

Marxism and Psychoanalysis – An Exchange

Joel Kovel and Ian Craib

*Joel Kovel has become increasingly well known to a British public over recent years, firstly with the publication in 1977 of **A Complete Guide to Therapy** (Harvester) and then with the publication by Free Association Books in 1988 of four titles: **The Radical Spirit; White Racism; In Nicaragua; and Against the State of Nuclear Terror**. He does not fit easily into either British or American intellectual culture. In America, where psychoanalysis is bound by highly organised, orthodox, professional institutions, it is very rare to find a practising analyst with an interest in and active commitment to radical politics. Kovel began his psychoanalytic training at the height of anti-war radicalism in 1967, and he was very much part of the movement. In **The Radical Spirit** he describes the tension that has worked throughout his career:*

On the one level I was a rising young professional and academic psychiatrist, committed to mastering an esoteric doctrine the essence of which was antipolitical and elitist. And on another, I was a political intellectual and activist, committed to radical social transformation and forming a network of associations which had nothing in common with my professional life (p. 3).

His personal development has led him to Marxism and to concentrate increasingly on politics and political writing, away from psychoanalytic practice, whereas in Britain a number of political radicals have moved towards training and practising as psychoanalysts and psychotherapists. This difference provides the framework for the following exchange.

The Radical Spirit provides the best introduction to his work. He does not try some vast synthesis of Marxism and psychoanalysis, but explores and works with the tension and the contradictions between the two and these are apparent in what follows. Amongst other things, he has tried to bring the insights of each to the analysis of the other. Throughout his work, there is an exciting and open-minded commitment to a humanist radical vision, and little of the very abstract theorising that has often surrounded the reception of psychoanalysis in Britain.

This exchange was originally intended as an interview when Joel was in Britain for the Free Associations conference in 1988, but everything went wrong, including the tape recorder. The conversation had covered a large area which seemed to hinge on alternative choices and commitments and the possibility – or impossibility – of justifying them. It was sufficiently interesting and enjoyable to follow up. This is the result.

OPENING STATEMENT: JOEL KOVEL

Marx comes before Freud in my affections, but Freud came before Marx in my development. To be precise, I arrived at Marxism as a medically trained psychiatrist-psychoanalyst with a developing hatred for the US security apparatus and what it was doing in Vietnam, and a disposition to look towards radical social transformation. Marxism appeared to me then as the most cogent and intellectually powerful way of understanding how the monster got the way it did and how it behaved. It still does. There was also a latent tension with my psychoanalytic work, an immanent critique of bourgeois practice and subjectivism, which I could not thematize at that time. Notwithstanding, I had already deeply internalized the logos of Freudianism when I encountered historical materialism.

This was not simply a matter of psychoanalytic thinking having been written upon passive clay. I was as disposed to see things in terms of 'deep subjectivity' as I was towards radical social transformation. I had happened to inherit both of these contradictory tendencies of the modern *zeitgeist*, and each had goaded me onwards from my early years. The contradiction can be expressed either as an oscillation, variously agonized and impulsive, between periods of 'inwardness' and 'outwardness', or as one kind of synthesis or another between the two moments. Obviously all these positions get mixed up in real life where they can be posed as a continuing series of existential challenges.

That I grew up intrigued by introspection and questions of the inner life is compatible with the fact that I had a fairly privileged (albeit petit-) bourgeois background; and this in turn means that my Marxism has been affected by the lack of a worker's perspective. It should also be mentioned that before I found Freud, the abovementioned radical tendencies sought realization in Reichianism. Influenced by a therapist, I was for a while about to become an orgonomist. I still remained affected in a number of important ways by Reich, but the position as a whole came to be seen as untenable, and was set aside. Interestingly, I did not learn of the Marxist period of Reich until my own Marxist phase began, years after I had turned away from orgonomy. I suppose I am ultimately some kind of Heraclitean, disposed to see reality in terms of eternal flux. In any case, I have never been able to take the world for granted, and my un-ease, thematized in the oscillation between inwardness and outwardness, found adequate means of representation in the dialectic between Marx and Freud. It seemed to me early on, however, that the contradic-

tion between Marx and Freud was not one which admitted of a synthesis. Nor, despite the many intriguing formal homologies between the two thinkers, could there be any kind of symmetry or balance between them. The difference between Marx and Freud is more than one of 'outwardness' vs 'inwardness'. It is also, and more decisively, one of basic values. I suppose this very proposition makes me more of a Marxist than a Freudian, since the difference in values is referable to a difference in sides taken in the class struggle (it is unnecessary to spell out who took what side). To claim that a bourgeois view and a workers' view are unsynthesizable is to claim (a) that the class struggle is basic to society; and (b) that it is unresolvable under capitalism – all of which makes one either a fatalist, who is willing to accede to historical stasis, or a Marxist, who takes the worker's side. I am no fatalist.

