The Psychoanalytic Movement

The Cunning of Unreason

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Foreword by José Brunner

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1

Back to Nature

> Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart, and the general circumstances of mankind, as instruments to execute its purpose, we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church?
>
> Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

Gibbon's Problem

Psychoanalysis, like Christianity, is a founded or historic rather than a traditional system of beliefs and practices. It has an even more precise point of foundation than Christianity. Neither the identity nor the existence of its Founder is in doubt.

It made its entry on the world's stage as a set of new and definite claims. The speed of the acceptance, partial or total, of its message, by at any rate a significant proportion of those to whom it was addressed and whom it could reach, was astonishing. The question which Gibbon asked about Christianity applies equally to psychoanalysis: by what means did the new vision obtain so remarkable a victory?

The present volume intends above all to offer an answer to this question, one which should be internally coherent, and compatible with the established facts.

The objection which Gibbon anticipated to the very inquiry itself can of course, and most certainly will, also be raised against this version of it. Are not the truth and importance of the ideas contained in the message sufficient to explain its impact? This objection can be raised against the present inquiry with a double force. Gibbon mentions only the positive factors which can be expected to lead people to embrace the true faith. The case of psychoanalytic ideas is more complex. Not only does the truth of the ideas themselves exercise a positive attraction, but also, as is well known, the system of ideas also contains, as an integral part of itself, an explanation of the occasional failure of those ideas to secure conviction. The idea of *resistance*, which leads people in some circumstances to reject the ideas in question, explains the occasional failure or delay of conversion as cogently as the truth of ideas can explain their eventual success.

In fact, it may even seem to do it a little *more* cogently: the unconscious forces which, according to the theory, have such a strong hold over us, but which apparently can recognise and fear (even in anticipation and at a distance) the doctrine which understands and may eventually tame them – these forces clearly have every incentive to resist, by all the formidable and elusive hidden means at their disposal, the acceptance of those doctrines. So perhaps the problem facing the historian of psychoanalytic ideas may even be the inverse of that which faced Gibbon and indeed any historian of a true belief: is he not redundant precisely when attempting to single out the social factors obstructing the recognition of truth? Has he not been anticipated by the theory itself? Does not the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself explain, better than anyone else can, its occasional failures?

Be that as it may: whether this problem is the obverse or the accentuated, reduplicated form of the one which Gibbon described, there can be no doubt about a certain parallelism between the two situations. The manner in which we shall endeavour to cope with this issue, with the interaction of social and psychological causes and of valid reasons, will emerge as we proceed. In the meantime, note the existence of other styles of exposition. There are at least three such styles:

1. *Internal or Hagiographical.* This works through a narrative of how the various discoveries came to be made. The narrative is formu-

lated in what might be called 'achievement' language: it looks back, and retrospectively describes how that which is now known (or assumed) to be true, came to be recognised, often in the face of enormous odds. Stories of (literal) saints and heroes are told in this way. This style has enormous pedagogic attractions: the stories convey the values of the believing community, the identification of the True and the False, of the Good and the Bad, not by overtly affirming them as such (which might on occasion arouse suspicion and even rejection), but *en passant*, through the tacit and pervasive identification of the Goodies and the Baddies within the story. The listener, stirred by the account of the adventures (be they physical, moral or cognitive) of the hero, thrilled and frightened by his hairbreadth escapes, exhilarated by his eventual but oh so perilously and narrowly attained success, absorbs the values of the narrative unconsciously, simply by identifying with the hero. Angered by his enemies, thrilled by his courage, he does not much attend to the merits of his cause, but rather absorbs them in passing. A good proportion of the favourable accounts of psychoanalysis take precisely this form, and are often told through fragments of the Life and Passion of Saint Sigmund.

2. *Eclectic*. This is characteristic of manuals of psychiatry which sec psychoanalytic ideas or techniques as one set of options among others, among the tools available to the psychiatrist.
3. *Hostile*. This concentrates on the failures or deficiencies of psychoanalysis, notably its conceptual or methodological weaknesses. Of such charges, the best known and most important is that psychoanalysis consists of a self-maintaining, self-confirming set of ideas (and/or practices), such that it 'comes out right' whichever way clinical or experimental evidence happens to point.

The present exposition attempts to answer a problem – just how did the astonishing psychoanalytical revolution in our ideas come about – a question which cannot possibly be resolved if one is content to remain largely within the bounds of any one of these three styles. The second and third styles, whatever their merits, are in a certain way even more inadequate for the purpose at hand than the first. The eclectic approach, whether or not sensible as a practical strategy, misses out the coherence and unity of the psychoanalytical vision, and what might be called its world-filling exhaustiveness. It can pervade and dominate a person's world in a way not open to therapeutic techniques in isolation. The third makes it rather difficult to propose any plausible solution to our central problem – unless one holds that *any* self-maintaining circle of ideas whatever, if well equipped with devices for evading falsification, will have a *succès fou*, which alas is not the case. I certainly do not believe this to be so. It is very easy to construct self-maintaining circles of ideas, and not all of them prosper. If we accept the legitimacy and importance of the question concerning why some systems of ideas (whether true or false) do on occasion acquire a kind of magic for those exposed to them, then we must seek an explanation which does not rely on circularity alone.

It hardly needs stating why the internal or hagiographical approach also cannot be sufficient. The ideas of the movement itself constitute data, indeed supremely important data for us: but they cannot be allowed to prejudge how their truth or falsity (and it could be either or both) contribute to the success of the intellectual system in question. The factors we shall look at will be drawn not merely from the domain which is the primary concern of that system, namely the human psyche: but we shall also look at two other domains – the intellectual history of mankind, and the wider social organisation and ethos of our time.

It seems to me the first principle of the study of any belief system is that its ideas and terms must be stated in terms other than its own; that they must be projected on to some screen other than one which they themselves provide. They may and must speak, but they must not be judges in their own case. For concepts, like feelings and desires, have their cunning. Only in this way may we hope to lay bare the devices they employ to make their impact – whether or not those devices are, in the end, endorsed as legitimate.

