political movement toward the democratizing of capitalism. This was to be done by appealing to ethical rather than economic considerations.

In Russia as early as 1897 Lenin (1870–1924) poured out the first of his many caustic attacks on the revisionism of Bernstein



that had been taken up by the moderates of his party, who relied on Bernstein's "theory of concession" rather than on the Marxist "theory of struggle" (1960a, 172; 1960b, 211).

In Hungary Georg Lukács (1885–1971) concluded that the contradictory forces at work in society "will hurtle blindly toward the abyss" unless the proletariat achieves "ideological maturity, . . . a true class consciousness," of its "historical role" (1971, 70, 76, 73). In Germany, Karl Korsch, seeing the failure of the 1918–1919 revolution in his country, sought to recall Marxists to the revolutionary essence in Marx's philosophy, campaigning against "pure theory" and for workers' education, councils, and political action. In Italy Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) called for the ideological development of the already existing factory councils to unify the workers and to prepare them for a new socialist society, emphasizing the "hegemonic" role of intellectuals in every society.

These three thinkers expressed an important trend in the modern era, namely, a general rise of consciousness among the working masses, and, among the intellectuals, an awareness of consciousness as a decisive force in the progress of humanity. The emergence of experimental psychology in the work of Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) was another evidence of this trend.

### ***The convergence of Marxism and Freudianism in Europe***

In the postwar Europe of the 1920s and 1930s, a time of escalating social crisis, the ideas of Marxism and Freudianism were widespread among intellectuals. In Frankfurt a group of German scholars using "critical theory" attempted to synthesize the two and to show how personal thought, motive, and action are interlinked with social process. Disturbed by the failures of postwar working-class parties, the power of mass culture, the ascendancy of Stalinism and fascism, the devastation of the war, and what they saw as a predestinarian and over-optimistic Marxist theory, they tried to integrate the thought of Marx, Freud, and other major thinkers like Kant, Hegel, Weber, and Lukács. Prominent among them were Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse. They shifted the emphasis from

Marx's materialism to the psychology and sociology of culture, i. e., to forms of consciousness.

Discarding Marx's class approach, then, the members of the Frankfurt school took as a major theme the impersonal "domination" permeating all of modern life—in the state-protected monopolies, bureaucracy, ideological industries, fragmented labor, cultural dehumanization, the commodification of persons, the breakdown of the family, and the formation of an authoritarian personality with its potential for militaristic nationalism and racism (Held 1983). They used Freud's concept of unconscious motives and conflicts to explain the roots of prejudice and of irrational mass convulsions like fascism.

The influence of the Frankfurt school came to the United States through émigrés like Erich Fromm (1900–1980), who departed from Freud's biological typology of character (oral, anal, genital) by describing it as a mode of the person's relatedness to others, social patterns, and culture. Thus in a market economy the "productive" human character becomes deformed into nonproductive orientations—receptive, exploitative, hoarding, and marketing. Further, the "escape from freedom" of large masses, such as the submission to fascist authority, arises as a reaction to the isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and powerlessness imposed by the vast structure of big business, politics, militarism, and the threat of war. While Fromm accepted Marx's premises of humanism, he withdrew from the analysis of class struggle and the call to class action.

### ***The beginnings of Marxism in the United States***

Soon after the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, many German workers, expelled for their radicalism, emigrated to the United States and brought both Lassallean and Marxist forms of socialism with them. The Workingmen's Party of the United States was founded in 1876 with a platform that included Lassallean ideas as well as a Marxist approach to building trade unions and to political activity. The party changed its name in 1877 to the Socialistic Labor Party, the direct ancestor of the Socialist Party of America (founded in 1901), and the present-day Socialist Labor Party and Communist Party of the

United States (Foner 1984, 7). Marxism continued as a major force among American workers into the twentieth century (Foner 1947, 493ff.). It was joined by indigenous versions of socialism such as Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1872) and Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888). In the era of Populism and Progressivism, social scientists entered the battle against the entrenched wealth of capitalism—John R. Commons and Thorstein Veblen in economics, Charles A. Beard in political science, and Edward A. Ross and Lester Ward in sociology. Amplifying their themes in the popular media were radical muckrakers like Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Lincoln Steffens, and Ida M. Tarbell.

But by 1910 the shock waves of the muckrakers had waned, and in the next years most of the progressive leaders went over to the middle ground of the Democrats. In his long reign over the AFL, Samuel Gompers's strategy of labor compromise produced only small gains in higher wages and shorter hours for a relatively small number of craft workers. In 1912 Eugene V. Debs, running for president on the Socialist Party ticket, got nearly 900,000 votes, almost six per cent of the total; and more than a thousand socialist candidates were voted into municipal offices. But World War I ended this progressive era. The upsurge of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 then became a worldwide threat to capitalism. Class consciousness of this magnitude could not be tolerated. In 1919 the Great Steel Strike was charged with an effort "to sovietize the steel industry" (Boyer and Morais, 1970, 205); and the Palmer raids and frame-up of Sacco and Vanzetti revealed the panic of the ruling classes.

Although the Communist and Socialist parties made advances, especially in the 1930s, labor and its allies had not solved the psychological and ideological problem. In the nineteenth century socialists and progressives believed they could weld the Jeffersonian vision of freedom and equality to the doctrine of economic determinism (Parrington 1958, 412). That was the faith that free people, acting in concert, might alter the social and economic arrangements to secure the life, liberty, and happiness of all. But they did not reckon with the power of capital to redefine "freedom" and to win over large numbers of

workers by the lure of “the American dream”—the comforts of middle-class life and the opiate pleasures of food, drink, entertainment, and fantasy, all engineered by the “hidden persuaders” of press, radio, and advertising, which in the early 1920s became a large-scale business. Concurrently, in the 1920s the intellectuals, having become cynical about the war, turned from an economic interpretation of history to a psychological one. The explanatory promise of psychology attracted them. Moreover, psychology was developing in middle-class institutions like the universities, where intellectuals get their training and worldview. And refuge in psychology enabled them to justify their doubts about the efficacy of economic and political struggle for industrial workers. The arrival of Freudianism reinforced these doubts.

*The meeting of Marxism and psychoanalysis  
in the United States*

Freud first visited the United States in 1909, lecturing at Clark University. In attendance was Dr. A. A. Brill, who had met Freud, studied his theory and techniques with Eugen Bleuler, and become the first psychiatrist to practice psychoanalysis in the United States. Brill founded the New York Psychoanalytic Society in 1911, and the next year helped to organize the American Psychoanalytic Association. The New York Psychoanalytic Institute was started in 1931, and similar institutes followed in Chicago, Boston, and other cities.

A vulgarized Freudianism reached the public in the 1920s. The popular belief that “the first requirement of mental health was to have an uninhibited sex life” mesmerized newspaper editors, magazine writers, and movie makers. As a boost to sales and profits, the gospel of sexual salvation, real and fantastical, was proclaimed to a hungry public. Decades of Darwinism had engendered a certain uncritical respect for “science” and therefore a fertile ground for the simplified ideas of Freud (Allen 1964, 61–64). But the impact of psychoanalysis as a new psychological science was limited to the educated middle class.

The Nazis’ assumption of power in Germany in 1933, their occupation of a large part of Europe, their invasion of the USSR

in 1941, and the war of the Allied Powers against the fascist Axis—all radicalized still further those already convinced of Marxism and socialism. At the same time class strife intensified in the United States. The labor movement, to which Communists gave critical leadership, was achieving important gains, creating the powerful Congress of Industrial Organizations and through the Wagner Act of 1935 winning the legal right to organize trade unions, to strike, and to bargain collectively. Among the radicalized intellectuals were young psychiatrists and lay analysts in training or in new careers. A fresh reinforcement of this movement came with the immigration of psychiatrists arriving from Europe as refugees from the Nazis, a number of whom were socialist and Marxist.

In 1944 some of these psychiatrists and others organized the Benjamin Rush Society. Its purpose was “to help formulate a scientific materialist theory and practice of psychiatry.” Through six issues of *New Masses* (1945–1946), two Marxist psychiatrists, Dr. Joseph Wortis and Dr. Joseph Furst, debated whether psychoanalysis is idealistic and reactionary or whether some forms “are consistent with Marxist theory and helpful to Marxists in dealing with their own psychological problems” (Harris 1983, 6). But no broad consensus emerged on theoretical issues or on an expanding psychiatry that would be organized, clinical, and usable in social work. The primary interest of the members of the Society, which included professionals from the fields of social service and mental health, was immediate and practical: the application of Marxist and Freudian theories, as well as knowledge from the social sciences, to the solution of problems encountered in everyday work.

### ***The Cold War and ideological struggle***

The Cold War against the Soviet Union and all movements aligned against world imperialism brought the mania of McCarthyism against all progressive thought at home. Critical class consciousness that might lead to action for social change was *verboten*. In 1952 the Benjamin Rush Society disbanded. Many thousands of social critics and dissenters lost their jobs and job prospects; millions were intimidated into silence. Yet the 1950s

saw the broad movement to ban the testing of nuclear weapons, popular protests against racism in the South, and the first small murmurs of rebellion among the college-age beatniks—precursors of the countercultural movement of the 1960s.

At the same time economic, social, and technological changes set in motion new class struggles and class consciousness; expanding urbanization and suburbanization; the deepening plight of the poor; population explosion and the growth of a “baby boom” generation; an increasingly wealthy ruling class and a growing middle class; a scientific technological revolution; the movement of production and investment to foreign countries; the heavy military expenditure and “the permanent war economy” (Seymour Melman); the new power of television with its consumerist advertising, narcotic entertainment, and worldwide information, including scenes of the war in Vietnam. While the system raised the level of consciousness by increasing expectations for individual achievement, freedom, and well-being, it simultaneously erected barriers in the way of fulfilling those expectations.

Gradually the youth of the 1960s felt this contradiction with particular keenness. Restiveness was articulated by university youth, who sensed the contraction of their hopes for themselves and for their social ideals. The economic oppression of the poor, especially the Black people; the resistance of the sit-ins in the South, the freedom rides, the civil rights marches led by Martin Luther King, Jr.; the futile Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban missile crisis; the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley; the Women’s Liberation Movement; the turmoil of U.S. militarism and subversion in the Third World; the first teach-ins and demonstrations against U.S. aggression in Vietnam; the dark cloud threatening nuclear omnicide—all bred a deep disenchantment in young people brought up to believe that they would pass through the doors of young adulthood into a world of peace, freedom, and justice, having a firm grip on their own destinies.

In forming identities and ideology, young people normally draw on the resources of their culture, taking as their models and mentors certain older adults, past and present. But the youth of

the 1960s, in search of a radical perspective and involvement, saw few who might serve in such roles. The radical heritage in U.S. culture had been abundant. It dated from Roger Williams and the colonial revolt against British tyranny, merging with the antislavery movement, the long and tireless campaign for women's suffrage, the agitation for labor unions, and the causes of socialism and progressive reform, peaking in the 1930s under the partial protection of the New Deal. But in the period of the Cold War and reaction after World War II, the Taft-Hartley Act crippled the labor movement, and the anticommunism of McCarthyism in the 1950s muted or silenced the voices of dissent and seasoned struggle. Young people were cut off from the nurture and instruction of this heritage and were compelled to find their radical path on their own.

### ***The youth revolt and the human potential movement***

From the 1940s and 1950s the whole field of psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychotherapy in the United States grew greatly and underwent differentiation. The social crisis drove many in the United States to seek psychotherapy, choosing among the many multiplying "humanistic" psychologies that were in the market. As early as the 1940s two European psychophilosophies, existentialism and phenomenology, had begun to take hold, for a time supplying what seemed to answer the need for direct confrontation with the anguish of immediate personal experience and decision. But in the United States, the "no exit" pessimism of European existentialism was unacceptable. People responded instead to the new upbeat U.S. therapies with optimistic and activist outlooks in the tradition of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Walt Whitman, William James, Andrew Carnegie, and Dale Carnegie. They wanted immediate, specific, and sure solutions. They prized personal autonomy, a satisfying job, and a comfortable adjustment to society and nature. Freudianism and Marxism were not widely known and lacked the emotional and personal accessibility of the U.S. therapies. The behaviorism of B. F. Skinner was an attempt to restore self-reliant initiative to the individual in mass society, but its minimalism had little appeal. In stripping away all consciousness

from personality, reducing it to a machine without emotion, motive, purpose, or reflective mediation between subject and environment, it made itself more useful for the “behavioral engineering” of public opinion, the manipulation of consumer buying habits, and the treatment of the mentally disturbed than for the creative transformation of person and society.

But in this postwar social environment a uniquely U.S. psychology and psychotherapy grew and prospered. It was first expressed in the psychology of personality of Gordon W. Allport and the client-centered, nondirective, group-centered therapy of Carl R. Rogers. Later came the “humanistic” psychotherapies of Abraham H. Maslow and Erik H. Erikson framed in a philosophy of personal development. In 1962 Maslow and Rogers, in company with neo-Freudians Erich Fromm and Charlotte Bühler, existentialist analysts Viktor E. Frankl and Rollo May, and others founded in San Francisco the Association for Humanistic Psychology. It attracted persons seeking positive values not recognized in traditional behaviorism and psychoanalysis.

The human potential movement appeared alongside the maturing of the baby-boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964) and soon blossomed into a variety of schools, including:

Gestalt Awareness Training, Transactional Analysis, sensory awareness, Primal Therapy, Bioenergetics, massage, Psychosynthesis, humanistic psychology, est, Arica Training, Transcendental Meditation, psychic healing, biofeedback, mind-control training, and yoga. (Stone 1976, 93)

All of these agreed on centering every mode of awareness on the present moment to achieve a sense of union with self, others, and the whole cosmos. They were seeking in therapy what the workaday alienated world of capital militated against—a unity of consciousness, of personality, of creative activity with others and nature. Both sellers and buyers of these therapies supposed that the therapies would meet the personal need for meaning and wholeness in people. And as services in the marketplace, they



functioned to make money for the mavens of merchandising and in the long term to “integrate” peaceably a large mass of restless youth and older adults into existing society.

When social dissent revived in the 1960s, it was concentrated among university students, an unusually large group, with middle-class and affluent backgrounds. Internalizing the outlook of an individualistic society, most of them defined their identities and situations as psychological, spiritual matters—problems of unawakened or misdirected consciousness, of false values. Hence their quest for a radically “new consciousness,” a conversion of spirit not unlike the conversion experience of old-time religion. They were not concerned with the socioeconomic dimension of human life, changes in institutions, or transformations in the material base of society—the forms and processes for producing, distributing, and consuming the products that sustain the bodies of people and without which spiritual values would quickly evaporate. All shared a disaffection with existing culture, a negativity toward the materialism, militarism, technology, and faceless bureaucracy—all of this working as an immediate and personal threat to the youth subject to the draft for the Vietnam war. Many in search of this new consciousness dropped out of existing culture into a “counterculture”—into drugs, psychedelic experiments, alternative lifestyles, and Oriental and Native American religions. A smaller number found their way into various political movements like the Students for Democratic Society and the Black Panther Party.

The theoretical Marxist alternatives available—Soviet-oriented communism, Maoism, Trotskyism, Third World Marxisms like those of Che Guevara and liberation theology—did not capture large numbers. When the young students did turn to political action, the most satisfying alternative for them was Herbert Marcuse’s. With its eclectic mix of Hegel, Marxism, Freudianism, and anarchism, this philosophy of “revolution” spoke to their passions and values. It could accommodate their pluralism, romanticism, lawlessness, and impulsive spontaneity. For Marcuse a new consciousness would be the midwife of liberation, and the newborn child would be unrepressed libido, abso-

lutely liberated. Thus Marcuse started with Freud's psychology, used pieces of Marx's sociology, threw away both, and ended in anarchy.

These young activists were in search of a new consciousness. But most established Marxist groups did not have developed views on the problem of individual and social consciousness. What is consciousness? How does it arise? How is it sustained, developed, transformed, and advanced? How is consciousness dialectically related to the world and action in the world, in order to understand and change it? How does the economic system, with its social institutions and culture, shape and direct consciousness, and, in turn, how does consciousness, which differs among classes, act back on these social conditions and the world of nature so as to support or alter them? What is this subtle and complicated dialectics? What are the different levels of "reflection" in the interaction and mutual transformation of organism and environment (Tobach 1995)? What was the dialectics of the rise and fall of socialism in eastern Europe? What is the dialectical path for our own social progress today?

This problem remains with us.

#### REFERENCE LIST

- Allen, Frederick Lewis. 1964 (1931). *Only yesterday: An informal history of the nineteen-twenties*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Boyer, Richard O., and Herbert M. Morais. 1970. *Labor's untold story*. 3d ed. New York: United Electric, Radio & Machine Workers of America.
- Bramel, Dana, and Ronald Friend. 1982. The theory and practice of psychology. In [vol. 1 of] *The left academy: Marxist scholarship on American campuses*, edited by Bertell Ollman and Edward Vernoff, 166–201. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Foner, Philip S. 1947. *History of the labor movement in the United States*. Vol. 1, *From colonial times to the founding of the American Federation of Labor*. New York: International Publishers.
- . 1984. *The Workingmen's Party of the United States: A history of the first Marxist party in the Americas*. Minneapolis: MEP Publications.
- Harris, Ben. 1983. The history of the Benjamin Rush Society. *Benjamin Rush Bulletin* 4 (Winter): cover and 5–10.
- Held, David. 1983. s. v. Frankfurt School. In *A dictionary of Marxist thought*, edited by Tom Bottomore. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.

- Lenin, Vladimir I. 1960a. A characterisation of economic romanticism. In vol. 2 of *V. I. Lenin: Collected works*, 129–265. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- . 1960b. Our programme. In Vol. 4 of *V. I. Lenin: Collected works*, 210–20. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Lukács, Georg. 1971 (1923). *History and class consciousness*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. London: Merlin.
- Parrington, Vernon Louis. 1958 (1930). *Main currents in American thought*. Vol. 1, *The beginnings of critical realism in America, 1860–1920*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Stone, Donald. 1976. The human potential movement. In *The new religious consciousness*, edited by Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah, 93–115. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Tobach, Ethel. 1995. The uniqueness of human labor. In *Sociocultural psychology: The practice of doing and knowing*, edited by Laura M. W. Martin, Katherine A. Nelson, and Ethel Tobach, 43–66. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- 
-

**REPLACES AD PAGE.**

# Concepts of Human Reality in the Thought of Freud and Marx

Howard L. Parsons

I shall treat the following: (1) the social background of the thought of Freud and Marx; (2) concepts of the creation of personality and socialization, and of the conflict and integration of personality and society; and (3) the meaning of unconscious and conscious activity.

## 1

As a medical student in Vienna in the 1870s, Freud was trained in the rigorous methods and outlook of mechanical materialism, and he championed the physicalism that argued that the biological sciences could be reduced to the physical ones. Two of his teachers, Emil Du Bois-Reymond and Ernst Brücke, had formulated a physicalistic principle: “No other forces than the common physical-chemical ones are active within the organism. . . . One has either to find the specific way or form of their action . . . or to assume new forces equal in dignity to the chemical-physical forces inherent in matter” (Erikson 1957, 83). At the same time he had then, and maintained throughout his life, a strong interest in the “mind” and in all the humanities—philosophy and all the arts—connected with it. But his medical training and biological bias dominated his thinking throughout life, and though he struggled heroically he never synthesized the biological facts of human life with the mental and social facts.

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1995)

The late nineteenth century brought dramatic progress in the biological sciences. Physics and chemistry, the tools of an early capitalism, were already established. The social sciences, starting with eighteenth-century speculations, and advanced by Marx and Engels, were not yet mature. Practical improvements, like the removal of refuse, the treatment of water and sewage, the use of soap, vaccination, the achromatic compound microscope, and anesthetic and antiseptic surgery, as well as empirical studies in physiological psychology by Fechner, Helmholtz, Sechenev, and others, the theory of evolution of Darwin, and demographic pressures for health care, meant that the biological sciences became critical for understanding human nature and behavior. Before Darwin, Spencer had formulated a universal theory of evolution, including social evolution, in which the human organism progressively adapts to its social and natural environment. In the struggle for existence, he argued, human society mirrors the inevitable mortal combat among animals; the most "fit" and morally superior persons are the economically powerful and wealthy and the inferior are the weak and poor. Biology, taking over the model of the physical sciences, which was analytic, atomistic, mechanistic, and reductive, became relevant to psychological investigation, as physics had been in the previous century.

The Enlightenment and the French Revolution awakened interest in the order underlying mental disorder. Greek and Roman doctors had treated mental disorder as a natural phenomenon, as did later Muslim culture. Medieval European practice, on the other hand, was dominated by demonology, astrology, exorcism, and the torture and killing of the mentally ill, who were said to be in league with the devil. Only rarely did doctors like the sixteenth-century Johann Weyer observe and give care to the insane. Philippe Pinel, who at the time of the French Revolution removed the chains from the patients at Bicêtre and substituted psychological management for the old violent methods of bleeding, purging, and incarceration, classified mental diseases by their physical causes; and others who followed, like Esquirol, Griesinger, and Kraepelin, refined the classification. Pinel's classic *Traité medico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale ou la*

*manie* provides a link to the Hegelian-Marxist tradition. *Aliénation* is stronger than *Entfremdung* and carries the force of the Latin *alienatus a se* (insane). The French *aliénation* means transfer and estrangement as well as derangement, while the German *Entfremdung* (Hegel's concept) means estrangement and alienation, but not mental derangement.