Beyond this, Marxism has always signified to me an embodiment of the spirit of justice. By this I mean that a world-view animated by outrage against oppression and domination, and which feels the need to set matters right, finds its reality best represented within Marxism and presented there, so to speak, for encounter – and more, finds the effort to set Marxism aside, whether for psychoanalysis, deconstruction, structuralism, semiology or whatever, an evasion of the reality of injustice and an accommodation with the powers-that-be. Now it is quite possible to say that such a world-view, animated by the sense of injustice, is not the best one to hold, for one reason or another.¹ So long as it figures in one's life, however, there is no supplanting Marxism. Thus I still agree with Sartre when he held that Marxism was the unsurpassable philosophy of our time, because the conditions for overcoming its limits have not yet been achieved.

All of which does not nullify the serious shortcomings of Marxism, nor entitle one to fetishise it. It is quite easy, even fashionable, to say this in an era of socialist retreat; but the point would have been equally valid at any moment in the development of historical materialism. Marxism provides, in my opinion, the best mode of representing and encountering a vital aspect of reality. The best, however, need not be good enough; and representation is not everything. In any case, reality is richer than our efforts to thematize it. To be true to a dialectical view of the world means to not accept the hypostatization of the world. At the same time, to lead an intellectually principled life means to establish certain priorities amongst the limits to which we are subject. I believe this view to be consistent with Marxism itself. As we know, Marx insisted he was not a Marxist.

One of the chief limits of Marxism is its inadequate representation of subjectivity. Psychoanalysis, as the discourse of deep subjectivity, is peculiarly well suited to illuminate this problem.² In this respect, though the failings of socialist transformation do not admit of any simplistic reduction, it is impossible to ignore Freud's claim that the Marxist project stumbles over its conception of human needs and dispositions.³

We may note a few instances, economic and political, in which this is so. Economically, capitalist ideologues proclaim that their system, emphasising individual self-maximization and the instinctual gratification afforded by commodities, is compatible with 'human nature', whereas socialism denies human proclivities. This proposition is almost tautological, since capitalism, especially in its late, consumerist mode, is in some measure the deliberate exploitation of desire. In any case, there is some kind of 'grain' against which socialism runs.

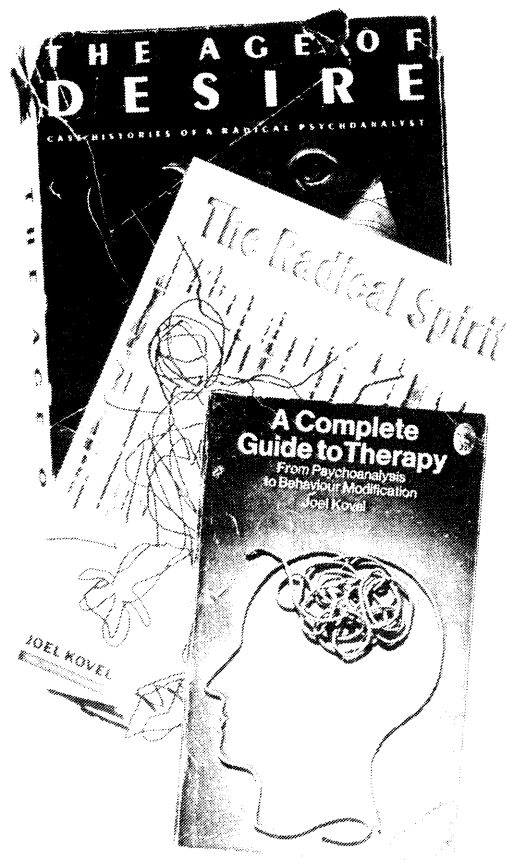
Politically, the appeal of nationalism, which so regularly overrides class interest and Marxist universalism, can

only be accounted for by invoking a deployment of desire, for the understanding of which a psychoanalytic framework is necessary. That is, nationalism necessarily entails passions organized so that signifiers of the order of 'fatherland' possess overriding motivating power. If there is an explanatory framework other than psychoanalysis capable of describing this, I am not aware of it. Obviously, I am not claiming that psychoanalysis is sufficient to understand something like nationalism; but it is necessary.

Finally, the problems of Leninism (whether developed to Stalinist levels or not), may be considered in light of tendencies which come broadly under the rubric of Freud's views on innate aggressivity. That is, the need for a strong, repressive Party-State is grounded in an appreciation that there is something to repress – namely, hostile, envious, power-hungry strivings which cannot be overcome by the installation of socialist relations. But this is essentially what Freud would claim.⁴

Marxism has a reply to this criticism, along the lines that human badness is 'second nature', imposed by the internalization of the 'nightmare of history', which is to be overcome in the long haul by transformed human relations. This is a powerful notion, to which I happen to subscribe. But it is no more than a hypothesis, and the burden of proof is on those who would endorse it, in the face of the evidence of history itself. That is, the 'long haul' may turn out to be very long indeed, too long, in fact; and second nature may conform so closely to first nature (Freud's notion of the innateness of aggressivity) as to make no practical difference.