Some Basic Facts and Questions

Psychoanalysis is a theory, a technique, an organisation, a language, an ethos, an ethic, a climate.

> *To us he is no more a person*
> *Now but a whole climate of opinion*
> *Under whom we conduct our differing lives.*

So wrote W. H. Auden about Sigmund Freud.[1]

The aim of this book is to offer an account of how, within the span of less than half a century, this system of ideas could conquer so much of the world, at any rate to the extent of becoming the dominant idiom for the discussion of the human personality and of human relations. It will endeavour to do this by relating its central ideas and practices to the major social and intellectual changes of the time. The system is very closely related to its period, often in ways its practitioners do not fully understand. We will not attempt a detailed account of the life of Freud and of the development of the psychoanalytical movement: that could not be done in so short a space, and has been done by others.

Nevertheless, for quick reference and by way of background, some of the key facts are presented here.

Sigmund Freud was born in a middle- or lower-middle-class Jewish family in southern Moravia (now part of Czechoslovakia) in 1856. The family moved to Vienna in 1860. Freud graduated in medicine in 1881. Four years later he secured a university appointment in neuropathology.

During the 1880s and 1890s Freud's views gradually developed and crystallised. His relevant work was carried out at the frontiers of neurology and psychopathology. The question of whether or not he 'progressed' from a neurological bias towards an autonomous 'psychodynamic' view of the human personality, is an issue which continues to haunt Freudian exegesis. What is not in doubt is that his attention was turned towards the psychological, as opposed to physical, elements in certain illnesses. Nevertheless, he did write, in 1895, a *Project of a Scientific Psychology* (not published till 1950), which, while foreshadowing many of his theories, also gives them a firm physical or rather neurological basis, and which is much invoked by those who uphold a physicalist interpretation of his system. Those who like their Marx non-scientistic, turn to the young Marx; those who like their Freud scientistic, turn to the young Freud.

After toying with methods of hypnosis and suggestion, he developed, between 1892 and 1898, the alternative method of 'free association' for exploring the psyche of patients. This method, or should one say its institutionalised practice, is one of the main pillars of psychoanalysis. Those eager to interpret this development in terms of his own theories, will note that the first occurrence of the word 'psychoanalysis' took place in 1896, the very same year as the death of Freud's father. The real point of entry of psychoanalytic truth into the world, comparable to the birth of Christ, or that great moment in the 1840s when the young Karl Marx allegedly perceived that Hegelianism was but a coded economic history of mankind, took place in 1897, with Freud's own 'self-analysis'.

This led to such crucial doctrines as that of infantile sexuality and the Oedipus Complex. His admirers have emphatically qualified this self-analysis as heroic, and held it to be a great moral as well as cognitive achievement. It is not entirely clear why this particular piece of introspection should not be doomed, like that of other men, to self-deception, but instead be classed as heroic and veridical – unless the reason is that its findings are valid, which to outsiders seems somewhat circular reasoning. The findings of that self-analysis were congruent with theoretical ideas towards which Freud had been groping anyway. From within the movement, however, the self-analysis is seen as an independent confirmation or origin of these ideas.

There is an Eastern European Jewish story about a *Wunder-rebbe* (a miracle-performing rabbi) who, caught one Friday evening far away from his home, was unable to reach home before the beginning of the Sabbath (during which travel is forbidden). But he was undismayed and performed a miracle: to the left of the road there was *shabes*, to the right of the road there was *shabes*, but on the road itself there was no *shabes*! The point of the story is that if you yourself make up the rules of what is the truth of the matter, performing miracles turns out to be not quite so difficult. The same would seem to be true of the heroism and accuracy of Freud's self-analysis.

If the doctrinal moment of incarnation is best set at 1897, then the organisational commencement of psychoanalysis is perhaps best fixed at 1902, with the Wednesday Psychological Society, which then began its meetings in Freud's house, and which was destined to become, in 1908, the Psychoanalytical Society of Vienna. Men other than Freud (Federn and Stekel) began to practise psychoanalysis in 1903; Ernest Jones, Freud's crucial British disciple and eventual biographer, began doing so in 1905.

Psychoanalysis can briefly be described as a technique in which a therapist encourages a patient to 'free-associate', i.e. to speak out anything that comes into his head, encouraging and guiding him only with occasional questions and, later on, interpretations. The assumption is that this will in due course lead to the uncovering of the unconscious, 'repressed' mental contents, which could not have been elicited by any more direct approach; and that their extraction and recognition by the patient will have significant and beneficial therapeutic consequences.

Outward expansion of the movement began about the middle of the first decade of this century. Correspondence with the Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung started in 1906, and in 1907 Jung founded a Freud society in Zurich. The first Psychoanalytic Congress took place in Salzburg in 1908. A Berlin society was founded in 1908, a New York and a separate American one in 1911, during which year the first article about psychoanalysis to be published in France also appeared. Freud gave some crucial lectures at Clark University in America in 1909.

During the second decade of the century, the movement also experienced its first great, and most famous, fissions: Adler left in 1911, Jung in the course of 1913–14. Jung had been, as is very clearly evident from Freud's own emphatic statements, the *Parade-Goy*[2] of the early psychoanalytic movement. His rapid elevation angered Freud's earlier Viennese followers, but Freud made it plain that favouring Gentile entrants was politically essential for the successful expansion of the movement.

Freud continued to live in Vienna until 1938, emigrated to London after Hitler's occupation of Austria, and died there the following year.

The Psychoanalytical Movement as an international institution and organisation, with its parallel rival movements headed by Jung and Adler, and later some others, really crystallised after the First World War. Its phenomenal and exponential growth has never been documented properly and with precision. Given its influence, this is odd and regrettable. We are dealing with nothing less than an intellectual, moral and terminological revolution, on an enormous, indeed a global scale. Changes in intellectual climate constitute something that is inherently elusive, and yet supremely important. It is probably best at this point simply to sketch or classify the types of institutional underpinning which this intellectual transformation enjoyed.