So the science of this period was growing aware of the fact and nature of consciousness generated by social life, as evidenced in the investigation of severe mental disorders of individual persons and in Destutt de Tracy's *idéologie*. In agreement with the physiologist Cabanis and in revolt against supernatural religious concepts, Destutt reduced all of the mental or "ideological" world to the sensory activities of perception, memory, judgment, and will; "spiritual" notions are therefore illusory. Pursuing this materialistic account, Marx and Engels held that such illusions (or philosophical "alienation") are reflections and symptoms of an alienated society and political economy. Freud's investigations into the causes of individual alienation some fifty years later had to await the advance of medical science and practice and medicine's slow recognition that mental disorder was its problem.

Freud's struggle to relate the bodies of human beings to their minds (first posed sharply by Charcot's successful hypnotism), to sketch the anatomy of melancholy and related things, to answer the old question, "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" was an individual psychological way of grappling with the deeper and wider crisis in capitalism, namely, the relation of productive life work to consciousness. By Freud's time medical scientists in practice had reached the point where they could no longer regard mental derangement as beyond their purview, hidden from the eyes of society and science by the confines of prisons and asylums, which asylums in fact represented an advance over degrading social treatment in previous centuries (Foucault 1965). In their own way they were seeking to do at the individual level what Marx and Engels had undertaken at a social level: to understand the nature of the hidden and unknown forces that produce malfunction in human life. As Marx and Engels

called it alienation, they called it illness. But in their attempt to avoid the traditional idealistic explanation, they landed in simple mechanical materialism or in a “fantastic psychology” of mysterious biological powers (Mead 1934, 211).

In addition to the widened public and professional awareness of mental illness and the new scientific interest in it, the incidence of mental disorders objectively increased under the conditions of capitalist economy. Like degenerative diseases, these disorders occur where the abrupt shifts of economy and lifestyle produce stresses and anxieties and in turn psychiatric upset—whether the people be Nigerian Yorubas or northern white Canadians in an early stage of industrial development (Dubos 1965, 238).

Freud’s work on neurological diseases in the Allgemeine Krankenhaus (general hospital) in Vienna led him to the work of Charcot in Paris on hypnosis and hysteria. He was working, therefore, at the borderline between physical and mental illness and had to be a pioneer in the analysis of the latter if he was to understand it. He started out with the perspective of the mechanical materialism of his teachers, the refined method of the physical sciences that the logical positivists in a subsequent Vienna were to name “physicalism.” But that narrowly rational method led him to inexplicable forces that did not lend themselves to positive sensuous identification and that led to the assertion of entities impenetrable to reason—the unconscious id and libido.

Industrial advance always dislocates and breaks up established institutions, including interpersonal ones like work and family. In Freud’s formative time, in the late nineteenth century, when modern medicine was just under way, illness was attacked with a “specific etiology”; it was said to be caused by observable physical microscopic entities that had to be destroyed or resisted (Dubos 1971, 101ff). No comparable theory was available to deal with mental illness. Moreover, malaise arising from the disruption of one’s interpersonal relations at work and at home was not attended to or taken seriously by the medical profession. In his pursuit of the causes of mental illness, Freud inadvertently discovered such disruptions as well as their partial cure, which



he somewhat narcissistically named “transference.” The truth was that his patients needed someone to talk to, and nearly all felt better after they talked with him.

Under conditions of feudalism, people in trouble talked to the members of their extended families, their fellow workers, their neighbors, their sympathetic priests. But in a big industrial city, in the depersonalized mass production of the factory or mill or mine, in the repressed bourgeois family, to whom could one talk? An industrial worker talked to the other workers. But many members of the bourgeoisie did not talk with anyone about their intimate problems—at least not to those of the opposite sex.

In its own way, psychoanalysis took up this mode of verbal therapy. It was both art and science applied to the self—the art of cure through “scientific” understanding. It came out of and required a class of people in need as well as professionals who responded to that need—or, in economic terms, buyers and sellers. Psychoanalysis offered a verbal, interpersonal therapy for a middle class that was allowed neither the unrestrained expression of its appetites for drink and sex, nor the sanctioned plunder of the ruling groups.

The need for intimate, verbal communication with others is a universal human need. But more than any other economy, capitalism, especially in its advanced development, awakens it, holds out the promise of satisfying it, and simultaneously deprives and alienates it. As medicine developed with the general technological advance of capitalism in the last half of the nineteenth century, it was natural that psychic disorders would come under its scrutiny. When in the twentieth century psychotherapy developed its many variants, particularly after World War II, it not only reduced lost workdays. It evolved into a method of adjusting mental workers to the intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts engendered by new conditions. Under Freud, psychotherapy acquired a larger purpose, rivaling the purpose of religion: to help dislocated individuals in their search for wholeness in an adverse world. (In the twentieth century, psychology became the powerful needle of bourgeois advertising for inducing the mass addiction of consumerism.) Freud made a second inadvertent discovery, the need of the individual person to weave

together the experiences of the past into a meaningful unity, to create a personal and interpersonal integrity in a society that militates against that.

Marx was the creature of another environment in another period. Brought up in the Rhineland during the afterglow of the French Revolution, he was inspired by and helped to formulate the philosophy of that movement of liberation as it progressed from 1789 to 1848. As a student of Hegelian philosophy, he had already found the flaws in a narrow empiricism, and as a student of Feuerbach's sensuous materialism he had seen the need for a this-worldly, objective philosophy that would pass beyond passive contemplation and abstract humanism to concrete, dialectical practice that would "change" the world. At the end of 1843, soon after he had arrived in Paris, Marx found the vehicle for this revolutionary change in the proletariat. As the most general class, both in its suffering and in its possibilities for humanization, it alone, he thought, was capable of creating a universal revolution that would liberate all classes.

Unlike Freud, Marx got his youthful orientation and professional training not in a specific discipline like medicine directed to work in a specific institution, but in a general field. But he had a strong political interest from the start, and so it was merely a question of time until he connected the general theory of philosophy, which he developed as a fusion of dialectics and materialism, with the distinctive and most consequential political movement of his time, the movement of the working class. The full theory was not worked out in scientific detail until he turned to political economy. Marx's contribution was not to show that classes and class struggle exist, but "1. to show that the *existence of classes* is merely bound up with *certain historical phases in the development of production*; 2. that the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*; 3. that this dictatorship itself constitutes no more than a transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*" (Marx 1983, 62–65). In both his thought and practice, Marx critically situated himself outside bourgeois society. He identified with the workers and he dedicated himself to the overthrow of the existing institutions of society. Freud, by contrast, was safely situated within

that society, ministering to the needs of some of those victimized by it and struggling stoically to make sense of its nervous illnesses by means of an elaborately speculative theory. Marx was not concerned with immediate and individual cures. He was aiming at the big, all-inclusive, earth-shaking change—the revolution of communism. To prove that this change was immanent in the nature of things, that history was “pregnant” with such a new society, he undertook his historical and prehistorical studies, and he wrote in the expectation that the course of future history would bear him out.

The great problem that confronted the young Marx and that haunted all his thought and work until death was this: How are we to explain in theory and eradicate in practice the ever-present contradiction between the poverty of the masses of people and the riches that their hands, brains, and machines can and do create? In the very formulation of this, in its very acknowledgment, Marx and Engels took their stand with the workers of the world. An order of society that produced such a contradiction, such flagrant dehumanization, was one that had to be doubted on every hand. One could not take it seriously as an order to be saved or reformed. One had to ask only how it came to be, how it was digging its own grave, and how its needed demise could be expedited.

As scientists, Freud and Marx were responding to and diagnosing the pathologies of nineteenth-century European capitalism. But they were addressing different classes and hence different problems. Jurgen Ruesch has pointed out that in the United States the lower middle class as a “culture of conformance and excessive repressive tendencies” tends to have psychosomatic disorders, the lower class with its freedom to express anger displays nonconformance and rebellion, while the upper class having an “overbearing superego” inclines to “a relatively large incidence of psychosis and psychoneurosis” (1955, 130–31). The systemic theory of health and illness bears this out: pathological symptoms and breakdown are functions of multiple causes, including psychological and social ones, and shift as the complex of causes shifts. Seeking a way out of the social pathology, Marx identified the creative upsurge of the industrial work-

ers against the conditions of their oppression as the curative force. Freud, by contrast, dealing with individuals one by one in his practice, individuals who could afford his fees, thought the cure so far as possible lay in the rational power of the individual ego. While Freud as a neurologist was led into explaining the “resistance” blocking the flow of integral experience in individual personality and issuing in individual disorders, Marx as an economist attacked the disorders of the whole society. Marx found the resistance to creative development in the class system, and therefore for him any resistance, complex, or hang-up in individual personality must be explained by this system rather than *vice versa*.

As a neurologist taught to observe the individual human organism, Freud never brought into focus the powerful forces of society shaping the individual personality. He sought the solution to the therapeutic effect of hypnotic suggestion—and ultimately the solution to the human situation—in forces within the biological individual. True, he asserted the origins of sexuality to be in infantile sexuality and in the infant’s intimate social relations to its parents. But sexuality, or, broadly, libido, was still for him an autonomous biological process untouched and unqualified in its basic character by anything else. It can be inhibited or facilitated, but it cannot be fundamentally changed. It is “the essence of our being, consisting of unconscious wish-impulses.” These “represent for all subsequent psychic strivings a compulsion to which they must submit themselves” (Freud 1938a, 536). While ego is formed as a mediative agency between impulses and external reality and while the ego ideal or superego is interpreted as “the heir of the Oedipus complex” and the phylogenetic “substitute for a longing for the father,” id still dominates the ideal (Freud 1961a, 36–37). How the biological body becomes socialized is not clear. Freud used terms like “identification” and “introjection,” but they are only rough descriptive terms, not explanatory. Freud suggested that the ambivalent fear and longing toward the authority figure define an archetype of desire that provides the interpersonal link of child and parent. The innate adversary of the pleasure-seeking

libido is therefore the authoritative restrictive superego. The external repression of the archetypal father is internalized through generations until it becomes second nature. The child is thus under the compulsion of “a categorical imperative” that compels it to incorporate as its own the patriarchal authority of the father while drawing on the nurturing resources of the mother. Submerging his rivalrous role to the father’s authority, the boy continues to love his mother (and at maturity, other women). But why would the girl, also first loved by the mother, love the father (and at maturity, other men) (La Barre 214)—the father whose principal role is patriarchal law-giver? Given the strict familial division of labor, such daughter-father love seems unlikely. But we cannot say that Marx analyzed or solved the problems of patriarchy either.

The biological model leads to an antagonism and unbridgeable dualism between individual drives and environment. The result is that ego, “poor creature” (Freud 1961a, 56), emerges as a parentless child, isolated and without a home, forever wandering and buffeted between the id, superego, and external world, dependent on them yet required to keep all of them from overcoming it. What a responsibility! Yet that is the task of the “normal” individual in capitalist society. One must eat, cope with an adverse and scarce environment, and manage the contradictions of social intercourse. That is no easy order. For Freud, ego is the lonely individual expected to be the rational and brave Stoic.

Marx accepted the plight of personality under capitalism. He was severely critical of the capitalist view of personality expressed in Max Stirner’s egoism and in Adam Smith’s concept that human labor must be imposed and repulsive (1973, 611, 612, 614). Self is generated in the social processes of human communication and of human labor. It begins to arise at the points of intersection between two bodies of the human species that recognize one another as having a common identity and that respond to signs that one or more make in common ways. It begins to take form when one body signifies the activities of its body in ways signified by the other, i.e., when a social “self”

begins to emerge. It develops when a plurality of such significations, more or less integrated and consistent, are adopted by the individual body in self-signification.

To do this requires not just the organs of mouth, anus, and genitals or even the striped muscles, but also organs of perception, conception, linguistic activity, and manipulation—eyes, ears, tactile receptors, nervous system, brain, speech apparatus, hands, etc. It requires social and ecological organs and capacities. The individual, said Marx, does not come into the world “with a looking glass in his hand” nor with a sense of identity. But “man first sees and recognises himself in other men” (1967, 52, n. 1). We must add that the capacity for this recognition, however imprecise in the beginning, must be innate. Furthermore, the capacity for sociality is deeply structured in the neonate’s capacities for vision, hearing, tactile sensation, empathy, imitation, emotion, etc. The general formula that the person is “the ensemble of the social relations” (Marx 1976, 4) is grounded in the humanizable capacities of the body. Marx, in addition, was explicit about our dialectical “spiritual” unity with the nonhuman environment. Plants, animals, stones, air, and light “constitute” a part of our human consciousness. They are our “spiritual [*geistige*] inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment” (1975b, 275).

Marx acknowledged the importance of the individual biological body in personality formation, but he found no innate conflict between impulse and reason and no necessary antagonistic conflict between the infant and parents. Rather, he stressed the social, interactional, interdependent, dialectical character of human nature and development. The individual body is conceived by a sexual act of two persons, grows in the body of the mother, and after birth is suckled by her and cared for by her and others. Freedom to develop exists “only within the community” (Marx and Engels 1976, 78). Just as man “makes all nature his *inorganic* body . . . with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die,” and as it provides his “spiritual nourishment” for sensation, feeling, and thought, so personality is profoundly interpersonal (Marx and Engels 1976, 275–76). Individual consciousness arises in the context of interaction with

human beings by means of language and common activity such as work and play. Marx said very little about the psychic creation and development of the infant and child; but for him and Engels consciousness is “a social product” and “language *is* practical, real consciousness.” Like consciousness, language “only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men” (1976, 78). Engels speculated that the transition from hominids to man came with upright posture, the freed hands, developed labor, closer contact, increase of mutual support and joint activity, and communication made possible by the larynx (Engels 1987).

In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx expressed penetrating but undeveloped insights into our social nature. The supposed dualism of nature and humanity, of body and mind, vanishes when we see that in the man-woman relation “man’s relation to nature is immediately his relation to man.” This is not “merely” a bodily relation, because our bodies are specifically and uniquely *human* bodies with all their perceptual, conceptual, interactional, and linguistic capacities. Even in a deformed, degenerate, and dehumanized sexual relation, like prostitution or sadism, the human features are there—else we could not intelligibly speak of “deformation.” Marx also observed that in such an immediate and natural relation wherein “the *human* essence in him has become a *natural* essence” the individual is simultaneously social: “man’s *need* has become a *human* need.” In addition, he said that we have impulses toward, and needs for, objects that are “indispensable” to the “confirmation” of our own natural powers; they provide us with physical and spiritual “nourishment” (1975b, 296, 336, 275). Our essential nature is thus interactional and dialectical, spread across a context of relations, both human and nonhuman.

Carl Schorske has pointed out that in the 1890s Freud experienced “a wracking crisis” of three dimensions: the frustration of his ambition to be a research scientist and prestigious professor and his being forced to take the lower role of physician at a children’s hospital; the disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire along national, ideological, and class lines, the old liberal-conservative opposition giving way to the conflict between working-class

socialism, middle-class and peasant nationalism, and Christian socialism, on the one hand, and the older elites—capped by the rise of Karl Lueger’s anti-Semites in the elections of 1895—events that retarded his academic promotions; and the death of Freud’s father, which became “a crisis of professional failure and political guilt.” This many-sided crisis produced in Freud a flight from the harsh realities of political and social life and a step down the social ladder from the medical and academic intelligentsia to the society of “ordinary Jewish doctors and businessmen.” In Schorske’s interpretation, Freud “began to detach psychic phenomena from the anatomical moorings in which in the science of his day had imbedded them.” He retreated into analysis of the intrapsychic life of the individual personality (1980, 184–86). Thereafter we can see that all politics was pushed into the background and explained as a derivative of intrapsychic problems, chiefly the conflict between desire and taboo.

Unlike Freud, Marx did not postulate an internal conflict of this kind in personality. Rather, the conflict most immediately and forcefully felt is the conflict between the needs of the individual body to eat, drink, clothe itself, etc.—in a word, to survive—and external nature on which it depends. In the normal course of prehistoric societies, this conflict is more or less solved by collective labor. But once history and class society appear, this conflict is mediated and exacerbated by a conflict between classes. The natural possibility of the realization of generically human potentialities, of the fulfillment of human needs, is aborted and alienated by a privative oppressive social system. Creativity through and with others is confined or miscarries because the matrix of social cooperation has been broken by class division. Individual personality is separated from itself, others, the process and product of labor, society, and nature. The problem is the “*Decomposition of the Original Union* existing between the Labouring Man and his Instruments of Labour.” The revolutionary task is to “restore the original union in a new historical form” (1975c, 129).



## 2

Freud's therapeutic theories as well as his social and political views revolve around the notion that people's deepest and most powerful energies are dangerously aggressive and destructive and therefore must be controlled in the interest of civilization and survival. Individual and social stability is the desideratum. Thus Freud's view of personality and society is an early and classical expression of the "equilibrium" theories like that of Talcott Parsons that have come to dominate the ideology of many contemporary bourgeois societies.

Freud's biological individualism postulated an antecedent and fixed fund of libidinous energy that, except for the damming influence of forces above and beyond it, would run riot. The child possesses a disposition for the polymorphous-perverse and so "may be misled into all sorts of transgressions" if the social inhibitions of "shame, loathing, and morality" are not present. This, added Freud, is "a universal and primitive human tendency" (1938b, 592–93). Psychoneurosis is the "converted expression" of such impulses, "*the negative of the perversion*" (1938b, 574–75). Here Freud's pessimism of extremes appears. The body, like an untrained animal coming into the world, either masters society or is mastered by it. As Freud put it, "*the ego is not master in its own house*" (1925, 355).

Given this primal surge of pure individual energy, Freud never succeeded in relating it in an integral way to the outer world. Ego develops where id is, i.e., as a differentiation of the demands of the impulses and as an instrument mediating between the impulses and external reality and between the conflicting impulses themselves. Ego is the executive that modulates the expression of impulses through delay or inhibition and orients them to the demands and restrictions of external reality. In this orientation it adjusts perceptual attention to reality, screening out what seems irrelevant and screening in what seems relevant, and evaluating and integrating the incoming stimuli. In addition it elicits skills in the integrating of impulses for expression in the world. The aim of all this is to secure a balance or harmony among the various parts of personality; and this aim is ultimately dictated by the impulses whose aim is the discharge of

energy and the reduction of tension between them and the world and among themselves. Ego is a servant bound to the master impulses. Even creative insights are dictated by the unconscious processes in the dark libidinal stream.\* Ego, Freud said, is “the most superficial portion of the id and one which is modified by the influence of the external world.” Consciousness is defined as “the function of the ego’s outermost layer, which is concerned with the perception of the external world.” The powerful unconscious, instinctive life determines the ordering and guiding functions of ego at the levels of both unconscious and conscious activity. “Ego instincts” are “directed toward self-preservation,” and while the superego “dominates” the ego, it “develops out of the id” and at best can inhibit it (1959a, 671). Ego is the great mediator, the stabilizing agency, standing between the demands of id, superego, and the environment.

Freud was concerned to find out how personalities manage their impulses, and in his search he discovered what he called repression. This is the mechanism by which ego excludes from conscious awareness and behavior certain phenomena that are painful. The unconscious is thus explained (1961a, 17, 15). Repression is a spontaneous and necessary means by which structure and equilibrium of personality are maintained. Freud at first described it as a “defense,” on the assumption that any mechanism of repulsion in the mind must have a self-preservative function. On further investigation by Freud and Anna Freud, it turned out that there are many more such defensive mechanisms that shield the psyche against things that seem to threaten its equilibrium, and that repression is basic to all of them (1964c, 245). But a defense can be ineffective. Thus psychoneuroses are defined as “inhibitions in the development of the libido” (1959a, 672). A neurosis is a “converted expression” of primitive, polymorphous impulses (1938b, 574, 592). It is a victory of the self-preservative ego over libido, “but at the price of severe sufferings and renunciations” (1961d, 118). Freud here as elsewhere presupposed. that “a satisfaction of instinct spells happiness for us” (1961d, 78), that id, the principal force in the psyche, is no more than “instinctual cathexes seeking discharge” (1964a, 74), and that the “displaceable libido is employed in the

service of the pleasure principle to obviate blockages and to facilitate discharge” (1961a, 45). A defense is therefore a defense against “unpleasure.” The therapeutic problem is how to loosen rigid, primitive, repetitive, and ineffective defenses and to release libidinous energy into pleasurable channels. (In his late work Freud came to regard the production of “realistic anxiety” by ego as a “signal” to warn and defend itself against objective danger [1959b, 92–95; 1964a, 84].) For Freud repression by ego is the individual’s mode of adjustment to a painful environment lying at the base of all defensive mechanisms. This mode of adjustment is ultimately the work of the superego, which may also carry out its will directly (1964a, 69). Superego posits an ideal that is both a lure and a restriction, a source of both admiration and fear.

Originally the superego was formed out of a repression by ego, “the repression of the Oedipus complex.” So the higher part of the ego takes over the character of the father and, by generalization, all authority figures and forces—religious teaching, schooling, and reading, etc. In this way the image of social authority, which reminds the ego-guided id of its phylogenetic experiences, insinuates itself into the feeling and behavior of individual personality as a power to command. It is “a categorical imperative” (1961a, 34, 35). Freud put it bluntly:

Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual’s dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city. (1961d, 123, 124)

The ego ideal is a fixed, inherited, generalized, social repression over the individual. If it does not exercise sovereignty over its subject impulses, they will rampage in open insurrection. If it has exercised too stern a control, they will rebel and go “their own way in the dark to rid themselves of this oppression” (1925, 354), venting their energies in acts of secret sabotage against the system. Freud presupposed revolutionary (anarchical) instincts that must be stabilized and appeased by the use of reason.