There is yet a deeper theoretical problem. This inheres in Marx's philosophy of revolution, without which the whole doctrine dissolves and fades into the general run of bourgeois thought. Now Marx's theory of revolution is conditioned by his view of Communism, as that toward which revolution is directed. There is a famous passage in the *Manuscripts* in which Marx reveals what Communism means to him.



Communism is ... the complete restoration of man to himself as a *social* ... being.... This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equal naturalism; it is the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution to the riddle of history and knows itself to be the solution.

Of course communist goals have been posited less flamboyantly. Yet to do so misses the ontological core of Marxism, as contained in this youthful and rhapsodic statement. More to the point, I think the real historical impact of Marxism cannot be divorced from the utopian dream set forth here, in which communism amounts to the final overcoming of differences, not simply between classes, but, on the basis of the classless society, between humanity and the universe ('nature'). It is the overcoming of the loneliness and separateness of the human condition itself. Communism is the ultimate unification.

Now Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition have a very powerful critique of the state of mind which accompanies this state of being. It is, Freud would argue, in essence a primitive mental impulse toward fusion with the breast, or even the womb. Marx's goal here can be read as an instance of what Freud called the 'oceanic feeling', namely, the recapture of the loss of ego boundary (that is, the sense of separateness between 'me' and 'non-me') occurring to the satiated infant as s/he falls asleep, presumably at the breast, and fancies union with the source of life. From another angle, Marx's goal of communism can be seen as the sense of absolute omnipotence associated with what psychoanalysis calls 'primary narcissism'. In any case, it seems a long remove from the lofty idealism enunciated by the young Marx. Whatever else one thinks of Freud's critique, it is hard to deny that it gives us a vantage from which to appreciate the flux of unreason which dogs the radical political project, and in particular, the web of linkages between communism and religion.

What else is one to think of the Freudian critique? At the least, that it supplies a powerful corrective to one limit of Marx's thought.⁵ Marx assumes that persons enter society as fully formed adults bound by ultimately economic relations of production. He forgets, or does not see, that there are infantile social relations which are anterior to, coexist with, and play some determinative role in mature relations of production and political action. These relations, which subsume the infantile body and the child's relations with other persons, are deeply affected by the economic, but cannot be said to be *ultimately* determined by the economic, in the sense of orthodox Marxism's fundamental principle. It follows that ignoring or repressing this dimension – which is Freud's – will have a deleterious effect on theory and practice.

On the other hand, taking the psychoanalytic dimension at full value can seem to disable the possibilities for Marxist practice by bringing to the fore powerful elements in the human situation which are not primarily determined by the canons of historical materialism, or cast into doubt the authenticity of Marxist goals. No wonder Marxists have tended to be so reluctant to take Freud seriously!⁶

I say here, 'can seem to disable', for a reason. Logically, one can accept or reject the Marxist position, and so do either on Freudian or non-Freudian grounds, that is, by 'taking the psychoanalytic dimension at full value', or not. I am



arguing that it is wrong to either accept or reject Marxism without taking Freud seriously, as someone who illuminates a whole dimension of reality. I also want to argue, however, that it is wrong to reject Marxism on the basis of the psychoanalytic dimension, because it is impossible to take Freud at full value *without first subjecting psychoanalysis to a Marxist critique*. In other words, there is no psychoanalytic principle which stands entirely outside historical determination. It may be said that certain things – the existence of desire, for example, or the yearning for fusion known as the oceanic feeling – are not primarily determined by the economic, or, more generally, within the framework of historical materialism. But to deny the *primacy* of the historical does not deny the *potency* of the historical in determining certain aspects of desire or the oceanic feeling, nor the possibility that those aspects are the ones which can be overcome through praxis. And this, when all is said, remains the issue – whether, that is, human beings themselves undergo evolution within the span of history; that question to which Freud resoundingly answers, No!, and Marx equally resoundingly, Yes!

This puts the ball back in the court of 'second nature', so to speak. I have argued above that the burden of proof belongs to those who hold to an idea of second nature (as against the Freudian innate), and are obliged to prove it against the evidence of history itself, and the possibility that the 'long haul' within which transformed social relations may change human nature may turn out to be overly long. We may now elaborate: 'proof' in this instance as not something which can be decided either inductively or deductively. One cannot prove the transformability of human beings by invoking some common principle derived from the whole class of historical actions, nor by reasoning metaphysically from some divinely installed human essence. However, one cannot disprove the proposition, either, by these means. One is more likely to reveal the effort to prove or disprove the proposition as motivated by ideological preference than to solve the problem itself. That is, those who believe human beings unchangeable do so because it suits them to do so, just as it suits others to believe that human nature is transformable.