The Psychoanalytical Movement in the strict and narrow sense is well organised, with an international association grouping national institutes and societies, and with a clearly defined membership. Analysts undergo training under their auspices; with its completion, the licence to practise analysis is issued by these bodies, and the monopoly of this licensing is in general jealously guarded. The most important part of the said training is that the apprentice himself undergoes a 'training analysis'; its successful completion is the main precondition of graduation.

There are parallel and rival movements, historically connected with Freud and with his dissident disciples, and with partly overlapping doctrines and techniques, and with roughly similar organisational principles.

There is also the entire profession of psychiatry, which as such has no shared dogma, but which has in the main recognised psychoanalysis as one legitimate approach, among others, to mental illness and personality problems. Those psychiatrists who use psychoanalytical ideas and techniques range from fully committed Freudians to avowed eclectics, willing to use anything on a trial-and-error basis, as part of a wider bag of tricks. The amount and kind of initiation received by these partial practitioners varies, once again, from full and officially sanctioned training analysis to all kinds of short-cuts. (It must be added that in the early years of psychoanalysis, before the First World War, and prior to its full institutionalisation, what counted as initiation, and justified recognition by Freud of a fellow-analyst, varied enormously and would seem on occasion to have been perfunctory.) The degree to which psychiatrists use psychoanalysis can vary from sustained use of the technique, to simple use of the terminology in characterising a patient's condition.

Furthermore, there is an enormous, fluid and uncharted world of 'psychotherapy' and loosely related movements and techniques, such as 'group therapy' (a kind of poor man's psychoanalysis, where the attention, and the cost, of a therapist is shared with an entire group). Roughly speaking, the central movement endeavours to retain the label 'psychoanalysis' for its own properly licensed guild members, and hopes that those outside it will content themselves with the unpatented 'psychotherapy'. This outer world of fringe depth psychology and therapy contains countless sub-movements, distinguished by technical idiosyncrasies or by syncretism with other systems of ideas, or identifiable simply by the identity of their leaders or their location.

This world is enormous, protean and volatile. A study published in 1959, and incomplete even then, lists thirty-six different kinds of psychotherapy. Another work, by L. Wilby, published in 1977, reports that there are no fewer than 200 conceptually distinct psychotherapies.[3] In France, under the leadership of Lacan, a sub-movement flourished which constituted a kind of Maoist cultural revolution within psychoanalysis – repudiating regularity of time-tables and of licensing. Sessions could be arbitrarily brief, and analysts were to be self-appointing . . .[4]

This world is of the utmost importance for the understanding of our society and its intellectual and moral climate. While the sociology of contemporary religion in the narrower sense is reasonably well explored and documented, this psychotherapeutic world, whose vitality and impact on people is probably greater, remains largely uncharted. Part of the reason for this strange contrast is perhaps that religious faith proper is now so lukewarm that the practitioners of religion are willing to cooperate with research, and indeed welcome it and often indulge in it themselves: the demonstrations of the social role and usefulness of their faith and ritual is the closest they can normally get to establishing its truth and importance. Practitioners of depth psychological cults, on the other hand, have a more genuine and straightforward conviction of the validity of their own ideas, coupled with a distrust and dislike of inquiries which are redundant if they confirm the faith, and positively harmful if they subvert it. They have on occasion refused permission to bona fide academics to carry out research. Freud himself is on record as holding that empirical research into his own ideas is redundant because they are already so conclusively established, but that it can do no harm. His latter-day intellectual progeny are no longer so sure about the second point, and do not generally welcome investigation.

Finally, there is the even more elusive and intangible, but at least equally important, phenomenon of the permeation of the language and literature of our society by Freudian ideas. It is doubtful whether this could be summed up in any quantitative or precise manner, yet it would be useful if it could be perceptively described and characterised.

The range and scale of these phenomena are astonishing. The rates of exponential growth always transcend and astonish the expectations of the human mind. Moreover, once properly articulated in words, the whole vision evidently became airborne, and was and continues to be capable of seeding itself effectively across astonishing physical and cultural distances. There has been nothing like this since the spread of the potato and of maize, and this diffusion was even faster and may have deeper implications.

But this phenomenal diffusion would hardly have been possible had the system of ideas in question not satisfied some deep and pervasive social and intellectual need. The specification of just how the intricate and elegant structure of that system fitted in with the distinctive social and intellectual condition of mankind in our age, is the central aim of this book.

The Last Angel

The great pre-industrial and pre-scientific civilisations, especially perhaps the Western ones, tend to see man as half-angel, half-beast. Perhaps there was an earlier stage when he was more at peace with himself and his instinctual drives, and possibly the angel–beast tension does not characterise all great literate civilisations with the same intensity. However, there can be no doubt but that, with their severe ethics, influential clerisies and codified expectations, these civilisations do have a marked tendency towards a kind of dualistic and demanding vision. Freud himself commented on it with some eloquence in *Civilisation and its Discontents* and *Moses and Monotheism*. And certainly the civilisation which engendered modern science and industrial society itself as a whole, was very much given to the beast–angel dualism, and the arduousness of the struggle it imposed may well have played a crucial part in bringing forth our modern world.

This dualistic vision caused great torment to those condemned to live with it:

> *Oh wearisome condition of Humanity!*
> *Borne under one Law, to another bound*
> *Vainely begot, yet forbidden vanity,*
> *Created sicke, commanded to be sound:*
> *What meaneth Nature by these diverse Lawes?*
> *Passion and Reason, selfe-division cause:*
> *Is it the marke, or Majesty of Power*
> *To make offences that it may forgive?*
> *Nature herselfe doth her owne selfe defloure,*
> *To hate those errors she her selfe doth give.*[5]

None the less, anguished though it may have been, this vision had one or two marked advantages. It provided a validation for the rules and values towards which men were obliged to aspire. They contained an answer to the question – why must we strive and suffer so? These higher values were tied to the better parts of the total cosmic order, and to the better elements within man. So there was an answer to the difficult question – why must we strive and suffer so? – an answer which linked the obligatory and painful endeavour to the overall picture, and as long as the picture retained its cogency, the demands retained their authority, even if anguish was the price.

