

## THE ILLUSION OF A FUTURE

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Faith is better than knowledge if it works; but knowledge  
is better if faith can only be an escape from knowledge.

Philip Reiff

Gad Horowitz, *Repression: Basic and Surplus Repression in Psychoanalytic Theory: Freud, Reich and Marcuse*, Buffalo and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977, pp. 227.

### I

The tension Freud was able to maintain between cultural, clinical, and scientific interests has, predictably, been torn asunder. Various camps participate in this work, either superficially clinging to the Freudian legacy while in fact undermining it, or disavowing its importance while paradoxically remaining obsessed with the danger it seems to pose. Needless to say, the United States has led the way in this process. Freud's depictions of culture could hardly be compelling to a social science which has only recently discovered alienation in, of all places, the voting booth; and the clinical-scientific aspects have been held in thrall by the institutes which control the practice of psychoanalysis here. The rites of initiation; the medical training requirement which pre-selects a certain type of practitioner and imposes on him a specific clinical outlook; and the theoretical re-formulations acculturating psychoanalysis to American habits of thought have trivialized its import by simultaneously narrowing and broadening the parameters of concern. Thus a psychic entity or process will be dissected so thoroughly and scientifically that it is difficult to understand it any longer as a human attribute; and surface phenomena such as cognition or motivation, which have little to do with the subject matter of psychoanalysis, are attended to as if the domain of consciousness had never been touched by Freud's research.

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It is not difficult to understand why American critical thought has ignored or attacked psychoanalysis — although a minimum of reading and reflection would reveal that Freud has approximately the same relation to American psychoanalysis as Marx does to Brezhnev. Apparently in Europe, it has been easier to grasp the radical essence at the core of Freud's thought, and at long last such ideas are finally making their way to our shores: even now, one can occasionally hear the name "Adorno" or "Lacan" quietly muttered here and there.

There can be no doubt that radicalism does indeed characterize the main discoveries of psychoanalysis, but the question of its nature remains: whether this radicalism is, by virtue of being radical, a natural adjunct to left-wing political thought, or whether it is of a wholly different nature, either without leftist implications or even opposed to them. The idea of the unconscious is radical in every sense of the term, but its political meaning is by no means obvious. Adorno's celebrated comment, "in psychoanalysis *only* the exaggerations are true" tells us less about the political implications of psychoanalysis than about the ineluctable attraction of any radical idea whatsoever to a radical thinker.

On the surface, at any rate, it does seem logical that Marxists would sooner or later have to confront Freud: first, because psychoanalytic theory contained a source of insight demanding recognition, and second, owing to historical events which forced a reconsideration of the Marxist theory of change. Socialist revolution had failed to occur at those moments when it should have — when the objective conditions had seemingly prepared the way for a proletarian takeover. It was thus reasoned that subjective factors must be at fault, but that Marx's concentration on material conditions led him to assume a psychology dominated by exogenous circumstance: if the world was ready for revolution, then the mind would surely follow. Clearly this assumption could no longer be made, so that a more sophisticated model of mental functioning was called for to explain how, between reality and action, another force insinuated itself with the power to sabotage revolutionary consciousness.

The outcome of these reflections was the Frankfurt School (as it is now called) which by the late 1920's turned to Freud as a way of completing Marx. As I had occasion to hint at above, this confluence is by no means easily accounted for in the theories themselves, bound as they seemingly are to wholly different world-views: optimistic and pessimistic, individualism and collectivism, inner and outer. Was Freud chosen because Adorno, *et al.* discerned an underlying sympathy with Marxism, or were they simply drawn by the power of a theory which could not be ignored? Can psychoanalysis truly be harmonized with Marxism, or do the two indicate an irreconcilable bifurcation in the discourse of contemporary thought — and perhaps in reality as well? Does Freud

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complete Marx or undermine him, or is it that each delimits a segment of existence which is irreducible to the other?

### II

The most widely known attempt to resolve these matters for the American audience is Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, first published in 1955. My reaction on reading the book several years ago, during a time when I was myself engaged in a painstaking effort to grasp the details of psychoanalytic theory, was one of disapprobation. It appeared to me that the material Marcuse had employed to posit a Marxist-Freudian utopia included little more than *Civilization and its Discontents*. A theoretical sleight-of-hand seemed to rest on a superficial comprehension of Freud, allowing Marcuse the luxury of a facile synthesis between the two theories. Gad Horowitz has come forward with a work similarly critical of Marcuse's scholarship, but in defence of a vision presumably too powerful to busy itself with details. It is these details which Horowitz now provides, finally allowing one to determine the true worth of a book which in the interim has assumed near classic proportions.

Marcuse's thesis was remarkably simple — so simple in fact that one wonders what all the fuss between psychoanalysis and Marxism was about. From Freud, Marcuse abstracted his understanding of the central psychoanalytic concept bridging subjective experience and objective circumstances: repression. If repression does indeed possess the explanatory power to encompass the realms of inner and outer, then presumably the deepest theory of psychical functioning could be wedded to the most profound understanding of social processes.

While Marcuse's exposition was simple, it was not necessarily simplistic, for he tried to push the discussion to the heartland of Freud's thought, rather than subordinating it to Marxism as others, such as Fromm, had done. He could have argued, for instance, that repression, as well as other central psychoanalytic findings, were merely the inevitable consequences of capitalist society, and left it at that. Yet Marcuse acknowledged repression as universal, and thus impervious to the vicissitudes of history. He went further and accepted other territorial gains claimed by Freud: the existence and significance of the drives, the inherent tension between drives and culture, a conflict model of socialization. Still more remarkable, he was willing to verify the existence of the death-drive as prior to the experience of social frustration. In short, Marcuse accepted the very elements of Freud's thoughts which were least historical, and incorporated them into a model of social change and ultimate socialist harmony.