A person's essence, for Marx, is not impulses seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. In fact, he strongly rejected mechanical materialism and hedonistic utilitarianism as models of human behavior. His root metaphor was social labor—variously called productivity and creativity. People have needs, to be sure, both constant and relative needs, and a certain amount of pleasure accompanies their fulfillment. But the generic and inclusive drive of human beings is their own self-making and world-making, the creative transformation of themselves, of others, of social relations, and of the ecological world. This is a dialectical model: people are actively engaged with other people, with the artifacts of human culture (such as tools, machines, objects having utilitarian use value, works of theoretical science, works of art, etc.), and with the nonhuman world in the modes of cognitive inquiry, reflection, appreciation, enjoyment, etc. Even solitary contemplation and meditation are acts that are social and environmental in origin, content, and consequence.

For Marx the generic human drive of social creativity is blocked and repressed by the conditions of class economy and ideology. The process of the extraction of surplus value from the workers, the vast majority of people, throws them into a state of want, material insecurity, and anxiety. The dominance of private property over creative social labor done in the service of an exploiting class separates and alienates people. The system of capital, reared by the physical and mental labor of the masses, erects barriers on every hand against their fulfillment. The class-to-class relations of production are oppressive “fetters” to the creative forces of production. This material repression of human potentiality at the base of class life, in the workplace and the home, is reinforced by the superstructure—by the institutions of law, politics, religion, family, media, education, art, science, and philosophy, and by the forms of consciousness, individual and social, which roughly correspond to the material foundation. In our own day the principal form of this material repression is a state monopoly capitalism imposing on the people built-in unemployment, inflation, poverty, sexism, racism, genocidal weaponry, multinational imperialism, and counterrevolutionary

militarism. The principal form of the ideological repression is anticommunism.

Marx was less complicated and more direct in his explanation of the fundamental repression in human living. First, the material repression of human needs—Marxism distinguished in principle between needs and impulses—is structured into the political economy of class society and into the social relations of production that determine under commodity exchange that the workers do not get what they produce to satisfy their needs. What Freud described as repression, as the work of the superego carried out directly or through ego, is simply the defense of the whole political economy, through superstructural agents, against the disruption and “unpleasure” of energies rebelling against the restrictions. Freud of course judged such restrictions to be necessary to civilization, though their severity, he believed, should be modified to relieve individual psychoneurosis; Marx believed that the restrictions function to facilitate a dehumanizing social system and that both ought to be overthrown. For Marx, unlike Freud, the “*categorical imperative*” is not the command of the ego ideal; it is, he said, “*to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being*” (1975a, 182). It is the righting of a wronged and repressed social order, the revolutionary reclaiming of humanity’s repressed creativity. It is the collective negation of the negation in private property.

Freud launched his investigations from the symptom of repression and the impressive fact of the *resistance* of individual personality to the conscious recall and assimilation of traumatic experience into personality. He sought to explain this deep-seated negativity, by an instinctive, “omnipotent” drive for pleasure, supposing that since this drive is the imperative one, all pain will naturally be avoided even at the peril of forgoing healthy adjustment. The reality principle can at best *delay* the discharge of libidinal impulse. It cannot efface the repressed material, which struggles for an outlet and finds it in “a substitutive representation” or “symptom,” though ego “fortifies the repression by means of the anticathexis of resistance” (1961b, 150). So there is a natural logic in the ego’s resistance to the environmental sources of pain.

To Marx, resistance is the struggle against exploitation going on in both unconscious and conscious ways. No doubt there is in all workers a resistance of the psychological kind against confronting the full pain of their exploitation. And the problem here is parallel to the psychoanalytic one, namely, to bring that to consciousness through the help of others. But for Marx the proper source and object of resistance is an objective system of human relations—the relations of productive life that hold the workers in bondage. Such objective relations of course register themselves in the form of felt pain and traumatic memories in the minds of the workers, conscious and unconscious, in their subjective states. But the main point is not only to become conscious of that objective situation in the world but to change it. The social world of class society is resisting our needs and our fulfillment; therefore, we must resist it. We must negate this massive negation.

Adherents of Marxism aim at the well-being and well-doing of all, and precisely for that reason theirs is not a utilitarian calculus of pleasure and pain. They strive to eliminate unnecessary and involuntary pain, but they do not shirk pain as an inescapable ingredient in the struggle of liberation. For Freud, pain is the price required by the reality principle in the adjustment of libido to the world, whereas for Marx pain is an inherent part of the birth process that creates a new society. Thus, for Marx there is never a conflict between two agencies in personality, never a question of whether the stakes are worth the effort. Marx presupposed that under sufficient duress people will revolt to free themselves, their friends, and their children, regardless of the cost in pain, suffering, and death. And history has borne him out during periods of massive revolution.

In Freud's biological individualism, "the social instincts are not regarded as elementary or irreducible" (1959a, 671), yet the dependent infant internalizes the values and disvalues of its parents. Exactly how this happens is not explained. These values and disvalues—the taboos and ego ideals, the punishments and rewards—then operate within the infant and "over" (*über*) the ego, the ego ideal emerging from the id. In this account, the infantile body of impulses is socialized in a very formal and

negative way—a repressive way—the way in which children were brought up and socialized in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century bourgeois society. In this account, the system of symbols, values, dispositions, actions, feelings, ideas, ideals, etc. of society do not really appear as internal and integral to the biological individual. They are internalized as superficial inhibitors and moderators of the primal instincts, and their restrictive effect can be easily loosened and overcome. In “Why War?” Freud stated that two psychological characteristics are “the most important” for civilization—“a strengthening of the intellect” that governs instincts and “an internalization of the aggressive impulses.” But to expect a community of men to subordinate their instinct to reason is “Utopian” (1964b, 214, 213). Freud’s dualism of instinct and reason is a disguised conversion of the class division in society. The result is that his own prescription of the rule of the cultured elite over the incurably instinctual masses emerges as a utopian proposal that tacitly accepts the ruling dominance of superstructural institutions over economic base.

What makes community possible? Love and work (1961d, 191). But the ties effected by these are not enough to account for a cultural community. People are aggressive and destructive toward one another; if this mutual hostility is not repressed, civilized society is threatened with disintegration. So it incites people to “aim-inhibited” relations of love, restrictions on sexual expression, the commandment to love their neighbors as themselves, and the violent punishment of criminals. The typical attitude toward one’s neighbor is exploitation of her or his work without compensation, sexual use of the other without consent, seizure of possessions, humiliation, the infliction of pain, torture, and murder. Genuine identification with the other person in the sense of loving the other as oneself is barred by the native narcissism of the self and by fear, envy, and rivalry toward the other. I cannot take the role of the other and enter into his or her attitudes and perspectives because I am too bound to my own instincts.

Yet Eros is ambivalent: it aims at pleasure and eternal absorption in the love object, but it also makes “one out of more than

one.” It is “the instinct to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units” (1961d, 101, 112, 111, 109, 108, 118, 140). In short, the libidinal manifestations of Eros are both ego-oriented and object-oriented—and to intensify the ambivalence, the aggressive instinct of destruction and death appears in conflict with the erotic instinct to preserve life. Full sociality is out of the question.

### 3

The difference between Freud and Marx comes out forcefully in their positions on unconscious activity. Let us first delineate some of the major meanings of the term “unconscious” so that we can more clearly see where Freud and Marx agreed and disagreed:

1) What at any given moment is beyond attention or conscious awareness in the psychosomatic personality—absence of awareness.

2) What is in the vague background of awareness and is not explicitly focussed on in attention or language.

3) What is in the background of awareness and, while attended to, is not formulated in symbols. (This may be expressed in nonlinguistic ways, as in facial expressions, voice, hand movements, posture, gait, the nonverbal arts like music, psychosomatic ailments, violence, etc.)

4) What is in the background of awareness but under certain conditions can be attended to and expressed in verbal form.

5) What is in the background of awareness and can be attended to and expressed in verbal or other form—and what is the defining creative disposition of personality driving toward development and therefore expression in both unconscious and conscious forms. This last is what Marx meant by unconscious activity.

Conscious awareness, therefore, is a certain degree of discriminating perceptual attending to the qualities and forms of what is happening in one’s body and environment and responding to that with “meaning,” i.e., connecting perceived happenings with past (remembered) happenings and future (anticipated) happenings. Conscious awareness is sensing and



“making sense” of one’s world. If I am a worker in the pay of someone else, I remain unconscious of my working world, of my place in it and my relation to my employer and fellow workers, of my own productive power, if what is happening in that world is experienced as a flow of qualities and forms beyond attention or, if attended to, beyond the structure of meaning and understanding. To be *class*-conscious is to form such meaning—the first step, Marx pointed out, in radical social change.

For Freud, the unconscious is that portion of psychic life that for most is inaccessible to conscious awareness. The greater part of it is an array of unorganized, imperious drives, “a labyrinth of impulses striving independently of one another towards action” (1925, 352). Those instinctive impulses that define the id are “entirely unconscious.” Ego and superego, the more or less conscious offspring of id, are also partly unconscious. In addition, the unconscious includes those stored elements of experience that have been barred from entrance into conscious thought and have been defensively “repressed” by ego or superego. The task of psychoanalysis is to deal with “the indirect or substitutive gratification of repressed impulses” that constitute neurotic symptoms (1959a, 671). It aims at the uncovering of repressed material, the understanding of its nature, causes, and consequences, the reduction of defensive incapacitation, and the new integration of personality. In this process, the unconscious is there as a brute fact, only incompletely known and insistently and blindly pressing against the rational direction of ego and the strict demands of superego. Freud compared the ego to a “sovereign” who “never goes among the people to hear their voice” (1925, 355). He also compared it to a man on horseback “who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse” and who often “is obliged to guide it where it wants to go . . . transforming the id’s will into action as if it were its own” (1961a, 25). The unconscious for Freud is thus the primary determinative force in human living; but it is subrational, and while its erotic instinct is preservative and constructive, its aggressive instinct is destructive. Ego then must be the consummate opportunist and diplomat, caught as it is between the pressures of id,

superego, and reality. Thus it “disguises the id’s conflict” both with reality and with the superego. It “lies like a politician who sees the truth but wants to keep his place in popular favor” (1961a, 56). This is a telling analogy. Why not begin with political economy, describe how it works, including the politician who lies, and then inquire how its processes and forms become internalized in personality? Instead, Freud remained inside personality and then inversely and partially described what goes on in the outer political world.

And this “resistance” to the recall of repressed experiences as well as the impermeable muteness of the unconscious—what are these? It may be that in this inarticulate underground lurk unthinkable or at least unutterable thoughts forbidden to public expression by the repressive political-economic system. This is the explanation of Marx for a ruling ideology that must suppress unruly ideas. Not everything unconscious is revolutionary, but, if the ruling class has any say, everything revolutionary must be unconscious.

Freud was correct, of course, in observing that the individual infant must be socialized. But the reason he gave for this was incorrect: there is no evidence that sexual, egocentric, and destructive dispositions are as fixed and determined as he claimed. Second, there is no compelling reason to believe that there must be such an absolute antagonism between the formative, directive power of consciousness and such dispositions. Freud was ambivalent on this: throughout his work he sided both with the happiness of satisfied libido and with the necessity of control by the cultural ideals. But here he personally and intellectually reflected the contradiction of nineteenth-century bourgeois European society. The contradiction at the base of society between the forces and relations of production was accompanied by the breakdown of superstructural institutions—family, education, religion, etc. So the positive bonds of the individual personality with others in home, school, community, and workplace as well as the negative constraints of morality had been loosened. The individual had been increasingly thrown back on individual resources. At the same time, the economic crisis had generated forces of opposition rebelling in various

ways against the confines of the old morality. The sexual rebellion was (and is today) only one of many modes of this opposition. To be understood, it must be taken as an expression of a generalized and generic blockage that is not fundamentally biological but human and social. Of course, the managers of the system of capital have learned to tolerate, co-opt, and encourage forms of rebellion that divert people's energies from inquiry into the causes of such blockage and from radical action to remove it.

While markedly different, Freud and Marx both pointed out the dissociations and fragmentations within persons and between persons and their environments. Both called for an overcoming of such dissociations and an integration of personality through a deepening of consciousness. Both sought integrated expression as over against the dividedness of repression. Both expressed, in different ways, the thrust of individual personality toward fulfillment and the simultaneous frustration of personality by obstacles inside and outside personality. Both were products of an advanced stage of capitalism, articulating both the freedom and the constriction, the opportunity and the barriers, of the individual personality liberated from the stupefying confines of serfdom and feudal relations into the capitalist market of wage labor that has required both a new consciousness and a new unconsciousness. Capitalist conditions of production and reproduction (i.e., family life) have elicited the generic and special powers of individual personality to a level at which we realize that we have them but do not have them, i.e., we are partly conscious of them and partly unconscious of them.

As scientists, both Freud and Marx discerned the problem of human living in the conflicting processes within and around individual personality; in the domination and ruin wrought by these processes over human lives and fulfillment; in people's ignorance—their lack of conscious understanding—of these processes; and in their consequent lack of conscious control (freedom) over the processes that determine their lives.

Freud concentrated on the processes lodged within the individual personality—the biologically generated conflict between id (aggressive, sexual, and other impulses) and rational,

controlling ego; and the conflict between ego (self) and the moral demands of the community internalized as superego. Marx viewed the human problem in the wider context of human society, history, and nature—the conflicts between productive forces and relations of social power and distribution, between ruling classes and ruled, between ideology and social and natural reality. For the one the conflicts were buried in the individual's unconscious; for the other they were objectively at work “behind the backs” of the producers. Therefore, for Freud the solution was the raising of individual self-consciousness through self-analysis, the mastery of the Minotaur of repressed trauma by the thread of memory and the Theseus of thought. But for Marx the solution must be the association of workers, the sharing of their individual perspectives on their lives, work, needs, and problems, their mutual stimulation and encouragement, their rising consciousness of themselves as a socioeconomic class locked into struggle with antagonistic classes, and their collective social action to remedy their common condition of oppression—by trade-union organization, by political action, and by social revolution. From the division, denial, and ignorance of the workers toward their exploitation, capitalists profit enormously; but mobilizing their creative communication, class consciousness and collective action, the workers have a world to win.

Freud developed the Stoic idea that the path of liberation from the bondage of repressed painful emotions is acknowledgment and control of it through courage and understanding. He discovered the role of the experienced and analytical helper in this process and, unwittingly, the curative conditions of empathic communication, the exchange of ideas, and the interpersonal relation, as Sullivan and others found out. Marx's idea of liberation derived from this same tradition, but extended it in two ways: (1) freedom means insight into not only the personal and interpersonal conditions affecting one but also the social and ecological conditions; and (2) freedom is the practice of groups and classes to change appropriately the environmental conditions that obstruct and release such insight and practice.

Freedom emerges with consciousness and communication. In

distinction from animal consciousness, human consciousness arises with the individual's importation, creation, and self-reflexive use of social signs, usually spoken sounds. Infant and child become aware of things not immediately present as stimuli through signs that signify those things. They learn to respond as others do to signs produced by them. They become even more conscious when they produce such signs themselves, taking the role of the other and calling out in their own behavior a response similar to the responses of others to the common sign—i.e., when they communicate. They become still more conscious when this role-taking is generalized and they respond to others in consistent ways in the use of the common language (Mead 1934).

In communication, persons do not merely duplicate the signs and meanings produced by others. They combine and integrate signs in new ways and create new meanings, differentiating themselves within the social process and contributing these meanings for integration (or rejection) by others in that process. To the degree that the process enriches integrative thought, engenders insight into the self, others, and the world, enhances affective response, and increases effective action—all in the service of human living and its fulfillment—to that degree it is liberating.

Freud's individualistic and static concept of the human self severely restricts freedom; it falls short of explaining both the glory and the debasement of human action. To survive and remain sane, the ego must maneuver its way between the powers of impulse that are incessantly beating at its gates and the commands from its superior officers, the deputies for social demands. But the orders of society are the orders of the ruling classes generalized, more or less collectively and unconsciously, through the mediation of economic, political, legal, social, religious, scientific, informational, artistic, and other institutions of society. These are the prescriptions required by the general class ideology. They are the rules, the authoritative standards acceptable to law and morality, to police and priest. They compel the insurgent needs to obey; the hungry poor cannot protest, the angry workers must desist. Yet the needs do resist and below consciousness stir toward revolt.

In such a predicament, the ego, constantly on the defensive, faces limited alternatives. It can rigidly repress its energies, risking neurosis or psychosis, though if only mildly neurotic it may continue to function in family and at work. It can indulge its impulses, dropping out of institutions and becoming a loner, or joining a drug culture or a culture of violent gangs, or simply merging with the mass of addicted consumers collectively hooked by the con artists of advertising and media. It can voluntarily submit its energies and ego to the discipline of an authoritarian group with its charismatic leader, retreating from society into a religious community or aggressively striving to regiment society by the violence of a neo-Nazi group. It can achieve a more or less balanced integration of id, ego, and super-ego, a self-centered personality smoothly “adjusted” into a society of other self-centered personalities, a placid and obedient social order that conveniently serves the interests of the ruling classes.

Finally, it can follow the pathway of creative sublimation in art. But this is a rare alternative, and for both the mediocre majority (as Freud saw them) who attempt art and the gifted few who can produce excellent art in capitalist society, the risks of surviving and the temptation to produce “commercial” art are great. Moreover, for Freud the creative artistic disposition is secondary and not intrinsic; like other cultural achievements, art is “deflected” sexual energy mixed with portions of productive ability, perversion, and neurosis (1938b, 584, 625). But it strains our critical sense to explain human creativity as thinly disguised sexuality and our “escape from freedom” into fascism as “animal” license. No animal is capable of such deliberate degradation; and this escape from freedom is itself an individual and social choice—as the self-censorship and silence about socialism among most intellectuals, the media, and the masses during the Cold War was and still is an act of free choice.

“Self” and hence “self-consciousness” arise when the child learns to take the role of significant others and to signify itself and its behavior as others do, i.e., when its socially learned and self-produced signs become self-reflexive; it views itself as an object, as a subject signified by other subjects and in turn

capable of responding to and influencing those other subjects. Thus, to become conscious in the full human sense is to become socialized through language, and “conscience” is one aspect of consciousness: it is the individual self’s adoption of the judgments (the oughts and ought-nots) and rules of behavior of those around him as they are internalized as self-judgments. To be conscious is to be socialized and moralized, to be aware of and linguistically responsive to the needs and demands of others. To be conscious is to have a conscience. This is the normal human way in which conscience arises.

But since people live and think, work and play in different social groups, they acquire different consciousnesses and consciences. Hence, ruling-class consciousness and conscience differ from working-class consciousness and conscience. Therefore, in class society a necessary clash ensues between the rules of conscience imposed by the institutions of the ruling class and the practice of everyday morality. “Thou shalt accept without complaint—or threat of radical overthrow—joblessness, hunger, illness, racism, sexism, pollution, high taxes, violence, war, and early death” contradicts the normal human demand to live a fulfilled life in decent human circumstances and in justice. Therefore, in the conservative social model like Freud’s, conscience becomes alienated, negative, and punitive. It is individualistic, attaching virtue and vice, praise and blame, to the individual; responsibility is “fixed” there. (Of course, moral progress occurs when insights of one or more of a small minority of individuals contest the limits of existing demands and broaden the humanistic basis of social morality in both ideal and practice—and when a class begins to transform the old morality into a higher one.) Also, the morality of conformity to the rules of any class society is mixed with elements of universal morality; otherwise, it would fall apart. But it is just this ambiguity that the ruling class uses, masking its self-serving morality behind slogans of humanistic morality.

Mature working-class conscience, an activity of individuals, proceeds from the basis of a unity rather than antagonism of interests between workers. Conscience becomes explicitly collective when all workers of a given group become conscious of

and live out the rule, "one for all and all for one." But the moral rule of "solidarity forever" is itself antagonistic to the moral rule of "look out for number one," the operating rule in bourgeois society. The first is better than the second not only because the great majority of people in the world prefer it in feeling, thought, and action, but also because in the objective history of the productive process of human life it is the imperative of human survival and fulfillment.

Working-class consciousness and conscience are negative, too, for they are set in opposition to bourgeois consciousness and conscience. Yet at the same time they voice, recall, and anticipate a universal morality that goes beyond negativity and class. Conscience in a fully socialist society will transcend both of these moralities, because the material mode of production and the relations of production will transcend all class character. So far as people do what they ought to do, so far as individual thought, judgment, and action are engaged in creative interchange with others, then so far conscience as the expression of the tension between rule of the ideal and actual practice will disappear. The tension in bourgeois society is the tension between the imposed ideal of a conscious individualism and the disposition and practice of unconscious collectivism. In early socialist society, the tension holds between the ideal of an imposed conscious collectivism and the remnants of unconscious individualism. In fully socialist society, individual consciousness will become awakened to its role and duty in society and the antagonistic relation of it to society will disappear. Both revered heroes and feared punishments will dissolve as motives of conduct. A new conscience harmoniously combining both enhanced individuality and enhanced sociality will emerge.

In Marxism, what is unconscious is simply the negation of conscious activity; it is the world, subjective or objective, that has not yet come into the domain of consciousness. As awareness of what is immediately present or mediated to awareness by means of signs and therefore absent, and as self-awareness, consciousness develops as conditions are favorable. Thus, presupposing a normal physiological organism, awareness widens as conditions force themselves on perception and conception



—such is the premise of materialism: that material existence determines consciousness. These conditions are of two kinds, nonhuman and human. We become aware of things and events when they force themselves on our attention—when they directly and immediately run athwart our habitual expectations, when they obstruct or fail to satisfy our needs and interests. We also become aware of things and events in a much wider environment and within our own subjective states when we communicate with others, when we begin to act with others in practical ways on our environment, and when we apply the language and meanings learned from others in self-reflective understanding of ourselves. Freud recognized the role of communication and self-reflection in the improvement of consciousness; but he never made these conscious principles and he never explored their causes and consequences. For Marx, the process of communication linked with common action is the process of rescuing ourselves from the limitations and unfreedom of an oppressive world whose oppressiveness is compounded by our own unconsciousness toward it. Creative socialization through language and practice is the method of liberation. While Marx emphasized labor in the workplace and political action, essential human activity includes also science, aesthetic engagement, play, and cooperation in groups.