But there was a further and very important advantage: the picture also provided an idiom and an explanation for all the forces within man which were *opposed* to the higher and purer elements. However much the Lower Aspects of our nature might have been reprobated, their very existence was not denied. Quite the reverse: the devil had a recognised place in the scheme of things. His power was treated with respect. No one who found him within his own heart had any reason to feel surprised. We had been warned.

However, with the coming of modernity, the total dualistic picture, of which divided man was a part, lost its authority. The twin currents of empiricism and materialism destroyed it, and replaced it with a unitary vision both of nature and man. Henceforth, nature was to be one single system, subject to invariant and neutral laws, and no longer a stratified system whose ranked levels in nature, society and man were to symbolise and underwrite our values. If materialism/mechanism is a great leveller or unifier, so is empiricism: at its root is the idea that all things are known in basically the same way, and nothing can have any standing greater than the evidence for its existence, and evidence is assembled and evaluated by *men*. Thus, obliquely, through the sovereignty of *public evidence*, all authority, sacredness, absoluteness are gradually eliminated from the world.

This modern vision was codified by the great thinkers of the European eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Perhaps the greatest exemplar of this type of view was David Hume; at any rate, he is certainly the one most relevant here. Like other thinkers of his age, he was under the impression that he was talking about man as such, rather than expressing the vision of an age. His *Treatise on Human Nature* gave a profoundly *un*-dualistic account of man, and one continuous with nature. Far from aspiring to a more-than-natural status for the highest elements in man, Hume's accounts of both abstract thought and of morality were profoundly of this world: ideas were but the aftertaste of sensations, morality was but a matter of feeling, feelings which in the end serve our collective convenience.

With the coming of a unitary vision of the world, man had to return to nature, to be seen as part of it rather than as the fruit of the intrusion of something higher, divine, into the world. Possibly the main agency of this renaturalisation of man was the theory of knowledge, which acted as the Great Leveller by insisting that man was known, and knew himself, in the same way as he knew anything else – through his senses. Sensations were the universal building blocks, the ultimate material, of everything. So duality was overcome: the old cohabitation of Angel and Beast was replaced by Hume's famous 'Bundle of Perceptions'. The elements from which this bundle was assembled were exactly the same as those of any other object of nature, and were simply accumulated by the senses. So there was no further reason to assume special, extra-territorial status for humanity within nature. That creature, assembled from such fragmented, transparent and hence basically innocuous elements, I shall on occasion call the 'Bundleman'.

And here we come to one of the greatest, most curious paradoxes in all the history of thought: this renaturalised non-dualistic man was, in a curious way, *more*, not less, angelic than his strife-ridden, anguished predecessor, with his double citizenship in the divine and in the animal, 'borne under one Law, to another bound'. Man now seemed very much at home in this world, and there seemed no good reason why he should not be at peace with it. Reading David Hume and Adam Smith, one might gather the impression that both the lusts and the guilts of the human heart are quite transparent to itself, at any rate in Scotland. (A little later, James Hogg, the author of *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, made it plain that this was not so; but he had little influence on academic psychology.) How did this astonishing beatification of man come about?

Hume was the supreme exponent of the empiricist vision, and one who explored its problems. One of his most famous, and also most misleading statements is: '*Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions*.'

Anyone not familiar with Hume's thought might well suppose, on reading this remark out of context, that Hume's vision of man was something like that of Dostoevsky, that he saw man as possessed by dark, tortuous, mysterious, perverse and uncontrollable passions. Not a bit of it. To understand properly the true nature of the famous Humean enslavement to passion, you must conjure up a different picture altogether. Imagine yourself floating in a boat on an artificial lake in a landscaped park, say one designed by Capability Brown. The currents of the lake are the passions, and you are indeed their slave, for the boat has neither oars nor rudder. If reason be the captain, it is a totally powerless one. The vessel will follow the currents, for there simply are no other forces that can impel or impede it.

Will they propel the boat to its destruction, in some maelstrom or cataract? Not at all. These currents are mild, the shores of the lake are rounded and slope gently. The currents may take you to a picnic on an island with a grotto or, alternatively, to a musical performance of Handel on one of the shores . . . With such passions, who would not gladly be their slave?

All that Hume meant by the celebrated 'enslavement to the passions' was that the desires which impel our conduct could only be engendered by *feelings*. 'Reason' (perception of fact or of logical relation) could never on its own produce a preference for one thing over another. It could only note incompatibilities or select optional means. In that sense, but in that sense only, the boat was oar-less and rudderless; and in that sense only, reason was powerless.

But the feelings which took over all responsibility for our aims and values, basically and simply for lack of any possible rival, were themselves of a very gentle and sensible kind, like the mild currents of our small artificial lake. This was a corollary of conceiving man (and everything else) as constructed out of the atomic elements assembled by outer and inner sense: sensations and feelings. The Bundleman was a gourmet crossed with an accountant, with a touch of compassionate sensibility thrown in. He conducted his life by studying his palate and seeking to arrange for its greatest satisfaction, and his imaginative sympathy for others inclined him to favour their satisfactions too, if to a somewhat lesser degree than his own.

A fallacious argument underlay all this: because only experience gives us evidence about the world (which is probably true), and experience comes in little bits (most questionable), therefore the only correct model of human conduct is one which sees it as the result of the accumulation and combination of introspectible feelings and sensations (totally false). This picture, endowed later with quite spurious tough-minded third person terminology such as 'Stimulus and Response' (henceforth SR), continued to haunt the tradition of 'scientific', empiricist psychology and does so still.

This tradition too has its compulsiveness: those who adhere to it are under the sway of the faulty inference from the plausible view of the cognitive sovereignty of sense experience, to the absurd conclusion that explanatory models of human conduct must be in terms of elements similar to 'sensation' or 'stimulus'. The inference is quite fallacious, though an entire movement in psychology (Behaviourism) is based on the failure to see this.

But what concerns us here is not the roots of the behaviourist error, but its consequences. The idyllic, gentle-passion theory found in Hume, is in effect transmitted by it to the entire and rather influential tradition of academic 'empiricist' psychology. Man's behaviour is seen as a set of responses to given stimuli: the task of psychology becomes to identify the links between these stimuli and responses. Psychology becomes a search for a kind of algorithm linking stimuli to responses.