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His fidelity to the fundamentals of psychoanalytic theory seemingly secured, Marcuse returned to Marxism by way of several addenda to Freud's conceptual apparatus — the most important being "surplus repression". The logic proceeded as follows: while Freud was correct about the universality of repression as such (which Horowitz terms "basic repression"), he indiscriminately treated all forms of repression as basic; that is, as immutable elements of the transformation from animal to human, from infancy to adulthood, from the pleasure to the reality principle. In fact, only a certain quantum of repression is necessary for these transformations — enough, for example, to transform sex into love, and thus raise the individual from a little engine of selfish lust to a member of a community held together by libidinal ties.

Surplus repression is obviously meant to be the psychological analogue of surplus value. The Marxist notion is historical, where the meaning of value is altered in the manner indicated by the modifier only under conditions of capitalist production. Similarly, the surplus addition to repression only makes its appearance under these same conditions. In the periods prior to capitalism, a second layer of repression (*i. e.*, in addition to basic repression) was also present, but not as a superfluous feature. The struggle between culture and nature necessitated levels of repression beyond those sufficient to merely civilize humanity: humanity had to bear the additional burden of toil in order to wrest from nature the means of subsistence. A secondary (but not surplus) layer of repression was thus formed to restrain the proclivity toward pleasure.

As a result of capitalism, the struggle against nature has been won, but the additional quantity of repression subsists — a classic Marxist instance, but in the psychological realm, of a contradiction. This quantity, rendered surplus by technology, is now in the service of domination purely for the sake of domination — as distinct from previous forms of power which gained authorization from their locus at the intersection of a recalcitrant nature and a pleasure-seeking humanity. Heretofore, power of leviathinian proportions was the only means by which individuals could be made to engage in toil of relatively little immediate personal benefit, but necessary for the collective struggle against nature. If those in power could hardly resist appropriating a bit more than was called for in this struggle, *tant pis* for everyone else: historical reason justified the right to rule, and excesses in this regard did not affect the core of justification.

In the contemporary scene, the material justification has been eroded by technology, and all that remains are the excesses: domination no longer serves the struggle against nature, but only the interests of those who control the economic and political processes. The psyche is structured along similar lines, dominated by a quantity of force inconsistent with material conditions as they now exist. Marcuse drew an analogy, as well as a causal relationship, among four factors: the level of technology, the quality of work, the location of social

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power, and the configuration of sexual pleasure. By means of this schema he believed he had filled in the psychological lacuna left by Marx, and thus explained why predictions of revolution had gone unfulfilled. Although technology had freed the proletariat from the need to toil, and thus from the masters who imposed it, domination nevertheless persisted as a precipitate of surplus repression, the effects of which resided beneath the level of consciousness familiar to Marx. As with toil and social power, repression remained at pre-capitalist levels. The demand for liberation — represented in its prototypal form by sexual pleasure — thus remained unconscious and inaccessible to its historical destiny. To put the matter somewhat differently: alienation would not be experienced as such if the pleasures from which one was alienated could not make their way to consciousness. Instead of the consciousness of alienation Marx envisaged as the motive force for rebellion, there appeared a highly distorted form in the guise of neurotic symptoms.

### III

However cavalier Marcuse may have been about the finer points of the Freudian texts, his argument is nevertheless logical to the point of elegance. Along with Norman O. Brown, whose *Life Against Death* appeared several years later, Marcuse seemed to have liberated Freud from leftist critics who attacked him for being bourgeois — or, what presumably amounts to the same thing, conservative. Theorists on the left had misapprehended the meaning of Freud's work owing to the confusion between his personal conservatism and the radical elements implicit in the theory. By virtue of this conservatism, Freud contributed to the misapprehension, often laminating fundamental insights with the bourgeois ideology of his day. One might, in this sense, speak of a basic Freud and a surplus Freud. This, at least, is the line Horowitz now follows, arguing in effect that the judicious reader can distinguish between the two by subjecting psychoanalytic theory to an intellectual centrifugal device: the bourgeois ideology will sink to the bottom, leaving the essential truths in their pure form.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, here is an important point to establish. No matter how coherent or (as in Brown's case) rigorous an argument one may make regarding the liberating essence of psychoanalysis, it is certainly difficult to attain that sense from a perusal of Freud's own work. The language of the repetition-compulsion and death-drive, of seething cauldrons and primary masochism hardly seems to connote the polymorphous perverse (Brown) or "the recon-

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ciliation of man and nature in sensuous culture'' (Marcuse). Is Freud's conservative pessimism an extraneous element, best removed by surgical procedure to reveal the actual liberating essence — or is that attitude so embedded in the theory that the surgery amounts to a lobotomization?

Although this is a complicated question to which, in effect, the whole of Horowitz's book is devoted, it is not clarified by *assuming* the ideological status of pessimistic conservatism. I have even heard it stated that Freud's pessimism is ideological, whereas Marx's optimism is objective. Horowitz too identifies the conservative aspects of Freud's theory with bourgeois ideology, a natural, but unnecessary, attitude for a Marxist to take. This identification is by no means obvious since one can, in principle at least, distinguish between psychical contents which derive their meaning from social conditions (*e.g.*, penis-envy) and psychical processes (*e.g.*, the repetition-compulsion) which are both conservative *and* ahistorical. It is a crude Marxism which classifies every non-revolutionary attitude as false consciousness. Nevertheless, there is no reason to pre-judge Horowitz on this matter, and it may be that his reading of Freud does justify the disassociation between personal sentiments and the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalytic theory.