The psychoanalytic concept of “working through” repressed material in the free and disciplined patient/therapist relation appears to be similar to the Marxist concept of creative communication among persons in “the ensemble of the social relations.” The whole process of “working through” presupposes an atmosphere of mutual trust, a motivation toward creative change on both sides, and a desire for help on the part of the patient and a desire and competence to be helpful on the part of the therapist. In such an atmosphere the patient freely expresses what comes to mind so that in time he or she gives voice to early repressed experiences from childhood with a vivid recall that evokes anxiety, regression such as acting out of impulses, and projection of fantasies upon the therapist. At this point, the analyst, previously neutral but supportive, actively begins to interpret to the patient what is happening and has happened in his or her life in order to

help the patient to understand, analyze, and reconstruct remembered experience. Analysis leads to synthesis, so that with the help of the skilled analyst the patient's conscious life or ego assumes control over a previously incapacitating unconscious life and is able to function effectively.

What Marxism adds to the creative process of communication, whether in a therapeutic relation of patient and therapist or in an ordinary workaday situation, is the necessity of practical activity toward objective problems and the mutual transformation of such practice and intercommunication. Freud was not conscious that the process of socialization, when fully developed, is the process by which personality is transformed and grows—a process in which new perspectives are created and integrated, relations of enrichment and reinforcement are created with other persons, unconscious experiences are made explicit and integrated into the qualities and forms of consciousness, and new and creative relations are initiated with the nonhuman world (Wieman 1946).

The socialization process is also particular and bears the marks of the class relations in a particular society. For example, Freud said that “there are present in all men destructive, and therefore anti-social and anti-cultural, trends,” that men exploit one another by treating others as wealth in the form of labor or as sex objects (1961c, 7, 6) and that

their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. (1961d, 111)

Here he described not biological behavior innate and inevitable but social behavior learned by infant and adult in the political economy of class societies. Similarly, when he wrote to Einstein in 1932 that “there is no use in trying to get rid of men's aggressive inclinations” (1964b, 211) and expressed doubt about the ending of war, he was uncritically articulating a presupposition of the ruling class of that society.

Yet Freud discovered truths about unconscious dispositions in persons deep in the psyche, such as the tendency of dependent deference to the father authority in family, state, and religion. But he emerged with a dim and despondent view of the human prospect, only partially conscious of the social factor and the need for vision, hope, and integral fulfillment. By contrast, Marx, in a revolutionary stroke, grasped the sociality of persons and the role of labor in history—our creative mutuality in community and nature and our imperative of democratic class struggle and liberation. But his Enlightenment faith blinded him to the individual psychic impediments to progress. He described the working of illusion in human life, especially religious and economic illusion, as well as self-alienation, inverted ideology, fetishism, and other forms of displacement of human productive energy. He directed attention to their social causes, but passed over the psychodynamics of the demand for illusions and supposed that attachment to illusions would disappear with the eradication of those external conditions. But the emotional glorification of Stalin and the mass mania of German Nazism revealed the power of the fear of death, the need for inclusive belief and meaning in life (overriding critical evaluation), an “enemy” projection, scapegoating, hero-worship, and mass extermination—all elicited and cunningly manipulated by the ruling authorities.

In both theory and practice, a mature Marxism, maintaining its vision of a free and just society, would work out the dialectical interdependence between the socioeconomic structures and the personal forces, building on the accumulating knowledge of the social and psychological and other sciences and applying them to the improvement of our earthly estate.

In the present milieu, many in the world of capital are celebrating “the end of history,” “the demise of socialism,” and the triumph of capitalism. But this triumphalism is premature. The essential description of society in Marxism remains as true and as troubling to ruling dogma as ever: nature and labor as the source of human value; the exploitation of wage labor; the expropriation of surplus value; rich against poor; the struggle of classes; alienation; the evolution of human history toward a

classless and fully democratic society; and the creative, productive unity of the human species with itself and the ecological system of earth. What of socialism in practice? Delayed, deformed and defeated, various large-scale practical experiments in socialism have so far not survived for long. But the idea of Marxism is not dead and can never die as long as the human species lives; its concept of an emergent human solidarity attuned to a sustainable ecological order is as old as history and as deep as human nature.

This idea is not mere utopian hope. It is a modern advance on the prehistoric notion of a single soul substance that binds together the members of a totemic community. It is a refined form of the prophetic humanism proclaimed in the urban civilizations of the first millennium B.C.E.—a protest of the common people against the inequities of empire, and a vision whose pursuit has recurred throughout history. The idea is derived, a developed stage in the long upward march to frame and carry out the ideal of human community. This ideal, abstracted from the concrete pattern in human existence, confirmed in science, draws its strength and durability from the unity of the human genetic system, the unity of life forms evolved within the biosphere, and the common behavior of human beings everywhere—speech, communication by language, tools, cooperative labor, and the capacity for culture and social organization. Therefore, the present life and future of our planetary species is intimately bound up with the continuous cohesion of its members in space and across time. What we must do is to deepen the idea of socialism and to apply it with all vigor and dedication.

I am indebted to Dr. Ethel Tobach for a searching and useful critique of this paper.

*Emeritus, Department of Philosophy  
University of Bridgeport*

#### NOTE

\*On this point, Freud was ambiguous (1925b). Lawrence S. Kubie has suggested that creative processes are preconscious symbolic processes forcing their way through the conventionality of conscious symbolism and the neurotic

rigidity of unconscious (repressed) meaning (1958). Recent research locates the source of creative insights in the right hemisphere of the brain. But of course the brain is a social organ within nature.

## REFERENCE LIST

- SE refers to *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, translated by James Strachey and others. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953–1974.
- Dubos, René. 1965. *Man adapting*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.
- . 1971. *Mirage of health: Utopias, progress, and biological change*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Engels, Frederick. 1987. The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man. In vol. 25 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 452–64. New York: International Publishers.
- Erickson, Erik H. 1957. The first psychoanalyst. In *Freud and the twentieth century*, edited by Benjamin Nelson, 79–101. Cleveland: World.
- Foucault, Michel. 1965. *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard. New York: Random House.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1925. One of the difficulties of psycho-analysis. In vol. 4 of *Collected papers*, authorized translation under the supervision of Joan Riviere, 347–356. London: Hogarth Press.
- . 1938a. *The interpretation of dreams*. In *The basic writings of Sigmund Freud*, edited and translated by A. A. Brill, 183–549. New York: Modern Library.
- . 1938b. *Three contributions to the theory of sex*. In *The basic writings of Sigmund Freud*, 553–629.
- . 1938c. *The history of the psychoanalytic movement*. In *The basic writings of Sigmund Freud*, 933–77.
- . 1959a. Psychoanalysis. In vol. 18 of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 670–72. Chicago: William Benton.
- . 1959b. *Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety*. In vol. 20 of *SE*, 87–174.
- . 1961a. *The ego and the id*. In vol. 19 of *SE*, 12–66.
- . 1961b. Neurosis and psychosis. In vol. 19 of *SE*, 149–53.
- . 1961c. *The future of an illusion*. In vol. 21 of *SE*, 5–56.
- . 1961d. *Civilization and its discontents*. In vol. 21 of *SE*, 64–145.
- . 1964a. *New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis*. In vol. 22 of *SE*, 5–182.
- . 1964b. Why war? In vol. 22 of *SE*, 199–215.
- . 1964c. A disturbance of memory on the Acropolis. In vol. 22 of *SE*, 239–48.
- Kubie, Lawrence S. 1958. *Neurotic distortion of the creative process*. Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press.

- La Barre, Weston. 1955. *The human animal*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1967. *Capital*, vol. 1. New York: International Publishers.
- . 1973. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the critique of political economy (rough draft)*, translated by Martin Nicolaus. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- . 1975a. Contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of law. In vol. 3 of *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 175–87. New York: International Publishers.
- . 1975b. *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844*. In vol. 3 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 229–346. New York: International Publishers.
- . 1975c. *Value, price and profit*. In vol. 20 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 101–49.
- . 1976. Theses on Feuerbach. In vol. 5 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 3–9. New York: International Publishers.
- . 1983. Letter to Joseph Weydemeyer, 5 March 1852. In vol. 39 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 60–66. New York: International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. 1976. *The German ideology*. In vol. 5 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 19–581. New York: International Publishers.
- Mead, George H. 1934. *Mind, self and society*, edited by Charles W. Morris. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Ruesch, Jurgen. 1955. Social techniques, social status, and social change in illness. In *Personality in nature, society, and culture*, 2nd ed., edited by Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray. New York: Knopf.
- Schorske, Carl E. 1980. *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and culture*. New York: Knopf.
- Wieman, Henry N. 1946. *The source of human good*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

# **Marx and Freud, a Reassessment: From the Industrial Age to the Information Age**

**Antal F. Borbely**

## ***Introduction***

Marx and Freud, the two dialecticians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries effecting the greatest cultural changes in the last one hundred and fifty years as judged shortly before the turn of the millennium, need to be newly assessed at the present time. While it appeared just a few years ago as if Freud's importance would diminish and Marx's steadily increase, now it appears, at first glance at least, to be the opposite. Whatever the future assessments of these great theoreticians will be, there is little doubt that they both will continue to be seen as of paramount importance for the history of humankind.

If by "at the present time" we understand the transition of the industrial age to the information age (to be discussed shortly), we might gain by such a reassessment new insights into the contributions of Marx and Freud and may be able to throw some light on the development of the socialist and the psychoanalytic movements.

## ***Marx***

With the demise of most of the socialist countries as we knew them, the following question of crucial importance arises: how fundamental a change are we witnessing? From Marx we learned to base all assessments on an analysis of history. He *Nature, Society,*

*and Thought*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1995)

himself did so in an exemplary fashion, trying to analyze history at each turn anew and with as little conceptual prejudice as possible. Radical, revolutionary analysis was synonymous with subjecting each historical change to renewed scrutiny; “without prejudice” meant a readiness to look at history with larger or smaller changes in one’s conceptual tools to understand it. When he said, “I myself am not a Marxist,” he meant that he was not wedded once and for all to any previous hypothesis, concept or conclusion. (It would definitely have been in Freud’s character to say: “I am not a Freudian,” as he revised with rare intellectual courage his theoretical insights, as new experience was gained.)

Today we are called upon to follow Marx by being ready, in principle, to be Marx’s students by no longer being Marxists in the traditional sense. We shall have to analyze history with the greatest possible sobriety, which will include questioning the continued validity of all Marx (and Engels and Lenin) ever postulated, without necessarily concluding that these postulates were invalid for their time.

The necessity for this preamble results from the generally disappointing level of historical analysis by Marxist theoreticians within the last few years (for an exception see Davidson et al. 1993). The overwhelming majority of the discussants do *not* think that a change of the deepest nature is occurring in front of our eyes, a change that deserves to be called the dawn of a new era—furthermore an era not, or only in the vaguest terms, anticipated by the classics of Marxism. Rather, the current manifest historic changes, as they appear in the demise of the socialist countries, are usually described in terms of shortcomings: tactical, strategic mistakes or crimes of political leaders, the communist party, the bureaucracy, etc. There is little awareness that our basic concepts have to be looked at and changed because a most fundamental historical revolution is occurring, giving new meaning to old concepts and their relationships. As outlined below, nothing short of a profound recategorization of all human priorities and a new conceptualization, a new paradigm for the present historic phase is called for.



*From the industrial age to the information age—An economic analysis*

To be ready to reconsider Marx's profound findings does not mean to discard them. As part of his methodology to understand historic change, Marx proposed to analyze closely the way humankind produces its subsistence, specifically to follow closely the development of the means and relations of production.

Since approximately 1970, the dawn of our present scientific-technological revolution (computer chip, information age, globalization with falling living standards of the blue-collar working class in many industrialized societies, etc.), a completely new way of producing has been made possible. Whereas before, production meant human acquisition of nature regarding the appropriation of substances and the harnessing of energy, we now increasingly produce and organize information.

Information, as an aspect of matter, was never described as such by the founders of Marxism nor, to the author's knowledge, by Marxist philosophers or communist party ideologues since then. The information sciences therefore did not receive the attention they deserved, which caused grave consequences in the economic sphere within the socialist block: the computerization of society and its precondition, the democratization, including openness (*glasnost*) in the communist parties and society as a whole, as introduced by Gorbachev, was begun too late. Regrettably, Gorbachev, even while sensing the need for democratization, could not lead this process in any methodical way, because he himself was not in the possession of a profound enough analysis. Neither he nor his theoreticians, all "professional revolutionaries," were prepared to grasp the essence of the revolution occurring in front of their eyes.

Whereas in the industrial age the amount of natural resources and the level of their development were of paramount importance for establishing the degree of sociohistorical development and general wealth, in the information age the level of a population's education and the degree of computerization becomes increasingly the indicator of such development and wealth. Not that natural resources now could be neglected, but they become

of secondary importance, paralleling the change that occurred during the transition from agrarian to industrial production. In the middle of the nineteenth century, in the industrializing countries, the majority of workers were working in the agrarian sector. As is well known, the relative percentage of workers employed in the industrial and the agrarian sectors soon became reversed. In hindsight, and using the vocabulary introduced above, we can say that the economy became energy-centered (rather than substance-centered).

*The reasons for the changing importance of the class struggle*

“Work” in the industrial age (and all preceding periods) could be described as human acquisition of nature. We are now in the process of moving away from a preponderance of acquisition from nature to a preponderance of a recursive exchange within human history: between previously established systems and newly emerging ones (see Jantsch, 1979). *The main dialectical contradiction now can be expressed as one between the old (information/organization) and the new (information/organization)*. Computers, as the main instruments of change of informational/organizational systems, increasingly begin to guide agrarian and industrial production, scientific research, and the further development of artificial intelligence itself. It is as if humans, after having developed extensions of human muscle power (animals, machines), the human senses (spectacles, telescopes, microscopes, etc.), and energy (steam, fuel, electricity, atomic power) now start to build brain power. With this latter step, we are witnessing the *transition from the concept of work as production to work as creation*. Now, not the harnessing of substances and energies from nature (science as interested in objective laws), but the design of new laws (science interested in objective, given laws and subjective, newly emerging and newly designed laws, see below) becomes of greatest importance. In the cognitive sciences a growing movement is noticeable that leads away from objectivist science by searching for an inclusion of the subjective (Rosch 1978, Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Overton 1994).

It is important to remain aware that much of humankind is

still and will for a long time be organized according to the laws of the industrial age; in fact large numbers are only now entering into such an age (Toffler 1980). This does not negate the necessity of analyzing the transition to the information age, as only such analysis can throw light on the developments in the previously socialist countries as well as in the presently existing ones. Based on the above, it can be predicted that because of the fundamental nature of the historic changes we are witnessing, and notwithstanding the fact that the class struggle remains, for the near future, of more central importance for Third World populations, the remaining communist parties still governing in China, Vietnam, and Cuba will have to reflect these changes by promoting deep theoretical revisions. These will have to be translated into new political programs or those parties will become obsolete as they lead their countries into the future. Once such revisions have been achieved (conceptual adjustments to the information age) and reforms have been carried out (democratization), the varied interests in society will have to be reflected by a political system allowing for multiple parties. Communist parties unable to change might still be able to represent, to some extent, trade-union interests. A mixed economy is being reintroduced in all previously socialist countries, including Cuba, China, and Vietnam. This occurs as a consequence of economic globalization, itself a crucial event accompanying the transition into the information age. The communist party of the new kind will have to represent, among others, progressive capitalist forces or renounce the claim to represent the welfare of a society with a mixed economy as a whole. It will therefore need a theory allowing for the existence of a mixed economy.

In the discussion about the class struggle as the most central parameter of all historic development (the classical doctrine) it is useful to remember on what basis the concept of class struggle arose. It was Marx's understanding that in the human acquisition of nature, wealth produced through labor under conditions of general scarcity would be appropriated unequally between the class that owned the means of production and the classes that did not. He postulated that only with the expropriation of the expropriators, only with the revolutionary seizing of power by

revolutionary classes from the propertied class could historic emancipation and progress occur. Progress could be undermined or slowed down by the propertied class based on their possession of culture, information, and the means to distort essential information according to their class interests. This conception, true for the industrial age, increasingly ceases to be true in the information age. Once information becomes the product (or rather the "creation") of our labor, we enter into an age of potentially unlimited wealth. The propertied classes will be less and less able to slow down progress based on their ownership of the means of production, because the means to distort what is important to know will increasingly be reduced once information (undistorted, generally accessible information) becomes the main commodity. *Emancipation of the working population becomes, for the first time, conceivable without expropriation of the propertied class as an absolute precondition. Therefore a peaceful social development becomes both possible and necessary (humankind's looming self-destruction in an atomic war).* It is here important to emphasize that the relative amount of privately owned versus socially owned means of production is for society as a whole to determine. Any dogmatic approach to this question can today be dropped. The class struggle will continue, but only as one of several dialectically related tensions and without the a priori goal of leading to a predetermined state of affairs (the expropriation of the expropriators). The class struggle will increasingly be superseded in importance by the struggle between the old informational paradigms (including the here developed one) and the new ones.

#### *A redefinition of socialism*

From the above it is clear that our old notions of what socialism consists of have to be partly abandoned. If the expropriation of the expropriators is not one of the a priori goals, what could take its place? One of the decisive discoveries Marx made with his conception of class struggle was the insight into the class relatedness of all activities, all thought, all culture. From that he was able to conceive of humanity's emancipation as a whole. The emancipation of the working class, its "historical mission,"

was conceived of as being not only in its own interest, but as being a precondition of the overall emancipation of humankind. If we abstract for a moment from the focus on the working class, we can formulate his insight as follows: it is possible to develop a scientific way of going about promoting general welfare in accord with historical developments once one can develop an understanding of culture, economy, law, philosophy based on the interests of groups of people. *It is, Marx asserted, possible and necessary to develop a scientific comprehension of sociohistorical developments beyond the one dictated by the class in power.* This insight can continue to inspire us even if some of Marx's doctrines regarding the historic mission of the working class get dropped.

Today, "socialism" could mean the scientific approach to promoting the welfare of the working population (including humane and law-abiding capitalists) with a methodology cognizant of, and therefore capable of not falling victim to unrecognized class interests. The communist party might be an organized group of highly dedicated individuals, studying and exchanging information pertaining to such goals and acting collectively towards implementing their insights once democratically established consensus has been achieved. The communist party of the new kind could not be the representative solely of the working class as the latter was defined traditionally. In the former socialist countries we could see how a communist party would never be recognized by the population at large in 1995 if it continued to maintain that it defended primarily the interests of the industrial working class (e.g., the coal miners and steel workers, etc.). Not even the industrial workers themselves believe that they could lead society at large into the future. It is this insight into a changed reality rather than "mass cowardice" that is responsible for the industrial working class not clinging to political power at all costs and accepting a more democratic interplay of group forces.

#### *Public opinion as a new political force*

With the shift from production of substance and energy to creation of information and organization, the need for accurate

information and future-oriented organization increases. This represents, for the reasons stated below, a democratization within the sphere of information dissemination, a shift from privately “owned” information to publicly “owned” information or public opinion. Whereas in the industrial age Marx correctly pointed out that the ruling ideas of a society are the ones favoring the interests of the ruling class, in the information age the ruling ideas will be increasingly determined by public opinion, reflecting the interests of society as a whole.

Previously, much information was produced to distort the facts in order to keep the public unaware about the unequal distribution of wealth. Today, the capitalist increasingly has to face a well-informed public opinion with access to all relevant information. Capitalists’ drive for profit will more than in the past be constrained by a public opinion, itself politically strengthened by democratically achieved changes of the rule of law. It is important to remind the “materialists” that public opinion is in no way less of a material force than the ownership of the means of production. Public opinion has proven its power during the recent events in the socialist countries, where the actions of the population were certainly not based on criteria of owning or not owning the means of production.

*Marx’s fundamental philosophical error as seen from hindsight*

It was unjustifiable expediency that led Marx from the politically correct distinction between “materialists” and “idealists” to the philosophically incorrect one between “matter” and “idea.” Even though ideas were seen as products of the brain and of nature, the very fact of subdividing the philosophers into materialists and idealists and making this distinction the linchpin of philosophy led to a deleterious dualism regarding matter and idea, and this in spite of the proclaimed monistic materialism. The subsequent reception by Lenin and the official doctrines of the communist parties remained faithful to the conception of Marx and Engels: the textbooks proclaimed monistic materialism, while dualistically opposing matter and idea, and, making matters worse, clearly favoring by far matter over ideas while allowing for some interaction between the two. In Marx’s

afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*, we read: “With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought” (1967, 19). Marx states clearly that the ideal is dependent on the material, and that it is not part of matter. The “reflected and translated” could have been described as a qualitatively new level of the development of matter, namely the informational and organizational level.

It was one of Marx’s crucial discoveries that he showed how society depended on nature, how the productive relations depended on the means of production, how the ruling class and the superstructure depended on the productive relations and how the ruling ideas in a society depended on the interests of the ruling class. With the help of these discoveries he could analyze sociohistorical developments in much greater depth than the (political) idealists, those who denied the existence of these dependencies by emphasizing in a one-sided way certain ideas like religion, vital force, moral virtues, science, progress, political harmony (class collaboration), introspection, etc.