Yet it offered the new image of man, the mirror for secularised, literally *naturalised*, man freed from the dualistic doctrine and the endless inner battle between Beast and Angel. Unfortunately, the picture, which should have been cheering and relaxing, brought its own tension with it. The trouble is very simple: anyone who has the least sense of what it is like to be a human being knows perfectly well, and without any shadow of doubt, that the Hume/SR account of man bears no relation whatsoever to the facts.

But it was, and partly remains, the official or dominant psychological doctrine or assumption. Yet we also know, each of us, with as firm a certainty as we can ever have of anything, that it is false. What happens when the official doctrine says one thing, and what everyone instinctively knows to be true is quite another? The French have a couple of good phrases for this: what results is the dualism of *pays legal and pays reel*.

In French, this suggestive and opposite terminology arose from a political situation in which the official, overt political institutions did not correspond, at least in the estimation of some, to the real, genuinely felt sentiments and loyalties of men. But there is, especially in the modern world, a *pays reel* and a *pays legal* of the human mind, at least as sharply distinct and deeply opposed as French state and society once were. The *pays legal* is the rather atomistic, calculating, introspectively accessible gourmet-accountant, whose presence is (erroneously) held to be entailed by an empiricist theory of knowledge. The *pays reel* is the nature of our feelings, drives, relationships, as we know them to be, from the often bitter experience of actually being alive. One of the main clues to understanding the significance and impact of psychoanalysis is very simply this: it provided both an idiom and a justification for recognising the *pays reel*. The more it was denied, the more an unconvincing *pays legal* was affirmed, the more clamorous the *pays reel* became emotionally. But it lacked an idiom and a doctrine. Anyone who provided it with a convincing idiom, rationale, and institutional underpinning, was bound to receive a reward.

The *pays legal* in the meantime consisted of the forcefully imposed survival of a demanding dualistic morality, sustained incoherently and unconvincingly by the doctrine of the Last Angel – that most implausible of ethereal beings, the self seen as assembled from the fragments of limpid consciousness, the innocuous gourmet-accountant, the Bundleman. But if we are bundles made up of quite harmless elements, why do we suffer so?

The Harbinger of the *Pays Reel*

The paradox arose because the empiricist tradition, in its determination to make man part of nature, had made him more, rather than less unrealistically ethereal; he now seemed purer and more transparent than he had been when partly divine, or at least when touched by divine creation or design. The Bundleman was more innocuous than the Angel/Beast. The thinkers of the empiricist tradition had supposed that the only way to exclude the supernatural from our understanding of man was to insist that all knowledge came through the senses and in no other way. To turn the limits of the senses into the limits of sense seemed a sound way of ensuring that man was made of natural materials only. It was supposed that the supernatural elements had to enter by supersensory channels; so if these channels were blocked, the alien elements and demands could no longer make their entry, and the result would be a man made of terrestrial materials alone, and responsive only to human and humane imperatives.

It is hard to imagine a more bloodless and unrealistic account of man. Should one be more appalled by the implausibility of this picture as an explanation of the twisted, devious and turbulent creature we actually deal with, or by the anaemia and complacency of this picture as a model of what man should be?

Many writers have noticed the incongruity between this model and reality. But there is one thinker in whose work this insight plays an absolute central part: Friedrich Nietzsche.[6]

Nietzsche, like Søren Kierkegaard, appeared in philosophy at a moment when the style of exposition of some thinkers at least was undergoing a fundamental change. He was influenced by predecessors like Schopenhauer who still wrote – even if they wrote very well – in an academic, science-emulating style, on the assumption that precise propositions were being propounded, and this, rather than tone and manner, was what mattered. In Nietzsche there is a shift to inconsequential, sometimes incoherent aphorism, and to a great deal of irony. The starched dress of formal argument, demonstration and precision is abandoned.

This change of form was no mere affectation. The new form genuinely reflected a change of content. Part of Nietzsche's message was that under the formal argument of a thinker there was a man whose deep emotional and situational concerns were reflected, or camouflaged, by the formally presented arguments. If this was indeed so, there was no point in practising such deception oneself; and Nietzsche, most consistently (thereby also giving licence to his marvellous literary talent), proceeded to turn upon the real psychic meaning of thinkers and intellectual traditions, while dispensing with the pedantry of much formal documentation or argument. The representatives of the empiricist, unwittingly-angelic, 'bundle-of-perceptions' theories of man were favourite victims of his irony.

It is a pity perhaps that Nietzsche did not concentrate on some major representative of this school, such as David Hume or Adam Smith; but nevertheless, the criticism strikes home. One might pedantically object that the British moralists invoked not stupidity, as Nietzsche suggested, but imagination, compassion and benevolence as the mainspring of morality. But to say that is to miss the point: 'stupidity' is the rhetorical exaggeration for a valid point. The empiricist or associationist account did indeed altogether miss the deviousness, the cunning, the camouflage and inversion, the envy or resentment, which underlie so many of our 'moral' reactions.

We have given an account of the peaceable, innocent, guiltless, not to say anaemic Bundleman of the empiricists, suggesting that he had emerged almost by accident, through a faulty inference: the thinkers of the Enlightenment had wished to see man in terms of nature only, without supernatural intrusions; and because empiricism was a naturalist theory of knowledge, they quite mistakenly concluded that man must be made of, and actuated by, only such elements as figure in the simpliste version of the empiricist account of knowledge (i.e. the elements that appear on the 'inner screen' of sensation).

But in fact, the guileless Bundleman was accepted and welcomed not merely because he was the corollary of a mistaken inference: there were also more positive reasons for accepting so rosy a vision of man. Optimistic social doctrines such as the natural harmony of interests, the feasibility of a social order built upon consent, with only minimal coercion (or even none at all) – these doctrines were also in the air in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The picture of the harmless and guileless bundle fitted in with these starry-eyed expectations, and they in turn seemed to provide a kind of confirmation for a psychology engendered by the empiricist picture of knowledge.