Horowitz's method is to break down Marcuse's argument into its constituent parts and re-assemble it by following the intricacies of the psychoanalytic texts in a detailed way. In so doing he hopes to rebuff those who felt that only Marcuse's vague reading of Freud could support revolutionary conclusions. Strength will be added to strength, the power of Marcuse's vision with the scholarship of Horowitz's explication. Thus we learn, via a painstaking and impressive summary of Freud's views on sexuality, the manners in which basic and surplus repression differentially affect the fate of bisexuality — in one case opening the possibility of mature polymorphous sensuality, and in the other, terminating in neurotic homo- and hetero-sexuality.

Still, an uneasiness with these proceedings is aroused quite early on in the book: where Marcuse's use of Freud was based on a promiscuous reading, Horowitz's is dependent on aid from a foreign ally, ego-psychology. At the beginning, Horowitz states that he has closely followed Freud's work to ascertain whether Marcuse's argument can be substantiated, and appends the following footnote:

Those texts [of Freud] and some of the most eminent disciples, particularly the ego-psychologists Heinz Hartmann and David Rapaport. These psychoanalysts are not 'neo-Freudian revisionists' (Marcuse, 1955, Epilogue) but systematizers of the final phase of Freud's research. (p. 4.)

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It is not difficult to understand why Horowitz finds it necessary to solicit assistance from this quarter: Freud was seemingly unconcerned with the question of healthy functioning, only vaguely hinting at its underlying processes by shadowy references to the concept "sublimation". Some radical defenders of Freud (*e.g.*, Mitchell, Adorno, Jacoby) are not bothered by this omission, noting that Freud's unmitigated conflict model of psychical formation and development is a perfect cipher for the lived internal experience of capitalist-bourgeois culture.

It is Horowitz's intention, however, to go beyond analysis, and describe a liberated model of psychic functioning — *i.e.*, a mode of functioning marked by sublimation rather than surplus repression. He believes that Freud's penuriousness in this regard has been made good by the subsequent generation of analysts. Here Horowitz accepts, with no further discussion than the footnote, the self-definition of ego-psychology: an extension of Freud's thought into areas where he was already moving, and in no way a contradiction or dilution of psychoanalytic discoveries. We are told that Freud restricted himself to the relations amongst the various psychical agencies, and the conflicts to which these relations give rise. In particular, he was concerned with the ways in which the ego is intruded upon, and thus rendered dependent. Now that these intrusions are more or less sufficiently understood, it is possible to focus on the other aspects of ego-functioning: its capacity to achieve a measure of independence, via sublimation — literally by translating the "lower", whether in reference to somatic forces (the drives) or otherwise pathological processes, into higher, sublime activity.

A new vocabulary arose to supplement the original one: neutralization (of drive-energies); primary and secondary autonomy of the ego; conflict-free zones of the ego; the "average expectable environment"; adaptation. By 1937, the year of Hartmann's *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation*, the narcissistic blow (in Freud's term) to the ego dealt by psychoanalysis had been partially repaired.

Heretofore, ego-psychologists have been accused by leftist Freudians of ideologizing psychoanalysis, making adaptation a goal and natural proclivity of the ego, so it is rather strange to see Horowitz embrace the theory wholeheartedly. He is not insensitive to these obvious critiques, although he does not meet them head-on; instead, he deflects the question by arguing, in effect, that ego-psychology is the psychology of the future — of that time when culture will promote the potential powers of ego-autonomy and strength, and the ego will thus be able to exercise its now latent capacities for sublimation. In presenting us with an ideal of the ego, we are able to gauge the distance between it and the effects of surplus repression imposed by patriarchal, capitalist society. Horowitz notes that Freud allowed for non-surplus repressive

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psychical development as well, but failed to elaborate on it. It is this allowance that justifies the work of the ego-psychologists, once the proper historical proviso attached to the notion of a healthy ego is appended.

Horowitz's line of reasoning makes formal-logical sense, and does seem to find a place for ego-psychology which is politically unobjectionable. Nevertheless, there remains the question of its internal theoretical status — that is to say, the degree to which the inner logic of psychoanalysis as conceived by Freud can be brought into harmony with the later additions. Indeed, this is the crux of the matter with the entirety of Horowitz's explication, even apart from his reliance on ego-psychology: the similitude or contrast between his logic and a true hermeneutic comprehension of Freud.

I will give an example — which I also take to be an exemplar — of the sometimes subtle, sometimes gross, shift of meaning involved in following the lines laid down by ego-psychology. The concept of health (and concomitant ideas regarding development) rely upon a sphere of functioning said to be autonomous — either initially, or as the result of the maturational process (primary and secondary autonomy respectively). Thus, the healthy ego, as well as healthy segments of the pathological ego, were said to be independent from the conflicts which mark the remainder of the psychical apparatus.

I do not consider this to be a further refinement of Freud's portrait of the ego, but a radical departure from it. The picture he sketched was thoroughly dialectical, where the healthy psyche, no less than the one subject to disease, was the resolution of pathogenetic influences in an ultimately mysterious way.<sup>2</sup> The ego owes everything to the conditions of its origin — conditions which implicate it in conflict with other parts of the psyche, with the limitations by necessity and specific elements in the environment, and with itself in the struggle between narcissism and the need to identify with superior others. The language of autonomy and adaptation, no matter what its application, dichotomizes the ego, separating its foundations from subsequent development, and clearing the path for the "discovery" of concepts which Freud had rejected in his struggles with Adler and Jung.

Horowitz yields to the temptation to split the ego in this way, or in an analogous one wherein he will posit an absolute demarcation between our patriarchal condition and the putative conditions of communist society. It may well be that under post-patriarchal conditions, the resources of the ego (such as they are) will luxuriate in their capacity to transform and neutralize drive-energy, turn conflict into harmony, make beneficial use of defences, and the like. Nor is there any doubt that some of these internal events are occurring in the present, but these are not, as Horowitz says in another context, "Freudian facts". Freudian facts point to limits, not possibilities. The proper Freudian question is: in a non-surplus repressive civilization, what would the sources and



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nature of conflict be, and what corresponding cultural institutions would both express and alleviate it?