It was one thing to call (politically) this more inclusive view “materialism,” but another to assume (philosophically) that these dependencies indicate that there are more material and less material, or even nonmaterial aspects of reality (ideas). To allow for such gradation within the concept of matter betrays a misunderstanding of matter as consisting only of substance and energy. A realm of ideas in opposition to a realm of matter, a dualistic rather than a dialectic approach to reality, was in fact used by the bourgeoisie. Here one has to explain why Marx omitted declaring the ideational, informational realm as the realm of the most highly developed matter, dependent on more basic forms of matter (nature, life, societal relations) but at the same time relatively independent of them. Humankind today is creating new molecules and has started to create new life forms (genetic engineering), the Internet, artificial intelligence, art, and, in psychoanalysis, a new way of overcoming the determinism of the individual’s past on his or her future (see below). How much stronger such an outlook would have been, with which progressive humanity could have embraced the realms of the subjective, fan-

tasy, creativity, love, and imagination—all human phenomena *par excellence*. More importantly, by including the realm of the ideational/informational within matter, the historic shift from substance to energy and from energy to information could have been theoretically comprehended in terms of a historical development of matter.

Marx, in his “Theses on Feuerbach” (1976 [1845]) postulated that sensuousness should be comprehended as “practical activity,” not as “contemplation of single individuals in ‘civil society.’” He himself insufficiently understood that thinking, feeling, desiring could be seen equally as “practical activity.” He did postulate that ideas, once taking hold of the masses, become a material force. If the concept “material” excludes ideational forms of practical activity, or acknowledges them only as subsidiary, it cannot come as a surprise that the historic shift from manual to mental, from productive to creative labor could not be comprehended—“division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears” (Marx and Engels 1976, 44–45).

This “vulgar materialist” comprehension of matter had the most far-reaching consequences in Marxist philosophy, psychology, economy, political science, and scientific communism. For the purposes of this paper I want to highlight only the following three facts: 1) Psychoanalysis, one of the earliest information sciences and a science revolutionizing the individual’s potential for self-fulfillment, was rejected as “bourgeois,” or “idealist” and as undermining the collectivist strivings of the working class. Accordingly, millions of individuals over many decades were left to their neurotic suffering without even knowing that there might have been help. 2) The computer sciences, with their focus on information and organization, remained outside the “materialistic” comprehension of Marxists in the socialist countries as well as in the nonsocialist ones, with the dire consequences described above. 3) The shift in the most industrialized countries from “more material” blue-collar work to “less material” white-collar work, as well as the shift from “productive” to “service” work, did not receive the deep analysis it deserved. Accordingly, the communist parties who prided themselves on



being the avant-garde of progressive humanity could not grasp the implications of the birth of the information age.

*Productivity and creativity*

The opposition of *capital versus people* has been transformed. Knowledge, previously used by capital for reactionary purposes, had to be countered by the knowledge of Marxian dialectics. With the information age replacing the industrial age, knowledge is fully embraced by capital, which is less and less intrinsically antithetical to people's interests. The automatic equation of profit with exploitation is problematic in today's society (minimum wage, progressive taxation, rights for unions, etc.) This means that we cannot exclude capitalists automatically from being part of the progressive movement. This formerly "social democratic" viewpoint, with all the negative connotations that it implied, must now become the Marxists' point of view. This is said with the assumption that Marxism today means the scientific analysis of world history from the point of view of people's welfare in the information age. Accordingly, concepts like "class struggle" will remain important but will not play the central role they once rightfully played.

As a consequence, while the welfare of the many must not be allowed to be dominated by the interests of the few, the capitalists should not be excluded from the community of the many, at least not until individually proven to be reactionary. The same would, of course, hold true of other nonprogressive workers. To accept capitalists, in principle, as part of the creative work force (informational/organizational and risk-taking anticipatory work) becomes today a necessity, which was accepted by the majority of the populations in the formerly socialist countries as well as by many of their communist party leaders and members.

*Philosophically speaking, the agrarian revolution focussed on matter as substance and the industrial revolution on matter as energy. The information revolution focuses on matter as information.* Information becomes increasingly a commodity and at the same time an inexhaustible resource for further information. Information can feed on itself. The class struggle was a consequence of the way we produced in the first two waves

(Toffler 1980): in early civilization scarcity of resources and a low level of knowledge constituted the context in which we transformed nature into products to satisfy our needs. Those products, as Marx had shown, were socially produced but privately appropriated by an elite group of the community that had arisen as a consequence of increased specialization of production. In the presently dawning era, the incredibly fast accumulating information does away with both the scarcity of these new resources and the low level of knowledge. Both information and knowledge will more and more be available for public consumption and thus strengthen the political significance of public opinion. Knowledge will become a democratic force. The power of public opinion, while still in its infancy, was clearly involved in the disappearance of right-wing dictators in South America and Spain, in the disappearance of apartheid in South Africa and, yes, in the disappearance of obsolete socialist regimes.

How can it be true that today those who own the large computers and computer and software factories do not necessarily have the power to oppress or control the rest of the population? It is undeniable that an elite still has better access to data than the average person, but it will be increasingly unable to control how such data gets processed into knowledge. This is up to the programmer, up to the individual user who creatively designs new programs, or uses programs in new ways or for new purposes according to newly emerging needs. The user is both customer and producer, the user becomes a creator whose creation cannot be controlled. This creation itself is an expression of new needs on whose satisfaction the capitalists depend for their own survival. Once knowledge becomes the main commodity of social life, an irreversible process of informed democratization sets in. As a consequence, as Davidson et al. elaborated (1993), the capitalist ownership can be alienated from social control.

We have all seen recent examples in the corporate world where a new start-up creative enterprise becomes a serious rival to well-established but less flexible corporate giants who are in danger of losing ground or even of disappearing from the scene. For such an occurrence no explanation will be found in

nineteenth century social analysis of any kind. Today, only continued creativity can yield continued success. The wealth of a nation will be increasingly defined in terms of its creativity potential. Such creativity can only flourish democratically, or not flourish at all. This, I think, is the reason that both right-wing and left-wing authoritarianism has no future.

### ***Freud***

Having located our times as the transition of the industrial age to the information age, we shall try to use this hypothesis to understand the development of psychoanalysis in a new way. It appears that psychoanalysis was the third information science, of course expressed in the typical positivistic language of science during the industrial age. Darwin's paleontology (information transmitted through natural selection as well as genetically) may have been the first, Marx and Engels's foundation of dialectical and historical materialism the second (consciousness as based on historically determined class interests). Freud searched for psychological healing by providing information about the patient's lost information (repression, childhood amnesia). He saw symptoms as containing past information in as yet indecipherable form. He conceived of complexes of information sequestered in childhood, and therefore still immature, that were for the adult analysed and unconscious but nevertheless motivationally active, thus interfering in the optimal functioning of the mind. He developed the psychoanalytic method: supine position, free association, and interpretation by the analyst, who tries to remain neutral and abstinent. This was geared toward allowing the patient to reexperience, in the relative safety of the analytic situation, what had been too anxiety provoking in childhood and had resulted in symptoms.

### *Information in the psychoanalytic process*

In psychoanalysis more than everyday insight happens. In the altered consciousness induced by the supine position and by free association, the boundaries of all categories, e.g., of affect, desire, and thought, begin to blur into each other. The

communication between the analysand and analyst is carried out in important ways in this categorically blurred way. On the surface, it is based on speech and nonverbal communication, but underneath, on a more essential level, the communication is about transcategorical entities, traditionally called “psychodynamics.” The analyst listens beyond the speech and beyond nonverbal communication to what is “going on” at a given moment of analysis, or to that with which the analysand is “struggling.”

The important difference between twice-weekly analytically oriented psychotherapy and on-the-couch psychoanalysis four or five times a week is the extent of this blurred state of affairs that allows both analysand and analyst to elicit and experience psychodynamic issues in a much richer way. It allows us to move from the level of fixed concepts to blurred concepts, from the level of differentiated figure and ground to the level of blurred figure and ground. Before we reach insight we experience the “meltdown” of many previously demarcated boundaries. Thus, we hear and talk also “from the inside” of what is happening, not only “from the outside.” The world of free association and the altered consciousness that accompanies it dissolves the boundary of one’s idiosyncratic logic and illogic. Psychotherapy’s conversational dialogue becomes in psychoanalysis one where the two partners are not always distinctly separated, where intrapsychic communication and intersubjective communication is superimposed and fluid, where the analyst and analysand together evoke the voices of important childhood figures as well as the ones now important. New significance, new meaning becomes accessible due to this “meltdown,” and it has a different, more deeply transmuting quality than the insight gained without it or with less of it.

As we observe the analysand’s inner dynamics with this blurring of boundaries, a multitude of meanings arise in the context of great ambiguity. Traditional concepts, like compromise formation or multiple determination, can serve only as short-hand to allude to the much greater complexity of the analytic situation.

*The information-carrying entities*

When we define categories like “drive,” “affect,” “thought” for conceptualizing the psychoanalytic process, the danger is that we absolutize the categorical distinctions, the *differentia specifica*. Drive then becomes too distinct from thought, thought too distinct from affect. In this way, we may lose sight of what these categories have in common. Yet, at the same time, there always was traditionally an awareness that thought, drive, and affect can influence each other, vie with each other for relative importance and form compromises with each other, indicating that communication between these mental entities is possible. When it comes to conceptualizing clinical conflict, the above-mentioned absolutization has far-reaching consequences. It leads, as I have shown (Borbely 1987), to both illogical and clinically inaccurate propositions, thus becoming counterproductive for the further development of psychoanalytic theory and practice.

Information underlies all communicating entities of the mind. This information might be organized, coded, transmitted, or implemented differently in drive, affect, thought, id, ego, super-ego, defense, and defended against, but it makes these entities more alike than different from each other.

Drives are informational in that they have goals, means to achieve these goals, objects, and priority setting (peremptoriness). Affects contain nonverbal information of a diffuse kind, comparable to knowledge laid down in neural or other connectionist networks using nonsymbolic means for the purpose of organizing a knowledge base and learning. Affects thus comprehended, contain in a nonsymbolic way conscious and unconscious drive derivatives, other affects, and thoughts engendered by a multitude of biographical constellations. They are evoked by presently occurring experience, which, in turn, they influence informationally.

Thoughts are the most specific entity of information and need not, as such, be further elaborated here. They were understood by Freud to be drive derivatives. Affect, bidirectionally connected with thought, was for a long time seen as a drive derivative; in more recent times the aspect of affect organizing

drives and drive derivatives was highlighted (Kernberg 1982).

All of these entities can, during psychoanalysis, blur into each other and can be transformed into each other, and all such transformations can, after being experienced in a new way, be retranslated into symbolic form by verbalization, accompanied by experienced and expressed emotion.

As we listen to the free associations, we try to be open to all these levels of information simultaneously, experiencing them as fully as possible. Once aware of important patterns, we communicate these back to the analysand in a way judged to be most helpful for a deepening self-understanding. Such an interpretation transmits through the tone of voice, the timing, context, and emphasis not only the analyst's ideational understanding, but simultaneously a verbal/nonverbal integration of understanding encompassing all the other modes of information mentioned above. Both in interpreting as well as in insight we combine partial knowledge with an acceptance of great uncertainties. We listen and communicate metaphorically (see below).

### *Metaphor*

Metaphor, or seeing something in terms of something else, was for a long time, and presently is, of great interest to linguists, philosophers, poets, psychologists, researchers in artificial intelligence, and psychoanalysts. This is so because metaphor is intimately connected with all forms of creativity, be it in exact sciences or the arts, be it in the human sciences or personality development. Metaphors allow us to conceptualize familiar things in unfamiliar ways and unfamiliar things in familiar ways (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Ortony 1979), a hallmark of all efforts dealing with emerging new vistas. (See also Overton 1994; Overton and Palermo 1994).

Metaphor is then not only seen as a figure of speech, but as a way of psychological functioning. It represents the calculated inclusion of vagueness into statements or actions, as a result of the unavoidable human condition of having to make decisions in the face of great uncertainty. When Freud related previously unrelated domains, like seeing sexuality in terms of personality development, motivation in terms of the unconscious, suffering

in terms of pleasure, transference in terms of the analysand's history, transference in terms of resistances, etc., he acted metaphorically. His work was not the result of secondary process accretions (although it was that too) but, again and again, he forced upon himself and us the readiness to change the view achieved by previously established categories of thinking, by grasping emerging new ones (excerpted from Borbely 1995).

Elsewhere I focussed on metaphor and interpretation, describing how "the analysand's present struggle evokes in the analyst a corresponding memory of a key biographic constellation . . . By linking these, on the surface perhaps dissimilar, but on a deeper level and in some important respect similar, semantic fields, *the interpretation brings them into metaphoric alignment*. The two seemingly unrelated subjects become tenor and vehicle of a metaphor, one being expressed in terms of the other. To connect in an evocative and novel way semantic fields that share something important is to create metaphors. Therefore, interpretations, in principle, aim at creating growth-promoting metaphors by linking emotionally charged, isolated images (of related biographic constellations) to each other" (excerpted from Borbely 1994). In that paper I tried to show how the reenacted transference and the correlated biographic constellation that was reenacted can be seen as two parts of a metaphor, now linked by interpretation.

It is generally assumed that most psychological changes occur unconsciously, via the primary process, involving the secondary process only peripherally. The latter mode of functioning is utilized when explicit explanatory demands impinge on the individual. If among all psychological changes psychological growth is highlighted, a specific term to describe such processes seems called for. As such growth is impossible without the metaphoric function I shall suggest the name "*metaphoric processes*." Such metaphoric process has to be distinguished from the primary, as well as the secondary-process thinking. It could be assigned to an intermediate position: like the primary-process thinking, it involves metonymy, synecdoche, and condensation; like the secondary-process thinking it is beholden to the reality principle. Kris's "regression in

the service of the ego” would belong here, as well as all intuitive, artistic, religious, philosophical, scientific searching. Therefore, since we are dealing with a psychoanalytic, translinguistic concept of metaphor, the differentiation between primary, metaphoric, and secondary thinking should not be made based on purely formal, linguistic considerations. We can now establish the following definitions: primary process means irrational thinking based on primitive embodiments; secondary process means rational (expository, explanatory, factual, logical) thinking; metaphoric process means imaginative rational, creative thinking (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

To relate metaphorically to the demands of life means to live creatively, to be free of compulsions and obsessions stemming from earlier, unresolved conflicts. “Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

#### *The different psychoanalytic schools and metaphor*

The importance of developing a psychoanalytic concept of metaphor goes beyond above noted connections to trauma, repression, and interpretation as well as the postulate of a metaphoric process functioning midway between the primary and the secondary process.

If the above account of what happens during psychoanalytic treatment is correct, a new understanding of the significance of the existence of different psychoanalytic schools becomes possible.

If neurosis means the circumscribed or pervasive loss of metaphoric process ability in particular domains due to childhood traumata, for which the cure consists of the restoration of such ability, it is conceivable that such restoration can occur with different metaphor systems or metaphor languages (different conceptualizations met with in the varied psychoanalytic schools). It appears then, that the analyst must be in possession of a metaphor language, which is capable of encompassing the salient stages and traumata of childhood as well as the events unfolding in the transference. An analytic process can be expected to occur if the following added conditions are met: the



analyst, himself or herself sufficiently analyzed, must be able to successfully transmit the language of his or her metaphor-system through interpretations to the analysand, so that shared images of past and present constellations can emerge and be comprehended as meaningful and relevant by both. The shared language used in the ongoing analytic discourse is a blend between the analysand's and the analyst's personal language, as well as the influence of the particular metaphor-language. It slowly becomes an idiom unique to each particular analytic pair (excerpted from Borbely 1994, 1995).

In summary, the above conceptualization of metaphor allows a better understanding of its role in the creativity-enhancing function of psychoanalysis.

### ***Freud and Marx***

We have analyzed the recent revolutionary historic events and Marxism's possibilities to integrate these new developments and respond creatively to them. We found the concept of information of paramount importance for Marxism's development from a production-centered to a creativity-centered theory of sociohistorical change. Within Freudian psychoanalysis, the description of common metaphor based methodologies underlying the different schools was only possible by moving from an energy-centered approach to an information-centered one. The importance of metaphor as a specific way to combine validated with new or uncertain information (risk taking, creativity) was described as embedded in psychoanalytic practice from the beginning, even if theoretically not grasped in its importance. From here we can predict that psychoanalysis will less and less be seen as a method for symptom removal, but rather as one for general creativity enhancement. It is now time to try to describe some connections between Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxian sociohistorical analysis.

Freud discovered that psychic causality in which the past determines the present is not irreversible, but can still be changed. Such change was made possible through the psychoanalytic method of re-experiencing childhood events in the context of the psychoanalytic situation. During the psychoanalytic

process the analysand gains insights that could change the past's impact on the present. Lost responsiveness to present and future needs, ambitions, opportunities, and responsibilities could then be restored. While well known by every psychoanalyst, this reversal of the effects of events that have already happened has not received the theoretical attention it deserves. What happened can still be changed as far as the effects those events had on a particular individual (here the analysand) are concerned. In this respect, Freud went further than Marx who only demanded analysis of new circumstances and a plan for future action in accord with such analysis. He did not yet fully break through the barrier of a mechanistic interpretation of historic causality that was the most suggestive one during the early industrial age. Accordingly, for Marx, only the future would hold the promises that, for now, had to be foregone. It is true: some compensation for misery and sacrifice was possible in the present: to know that one acted in accord with humankind's inevitable emancipation (Engels agreed with Hegel that "freedom is the insight into necessity" [1987, 105]). Paradoxically, Marx also emphasized that humankind, by gaining insight into the laws of society and history, would for the first time be able not to suffer what history dishes out but to actively, creatively make history, create history.

Marxism will only be viable if it becomes information centered rather than materialistic in the old sense (matter associated with mass, but not information). Accordingly, work will have the added and increasingly central meaning of creation rather than production. One could make a case that such a development lay dormant in Marx's methodology and would have been possible much earlier with a more democratically structured communist party and government.

#### *Information-centered creativity*

Both Marx and Freud were representatives of the industrial age and therefore developed models that were energy centered. For Freud, everything mental could be expressed as part of psychodynamics, understood energetically. For Marx, all sociohistorical events and (class) aspirations could be translated

into revolutionary or counterrevolutionary forces, again understood energetically. Neither Marx nor Freud explicitly focussed on information so crucial for both theories. While Freud's concepts were formulated dualistically, the psychoanalytic practice was full of dialectical developments. On the other hand, Marx formulated his concepts much more dialectically. Ironically, with the exception of certain periods under Lenin, Castro, and a few others, the socialist practice under socialist governments lacked creative dialectics and became mechanistically distorted. With the militaristic concept of "democratic centralism" the dialectic interplay between different societal groups was stifled. The explicit rejection of psychoanalysis, an early information science, by all socialist governments (again except for early times under Lenin's, and in some measure under Castro's, government) and all communist parties, governing as well as nongoverning, was the sign of a deep malaise. (For belated attempts to deal with psychoanalysis more seriously in the Soviet Union, see Borbely 1978, and in the German Democratic Republic, see Thom et al. 1991 and Borbely and Erpenbeck 1987.)

There must have been an uncanny sense of a new revolutionary current, as yet ill understood, emerging worldwide, and manifesting itself early on and powerfully in psychoanalysis: the information revolution. It is well known, how the "more materialistic" information sciences like cybernetics, and later artificial intelligence were, at first, received with great skepticism. In keeping with the above, the philosophical implications of all information sciences were never integrated into the main corpus of Marxism-Leninism.

We can therefore say that both Marx and Freud began to struggle, without knowing it, with the questions posed by the approaching information age. How can human beings collectively and individually become creative and how can this be scientifically understood and mastered? The groundwork for a science of creativity was laid down by these two courageous men. That includes the groundwork for the development of a concept of science inclusive of the historic, subjective, and creative dimensions so important in what we consider typically

human. No matter how extensively their theories will be reformulated, their place in the intellectual history of humankind will, for this reason, be one of lasting importance.

*New York Medical College*  
*New York City*

#### REFERENCE LIST

- Borbely, Antal F. 1978. The dialectic relationship between transference and inference. In vol. 4 of *The unconscious*, edited by Aleksandre S. Prangishvili, Apollon E. Sheroziia, and Filipp V. Bassin. Tbilisi: Metsniereba.
- . 1987. Towards a temporal theory of the mind. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* 10, no. 4:459–87.
- . 1994. Metaphor and interpretation. Manuscript.
- . 1995. Metaphor and repression. Manuscript.
- Borbely, Antal F., and J. Erpenbeck. 1987. Vorschläge zu Freud. *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 35, no. 11:1010–24.
- Engels, Frederick. 1987. *Anti-Dühring*. In vol. 25 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 5–309. New York: International Publishers.
- Davidson, Carl, Ivan Handler, and Jerry Harris. 1993. The promise and peril of the “third wave”: Socialism and democracy for the 21st century. *Dialogue and Initiative*, no. 7.
- Jantsch, E., 1979. *Selbstorganisation des Universums*. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag.
- Kernberg, O., 1982. Self, ego, affects and drive. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytical Association* 30:893–917.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1967. *Capital*. New York: International Publishers.
- . 1976. Theses on Feuerbach. In vol. 5 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 3–9. New York: International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. *The German ideology*. In vol. 5 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 19–549. New York: International Publishers.
- Ortony, Andrew, ed. 1993. *Metaphor and thought*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Overton, W. 1994. Arrow of time, cycle of time. *Psychological Inquiry* 5, no. 3:215–37.
- Overton, W., and D. Palermo, eds. 1994. *The nature and ontogenesis of meaning*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Rosch, Eleanor. 1978. Principles of categorization. In *Cognition and Categorization*, edited by Eleanor Rosch and Barbara B. Lloyd, 28–46. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Thom, A., C. Schroder, and M. Geyer, eds. 1991. *Geschichte und Gegenwartsprobleme der Psychotherapie—zur Stellung Sigmund Freuds und der Psychoanalyse*. Leipzig Symposium, 1989, Karl-Sudhoff-Institut für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften, Bereich Medizin der Universität Leipzig.