If this picture is deeply suspect, if it is but the *pays legal* of the Enlightenment, what is the truth of the matter, what is the *pays reel*? Nietzsche was not a coherent thinker and never properly codified the alternative. This would have been contrary to his style and spirit; moreover, it is doubtful whether the alternative he sketched or hinted at was or even could be fully consistent, and formal exposition would have laid bare its inner strains. But it is important to try and pin down this alternative vision, to codify it and make it precise – while admitting that this procedure may misrepresent in detail, and certainly in spirit, the intentions and style of the author to whom it is being credited.

These views about the *pays reel* of the human mind, which may I think legitimately be extracted from the works of Nietzsche, can be formulated and enumerated as follows. I shall henceforth refer to the ideas on this list as the Nietzschean Minimum (NM for short).

1. *Instinctuality*. Our real satisfactions and needs are closely linked to our basic instinctual drives. Our contentment and our distress are not a matter of running up a positive balance in the summation of little pleasures, distributed over the screen on to which our stream of consciousness is projected, as on a kind of skin we extend towards reality; in fact they come, on the contrary, in big brutal blows, linked not to our skin, but our innards.
2. *Situationality*. These satisfactions are situational, not atomised. What satisfies and what disturbs us is not the pleasure- and

pain-flavoured little specks on the screen or skin (adding up the pleasures and subtracting the pains); it is a three-dimensional and persisting situation. Our concern is with such total situations, and not with a pleasure/pain balance sheet.

3. *Reality is Other People*. The type of situation which satisfies or disturbs us is primarily one involving other people, and, above all, people with whom we have persistent, intimate and emotionally charged relationships – members of our family, or generally fellow-members of the persisting immediate elementary community. What matters above all are relationships of power and of submission.
4. *Trauma and Gestalt*. Our perception of the situations in this intimate and immediate realm of our deepest and genuine concern, and the manner in which we form attitudes and assessments within it, do not in the least follow the atomic, slowly and cautiously cumulative, accountant-like procedure postulated by empiricist philosophers. Perception, formation of permanent pictures and attitudes, is by *trauma*. Single crucial events act like switches which deeply modify our vision and valuations, irrespective of whether that single strategic event is, by some external standards, either 'objective' or important.
5. *Covertness*. The manner in which these kinds of crystallisations of vision and attitude occur is such that it is not generally conscious or accessible to the consciousness, or to the deliberate control, of the person concerned.
6. *Infancy*. Many, perhaps all, of these crucial crystallisations occur very early in life. In any case they persist in the same person over long periods. (This doctrine is prominent in Freud, whereas in Nietzsche it is just a plausible corollary of other ideas. But nothing really hinges on whether this point is explicitly worked out in Nietzsche.)
7. *Surrealism*. The 'logical' principles, if they can be dignified by such a term, which govern these crystallisations, are strangers both to the principles of perspective, and to all the normal rules of time, space, logic and causality, which more or less govern (or are meant to govern) our conscious thought. They are devoid of perspective or sense of proportion: 'objectively' important ones may be ignored, 'objectively' insignificant ones may be crucial. Logic and the known laws of causation are ignored: logically in-

compatible convictions or aspirations can coexist, causal impossibilities are ignored, distances in time and space disregarded, and so on.

8. *Cunning*. While low on logic and sense of reality and real possibility, these inner reactions are not random, but most cunningly functional, and at the service of our persistent instinctual drives, and linked to the objects which those drives selected in the trauma-governed ways indicated above. So, these activities display a curious combination of great cunning and, by waking-hours conscious standards, equally outstanding stupidity, in their insensitivity to fact and logic.
9. *Fraud*. These attributes – cunning, camouflage and inaccessibility to consciousness, enslavement to instinctual needs, stupidity in the face of reality – apply not merely to the aspects of our personality generally considered to be a bit beastly, but also, and equally – *at least* as much – to the activities traditionally considered to be furthest removed from our beastliness: conscience, reason, pursuit of ideals, etc. These are as much at the service of the cunning and disguised agents of instinct, as are our more blatantly animal concerns; but they suffer from the added disadvantage of being more twisted, dishonest and linked to weakness and illness. They are more repulsive aesthetically, and more harmful.
10. *Pathology*. These deceitful, hidden and instinct-linked phenomena are often linked to disease, by being the cause of symptoms which traditional medicine, and in modern times common sense also, had attributed to physical, physiological causes.

It need hardly be stressed how much these ten principles are contrary to the psychological assumptions of the Bundleman.

It is part of our argument that the NM has been taken over by Freud from Nietzsche. What was it that Freud added to the NM which helped it conquer the world? The NM on its own had *not* conquered the world.

But even within the actual content of the ten principles, as formulated, there are no doubt some differences, notably in stress, between Nietzsche and Freud. For instance, Nietzsche was not particularly interested in the role of infancy in character-formation; Freud, on the other hand, was not so preoccupied with the aesthetic or political demerits of over-conscientious civilisations. (On the whole he stuck to the Public Health aspect of the matter.) In brief, minor differences in the Nietzschean and Freudian versions of the NM are not denied: but they do not matter much. What does matter a very great deal is the difference in the external use of the NM by the two men (external to the meaning of the ten principles themselves). Summing it up from Nietzsche's (but not so much Freud's) viewpoint, what those ideas all amount to is:

1. *The Self-Devouringness of Morality*. The more demanding, self-torturing moralities spring from the very same inner force which is also responsible for our more openly this-worldly, animal desire; but they are distinguished by their inner dishonesty and tortuousness, a tendency to engender inner malaise which does not haunt their more candidly animal partners. It is not the case that a Higher Voice is speaking, only that one of the low earthly drives has turned in upon itself, or has acquired the cunning to disguise itself as its own denial, or strives to destroy its rivals from the rear. (This is one of the points where Nietzsche's consistency may be doubted: if all drives are alike, with what right do we aesthetically condemn the tortuous, dishonest ones – given that, on his own admission and to his regret, they do often succeed thanks, precisely, to their deviousness?) Is not the condemnation of dishonesty itself a survival of that self-tormenting conscience which is being damned? In the name of what value or ideal can we damn cunning and the moralistic self-torturers if they prevail? Was it not they themselves who invented the ideal of an abstract truth? So do we not damn them in the name of a pseudo-standard which they themselves deceitfully invented, and in disregard of the more terrestrial norm of success which we ought really to reinstate? Nietzsche was fully aware of this regress and of the tendency of his own ideas to devour themselves.