### IV

The dichotomous logic borrowed from ego-psychology is most clearly seen in the extensive discussions on sexuality which occupy Horowitz throughout most of the work. Recent trends in psychoanalytic thought have somehow managed to avoid, ignore, or denigrate the fate of sexuality in psychological development, as have cultural critics of Freud from the very beginning. So it is to Horowitz's credit that he reminds us of the central place assigned to sexuality in Freud's work, and the social meaning attached to it. Social power is first experienced as an intrusion on sexuality, and prefigures subsequent development. It may then seem (as it did for instance to Reich) that the liberation of sexuality is a function of social liberation: remove the oppressive forces and *Mirabile Dieu*, sexuality is free to develop in a natural way.

Unfortunately, there is another theme in Freud's work — authority — and although often understated, it is as pervasive as sexuality, bound up as the one is with the other. Horowitz falls prey to a series of misunderstandings concerning this topic, and while thereby making his task considerably easier, our comprehension is hardly advanced. In the first place, Horowitz divides the world between power which emanates from outside, and sexuality coming from within. He recognizes that social forces are internalized — hence surplus repression — but this is conceived in the oppressive mode only, as illegitimate power and domination. The second misunderstanding follows from the first: authority is reduced to internalized social domination — a mere cipher of reality — and thus has no place in the liberated psyche. Authority too becomes superfluous, once a certain level of material production is reached.

As far as I know, Marx did not have much to say about the permanent place assigned to authority in the universal scheme of things — only that it appears in capitalism as oppressive domination. Engels, however, did make a remarkable little contribution on the subject which may or may not have reflected Marx's thinking. Authority, he wrote, inheres in the logic of things natural and imposes itself on consciousness in the organization of work. Freedom does not mean a log can be chopped with a towel — but that in the absence of artificial constraints, one will recognize which constraints are natural to the situation.

There is a certain sense in which Horowitz follows this logic: the ego, left more or less to its own devices and not externally imposed upon, will choose a salutary and harmonious course of action. He may be correct, but there is nothing either superfluous or objective about authority as Freud understood

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it. Ego-psychology has, at this point, drawn Horowitz into a fatal misapprehension of the ego's own foundations — which are constituted by authority. The original ego is, in Lacan's phrase, characterized by a "lack", compensated for by identification with a superior other. I can find no possible bridge between this conception and that of autonomy. Far from being an extraneous element which waxes and wanes with the course of history, authority is synonymous with the notion of the ego (via the concept of identification). To the extent that one conceives of independent properties of the ego, one has ascended from the core of psychoanalytic thought and entered a different realm altogether.

Curiously, Horowitz does not say very much about authority in a direct way, but since the political implications of Freud's thought depend on a proper understanding of the subject, I will try to make some sense of Horowitz's ideas. He does touch on the matter in a brief discussion of *Totem and Taboo*, where one can read his characteristic form of explication.

Horowitz consults *Totem and Taboo* to ascertain if Freud equates "patriarchy, not with civilization as it has in fact evolved, but with civilization per se" (p. 119). For reasons not totally clear to me, it is important to Horowitz that the primal horde be a pre-cultural entity. This was not Freud's view on the question, as I will show in a moment. Yet Horowitz has some logical justification for his views: the horde was ordered by might rather than law, and the defining psychoanalytic elements of culture — the incest taboo and prohibition on parricide — had not yet been instituted.<sup>3</sup> After the father is killed, the sons make a brief go of it on their own, until they finally give in to the memory of their deed and re-institute patriarchy — albeit in a modified form. It is in this interregnum, between the primal father and his successor, that Horowitz claims to have discovered a *proton eutopia*:

This Law [instituted after the parricide] was of course in one sense the Law of the Father, but in another sense it was the Law of the Brothers who had killed and eaten the father, the Law of the Revolution which had founded human culture by *overthrowing* patriarchal domination and substituting for it 'democratic equality' among males and among males and females. (p. 120)

Quoting Freud (from *Moses and Monotheism*), Horowitz also indicates the possibility of a matriarchy during this period: 'The power of the father was broken and the families were organized as a matriarchy.' (p. 120) <sup>4</sup> Hence:

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[W]omen as well as men were ... incarnations of the Law .... It is the hypothetical era of the brother clan/matriarchy to which Freud is referring when he writes of a state of *civilization* in which restrictions on 'perverse' sexuality had not arisen .... Here polymorphous genitality and equality of the sexes coincide with Law and Culture. (p. 120)<sup>5</sup>

Horowitz's purpose is to show that a non-surplus-repressive (polymorphous; egalitarian) culture is allowed for explicitly by Freud, and not only by implication. Thus, Freud can be split between the superficial patriarchal ideologue and the radical liberator. Horowitz, however, is remarkably sloppy in establishing this split. In a few passages, we learn that the consequence of the parricide was (a) the Law of the Father; (b) the Law of the Brothers; (c) the Law of the Revolution; (d) democratic equality; (e) matriarchy; (f) brother clan/matriarchy. Second, we are led to believe that in consequence of one of these outcomes, polymorphous genitality results, as if this were Freud's opinion on the matter. In fact, Freud is silent on the question, and more than Horowitz's opinion is needed to discover what Freud may have thought.