**REPLACES AD PAGE.**

# Philosophy, Politics, and Psychoanalysis

Irving J. Crain

## 1

Everyone gradually develops an “outlook” on life, and those whom we call philosophers become the eloquent exponents of these varying views. One can divide the myriad of philosophies into two broad camps: the idealists, who believe that people are endowed with certain innate, spiritual, human qualities that create and determine the world about them; and the materialists, who believe that the world exists independent of people and creates human beings by its impact upon them. Of course, there are the dualists and eclectics, who take a little here, a little there, but all end up at one side of the scale or the other.

The apparent contradiction between the ideal and the material, nature versus nurture, subjective and objective, mind and body, have occupied philosophers and scientists for centuries. However, I believe that we as psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, psychologists—students of the human mind—have an important role to play in trying to resolve some of these dilemmas, not only from a theoretical and philosophical, but also from a practical, point of view. In essence, the problem of the mind is our “business,” our work, our field of activity as clinicians and therapists.

Silvano Arieti states in an article on the present situation in psychiatric theory:

The mind/body or neuropsychiatric split remains a focus of discomfort for by far the majority of psychiatrists who are concerned with theory. A monistic conception would

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1995)

appeal more to our sense of “theoretical elegance”; it would satisfy our need for consistency and would appear more congruous with prevailing scientific positions.” (1968)

William James considered the connection between mind and brain “the ultimate of ultimate problems.” Descartes ushered in the philosophy of dualism—proposing the existence of physical substance and mental substance, independent of each other, but conditioned to exist by a third substance—God. Nevertheless, as a materialist, as a scientist, he was the founder of analytic geometry and laid the basis for a materialist physics of modern times. As a philosopher, however, he felt that the ultimate criterion of truth was in the mind itself. The rational mind prevailed.

The noted neurologist Hughling Jackson resolved this problem by ignoring it.

I do not trouble myself about the mode of connection between the mind and matter. It is enough to assume a parallelism. That along with excitations and discharges of nervous arrangements in the cerebrum, mental states occur, I of course admit; but how this is I do not inquire; indeed, so far as clinical medicine is concerned, I do not care. (1958)

Eminent neurophysiologists like Sherrington (1942) and Eccles (1970) conclude that the brain is a conduit for the spiritual world; the real world is our inner reality, not that perceived through our senses of outer reality. In his Gifford lectures at Edinburgh, Eccles states, “In some mysterious manner the human brain evolved with properties of a quite other order from anything else in nature.”

The renowned neurosurgeon Wilbur Penfield, in his book *The Mystery of the Mind*, concludes:

Taken either way, the nature of the mind presents the fundamental problem, perhaps the most difficult and most important of all problems. For myself, after a professional lifetime spent in trying to discover how the brain accounts for the mind, it comes as a surprise now to discover, during this final examination of the evidence, that the dualist



hypothesis seems the more reasonable of the two possible explanations. Since every man must adopt for himself, without the help of science, his way of life and his personal religion, I have long had my own private beliefs. What a thrill it is, then, to discover that the scientist, too, can legitimately believe in the existence of the spirit! (1975, 85)

At the other end of the pendulum are the behaviorists, exemplified by Watson, Skinner, Jensen, et al., who believe that only through externally observed behavior can we determine “mind” and its psychology. Many feel that it is impossible to know the mind since it is a subjective phenomenon. The mind can never know itself. As Skinner says, “there are no psychic feelings. What you feel is merely a by-product of what you do” (1977). And further, Skinner holds that the mind is “an explanatory fiction” and “a person does not act on the world, the world acts upon him” (1971, 24). Man is seen as a passive reflex animal devoid of will, purpose, and goals. The mind is an irrelevant construct.

We are also observing the recent emergence of the sociobiologists, led by E. O. Wilson, who states that genetic and biological determinants can best explain the human condition (1975). Although social factors are not ignored, they are seen as either secondary or as evolving from the very basic genetic codes we are born with. (In a scholarly critique of the sociobiological approach to human nature, Lewontin et al. [1984] expose it not only as scientifically flawed and prejudiced, but as an apologia for the status quo in society. Sociobiology sees racism, sexism, and class position as genetically determined and, therefore, biologically inevitable.)

## 2

At this point I should like to introduce the thinking of a philosopher who probably was the first to cut the Gordian knot of mind versus body. In essence, the problem was insolvable because it was wrongly posed, It was Spinoza (1632–1677) who postulated that man is part of nature, thinking nature. Thinking is not a product of an action, but the action itself. Thinking and the

body are not two different things, existing separately and therefore interacting, but one and the same thing expressed by two different modes. One does not cause the other. In man, nature thinks of itself and acts on itself. Thinking is not some special substance instilled into nature; it is an attribute of nature. Spinoza said that God *is* nature and nature is God. He did not speak of God and nature but the unity of both.

He distinguished between thinking and nonthinking bodies. A pair of compasses can describe circles more accurately than the hand, but cannot draw triangles or squares. The action of a body that does not think is determined by its own inner construction. The thinking body builds its movements on the shape of any other body. A human body is not linked by its structural, anatomical organization except for the moment, but not originally or forever. Its actions are constantly embracing new things and plastically adapting itself to them. This is thinking. Thus, animals also think, but to a very limited degree.

Spinoza wrote:

The human body needs for its preservation many other bodies by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated . . . [and since] it can move and arrange external bodies in many ways. . . . The human mind is adapted to the perception of many things, and its aptitude increases in proportion to the number of ways in which its body can be disposed. . . . The more we understand individual objects, the more we understand God, the more we know ourselves. (1955, 380)

In other words, thinking was a function of external objective activity. God was not eternal or supernatural. Though many scholars believed Spinoza was a pantheist, those with whom he lived felt otherwise. His Jewish parents had fled the Spanish Inquisition and were accepted in the growing industrial city of Amsterdam, but Spinoza was ultimately excommunicated from the Jewish community for his materialist, atheist, and heretical views. The authorities in general considered his ideas blasphemous and none of his works were published until after his death.

When [Merriam] Webster's [Collegiate] dictionary defines

politics as, “the total complex of relations between men in society [and] competition between competing interest groups or individuals for power and leadership in government or other groups,” we see the interconnection between power, politics, and philosophy. Since history would indicate that power prevails through its politics and philosophy, the struggle for scientific truth and understanding is thus hindered or enhanced by the power in control.

Just as Goethe and Heine revered Spinoza, today many scientists are becoming increasingly appreciative of Spinoza’s philosophy. Though Russell felt Spinoza was outdated (1945, 578), it was Einstein himself who said he would have preferred “old Spinoza” to Carnap or Bertrand Russell as the umpire in his dispute with Niels Bohr on the problems of quantum mechanics. Erich Fromm considers Spinoza the “founder of modern psychology” (1964). A. Kaplan has written a comprehensive article on the essential similarities and differences between Spinoza and Freud (1977). A recent article by John Pittman, “Spinoza and Marx,” indicates that Marx and Engels adopted the true materialist content of Spinoza when they broke away from idealism (1983). In the joint annual Academic Lecture of the Society of Medical Psychoanalysts and the New York Medical College, in April 1984, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg spoke eloquently of Spinoza, Marx, and Freud as proponents of the Age of Enlightenment.

Spinoza’s thinking, however, worked only for a static world. Evidence was slowly accumulating that the human mind had appeared from the evolution of the brain and the development of society. Nature does not think as an inherent property, but only as a developing necessity. Natural science teaches us that mind and matter are not the same thing, but that mind is a product of the evolution of matter. Spinoza’s ideas also could not answer how ideas rose to begin with, and how they would influence the conditions that gave rise to them.

### 3

It was Hegel (1770–1831), the philosopher, who stated, “To be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all

philosophy” (1955). In his effort to cut through the dualism of mind and matter, Hegel introduced the philosophy of dialectics: the concepts of movement, development, change, and creativity. He believed that the world depended for its being on an “absolute idea,” which existed before nature and man. It was then negated and transformed into the object world of natural phenomena and then negated again into human thought.

Hegel believed that evolution proceeds from quantitative to qualitative change through its internal contradictions, and finally into a human social consciousness. Thought is transformed into matter and transformed into mind and the process is endless. Hegel saw thought as something that could be studied scientifically and wrote his thesis *The Science of Logic*. He noted that thought achieved awareness of the schemas of its own activity through language and speech plus external activity in the affairs of the world it creates. The whole history of humanity was thus considered a process of the “outward revelation” of the power of thought as a process of logic to which man’s purposive activity was subordinated. He saw thinking as not merely related to subjective ideas, words, feelings, etc. but verified in practice the unity of thought and activity.

But Hegel’s own concept of the endless transformation of mind and matter was in sharp contradiction to his conclusion that the “Absolute Idea” culminated in the Prussian state as the highest and last stage of human society. The “national soul” was the embodiment of the absolute spirit. And just as some have criticized Spinoza as being pantheistic, though a materialist, others chose to see Hegel as advocating the supernatural spirit as the quest for all knowledge though he was an advocate of the Prussian state. In other words, Hegel’s philosophy of development and change was compatible with the growing struggle of the bourgeoisie of his day against the existing feudal order. His philosophy was thus politicized.

#### 4

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) entered the debate and attacked Hegel’s philosophy as idealist, and an expression, in technical philosophic form, of the Christian dogma concerning

the creation of the world by God. In his book, *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach holds that God represents the nature of man projected outside himself and transformed into an absolute (1957). Though rejecting Hegel's idealism, he did not appreciate Hegel's dialectical method of transformation and development. Thus his materialist philosophy was mechanical and saw no place for consciousness and abstraction. In fact, Feuerbach's own idealistic approach was to supplant a world based on Christianity by one of love. But how was one to do that?

5

It was Karl Marx (1818–1883) in his afterword to the second German edition of volume one of *Capital*, written in 1873, who stated:

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, *i.e.*, the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.

The mystifying side of Hegelian dialectic I criticised nearly thirty years ago. . . . But [when working on the first volume of *Capital*] I . . . openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even here and there, in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with the modes of expression peculiar to him. . . .

In its mystified form, dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things. In its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid

movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary. (1967, 19–20)

In a similar fashion Marx defended Spinoza against his critics and clearly saw philosophy as being intimately tied to politics and the powers that be. As for himself, Marx identified his philosophy with the revolutionary process of growth and change in man's relations, activity, and consciousness. Studying the historical, human, economic, and political aspects of feudalism, and those of ensuing capitalism, Marx opted for the changes to be brought about by socialism.

Of course, the political response to this philosophy led to Marx's expulsion from his native Germany, from France, from Belgium, finally to work and live in relative poverty in London, England. His trusted colleague and friend was Frederick Engels. Few Americans realize that Karl Marx corresponded with Abraham Lincoln regarding the conduct of the Civil War\* and contributed nearly five hundred articles for the *New York Daily Tribune* from 1851 to 1861.

Marx created a new philosophy that was dialectical and materialist. Incorporating the unity of mind and matter proposed by Spinoza, the dialectical method of Hegel, the materialism of Feuerbach, Marxist philosophy proposed that human beings are the creators of the world and themselves. Through their activity they socialize the material world and humanize their biological world.

Marx and Engels, in their *German Ideology*, wrote:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men—the language of real life. . . . The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. . . . In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven. . . . The phantoms formed in the brains of men are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-

process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. (1976b, 36)

Marx further states, “A *psychology* for which this book, the part of history existing in the most perceptible and accessible form, remains a closed book, cannot become a genuine, comprehensive, *real science*” (1975, 303).

## 6

How can this be related to psychoanalysis and psychology? Why are so many articles, books, and symposia concerned with the Freud-Marx dialogue? At the turn of the century, as the age of the atom, the cell, bacteria, physics, chemistry, etc. was ushered in, scholars pondered how society could benefit from all these scientific advances. How could a healthier and happier society be created? How could one better understand and prevent illness, poverty, and war? Could people change the world and themselves, or were they doomed to repeat the past?

Before one could deal with these grand problems and goals, one had to develop a paradigm, a theory, a philosophy around which its adherents could function. Does psychoanalysis have one? Some say that since it is not a science, a verifiable, materialist theory is not necessary or even possible. This is a poor excuse for a difficult task. As psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, physicians, and scientists, we must try to establish a philosophy, a paradigm, around which we can all function, to agree, to disagree, to research, to teach, and to apply.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) proposed a theory that was from its very beginning fraught with paradigmatic and philosophical contradictions. It was a mixture of material, biological premises and speculative, metaphysical concepts.

As a result, recent studies reveal over forty different and distinct schools of theory and therapy in the field of psychiatry, as reported by Karasu (1977). Other investigators say there are lots more, up to two hundred! In a two-volume issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy* (1973–74) containing articles entitled “My Philosophy of Psychotherapy,” fifteen eminent therapists presented views from “I do what’s best for the patient” to “I have no philosophy.”

Arieti states, "Many tenets of classic psychoanalysis cannot at this stage of our knowledge be included in the body of general psychiatry" (1968). The libido theory is rejected as there is no evidence, or necessity to postulate a sexual energy or even a psychic energy, which derives from the id. The concept of the id is also questioned. How is it possible that the id which Freud characterized as "a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement," has no structure whatsoever, but is only a reservoir of energy and instincts? And, further, "we must eliminate the division of the psyche into id, ego, and superego." The conception of motivation, conscious or unconscious, "as a tendency moving only toward the gratification of infantile striving, wishes—cannot be accepted." He further questions the concept that consciousness alone is curative while omitting the process of change through activity. Arieti also seriously questions the concept of infantile sexuality. On this subject Frieda Fromm-Reichman believes that the "entire Freudian psycho-sexual sequence is not a regularly occurring and normal development, but a pathological formation" (1950).

All this controversy is not presented to cloud or minimize the epoch-making contributions of Freud toward the understanding of the human mind in health and disease, along with a treatment method to alleviate psychic suffering. The problem here is to evaluate the underlying philosophy of the Freudian system.

In addition to its reductionist and metaphysical aspects, Freud's approach was ahistorical. He believed that basic human needs were not only unchanging, as dealt with in "Totem and Taboo," "Moses and Monotheism," through his "Civilization and its Discontents," but also in constant conflict with existing society, past and present. Human beings and society were seen as fixed rather than evolving categories, each with their own contradictions and qualitative changes. Humans were determined, either by a biological materialism, "anatomy is destiny," or a metaphysical idealism, "Eros and Thanatos."

Pinchas Noy in the "Psychoanalytic Study of the Child," referring to Freud's concept that the unconscious is timeless and not altered by time, and that the primary process is already present in infancy, states:



This means that the primary process is to be regarded as something that springs from nowhere . . . and develops towards nowhere, a strange group of functions for which there is nothing similar to be found among all other biological functions. (1979)

At the same time, the political reactions to Freud were intense. To begin with, his position on sexuality was a severe blow to the Victorian morality of his time. In addition, he was virtually “excommunicated” by his medical colleagues because of his unorthodox views on hysteria, the unconscious, and related medical problems. On the other hand, his followers became identified with the growing progressive political ferment in Europe.

## 7

The first and second generation Freudians were very much involved with philosophy and politics. A recent book, *The Repression of Psychoanalysis*, is a detailed archival study based on these aspects of the psychoanalytic movement. The author, Russell Jacoby, points out:

Today, it is easy to forget how many psychoanalysts identified themselves as socialist and Marxist: Paul Federn, Helene Deutsch, Siegfried Bernfeld, Herman Nunberg, Annie and Wilhelm Reich, Edith Jacobson, Willi Hoffer, Martin Grotjahn, Karl Landauer, Bruno Bettelheim, Ernst Simmel, and Otto Fenichel. (1983)

The central figure in this movement was Otto Fenichel, who believed that unless one understood the contradictory, exploitive, class basis of the society we live in, a scientific evaluation of human responses would be incomplete and distorted. In arguing with Erich Fromm, a representative of the neo-Freudian so-called Frankfurt School, who maintained that the “helplessness, powerlessness, and alienation” of the individual was due to technology and machines, Fenichel stated, “Not the immensity of the machine matters, but its use by monopolistic capitalism.” In this classic paper, “The Drive to Amass Wealth,” Fenichel points out

that the anal-erotic drive is not a sufficient factor to explain this need under an economic system that demands a continuous profit on investment, lest one go bankrupt:

Reflection on the significant influence of economic evolution upon all conditions of mankind shows us that such a drive at one time did not exist and at some future will no longer exist. (1938)

His first lecture, following exile to Oslo, was "Psychoanalysis and Marxism."

And there was Ernst Simmel, a highly esteemed colleague of Freud, who, almost in response to Freud's hope that therapy become accessible to the poor "who suffer no less than the rich from neurosis," helped found the Berlin Institute and presided over the Society of Socialist Physicians.

All of the analysts listed above had to flee from Hitlerism, ending up mostly in the United States. Jacoby comments, "As they filled out their applications for entry permits and visas, their politics evaporated and what they left off the form they dumped in the Atlantic Ocean as they crossed it" (1983).

Nevertheless, Fenichel wrote and distributed a detailed newsletter or "Rundbrief" to his scattered psychoanalytic colleagues, continuing their polemics on Hitler, war, politics, psychoanalysis, and society. These letters "were secret, and Fenichel counselled recipients to destroy them." Referring to the seminars by Simmel, who was then president of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Study Group, Fenichel said, "I, too, am often longing for the discussions we used to have in Europe."

Psychoanalysis had become politically neutralized and "Americanized." Lawrence Kubie, in a brief paper, "The Dilemma of the Analyst in a Troubled World," states:

The psychoanalyst has a tendency not to become actually involved in causes [and] acknowledged regretfully that they do not often know enough about the technical aspects of social or political or economic or international policy to justify an active espousal of one side or another. (1950)

The taboo on sex was lifted and descended on politics. Freud was in, Marx was out. The early Freudians lost in their battle to keep psychoanalysis from becoming a narrow medical specialty.

In this regard, I must point out that in 1944, the Benjamin Rush Society was formed in New York City, to develop materialistic, scientific theory and practice of psychiatry and psychoanalysis, and to examine to what degree, if any, could Marxist theory be applied to the questions at hand. Almost reflecting the “repression” of the early Freudians, the Society was forced out of existence by the growing McCarthy period in our country. I wonder how many of us know that leading members of our profession had to write under assumed names in developing their views on psychoanalysis and society.

## 8

To return to past history: as the early Freudians were struggling to develop a theory and understanding of the human personality, similar efforts were taking place in the Soviet Union. Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), a young physician and psychologist, was probably the first investigator to study the interconnections between cognition, psychology, personality, and neurophysiology, along with a Marxist concept of historical and social evolution. Though Fenichel had visited the Soviet Union on many occasions, there is no evidence that he was aware of Vygotsky’s work. In fact, Vygotsky’s pioneering efforts were even relatively unnoticed in his own country because of the great emphasis on the contributions of Pavlov.

In a paper written in 1924, reminiscent of Spinoza, Vygotsky states:

The main premise of reflexology, namely the purported possibility in principle of explaining all human behavior without any recourse to subjective phenomena and of constructing a psychology without mind, is the hand-me-down dualism of subjective psychology, its attempt to study pure, abstract mind. This is the other half of the old dualism: then there was mind without behavior, now we have behavior without mind; in both cases mind and behavior are not one, but two. . . .

Rather than study reflexes, we must study behavior, its mechanisms, its component parts, and its structure. (1979, 8, 10)

Vygotsky ushered in a philosophical approach to the human mind that considered it a function of human activity, socially and historically determined. From birth, the infant was an active participant in its psychological development. Through its sensate activity, the infant actively learned about its environment, changed its environment and itself in the process. But unlike animals who also acted on the environment, the infant's environment was one that was already historically and socially developed by those who preceded it. The human environment is qualitatively different because it also contains the existence of language and meanings created and conveyed by other humans. To Vygotsky, word-meaning became the unity of thought and speech, thus adding to the established Pavlovian concept of signalization, the concept of signification.

A word without meaning is an empty sound, . . . a word does not refer to a single object, but to a group or class—a generalization, and reflects reality in quite another way from sensation and perception. (1967)

Thus we as human beings create not only physical tools, but also mental tools. With physical tools we master nature, with mental tools we master ourselves. It is through our activity that both are united.

Vygotsky, in an article written in 1933, "Play and its Role in the Mental Development of the Child," observed that play comes to the child when it cannot have its immediate needs met in real life, it is the birth of imagination, "a *new* formation which is not present in the consciousness of the very young child, totally absent in animals and represents a specifically human form of conscious activity" (1967). He observed that child's play was enhanced, not diminished, by rules. Through play and games children learn to know more about themselves, others, and society. Pleasure comes from mastery and control, not from abandon and "freedom."

Though crediting Piaget with having "revolutionized the

study of child language and thought,” Vygotsky felt that Piaget still maintained a dualistic approach—the pleasure principle preceding a reality principle with the former being a vital force in itself. Vygotsky states further, “The true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the socialized, but from the social to the individual. Children do not live in their own world.”