2. *Excellence is Parasitic on Aggression*. The humanitarian, dishonest, aggression-denying moralities do not merely commend something which does not correspond to our real psychic constitution; the way of life they recommend is incompatible with the kind of excellence which we still partly recognise and which was preached by an early, healthier, aristocratic morality. Excellence will not survive the victory of the resentful, compassionate, humanitarian pseudo-morality.

3. *Social Darwinism*. The supposedly harmonious, conflict-free, universalistic and humane ethic, apart from being in conflict with our true natures and inimical to excellence, is also incompatible with the

real possibilities of life on earth. Here Nietzsche's thought converges with the implications others have found in the work of Malthus and Darwin. Whether realism, honesty, survival, psychic health or excellence is our consideration – we had better have another good look at our values.

So the humanistic and humanitarian view of man, preached by the Enlightenment in secular terms, is incompatible with the true nature of our satisfactions, with our real ways of choosing our beliefs, with our old standards of excellence and with the realistic possibilities of life. Though it had been presented as the antithesis and overcoming of the religious view of man, it was in fact merely its perpetuation in secular terms, the perpetuation of an ethic of resentment by other means. Under the new packaging, the old priestly venom, the resentment and self-hatred of the weak, the attempt to set up their weakness as the norm and to stigmatise vigour as evil, are all lurking, more insidiously than ever before.

One of my central arguments is that the psychoanalytic revolution, the impact of Freudian ideas, is intimately connected with the recognition of the *pays reel* of the mind. But if the main characteristics of that *pays reel* were already discerned by Nietzsche, albeit with a different political stress, why did they need to wait for Freud to make their full impact? (One must admit that Nietzsche included certain ethical and political conclusions which Freud did not share or endorse.)

This question is fundamental. Hence, a list of the differences between Nietzsche and Freud or rather, perhaps, between their presentation of these ideas, becomes supremely important. What are they?

1. The NM is sketched out by Nietzsche in a loose, general and unspecific way. He seems to be saying: this is the general way in which the human mind and heart work, and here are some historic and concrete examples – but between the rather general NM and individual cases there is no corpus of apparently precise generalisations or laws. By contrast, Freudian and psychoanalytic theory seems to be full of them.
2. Furthermore, one finds in Nietzsche's work a rather general entity, the Will to Power, whereas Freudian theory is preoccupied with sexuality. It is not entirely clear whether the Nietzschean Will to Power is simply a generic name for all striving, like Schopenhauer's Will, or whether it is a little more specific.

Admittedly, Freudian sexuality also often looks like something much broader than sexuality in any normal sense. The libido seems fairly free-floating. It lusts after What it May Concern, rather than some circumscribed object. Nevertheless, there seems to be a contrast between the two thinkers at this point, and Freud does at least seem to be much more specific.

3. The sombre recognition of the *pays reel* and its bitter, harsh realities, is not in Nietzsche accompanied by any promise or genuine recipe for personal salvation. The Transvaluation of Values, which he commended, is questionably coherent, highly nebulous, sounds as if it might be arduous and perilous, and, let's not beat about the bush, is a bit above the heads of ordinary people. A highbrow classicist-philosopher is shrieking against long-term historical trends which are hardly involved in the daily concerns of most people. One knew what he was rejecting: no one has ever been sure of the exact nature of the alternative he was proposing, though some have claimed it for their own values, or attributed it to their enemies. It is for this reason that the endemic debate about whether or not he was a proto-Nazi is pointless. His proposed alternative was not coherent or determinate enough to enable one to answer this question with any finality.

   By contrast, Freud does offer a position, concrete and identifiable, and a technique for attaining *individual* salvation in the face of problems only too real for ordinary people. In fact, his theory attained fame only as the accompaniment of that technique of salvation. Soteriology came before doctrine, as perhaps it should.
4. Nietzsche neither did, nor could, engender any organisation to sustain his doctrine. He was simply a professor and writer, who had to rely on his published word for whatever impact he was to make. The contrast with psychoanalysis, whose ideas have a well organised guild/church to sustain them, and which has a definite role within medicine and thus is incorporated in science, is obvious.
5. Nietzsche was a professor of classics who wrote brilliantly though somewhat wildly, and went mad in his old age. The aphoristic brilliance and frequent ambiguity of his writings made him a permanent favourite with those who have a taste for literary philosophising, but they conferred no authority whatsoever on his pronouncements. By contrast, Freud was a doctor, a psychiatrist, and thus occupied a place in that unutterably crucial, strategic

> area in the present intellectual life of mankind, where science, known to be true, but painfully distant and indifferent to the sufferings of individuals, meets therapy and care for the ailing, notably for the psychically ailing – in brief, where guaranteed truth meets the crying need for salvation. He also endowed the NM with a terminology which appears to link it to medicine and to science.

One might sum this up by saying that Freud added specificity where there had been only a general outline; sexuality where there had been a semi-metaphysical, semi-biological abstraction, the Will to Power; a reasonably specific recipe for personal salvation and therapy, where there had been only a most ambiguous indication of a collective transvaluation of values; an organisation where there had been none; an ostensibly scientific terminology where there had been only literature; and an insertion of these ideas into the context of medicine, when they had previously lived only in the doubtfully prestigious ambience of philosophy. All these transformations, severally and jointly, were of the utmost importance.

The Battering-Ram

In the end, the Will to Power is a far, far more disturbing, more corrosive idea for humanist optimism than is the domination of the human psyche by sexuality. The optimistic vision of the Enlightenment – whether in its liberal, Marxist or any other form – which envisages a social order without oppression or dogmatism, egalitarian, cooperative and consensual, is deeply threatened, if it turns out to be true that *domination*, the imposition of our will on others, is the only thing which truly turns us on, and that all else is but façade and self-deception. If this be the ultimate truth about us, well then the sad prospect for humanity is either the perennial frustration of our deepest needs, or a social order in which some may fulfil themselves – but only at the cost of the oppression and humiliation of others. It is for this reason that Nietzsche is a profoundly disturbing thinker, a corrosive acid poured over the various forms of humanist optimism.