Whichever of these possible social conditions held, in time patriarchy was restored, and Horowitz asks:

Was this restoration of patriarchy, this 'great social revolution' [Freud], an inevitable consequence of the deep universal structure of the human Mind ? (p. 120)

This is the question by which, presumably, one finally ascertains the patriarchal bias in Freud's work. On the contrary, it really addresses the question of authority, not authoritarian domination. One suspects, as I mentioned earlier, that Horowitz has confused the two, indiscriminately mixing psychical structures with their social expression.

In Horowitz's version, the Primal Restoration is pre-human, "a re-assertion of the father-dominance characteristic of ape-men." (p.120) This retrograde act has really nothing to do with structures of the mind, but with '*changes in conditions of life*'. (p. 120)<sup>6</sup> In other words, the patriarchal revolution resulted from economic rather than psychological conditions — from, in Horowitz's infelicitous phrase, "ignorance-helplessness before nature". Shades of Engels are discerned in this notion: authority is the response to natural conditions; *i.e.*, to the productive capacities as they affect the struggle with nature. Even on this non-Freudian, but not unreasonable, point, Horowitz sows confusion,

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since we also hear a psychological account where the Restoration indicates the failure to effect a "complete transition from primate-hominid to human society": "Patriarchal domination is a regression (return of the repressed) to the primate order within the human order." To which he adds, as a final social conclusion, that technology can now divest us of ape-ness.

Horowitz has reached this destination by emphasizing the single materialist strand in the web of Freud's discussion. If we turn to the original texts ourselves, a much different picture emerges. In the first place, Freud clearly states that the primal horde was a human group.<sup>7</sup> I would not want to jeopardize my professional credibility by deciding one way or the other on this matter — but since the question is only one of the fidelity to Freud, it can be easily resolved.

Whatever the case regarding the primal horde, it was disbanded by parricide, and we can assume that although Freud interchanged several different stages which followed, a democratic order of some sort prevailed. Horowitz derives from this a golden age of uninhibited (but mature) sexuality and equality between the sexes. Freud had a somewhat different notion of this democratic utopia, which he referred to as "the tumultuous mob of brothers"; and citing Atkinson with approval, he goes on:

after the father had been disposed of, the horde would be disintegrated by a bitter struggle between the victorious sons. Thus any new permanent organization of society would be precluded: there would be 'an ever-recurring violent succession to the solitary paternal tyrant, by sons whose parricidal hands were soon again clenched in fratricidal strife'.<sup>8</sup>

Even these reasons are not at the center of Freud's explanation. The bulk of his discussions refer to: ambivalence, guilt, the failure of the wish to take the father's place, a childish desire for the father's "protection, care, and indulgence",<sup>9</sup> as well as problems of jealousy and envy attributed by Freud to any group of equals. Nor does Horowitz's reliance on the slender thread of "the conditions of life", isolated from these other reasons, make any sense. Why, after all, was it necessary — even in primitive stages of production — for the brother clan to acquiesce to patriarchy? Freud's answer is given in *Group Psychology*: it is in the very nature of groups that, without leadership, they suffer from "psychological poverty". "Ignorance-helplessness" must itself be reckoned as a subjective condition, brought into being by the psychological condition of democratic equality.

Such is the social psychology of democracy upon which our liberation is to be

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founded. The Restoration was the inevitable result of this psychology, of the "persistence of an unappeased longing for the father".<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, I agree with Horowitz on the most abstract and formal levels: one can disassociate *Totem and Taboo* from patriarchal conclusions, but not for reasons even vaguely like the ones Horowitz has somehow found. In the context of Freud's later contributions to the theory of ego-development (e.g., "On Narcissism," "Mourning and Melancholia," *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, *The Ego and the Id*, *Civilization and its Discontents*), it is possible to differentiate between the role of authority in this development, and particular social manifestations, between the superego and patriarchy. Nor is it impossible to imagine, within this same context, social conditions which might mitigate the type of *Unbehagen* uncovered and described by Freud — for example by the interposition of a different kind of family structure than the nuclear one. Nevertheless, no reading of Freud — save one distorted by the motive of political wish-fulfillment — can lead one to the conclusion of an authority-less, ego-liberated state. It is authority which forces the infant out of his libidinous phantasy world; authority which constitutes the ego and acculturates it.

### V

It is a curious phenomenon that writers who would add the social dimension presumably missing from Freud's thought seem inevitably to fall back on biologicistic revisions. Without much trouble, Horowitz manages to succumb to this non sequitur. Basic repression, we learn, is for the most part the work of nature, a function of the natural processes of maturation. When nature takes so great a part in the matter, it is not difficult to ignore the social aspects of socialization. It is these social aspects which are surplus to a being who, left to its own devices, would routinely pass through various stages of development. We are told that, of course, some conflict results in passing from one psychosexual stage to the other, and that there is a quantum of environmental influence needed to convince the child to relinquish the joys of sucking for playing with his feces, and to give that up for the penis or clitoris, and finally onward to polymorphous generality and object-love — but this influence is merely an inducement, encouraging nature to take its benevolent course.

Freud was hardly a disciple of Rousseau on this matter. The full thrust of his radical understanding was to state that these developments were fully unnatural under the best of circumstances — and that in those few cases where one might speak of "organic repression" (a concept repeatedly seized upon by Horowitz), the reactions were on the order of repugnance and disgust at the repressed material, rather than polymorphous pleasure. From the point of view

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of the psyche, *repression is by its very nature surplus* — a process forcefully invoked, and in conflict with the most profound impulses of the individual.

For all the seeming erudition of Horowitz's brief for liberation, we are presented here, as elsewhere in the book, with the sense of arguments too easily made, quaint and even archaic in their logic. Horowitz disavows (in the chapter on Reich) a simplistic energetic interpretation of Freud, where pure quantities of libido struggle to release themselves from the bondage of oppressive social interdiction. Yet he does nothing to escape from an equally mechanistic logic which obscures the dialectical sense of psychical acculturation.