Unfortunately Vygotsky died of tuberculosis at age 38, but his impact was extended by his colleagues Aleksandr R. Luria and Aleksei N. Leontiev. In his *Working Brain*, based on forty years of research, Luria demonstrates that “thinking arises only when the subject is confronted by a situation for which he has no ready conclusion; the origin of thought is always the presence of a task” (1973). He shows that with different tasks, different periods of history, different social and class positions, the brain itself responds with different physiological configurations and functions. (The reflexes, neural connections, thinking processes, must be different between a violinist and a football player.)

As the chief of the Institute of Defectology, Luria’s findings were based on the study of brain-injured veterans following World War II. In his last book, *Language and Cognition*, Luria states:

In order to explain the highly complex form of human consciousness one must go beyond the human organism, One must seek the origins of conscious activity not in the recesses of the human brain or in the depths of the spirit, but in the external conditions of life, in the social and historical forms of existence. . . . Humans differ from other animals because, with the transition to socio-historical existence, to labor, and to the forms of social life associated with it, all basic categories of human behavior undergo a radical change. Direct, instinctive behavior yields to complex, indirect behavior. Thus, from the point of view of biology, it would be meaningless to scatter seeds on the ground instead of eating them. (1981)

Leontiev (1904-1979) concentrated more on the development of perception and consciousness. In his recently published book,

*Activity, Consciousness, and Personality*, he points out that we do not see something in our brain and then “project” our mental image onto the object. We use our senses as active agents, seeing, hearing, touching, smelling objects “out there.”

Within the skull you will not find anything to which a functional definition of thought could be applied, because thinking is a function of external, objective activity. . . . In society man finds not only his external conditions to which he must adapt his activity, but also these very social conditions carry in themselves the motives and aims of his activity, the ways and means of their realization. . . . There is no such thing as activity without a motive; unmotivated activity is not an activity without a motive, but activity with a subjectively and objectively hidden motive. (1978)

Leontiev thus appreciates the concept of unconsciousness. There may be one goal, but many motives. He further points out that the human being is the only animal that sees the products of activity in terms of names, meaning, values, and goals. By transforming natural marble into a statue, a person becomes a sculptor. To the human mind a statue is a work of beauty; to the pigeon, it is still just a place to perch.

Leontiev speaks of the unity of mental activity, but shows that consciousness leads a “double life”—one, from meanings and activity that have been socially and historically developed (phylogenetic) and the other, from one’s individual activity (ontogenetic). Consciousness reflects both socially objective meaning and subjective personal ones. In society, based on class, race, and sex division, these two modes of consciousness can become more and more divergent.

This makes it possible to

introduce into the individual, distorted, fantastic ideas including those with no basis in real life experience. Some ideas are so fixed that only the big confrontations of life can break them down and their destruction may lead to psychological disaster.

9

Recent trends in our field are moving from an idealist, metaphysical, reductionist, speculative approach, to one more materialist, verifiable, and developmental. The theory of interpersonal relations, object theory, cultural determinants, cognitive development, systems theory, etc. are all tending toward a more objective, social, and historical view of the human being. For example, Rosenblatt and Thickstun, elaborating on the systems theory and its relationship to psychoanalysis, conclude that the concept of psychic energy, the id, instincts

are no longer useful in our field, and since activity is a given of all biological systems there is no need to search for a prime motivating force—the question is not what drives the person, but what conditions determine which behavioral system is activated. (1977)

As the philosopher Laplace said when asked why he omits the deity in his treatise on celestial mechanics, “I had no need of that hypothesis.”

Are we in a position to resolve the question of nature/nuture? I believe the problem is best answered by the proposition that people create their own environment and, in the process, themselves. As Thomas points out, “The human infant is an active agent from the moment of birth in the organism-environment interaction process” (1981). Marmor, in an article on Systems Thinking, states, “Man is an active organism . . . capable of self-regulation, goal seeking, . . . internally active as well as externally responsive” (1983).

Posing the problem this way, the mind/body question is resolved by what is becoming known as Activity Theory in the East and Developmental Theory in the West. The two are not very far apart. It is of interest that at the last International Psychological Congress, B. Lomov, director of the Institute of Psychology, Moscow, highlighted the meeting by stating, “The need has become urgent for a consistent application of the principles of the systems approach in the science of man” (1984).

Thomas, in a very extensive review of Developmental Theory, concludes:

It is much more likely that Freud and Erickson's characterizations reflect sequences of demands and expectations of a specific environment rather than any preprogrammed maturational sequence. . . . Development is not shaped by the conflicts between drives for instinctual gratification and the repressing forces of social reality. . . . We have suggested the goals of human behavior, starting at birth, as social competence and task mastery. (1981)

Greenspan and Lourie, in their National Institutes of Mental Health studies, state, "There is a need for another dimension of our classification, which would focus on the organism's individual way of processing, organizing, integrating and differentiating experience" (1981).

Offhand, the activity/developmental approach sounds like a simple paradigm, a simple philosophy of life, but is in fact, quite distinct from the biological, instinct approach as well as the environmental, cultural approach. As Loewald states, "Inborn apparatuses are nothing but euphemisms for neurophysiological and neuroanatomical substrates; they have no psychological status" (1979). In other words, this paradigm implies that psychology is not biology or sociology, but refers to a qualitatively new form of motion, unique to the *human* being, derived from, but congealed within the complexity of society and the intricacies of the brain. Human beings create their own fantasies and their factories, their memories and their monuments.

## 10

What will be left of psychoanalytic thinking? This is a question raised by Schafer in *A New Language for Psychoanalysis*, in which he states, "For now everything is an action; . . . thinking is a certain kind of action . . . and it is people, not wishes, who (or that) are frustrated" (1976, 124).

I believe that our field can gain from these theoretical and philosophical developments. The activity/development theory becomes more consistent with our actual clinical practice. Hilde Bruch, in an overview of the theory and therapy of anorexia nervosa, states, "Traditional psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on



interpretation of unconscious processes, was found to be rather ineffective, whereas an approach evoking active participation on the part of the patient led to better treatment results" (1982). She opposes the traditional psychoanalytic model that sees the child as "born with certain drives or instincts . . . as a passive recipient of adult ministrations" to one based on "the infant's own contribution to his development from birth on." Pointing out that anorexia nervosa was traditionally viewed "as a form of conversion hysteria and as the symbolic expression of the repudiation of sexuality, specifically of 'oral impregnation' fantasies," she states that experience has shown that it basically "represents a problem in the development of identity and selfhood."

Bruch adds, "these patients do poorly with a prescription of 'say everything that comes to your mind'; all that comes to their minds are ruminations about food and weight and the conviction of still being 'too fat.'" She further points out that,

This change in treatment orientation from a focus on content to an emphasis on functional interaction amounts to a redefinition of the therapist's role. His or her task is not so much to give insight about the symbolic significance of the symptoms as to help the patient with the way she faces the realities of her life, in the past and present. . . . This concept is in good agreement with other studies of infancy, although, as far as I know, it has not been expressed in quite such simple and general terms.

In a seminal paper, "Insight, Activity and Change," Robbins was one of the first to pose the question of activity, stating "Psychotherapy itself was in reality an activity, a social practice. . . . The laws governing the correct practice of psychotherapy and its outcomes are identical with the laws governing growth" (1956). Insight and change come from activity.

To conclude, the activity/developmental approach represents the theory that can be equally applied to our understanding of human growth, phylogenetically and ontogenetically. I believe that Arieti might agree that this monistic conception would appeal to "our sense of 'theoretical elegance' and would appear more congruous with prevailing scientific positions."

Irving J. Crain died 11 May 1995. This paper was originally presented at the Winter Meeting of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis, 6–9 December 1984, New York.

*New York Medical College, New York City*

#### NOTE

\*The author is apparently referring to a message, drafted by Marx, sent by the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association in November 1864 congratulating Lincoln upon his reelection as president. *Ed.*

#### REFERENCE LIST

- Arieti, Silvano. 1968. The present status of psychiatric theory. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 124:1630–39.
- Bruch, Hilde. 1982. Anorexia nervosa: Therapy and theory. *American Journal of Psychiatry*.
- Eccles, John C. 1970. *Facing reality*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Fenichel, Otto. 1938. The drive to amass wealth. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 7:69–95.
- Feuerbach, Ludwig. 1957. *The essence of Christianity*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Fromm, Erich. 1964. *The heart of man: Its genius for good and evil*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Fromm-Reichman, Frieda. 1950. *Principles of intensive psychotherapy*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Greenspan, Stanley I., and Reginald Lourie. 1981. Developmental structuralist approach: Infancy and early childhood. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 138:725–35.
- Hegel, Georg W. F. 1955. *Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- . 1969. *Hegel's science of logic*. Translated by A. V. Miller. New York: Humanities Press.
- Jackson, J. Hughling. 1958. *Selected writings*. Vol. 1. New York: Basic Books.
- Jacoby, Russell. 1983. *Repression of psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kaplan, A. 1977. Spinoza and Freud. *American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 5:299–325.
- Karasu, T. B. 1977. Psychotherapist: An overview. *American Psychiatry* 134:851–62.
- Kubie, Lawrence S. 1950. The dilemma of the psychoanalyst in a troubled world. *Bulletin of the American Psychoanalytical Association* 6:1–4.
- Leontiev, Aleksei N. 1978. *Activity, consciousness, and personality*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Lewontin, Richard C., et al. 1984. *Not in our genes*. New York: Pantheon Books.

- Loewald, Hans. 1971. On motivation and instinct theory. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 28:91–128.
- Lomov, B. 1984. A system of the sciences of man. *Social Sciences* 15:22–33.
- Luria, Aleksandr R. 1973. *The working brain: An introduction to neuropsychology*. New York: Basic Books.
- . 1981. *Language and cognition*. New York: Wiley.
- Marmor, J. 1983. Systems thinking in psychiatry. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 140:833–38.
- Marx, Karl. 1967. *Capital*. Vol. 1. New York: International Publishers.
- . 1975. *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844*. In vol. 3 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 229–346. New York: International Publishers.
- . 1976. Theses on Feuerbach. In vol. 5 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 3–9. New York: International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. 1976. *The German ideology*. In vol. 5 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works*, 19–549. New York: International Publishers.
- Noy, Pinchas. 1979. The psychoanalytic theory of cognitive development. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 34:169–217.
- Penfield, Wilbur. 1975. *The mystery of the mind*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Pittman, John. 1983. Spinoza and Marx. *Benjamin Rush Society Bulletin* no. 4: 21–26.
- Robbins, B. 1956. Insight, activity & change. *Psychotherapy* 1:304–20.
- Rosenblatt, Allen D., and James T. Thickstun. 1977. Modern psychoanalytic concepts in a general psychology. *Psychological Issues* 11:78–133.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1945. *A history of Western philosophy*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Schafer, Roy. 1976. *A new language for psychoanalysis*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.
- Sherrington, Charles S. 1942. *Man and his nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Skinner, Burrhus F. 1971. *Beyond freedom and dignity*. New York: Knopf.
- . 1977. *Monitor* (July). American Psychology Association.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de. 1955. *Ethics*. Great books of the Western world, vol. 31. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica.
- Thomas, A. 1981. Current developments in developmental theory. *American Journal of Orthopsychology* 51:580–609.
- Vygotsky, Lev S. 1967. Play and its role in the mental development of the child. *Soviet Psychology* 5, no. 3:6–18.
- . 1979. Consciousness as a problem in the psychology of behavior. *Soviet Psychology* 17, no. 4:3–35.
- Wilson, Edward O. 1975. *Sociobiology: The new synthesis*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.

**REPLACES AD PAGE.**

### A Marx-Freud Dialogue?

Peter Feigenbaum

From a scientific perspective, probably the greatest legacy of Marx and Freud is that they put forward empirically testable theories about human nature, society, history, social struggles, and human psychology. In Marx's case, the more salient theories are: the labor theory of value; the theory that the history of human society is the history of class struggle; the theory of surplus value under capitalism; the theory of alienation; and the theory that the capitalist economic system will end and give birth to socialism. Freud's most well-known theories include: the theory of the unconscious; the theory of the id, ego, and superego; specific defense mechanisms of the ego, and the theory of psychosocial stages in human development. For the most part, it is the topics over which their theories *clash* that give rise to the Marx-Freud dialogue. But what gives rise to these topics? To fully understand and appreciate the latest wave of Marx-Freud papers by Howard Parsons, Antal Borbely, and Irving Crain, it would be helpful to bear in mind the following question: What practical, political issues have motivated the authors to write these essays?

Howard Parsons's contribution is a scholarly, balanced, neatly crafted patchwork of topics, each of which is used to compare and contrast the ideas of Marx and Freud. The task he undertook required substantial effort, and the resulting paper *Nature, Society, and*

*Thought*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1995)

performs a valuable service. Parsons identifies and explores more than a dozen points of contact and contrast between Marx and Freud. These include: their field of training; their relationship to their society; their slant on the mind-body problem in philosophy; their explanation of the origin of politics; their root-metaphors; their view on the sources of intrapsychic conflict; their view of ego development; their perspective on the origin of pain; their description and explanation of repression and resistance; their view of communication and its function in personality development and therapy; their position on the cure for intrapsychic conflict; their understanding of the unconscious; their understanding of individual consciousness; and their view on the correct path to individual and social liberation.

The most illuminating comments are the ones associated with the root-metaphors, the sources of psychic conflict, the nature and causes of repression, the process of communication and its role in ego development and therapy, and the nature of conscious and unconscious activity. According to Parsons, Marx's root-metaphor is *social labor as a productive, creative force*: humans create transformations of themselves, others, social relations, and the ecological world; in contrast, Freud's root-metaphor is *impulse-blockage-discharge*, or *impulse-repression-pleasure*: a mechanical materialist form of explanation, coupled with hedonistic utilitarianism. These metaphors provide distinctly different frameworks for understanding and interpreting many of the topics Parsons touches upon. For example, the sources of psychic conflict are, for Marx, *external* to the individual; they are between individual bodily needs and nature in human prehistory, and are exacerbated by class conflict in later history. For Freud, the sources of conflict are *internal*; they are between the impulsive wishes of the id and the diplomatic rationalizations of the ego in early ontogenetic development, and are exacerbated by the demands of the superego and society in later development.

On the nature and causes of repression and resistance, Parsons asserts that Marx viewed social creativity as being blocked by *the conditions of class economy and ideology*. Freud viewed individual creativity as being blocked by *intrapsychic defense mechanisms*. As Parsons notes, these theories lead to different practices.

For Marx, social health is brought about by the *removal* of the obstructive forces of repression; for Freud, repression is *unavoidable and necessary* to individual mental health and psychic equilibrium. As for the process of communication, and its role in ego development and therapy, Parsons claims that Marx regarded the ego as arising from the individual's *active and self-reflexive use of signs* in the context of social communication. The human personality is not born, but created in collaboration with others in the course of communication. Freud, in comparison, accorded no such formative role to the process of communication. For Freud, communication and self-reflection play a role in the improvement of consciousness, although, according to Parsons, Freud never formulated these as explicit principles.

Conscious and unconscious activity are topics in which the differences between Marx's and Freud's theories are most pronounced. For Marx, unconscious activity is what we are *not aware of*, or what we *do not understand* even if we are aware. Unconscious activity occurs "behind the backs" of the producers, but it can be made *accessible to consciousness* through political struggle and social communication. Parsons's discussion of the role of consciousness-raising and the development of a social and political *conscience* on the part of workers is enlightening. He asserts that, for Marx, the path to liberation is understanding and becoming conscious of personal, interpersonal, social, and economic conditions, and then acting—within groups and as classes—to change the environment so as to remove the repressive obstacles. Freud's view of unconscious activity stands in striking contrast. Unconscious activity consists of a labyrinth of impulses that, for most people, is *inaccessible* to conscious awareness, except through the intensive help of an experienced psychoanalyst. According to Parsons, the path to liberation for Freud is through the raising of consciousness by an experienced analyst, under the curative conditions of empathetic communication, the exchange of ideas, and the interpersonal relationship of analyst and patient.

In my opinion, Parsons's paper raises two challenging questions, one for Freudians and the other for Marxists. An important

question for Freudians to consider is: Are there any circumstances in which *political activism* and *social change* enter into psychotherapy as part of the cure? For Marxists, a question to consider is: Are there circumstances that give rise to *intrapsychic conflicts*, and if so, what is an appropriate form of cure?

Antal Borbely's perspective on the Marx-Freud dialogue is strikingly different from that of Parsons, and it contains some shocking surprises. Borbely, a practicing psychoanalyst, contends that recent technological developments—most notably the computer chip, the computer sciences, and the Internet—are so revolutionary that they are capable of transforming industrialized society to the point where class struggle is rendered irrelevant and unnecessary. At the crux of his argument is “information,” which is the key commodity in the new era that is dawning. Information is envisioned as a liberating force: someday everyone will be able to create it, share it, and have complete access to it. Barriers between capitalists and workers will crumble because power will be neutralized by the free exchange of information. To quote Borbely: “Once knowledge becomes the main commodity of social life, an irreversible process of informed democratization sets in.”

The thrust of Borbely's essay is directed at what he perceives as Marxism's failures and Freudianism's successes with respect to the concept of information. Marxism has failed, according to Borbely, to understand the “material” nature of information, to appreciate its social value, and to anticipate its central role in the revolutionary reorganization of human society. In fact, he asserts that many of Marxism's central theses have already become outmoded and require revision. Borbely targets several key concepts in Marxism to illustrate the kinds of revisions he feels are needed. The old concept of *production*, which he describes as the “human acquisition of nature,” should be reconceptualized as the production and organization of information. In the past, the gauge of *sociohistorical development* was the level of natural resources harnessed for production, but in the future the gauge should be the degree of computerization and the level of education achieved by the population. *Work*, which formerly was viewed as production, should be viewed as creation. In the recent past, *economy*



has been viewed as either capitalist or socialist, but in the new age there should be room for the notion of a “mixed” economy, consisting of both public and private ownership. In the old materialism of Marx, Borbely claims, *ideas* were excluded, but in the new materialism ideas should be regarded as belonging to the highest level in the organization of matter–information.

Borbely’s most controversial claim by far is that the *class struggle* is being superseded by the struggle between the old information paradigms and the new ones. The gist of this argument is that the capitalist class undermines, slows down, and distorts the progress of humanity because it owns the means of producing—and distorting—information in accordance with its class interests; but as the working class comes into full possession of the means of producing and disseminating information, the capitalist class will become increasingly unable to distort information and slow down progress. From this, Borbely draws several conclusions. First, working-class emancipation is, for the first time, “conceivable without expropriation of the propertied class as an absolute precondition.” Second, socialism’s role in the future will be to promote the general welfare of the population, which encompasses both workers and capitalists. Third, the ruling ideas, which in the past were understood to be those ideas favoring the interests of the ruling class, will, in the information age, be determined by public opinion.

A few comments are in order here. On scholarly grounds, I find it difficult to accept Borbely’s revolutionary theory of information. While his theory is attractive at first blush, highlighting as it does the usefulness of the notion of information, upon further scrutiny serious problems are revealed. Of most concern is the gravely mistaken notion that the only impediment that the capitalist class poses to the emancipation of the working class and the progress of humanity is the “distortion of information.” There is no mention of the exploitation of labor, runaway shops, the extraction of surplus value, the economic practice of racism, or the amassing of tremendous public wealth in the private hands of a few. Another serious flaw in Borbely’s theory is the questionable assumption that people will inevitably and irreversibly have

total access to information. For this to occur, everyone must first possess a telephone, a computer, a modem, an Internet account, and a high degree of education. With unemployment rising and corporate downsizing in vogue, this scenario does not seem likely. A third problem is the ubiquitous concept of "information," which is never precisely defined, but is instead used metaphorically.

It is my impression that this entire theory is an expression of Borbely's response to three particular social events of great significance, events that he himself cites: economic globalization, the demise of socialism in Eastern Europe, and the rejection by Marxists of psychoanalysis as "bourgeois" and "idealist," leaving many to suffer without its help. The emergence of a global economy has been made possible by the emergence of transnational corporations, which are using the new technologies to manage and exploit a global workforce. This latest stage in capitalist economic development is producing a crisis, a growing sense of hysteria for working people, making them justifiably fearful of losing their jobs to workers living in other parts of the globe. Add to this crisis the failure of the first experiments in socialism, and it is possible to imagine how Borbely (and many others) might be tempted to question Marxism's relevance. If on top of this we add the rejection of psychoanalysis by the former socialist governments, it is even more understandable how Borbely could theorize about the end of Marxism.

Borbely's discussion of Freudian psychoanalysis is much more solid than his discussion of Marxism, and far more intriguing. First he makes the point that Freud embraced the concept of information and used it in his psychotherapeutic practice. Freud, according to Borbely, sought to produce psychological healing by "providing" information to the patient, who had "lost" the information; Freud saw symptoms as containing "past" information in an undeciphered form; he conceived of "complexes" of information sequestered in childhood, but nevertheless motivationally present and active.

In psychoanalysis, information is communicated between analyst and analysand that is both "on the surface" and "beneath" it. The information below the surface has traditionally been called

“psychodynamics.” Using words and nonverbal communication, both patient and analyst engage in a therapeutic conversation in which communication ranges between the straightforward and the metaphorical. As psychoanalysts listen to “free association,” they try to be open to the different levels of information contained in the communication. “Drives” and “affects” enter into the conversation as detectable information, and their presence in the conversation enables the analyst to feed back information to the patient. Borbely confides that the shared language used in the ongoing analytic discourse is a blend between the analysand’s and the analyst’s personal language, reflecting also the influence of the particular metaphor-language they have developed. “It slowly becomes an idiom unique to each particular analytic couple.”