By contrast, the thesis of the dominance of sexuality in our psyches is, at any rate by now, far less worrying. If, throughout our youth and until the sad decline of later middle age, we are unutterably randy, and really think of nothing else, whatever we may pretend to ourselves on the surface – what of it? Society and the optimistic vision of mankind, in an age of contraception and effective medicine, can as far as I can see accommodate themselves to any amount of randiness on the part of its members, at any rate once we get used to the idea (a state of affairs which seems to be well on the way). If in truth we are all sex-mad apes, this may sadden those who hope that some pure and abstract values mean most to us: but people who cling to that belief must by now be in a minority. The naturalised idea of mankind has, on the whole, taken over.

So, from an objective viewpoint, or from the viewpoint of the current climate of opinion in 'developed' countries, sexuality and the acceptance of its vigour and its early arrival on the scene, present no terrible, unmanageable threat to our ideological peace of mind. But it is as well to remind ourselves that this was not always so, and that at the time of the emergence of psychoanalysis, its stress on the importance and pervasiveness of sexuality was felt to be its most notorious and scandalous doctrine.

There are various obvious reasons why sexual puritanism should have been rampant in nineteenth-century Western Europe. The early stage of industrialism throws up an appallingly impoverished and uprooted urban proletariat, whose precarious condition inevitably drives a large proportion of its womenfolk into prostitution. *The Communist Manifesto* was very explicit: 'Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes . . .'

The consequence of this situation, of a kind of enormous economic/moral sump at the bottom of society, of a constant threat to all as a consequence of the ever-present possibility of destitution, is that the large sections of society immediately above the sump, signal their 'respectability' in the only way available to them. When brothels are as numerous as they were in Victorian London, girls are unlikely to wish to signal their liberation from sexual taboos: that was to come only much later. Another obvious factor making for prudery was of course that the sections of the population who did well out of the new industrial order, and who set its tone, were, for reasons well explored by sociology, recruited disproportionately from groups already given to puritanism, and they were unlikely to abandon very quickly the values which had helped them rise in the world.

These reasons, and perhaps others, were the historically specific factors which helped to make the world into which psychoanalysis burst somewhat touchy about sexuality. But, even if (in my view) it is not particularly disturbing for developed society in the long run, sexuality nevertheless does constitute a problem for most, and perhaps for all societies. There is probably no aspect of life where the *pays reel* of the mind and the *pays legal* are so endemically at variance. There can hardly be any point where their divergence is so forcefully brought home to the individual mind.

The sexual stirrings of a person are unpredictable and erratic. They are no respectors of the system of personal relations sanctioned in a given community, or indeed of its customs and proprieties, or of its practical needs. This is almost as true in an 'enlightened', liberal, permissive society as it is in a repressive and puritanical one. Even in the most liberal and promiscuous commune, it simply is not feasible to practise the sexual equivalent of demand feeding. Whatever may be possible in the course of occasional orgies, it would totally disrupt daily life, its activities and relations. Sexual activity also involves the use of bodily parts which in the Western (and most other) traditions normally remain hidden, held to be unclean, and are physiologically connected with excretion.

> *But Love has pitched his mansion in*
> *The place of excrement*
> *W. B. Yeats, 'Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop'*

It is true that William Blake, an eccentric and mystical spirit, found genitals beautiful: 'The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands and feet Proportion.' (*Proverbs of Hell*)

There is little point here in entering on a discussion of aesthetics, but it is obvious that, if allowed to be beautiful, the aesthetic considerations which make genitals so are highly discontinuous from those which otherwise operate in assessing human physical beauty. Generally speaking, parts of the human body are considered beautiful if round, firm, smooth, dry, unsmelly and clean. Wrinkles are normally associated with age. Bodily smells are not usually deemed attractive and the repulsion they inspire attaches by association to any part liable to produce them. Primary sexual organs have a number of features which, in any other context, would be deemed anything but attractive.

Moreover, the entire early education of children in most Western traditions predisposes them against an overt or avowed preoccupation with these parts.

Hence, the fact that, in sexual activity, they suddenly acquire an enormous affective charge, signals in the most dramatic way imaginable the discontinuity between sex and the rest of life – a discontinuity which inevitably persists in some measure even in a permissive society, but which had been very much accentuated during the period when Freud made his impact. Anthropologists have noted how the shock of the inversion of normal conventions is used as a kind of social punctuation, as a means of highlighting a *special occasion*. As a distinguished anthropologist observed: 'Why should it seem natural to wear top hats at funerals, and false noses on birthdays and New Year's eve?'[7]

Leach's answer is that both heightened and inverted or abandoned formality of dress and/or role, mark out special occasions and endow otherwise shapeless time with its structure. Sex is a role-reversal given us by nature. It brings its own discontinuity and intensity which fortify, and sometimes subvert, the relations sanctioned by society. It seems as if nature, through sexuality, had made humanity a present of a kind of proto-ritual, ready to be turned into a ritual proper by culture. It is tempting to speculate about the origins of ritual in pre-social patterns of courtship and mating.

The next step is now ready: even though, in the long run, the addiction of the human heart to violence or domination (if it obtains) is far more disturbing than our sexuality, nevertheless, for reasons pertaining both to the permanent condition of complex society, and to the special accentuation of puritanism in the nineteenth century, sexuality was the ideal battering-ram for bringing home, in the guise of a great new discovery, the disparity between the *pays reel* and the *pays legal* of the mind. In the nineteenth century, the age of belief in progress and the perfectibility of man and the human condition, that disparity was specially acute; and at the same time, sexual puritanism, the collective conspiracy making for a kind of social invisibility of sex, remained very strong or even grew stronger. Before 1914, the bourgeoisie of Europe might well worry about sex. What else was there to worry about? So it was no accident that it was used to hammer home an awareness of the dark side of man.