Again, the reader finds himself presented with categorical misrepresentations concerning the interplay of psyche and culture, now concerning confusion between the structure of psychical conflict and its particular social contents. Culturalists would like to believe that the structure of the mind undergoes a radical modification with the alteration of society, and I would hardly be able to prove they are mistaken in their faith. However, the dominant motif of the *Freudian* psyche is not the specific configuration of juxtaposed contents at any one moment in history: it is *the ubiquity of conflict*. Without the thorough recognition of this principle, modifications of psychoanalytic theory are not psychoanalytic.

Let us examine this most important substantive theme in Horowitz's book: bisexuality. Horowitz correctly emphasizes Freud's presumption of bisexuality, and argues that patriarchal norms severely restrict and inhibit the bisexual constitution, bifurcating it along rigid masculine/feminine (active/passive) lines. In this situation, castration-anxiety and penis-envy are exacerbated, until they become the exclusive sources of sexual self-consciousness and identity. Whereas bisexuality opens the way for sexual identity to be determined by many factors, patriarchal culture reduces the possibilities to two, thus gathering all the possibilities of sensuous living and condensing them into envy or fear as total determinants of the personality.

No right-thinking opponent of patriarchy could disagree with this analysis, and there is nothing in Freud to dispute it. Yet the leap Horowitz makes from bisexual constitution to polymorphous genitality is a different matter. Freud's analysis was meant to show that the transitions from one libidinal epoch to another were marked by traumas inhering in the very nature of the process. The social factor does indeed affect content (*e.g.*, the exacerbation of penis-envy), but in no way touches the form (trauma, *angst*, conflict). If anything, the bisexuality thesis implies the inevitability of trauma, not its historical relativity: first, because gender-identity must be *learned*, implying a restriction of sexual expression; and second, because the bisexual child must eventually confront the presence or absence of a penis as a traumatic shock to its previous self-misrecognitions. By this standard, penis-envy and castration-anxiety continue

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to hold pride of place in the psychological development of the child whatever the forms of cultural organization that are present. Culture affects the quantitative strength of these constituent ideas; the reward system attached to them (*i.e.*, the relative advantages and disadvantages accruing from the boy's castration-fears or the girl's penis-envy, respectively) and thus the social equality between the sexes; and the amount of repression to which homosexual and bisexual impulses are subjected. These are important matters, and without Freud's guidance we would still be in the dark — but they are far from pointing to conflict-free zones within the psyche, or between psyche and culture.

The libidinal model, directing attention to neatly drawn categories of time and space (stages and zones) naturally lends itself to a mechanistic interpretation, so it is not surprising that Horowitz, like so many others working in this genre, simplifies psychoanalysis beyond recognition. It would be more difficult for him to argue from modifications in culture to modifications in the psyche had he incorporated the hermeneutic model into his analysis, thereby giving recognition to the peculiar nature of unconscious thought processes. It is on the battleground of the unconscious that the war of socialization takes place, upsetting our precious notions of time, space, and causality.<sup>11</sup>

The relationship between the two models — between *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* — is extraordinarily complex, and only now in the work of Lacan, Ricouer and others are serious efforts being made to fathom it. This much can be said however: it is the influence of primary-process (unconscious) thought which gives meaning to the various dispositions of libido: meaning does not inhere in the libido itself, as the wish to be free, or to express itself in a mature, genital fashion. Nor does culture act *directly* to determine these meanings: they are first formulated into mental representations; that is, ideas mediating for the mind in what ways self and reality will be understood. This re-formulation takes place in accordance with *permanent* attributes of unconscious ideation, each of which brings mind into conflict with culture. By way of summary three such attributes can be specified: concerning the subject, the unconscious is narcissistic; concerning the object, it is marked by "Desire";<sup>12</sup> and the bridge between subject and object is exotically constructed by the primary processes themselves (displacement, condensation, considerations of representability, and secondary revision).

A single thematic thus joins texts as seemingly disparate as *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Three Essays*, and *Civilization and its Discontents*: the struggle between the independent properties of mental life and the equally discrete exigencies of the *res publica*. Culture may be able to strike a bargain with narcissism and desire, and allow the primary processes an avenue of expression, but the compromise would still fall far short of the sensuous play envisaged by Horowitz and Marcuse before him. Nor can the ideal of love

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between two people be any less subject to disruption by the insatiable quality of the unconscious. The bourgeois program of liberated sensuality put forward in *Eros and Civilization*, and revived in *Repression* is Freudian in one aspect only: the revelation of a wish that it must remain for the oneiric to fulfill.

### VI

Horowitz picks and chooses among the various segments of psychoanalytic theory as if they are so many dishes at a buffet, leaving us to struggle with a main course he has found indigestible. Still, my criticisms would be pedantic if despite his misreading, essential features of our condition were laid open to view. It would not be the first time that willful, if unwitting, misinterpretations formed the groundwork of critical social analysis. The concept "surplus repression" might be one of those fortunate errors leading us to the truth, a critical instrument exposing the internal and external forces that govern contemporary existence. If this were the case, who would care that Horowitz (and Marcuse) was wrong about Freud — as long as he was right about reality?

It seems, however, that reality fares no better than Freud. Neither clinical nor social analyses confirm a state of affairs deserving the diagnosis "surplus repression", nor the quaint Marxist analogue of "patriarchal domination shaping persons who renounce their claim to happiness and resign themselves to a life of toil": (p. 122)

Where are these people? Far from being subject to surplus repression the characteristic psychological types of our day may not even be subject to *basic* repression, an unthinkable occurrence in Horowitz's biologicistic account. Repression, as is now well-known, is a rather advanced defensive strategy preceded by the more primitive ones of splitting, denial, etc., instituted during pre-Oedipal stages. Clinicians are increasingly faced with patients in whom these mechanisms, rather than the one favored by Horowitz, are predominant. It has been hypothesized that certain cultural conditions, reflected in the family, are conducive to pre-Oedipal fixations and the attendant defences.<sup>13</sup> In this situation, it would be far more accurate to speak of *deficit* repression.