What Borbely describes is a fascinating and entirely plausible phenomenon, one that is scientifically researchable and ought to be of great interest to Marxists, psycholinguists, and other scientists. This verbal/therapeutic phenomenon may very well offer some insights into one of the more intractable problems in sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic development—explaining how the individual becomes socialized. This problem is relevant to Marxists and Freudians, and provides a common focus for discussion and a practical opportunity for scientific collaboration. The kinds of transactions between analyst and patient that Borbely describes can be studied empirically, although such an investigation would require a complex coordination of diverse methods: discourse and narrative analysis, intersubjective analysis, rhetorical analysis, speech-act analysis, grammatical and intonational analysis, and possibly other linguistic methods. Of relevance here are the psycholinguistic investigations conducted by the Marxist developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1987), and the political, historical, sociolinguistic analyses presented by the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1981).

In his closing remarks, Borbely mentions in passing a noteworthy difference between Marxist theory and practice and Freudian theory and practice. According to Borbely, Freud’s theoretical concepts are essentially dualistic and mechanical, whereas developments in psychoanalytic practice have been

largely dialectical. In contrast, Marx's theoretical concepts are formulated dialectically, whereas socialist practice (with notable exceptions) has proceeded undialectically and uncreatively (Borbely cites, as an example, the militaristic system of "democratic centralism"). For those struggling to understand the causes underlying the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, this characterization of the divergence between theory and practice, if true, may be a useful port of entry.

Irving Crain's contribution to the Marx-Freud dialogue seems to issue from a genuine concern for the future of Freudian psychoanalysis. As a psychoanalyst, he is troubled by the fact that psychoanalysis does not have "a paradigm, a theory, a philosophy around which its adherents could function." Without a coherent, fully scientific theory of human psychology to guide research, clinical practice, and teaching, he argues, psychoanalysis cannot contribute meaningfully to the solution of society's most vexing problems, such as preventing war and creating a happier, healthier society. As a Marxist, Crain affiliates himself with that segment of the psychoanalytic movement that has rejected the mystical, reductionist, ahistorical, and apolitical aspects of Freud's conception of the human personality. He laments the fact that the early Freudians lost their battle to keep psychoanalysis from becoming a narrow medical specialty.

Using the rhetorical device of retracing the development of Marx's thought step by step starting with Spinoza's materialism, Crain subtly proposes that what psychoanalytic theory needs is Marx's philosophical framework of dialectical and historical materialism. The simplified and abbreviated history of philosophy that Crain soothingly relates is his clever way of showing that Marx's theoretical perspective is strong in just those places where psychoanalytic theory is weak. To illustrate the strengths of the Marxist approach, Crain highlights some of the groundbreaking theoretical work of Soviet developmental psychologists and "activity" theorists, such as A. N. Leontiev, Lev Vygotsky, and Alexander Luria. He cites their work on key topics such as motivation, conscious and unconscious thought, and personality to show that Marxism has something of value to contribute to psychoanalytic theory. Their work is also used to illustrate that

Marxism regards human psychological development as the product of not only heredity and biological activity, but also historical, economic, social, cultural, political, interpersonal, and personal activity.

In sum, Crain's efforts seem to lead to the following conclusion: psychoanalytic theory will remain incomplete and distorted unless it takes into account the contradictory, exploitative, class basis of our society. While the logic of his argument is not iron-clad, it has a charming appeal that Crain undoubtedly hopes will inspire and persuade progressively minded psychoanalysts to incorporate Marx's ideas into their thinking and practice.

In conclusion, it is clear that Parsons, Borbely, and Crain have expended considerable effort to provide insightful and provocative new ideas about Marx's and Freud's theories. It is also clear that the three contributors are pursuing rather different agendas. Consequently, there is no real dialogue here. Because of the complexity of the issues, I cannot help but wonder how many *other* viewpoints there are on Marx and Freud—viewpoints held by women, people of color, and poor people, for example. Perhaps all of the perspectives need to be aired before there can be a true Marx-Freud dialogue.

*Department of Research and Program Evaluation  
The Children's Village  
Dobbs Ferry, New York*

#### REFERENCE LIST

- Vygotsky, Lev S. 1987. *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky*. Vol. 1, *Problems of general psychology*. Translated by N. Minick. Edited by Robert W. Rieber and Aaron S. Carton. New York: Plenum Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1981. *The dialogic imagination*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Edited by Michael Holquist. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press.

## **Comments on the Papers on Marx and Freud**

**John P. Pittman**

This somewhat motley array of reflections on “Marx and Freud” is not without rewards. But overall it is disturbing to find so much time and energy invested in exploring the same old rut. Let me first very briefly justify this negative judgment; then I will try to flesh out my own objections in a more systematic way.

The “Marx-Freud” problematic has not been without its would-be Newtons during the past seventy years: Crain identifies some of the likely candidates but others get passed over in silence. An entire constellation of central European intellectuals, sometimes grouped under the rubric “western Marxists,” goes unmentioned. The intellectual blinders are very well in place in this symposium: the orientation to Marxism, at least, seems to be of a late Third International origin. This has unfortunate consequences.

Here we have, once again, a symposium of three white men—accepting for a moment the verities of mainstream culture regarding “race”—discussing the theories of two dead “founding fathers” virtually as though the world consisted exclusively of white men (this despite Parsons’s mention in passing of “patriarchy”). Theirs is a world without W. E. B. Du Bois, say,

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1995)

or Simone de Beauvoir, just for starters. And if that were not embarrassing enough, they seem unaware how retrograde this makes their efforts, despite their professed political intentions and revolutionary shibboleths. It is unlikely we could find a plainer piece of evidence for the currently fashionable judgment of the irrelevance of Marxist writing than this line-up of articles.

It is not that these writers are not “Marxist enough”: they obviously can quote the texts and talk the talk with the best of them. But from the point of view of the present, and of the political alignments and culture wars waged intellectually in the United States today, these contributions mark their authors as somewhere to the right of Bill Clinton. To be honest, I am not quite sure what their problem is, psychologically speaking. I am prepared, however, to comment on what I take to be their conceptual lapses.

Irving Crain’s contribution has the merit of attempting to indicate something of the historical course of development of the institutionalized psychoanalytic movement as it came to be constituted during and after the period between the wars, its center shifting from central Europe to the United States. These politically relevant remarks, along with Parsons’s intellectual stage set of Marx’s and Freud’s lives and works, point in the direction of a historically situated account of the problem designated by a “Marx and Freud” discussion.

Unfortunately, too much in the rest of these texts moves in the opposite direction, attempting to establish “readings” of what are described as Marx’s and Freud’s “place in the intellectual history of humankind” (Borbely), and to contrast and compare Marx’s and Freud’s “positions” (Parsons). These reifying formulations only complicate and obscure the difficulties involved in appropriating the writings of these theorists for our own purposes. Careful attention to the texts of Marx would suggest the uselessness and irrelevance of locutions such as “the intellectual history of humankind”; more generally, the attempt to attribute to any thinker a stable and coherent system or architectonic of thought, or even a theoretical “position” that can then be juggled along with others, is a kind of violent textual practice authorized

only by an “idealism” that the efforts of Marx and Freud can be used to make visible.

This complaint amounts to an insistence that any seemingly stable identity is riven, constituted on the ground of a repressed and sometimes invisible opposition. This is as true of texts as products of writing, as it is of human individuals as products of their own life’s activities, and of social formations as products of the activities of “associated producers” (Marx 1967, 820). In different ways, and to different degrees, both Marx and Freud developed analytical methods in accordance with something like this general approach. What I find objectionable in these articles is the attempt to evaluate, globally, Marx’s and Freud’s “theories,” counter to the requirement of this methodological demand that things not be treated as stable and self-subsistent wholes. But this is just what these contributors do, writing of “Marxism” in the one case, “Freud’s thought” in the other. This is not unrelated to the earlier objection, which might be thought the more “political,” less “theoretical” one: insofar as readers are not attuned to the constitutive conflicts underlying the surface, and so dwell in a realm of idealizations, they will be immune to the evidence of embattled diversity around them. The traditions of thought and action in which Marx and Freud came to consciousness and in turn transformed were deeply tainted by Eurocentric and patriarchal illusions, and neither of these European outsiders was free of these influences. These are matters of considerable importance, and they have been and are being addressed by writers both in and out of Marxist and Freudian traditions. It is somewhat disappointing, to say the least, that our symposiasts have not drawn on that ongoing theoretical work.

There are many specific criticisms to be made of the articles individually. I will confine myself to a broad comment about Parsons’s paper, and one about Borbely’s.

Parsons’s considerations take the form of a contrast between Marx, the socialist theorist who was able to formulate adequately the problem of “full sociality” (40), and Freud, who, because of his “biological individualism,” was unable to achieve such a



complete understanding. This contrast is loosely connected with that between Marx's "critically situat[ing] himself outside bourgeois society" and Freud's being "safely situated within that society" (26–27). This series of contrasts is rounded out by Parsons's claims that while "Freud never brought into focus the powerful forces of society shaping the individual personality" (28), Marx "found no innate conflict between impulse and reason and no necessary antagonistic conflict between the infant and parents" (30) and that "unlike Freud, Marx did not postulate an inner conflict [between desire and taboo] in personality" (32). First it must be said that these judgments are misleading at best, and tend to suggest a toothless and mushy-headed Marx. I cannot substantiate this in detail here, but my sense is that Parsons does justice to neither of his subjects, preferring to choose points of contrast. The way Parsons uses this sort of contrast to create an ethical opposition between Marx and Freud is illustrated in the following passage:

For Freud, pain is the price required by the reality principle in the adjustment of libido to the world, whereas for Marx pain is an inherent part of the birth process that creates a new society. Thus, for Marx there is never a conflict between two agencies in personality, never a question of whether the stakes are worth the effort. Marx presupposed that under sufficient duress people will revolt to free themselves, their friends, and their children, regardless of the cost in pain, suffering, and death. And history has borne him out during periods of massive revolution. (38)

Here Freud's putative rationalization of pain as one of reality's demands—a rationalization couched in monetary terms, no less—is contrasted with Marx's recognition of human nobility transcending any "cost" in pain, a nobility linked rhetorically to the prospect of a "new society." Certainly Parsons has hold of a very powerful and resonant part of the legacy of Marxism, but it is not, perhaps, the best one to *use* for doing creative thinking. The mythical heroism of the masses may very well be a comforting distraction from the "pain" of the new world order and the

effective “death” of (no longer) actually existing socialism, but it is likely to drive a Freudian, and many others as well, even deeper into the conviction that Marxism of this kind is a form of illusion rather than a tool of social analysis. Such a conviction is only strengthened when we read Parsons’s assertions:

In fully socialist society, individual consciousness will become awakened to its role and duty in society and the antagonistic relation of it to society will disappear. Both revered heroes and feared punishments will dissolve as motives of conduct. A new conscience harmoniously combining both enhanced individuality and enhanced sociality will emerge. (48)

Parsons presents us, then, with the aspect of the man of faith, who asks, even demands of us, adherence to utopian vision in the face of a recalcitrant world. That he does so in the name of Marx is, perhaps, unfortunate. Marx generally refused to indulge such pie-in-the-sky ruminations. But it is to be expected, given the approach of contrasting “the thought” of Marxism, taken as a fixed and unchanging ideal, with a similarly frozen account of Freud. It perhaps justifies the claim that no Marx-and-Freud discussions will be successful if attempted by “Marxists” or “Freudians.”

Regarding Borbely’s piece I can only make one general comment. His account puts too much weight on a concept he does not take sufficient time to examine or determine—the concept of information. While many important claims are made about it, and indeed a whole new world, a revolution, is declared in its name, we learn very little about Mr. Information from Borbely. He is the mystery guest about whose identity we are left to guess, even after the formal introductions are over. What Borbely does not seem to appreciate is that information is *produced*, and does not come ready to hand. The producers of information, furthermore, are not elves on the North Pole, but real human individuals: individuals, therefore, caught up in a real mode of production characterized—partly, at least—by the sorts of social antagonisms Marx analyzed back in the nineteenth cen-

ture. There is, of course, much more that can and must be said; much has changed in the character of capitalist production. But my sense is that Borbely has let some home truths escape him in his excitement over the information revolution. Whatever one thinks of capitalists as individuals, or of their worthiness to be included in “the conversation of humanity,” capital and exploitation are by no means dead categories in the “postcommunist” era, if that is what this is.

Finally, it should be said that the concept of information, as used by Borbely, is not a precisely determined concept but a metaphor, an umbrella term suggesting analogies between fields of knowledge as diverse as information theory, evolutionary theory, and psychoanalysis. Though Borbely wants to assimilate all these, and more, under the banner of the information revolution, I am skeptical about the usefulness of doing so. As Borbely himself points out, metaphors are useful as first-order approximations, affording “partial” understanding of complex phenomena. It was a hallmark of both Marx’s and Freud’s approaches not to be content with such metaphorical formulations but to engage deeply in inquiry aimed at detailed analyses of concrete situations. I suspect that, should Borbely pursue his inquiries into what he calls the information revolution, he would be forced to acknowledge the dangers of hanging a social theory on the back of a popular metaphor.

*Department of Art, Music, and Philosophy  
John Jay College, CUNY*

#### **REFERENCE LIST**

Marx, Karl. 1967. *Capital*. Vol. 3. New York: International Publishers.

## Response

Marquit asserts that I imply that unemployment, low wages, racism, and poverty will spontaneously vanish. I stated that a reformed communist party will fight for the emancipation and democratization of the population at large. I argue that the expropriation of the expropriators, a worthy goal in the industrial age, is in the information age unnecessary (diminishing distortion of information impeding democratization) and harmful (danger of a third world war, loss of economic risk-taking ability). When Marquit says that I lost the hope for socialism, he is right insofar as that I lost hope for socialism as it was defined for the industrial age. In my paper I am trying to give an outline of a reconceptualization of some of the traditional Marxist notions. I trust that Marxism, or historical and dialectical materialism, is capable of changing with the ever-changing history (as it was anticipated by Marx and Engels).

Regarding Marquit's statement: "Borbely obliterates the distinction between matter and ideas," I would like to say the following: I distinguish them as substance and energy are commonly distinguished, which both, according to Einstein, can be transformed into each other. I am proposing to see the informational realm as an extension of the historical development of matter. Contrary to Marquit's claim that I do not offer any philosophical argument for the above view, I point out the logical contradiction between Marx's dualistic view of matter and idea and his materialist monism. Further, I raise the philosophical question, why Marx, who saw sensuousness as practical activity (and therefore material), could not extend practical activity to include thinking, feeling, loving, and all other ideational activities. Why create a nonmaterial realm?

Pittman (as well as Marquit and Feigenbaum) demands that more of an effort should be made for the definition of information; further, he anticipates that, in the future, I will be "forced to acknowledge the dangers of hanging a social theory on the back of a popular metaphor." I agree with both points: regarding the

concept of information, I acknowledge that our philosophical grasp of it in general, and certainly mine, is in need of much development. Regarding the “dangers” quoted above, I also agree. It is always risky to try to analyze historic changes—one risks being proven wrong. Such risk is the price of all attempted creativity. “Popular metaphor” or not, information will definitely have to be integrated into historical and dialectical materialism.

Peter Feigenbaum is concerned about my “gravely mistaken notion that the only impediment that the capitalist class poses to the emancipation of the working class and the progress of humanity is the distortion of information.” Nowhere do I claim this, although I can understand that such a claim could be seen as implicit in my paper. For reasons of space I have not focussed on the multiple reasons why the capitalist class is in power and one-sidedly emphasized information-related aspects. I share his opinion that there are other than informational reasons for the power of the capitalist class and that too many among us still live in deplorable conditions. I do not agree that the solution is the expropriation of the expropriators (as Feigenbaum implies when he uses notions like “exploitation of labor,” or “extraction of surplus value”). These concepts need to be reanalyzed for the present times. I hope that there is the possibility that with the strengthening of public opinion as a democratic force a mixed economy with a human face will be achievable. We obviously disagree about the likelihood that people will have access to information. Yes, I do believe that everyone will at some time have a “telephone, a computer, a modem, an Internet account, and a high degree of education.” Sweden is on its way to such achievements.

Antal F. Borbely

## ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES

**Howard L. Parsons, “Concepts of Human Reality in the Thought of Marx and Freud”**—In his mechanical, physicalistic diagnosis of European capitalist society, Freud addressed problems appearing in individual persons of the bourgeois classes; Marx, dialectical and economic, investigated class conflict and its potential working-class resolution. Only incompletely accounting for the socialization ego, Freud stressed the internal tensions between id, ego, superego, and social reality, whereas Marx described social communication and collective labor as its formative processes. The aim of Freud was individual and social equilibrium through acknowledging and guiding unconscious repressed drives into conformity with social demands (of the ruling classes). But for Marx the goal was class consciousness, social revolution against ruling-class demands, and the transformation of a class-ruled society into a universal human community.

**Antal F. Borbely, “Marx and Freud, a Reassessment: From the Industrial Age to the Information Age”**—The work of Marx and Freud is described as the second and third information science (the first being Darwin’s) in the context of the transition from the industrial to the information age. Marx showed that consciousness (information) is dependent on practical activity, whereas psychoanalysis shows that the individual can escape his or her unconscious past determinants through regaining lost information. Both Marx and Freud formulated their theories in terms of the industrial age, where matter meant substance and energy, not as yet information. The outline of a reformulation of both theories into information-centered ones is given. The demise of the socialist regimes and their rejection of psychoanalysis is analyzed in close connection with their (and Marx’s) philosophical error of not subsuming information as part of matter.

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1995)

**Irving J. Crain, “Philosophy, Politics, and Psychoanalysis”**—

The theory of the mind-body relation, critical to psychoanalysis, has a philosophical history. Following Spinoza, Hegel, and Feuerbach, Marx advanced the idea of the dialectical, developmental unity of thought and the material world. Psychoanalysis also applied science to the improving of human society. Today Freud’s theory has split into many schools questioning the concepts of libido, id, ego, superego, infantile sexuality, conscious therapy without activity, psychosexual stages, and unchanging needs, as well as Freud’s fixed categories (human nature, society) and determinism. Many early Freudians were socialist and Marxist, forced to flee from Hitlerism and repressed under McCarthyism. Their innovative work was paralleled by such Soviet researchers as Vygotsky, Luria, Leontiev, and Lomov. Recent trends emphasize the organism’s activity, self-regulation, goal-seeking, environmental conditions, systems, interaction, and development.

### **ABREGES D’ARTICLES**

**Howard L. Parsons, «Les Concepts de la réalité humaine**

**dans la pensée de Marx et Freud**»—Dans son diagnostic mécanique et physique de la société capitaliste européenne, Freud s’adressa aux problèmes qui apparaissaient dans les personnes individuelles des classes bourgeoises; Marx, dont l’analyse était dialectique et économique, examina le conflit des classes et sa résolution potentielle dans la classe ouvrière. Freud qui ne rendait compte que partiellement du moi socialisé souligna les tensions internes entre le ça, l’ego et le superégo, et la réalité sociale, tandis que Marx décrit la communication sociale et le travail collectif comme les processus formatifs. Le but de Freud était l’équilibre individuel et social à travers la reconnaissance et la conduite des besoins vers une conformité avec les demandes sociales (des classes dirigeantes). Pourtant pour Marx le but était une conscience de classe, une révolution sociale contre les demandes de la classe dirigeante, et la transformation d’une société réglée par classe dans une communauté universelle humaine.

**Antal F. Borbely**, «**Marx et Freud, une réexamination: de l'âge industriel à l'âge informatique**»—L'auteur décrit l'oeuvre de Marx et Freud comme la deuxième et troisième science informatique (la première étant celle de Darwin) dans le contexte de la transition de l'âge industriel à l'âge informatique. Marx démontra que la conscience (l'information) dépend sur l'activité pratique, tandis que la psychoanalyse démontra que l'individu peut s'échapper de ses déterminants passés inconscients en retrouvant de l'information perdue. Et Marx et Freud formulaient leurs théories en termes de l'âge industriel, où la matière signifiait la substance et l'énergie, pas encore l'information. L'auteur offre un schéma de la reformulation des deux théories dans celles qui se sont centrées sur l'information. Le décès des régimes socialistes et leur rejet de la psychoanalyse sont examinés en rapport proche avec leur erreur philosophique de ne pas subsumer l'information comme une partie de la matière.

**Irving J. Crain**», «**La Philosophie, la politique et la psychoanalyse**»—La théorie des rapports entre l'esprit et le corps, essentiel à la psychoanalyse, a une histoire philosophique. Suivant Spinoza, Hegel, et Fueuerbach, Marx avança l'idée d'une unité dialectique et développementale de la pensée et le monde matériel. La psychoanalyse appliqua aussi la science à l'amélioration de la société humaine. De nos jours la théorie de Freud se fragmente en beaucoup d'écoles qui mettent en doute les concepts de la libido, du ça, de l'égo, du superégo, de la sexualité infantine, de la thérapie consciente sans activité, des étapes psychosexuelles, et des besoins invariables aussi bien que les catégories fixes de Freud (la nature humaine, la société) et le déterminisme. Bien des freudiens dès le départ étaient socialistes et marxistes; donc, ils étaient forcés de fuir du hitlerisme et réprimés sous le mccarthyisme. Leur oeuvre innovative trouve des parallèles dans les recherches de Vygotsky, Luria, Leontiev, et Lomov de l'Union soviétique. Les tendances récentes soulignent l'activité, le règlement du soi, la recherche des buts, les conditions environnementales, les systèmes, l'interaction et le développement de l'organisme.