Almost every detail of Horowitz's account is undermined by this evidence. It is hardly the case any longer that typical symptomologies are marked by excessive sexual repression and a concomitant narrowing of ego-functions such that toil is taken for granted. It is particularly astonishing to read that sexuality is limited to genital, procreative forms, and further restricted by the general deerotization of the body, when in fact prodigious sexuality and perversity highlight the erotic careers of the contemporary patient. An individual's fear of homosexuality still persists in much the same way Horowitz describes it, but this factor must be viewed in its social context where new sexual identities are



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everywhere being forged. The rigid heterosexual morality forming the basis of Horowitz's analysis is on the decline — in the deepest recesses of the psyche, no less than on the streets of urban centers.

These matters are touched on at one point: when Horowitz summarizes Marcuse's later description of "repressive de-sublimation":<sup>14</sup> "counter-phobic pseudo-sexuality with little or no consideration for the partner", "perversion rather than neurosis as the characteristic pathology", "compulsive separation of affection from physical pleasure". (pp. 78-80) Nevertheless, no further effort is made to ascertain whether this syndrome is in any way related to the book's predominant psycho-social themes.

This syndrome has, in fact, been the object of close scrutiny in recent years under the name "pathological narcissism". The disorder differs in every way — genetically, dynamically, structurally, and libidinally — from the classic neuroses analyzed by Freud, and used by Horowitz to form the basis of his work. More important, pathological narcissism points to a different type of social order altogether — one not so readily described as patriarchal; where self-imposed toil is hardly the problem; and where the question of alienation seems far murkier than the formal Marxist model would allow. In short, neither the original Freudian nor Marxist descriptions apply.

I must confine myself here to one facet of the narcissistic character: its pre-Oedipal determinants. Pre-Oedipal pathologies typically arise in the context of the mother-infant dyad. To state the matter briefly, the defensive structures erected at this stage are pre-repressive, and act as buffers against the later development of Oedipal phantasies. I think it is fair in this regard to speak of a psychological matriarchy as long as it is understood that the defences act in part as reaction-formations against this state of affairs. Further, the classic internal representative of the patriarchal order — the superego — takes on a decidedly attenuated and primitive cast. On the one hand, it is a shrunken vestige, its former space now filled by a "grandiose self". On the other hand, it never goes beyond its original primitive nature, and thus gives rise to experiences of rage rather than guilt.

Thus the internalization of the father as an authority figure — the *sine qua non* of patriarchy — is lacking. The situation, as it presents itself psychologically, forms a perfect analogue to features of advanced capitalism where authority is formal, legal-rational, instrumental, and external. One obeys because it is in his interest to do so, not because the law is experienced as a moral imperative. The characteristic attitude of estrangement is not alienation, since there is no vision of infantile perfection to be alienated from — but rage, *ressentiment*, envy and anomie.

As far as character goes, the narcissist is, in Rieff's language, transgressive, incapable of delimiting aggressive and libidinal urges except in the service of

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gratification. He is often quite successful socially, not because he is enslaved to toil or the "performance principle", but owing to immense needs for approval. Vocations, institutions, libidinal objects, ideals — none have the power to compel belief where the sole source of reference is the self. In the older forms of neurosis, repression created a nucleus of unconscious mental representations which found their way back to consciousness through association with objects in the external world. This may have been the mechanism lying behind false-consciousness: the individual was psychologically bound to elements of reality in spite of their effect on his objective conditions. In the representative pathologies of our own day, reality-testing functions remain unimpaired for the most part, and the individual is free to pick and choose among those objects which are able to provide gratification.

It is this situation which calls for our understanding. A truly Freudian analysis would pay close heed to the clinical evidence, as a Marxist one would to altered social conditions. The same state of affairs decried by Horowitz is now even being hailed by some thinkers as "the good old days".<sup>15</sup> That, however, is a value judgement and, as one subject to those old days, I am not certain that I subscribe to it. In any case, the empirical facts remain in contrast to those described in *Repression*.

### VII

The achievement of a synthesis between Freud and Marx remains undone. Worse, it is not even clear whether Horowitz's book has put a definitive end to hopes of discovering a Freud who can guide us toward liberation. Is the book misconceived because of Horowitz's carelessness, or is there something in the nature of the material itself which defies the conclusions wished for it? The accounts of Marcuse and Brown are flawed in many of the same ways — and one begins to wonder why the need is felt to push Freud beyond the parameters he defended with such conviction.

Philip Rieff has addressed himself to the limits Freud imposed. He locates Freud's work at a moment in Western civilization when "communities of authority" have disintegrated, leaving the individual to care for his own psyche. Psychoanalysis is concerned only with this care, through what Rieff terms the "analytic attitude", an instrument of knowledge alone, without any power or intent to provide salvation: "[Freud] will not help those who suffer from residual beliefs to find new beliefs; he can only help us in our unbelief." 'Consolation', Rieff quotes Freud as saying, '... at bottom this is what they are demanding ... the wildest revolutionaries no less passionately than the most virtuous believers'.<sup>16</sup>

Rieff is probably correct, and psychoanalysis should not be called upon to

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instruct us in a faith that it has set out to undermine. Still, the analytic attitude need not stop at the couch, and if that attitude cannot be assimilated to Marxist passion, it can at least assist passion with insight. Whatever liberating potential exists in the shadows of the present will only be known — as Marx taught — by the most thorough understanding of the conditions determining social consciousness. Now we are aware that such conditions include psychological states, and that the social world as it is lived internally can be brought to light with psychoanalysis.

After this point, psychoanalysis and Marxism must part ways, the former to remind us of boundaries, the latter to reveal possibilities. It is not for the Marxists to claim that the revolution will put an end to dreaming, since reality will fulfill all wishes; nor for psychoanalysis to reply that after Lenin comes Stalin.

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### Notes

1. Russel Jacoby (in *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1975) and Juliet Mitchell (in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1974) make a different argument: Freud's concepts reveal the inner truth of bourgeois culture. Thus he was, at once, an ideologue and critic. This is essentially the same line taken by Adorno and Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School. It was Marcuse who departed from his former colleagues by discovering the liberating element in Freud's thought. (For an excellent summary of the Frankfurt School's relation to psychoanalysis, see Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*, Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1973, pp. 86 - 112.)
2. See especially, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (1910c), S.E. XI, pp. 59 - 137. (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London: The Hogarth Press.) Here Freud makes his most complete use of the term "sublimation" — which consists of little more than including it in a descriptive typology. It is clear from this text that "sublimation" cannot do the kind of work the ego-psychologists, Marcuse and Horowitz want. Nothing separated Leonardo from neurosis except for his art — which itself was anything but free from the pathological strains in Leonardo's character. The idea of sublimation as a distinct form of mental functioning is not Freudian: it is rather an idealized reification which revives the dichotomy between the healthy and the diseased.
3. Still, it is only a logical justification. The point is that the incest taboo and prohibition on parricide had yet to be internalized — rather than that they did not govern the primal horde. The organization of the primal horde derived from the power of the father who imposed these restrictions. Freud is drawing on the analogy of infantile development, detailing in mytho-historical terms the processes by which power is transmuted into authority. The early stage is

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not pre-social, but the historical foundation of society, violent and based on might. The intent of Horowitz's misreading here is to move this foundation forward to the *proton eutopia* he has discovered subsequent to the parricide (see text below).

4. S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays* (1939a [1937-39]), S.E. XXIII, p. 131.
5. The idea of a matriarchal society, preceding patriarchy, was a popular one in German intellectual circles during the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Horowitz does not repeat the logic for idealizing matriarchy — so it is not clear why a matriarchy would be any less patriarchal (*i.e.*, authoritarian) than a patriarchy — unless one assumes that, by nature, women are superior to men. As a cultural symbolic, the *vagina dentata* is hardly a more comforting signifier of power than the phallus. In any case, it is not enough to simply invoke the term “matriarchy” without explanation, and expect the reader to naturally connote polymorphous sexuality and equality.
6. Freud, *ibid.*, p. 133. The passage is not italicized in the original and Horowitz does not mention that he has added the emphasis.
7. In *Moses* Freud states, “in primeval time primitive man lived in small groups” and that these “human creatures” had developed rudimentary forms of speech (p. 81). Similarly in *Totem and Taboo*, he refers to the “social state of primitive men”. ([1912-13], S.E. XIII, p. 125) I briefly noted above Horowitz's concern that the primal horde be pre-human. It is still not clear to me why he risks being so careless with Freud to make this point: the silly idea that patriarchy signifies primate-hominid regression is hardly worth it.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 142n. A few pages later Freud does mention the “social fraternal feelings” which Horowitz must have in mind. Freud, however, goes on to say:  
“Society was now based on complicity in the common crime; religion was based on the sense of guilt and the remorse attaching to it; while morality was based partly on the penance demanded by the sense of guilt”. (p. 146)  
I can find no inference of either polymorphous genitality or sexual equality — not to mention autonomous ego-functioning — in even this toned-down version of the brother-clan.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-146.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 148
11. The European Marxist Louis Althusser has noted that the singular object of psychoanalytic research is the unconscious, and he goes on to state, apropos socialization:

“Humanity only inscribes its official deaths on its war memorials: those who were able to die on time, *i.e.* late, as men, in human wars in which only *human* wolves and gods tear and sacrifice one another. In its sole survivors, psycho-analysis is concerned with another struggle, with the only war without memoirs of memorials, the war humanity pretends it has never declared, the war it always thinks it has won in advance, simply because humanity is nothing but surviving this war, living and bearing children as culture in human culture: a war which is declared in each of its sons, who, projected, deformed and rejected, are required, each by himself in solitude and against death, to take the long forced march which makes mammiferous larvae into human children, *masculine feminine subjects*.

This object is no business of the biologists: this story is certainly not biological!” (L. Althusser, “Freud and Lacan” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971, pp. 204, 205-206.)

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12. In Lacan's sense of the term, the unbridgeable, inevitable abyss separating the insatiable character of the subject's wish for "recognition", and the recalcitrance of the object.
  13. See, for example, Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Beseiged*, New York: Basic Books Inc., 1977; and *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978; Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers/Harper Colophon Books, 1977; J.R. Schiller, "The Political Psychology of Narcissism", 1978, xerox.
  14. The term itself is a total misnomer. First, because the symptoms Marcuse and Horowitz refer to arise from the absence of repression; and second, because, one of the characteristic problems of the pathology is the incapacity to sublimate in the first place, so there is no question of a "de-sublimation". Marcuse used the term (in *One-Dimensional Man*) to denote a situation where sexuality was allowed expression by the state as a means of diverting energy which might otherwise be directed toward rebellion. Still, one hardly needs psychoanalytic terminology or conceptualization to understand what is, in fact, a mode of oppression: give the people circuses and they won't complain about domination.
  15. See Lasch, *ibid.* and Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: The Uses of Faith After Freud*, New York and Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers/Harper Torchbooks, 1968.
  16. Rieff, *ibid.*, pp. 38, 29.
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