As one of the latter, I take heart in the absence of disproof rather than discouragement in the absence of proof, and claim the following: so long as the issue is not settled, one is simply obliged to act as best as one can. For the principle of 'proof', such as it exists, still remains Marx's Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: the point is to change the world – not as an alternative to understanding it, but as the deepest, best way of understanding it. This means to change the world consciously,

self-reflectively, in that often invoked and elusive dialectic between theory and practice. It is not a question of proving something logically so much as one of moving in the direction of a proof, a motion which is itself a gesture toward transformation.

So I have chosen to accept Marxism while taking the psychoanalytic dimension at full value, and to shoulder the complications. From this perspective, the deepest critique leveled by Freudianism at revolutionary practice now looks as follows: the drive toward unity does indeed comprise the ontological core of revolutionary practice – what else, for instance, is the signification of ‘solidarity’, or indeed, *communism*? But it is a bourgeois prejudice, born of attachment to the isolated and fragmented self of late capitalism,⁷ which would dismiss this notion on the basis either of its infantile precursor or its perhaps inevitable irrational distortions. Freud’s insight into the oceanic feeling ascribed it to the experience of the infant at the breast. Freud’s bourgeois prejudice, however, reduced the significance of the feeling to his estimation of the mental level pertaining to its earliest occurrence. The oceanic feeling became, therefore, stained with all of Freud’s hostility toward and fear of the sensuous, the spontaneous, the visionary – all manifestations of what is non-rational. Oceanic experience was seen, not as the first

occasion, within an individual life, of a process of unification which can be read as a ‘species destiny’, but as a regression toward the pathological.

There is a potential conflation between the *nonrational* and the *irrational*, to which even Freud, the great explorer of unconscious mental life, remained largely blind. The nonrational is what stands outside the given order of things, the logos, if you will, of civilisation; it is the ‘more things on heaven and earth than are present in our philosophy’. The irrational represents the twisted, the distorted, the split-apart, the violent.⁸ There is no sound theoretical or practical way within psychoanalysis to distinguish between the two – hence the slide of psychoanalysis toward conformism, apologia, and irrelevancy. There is, on the other hand, an excellent – and one might add, essential – way of differentiating nonrational from irrational in Marx’s theory of alienation and in the Marxist view of praxis. Viewed in this light, the sensuous, the spontaneous, the visionary, and indeed, aspects of the ‘oceanic’ and spiritual – all vicissitudes of desire⁹ – are readily incorporable into a theory of revolution and may be fairly and non-economistically considered the embodiment of socially transformative force within the individual. In this way, psychoanalytic understanding may serve the radical project.

RESPONSE: IAN CRAIB

Reading Joel’s opening contribution, I am struck by two things. In the first place, it is good to see the issues addressed not merely in terms of theory – and a theory which allows contradictions and disjunctures, and perhaps the absence of a solution – but also in terms of feelings, beliefs, commitment and action. It is good to see a difficult reality acknowledged, rather than absorbed into problems of discourse. In the context of much academic debate now, this is old-fashioned and refreshing, and what it all ought to be about. Secondly I agree with nearly everything he has to say. I do not believe there can be a synthesis of Marx and Freud; they each illuminate some aspect of the human condition, and some aspect of human possibilities, but at some level they are irreconcilable. That level has to do with conceptions of human nature and in many ways I find myself entirely on the Freudian side, and of post-Freudian work, I find Melanie Klein’s development of the idea of a death-instinct most fruitful. That leaves me, I suppose, profoundly pessimistic about future possibilities. Yet I would also want to maintain that there is an optimism to be drawn from this, that it is better to recognise a fundamental destructiveness in human beings that may be socially channelled in all sorts of directions, but has to be contained, and more importantly *is* containable, than it is to deny that destructiveness. Joel’s desire to maintain Freud and Marx side-by-side is perhaps a recognition of this: a Marxist critique of psychoanalysis could easily consign it to the dustbin of history.

We would both like to keep hold of the Marxist and Freudian sides of looking at the world; the difference is that I suspect I find the Marxist end more difficult to hold onto, much less satisfactory than he does. Teaching sociology, I have often found myself saying that, in theoretical terms, the best reason to be a Marxist is that it breaks down in more interesting ways than its alternatives. Yet I still find Marxism important for the very thing that Joel takes from it: the humanist vision. In my view the only reason to be a Marxist is that vision contained in the early work; without it the analytic bite

and sophistication of Marxism is only an intellectual pursuit. But I have found myself disillusioned with that ideal as well.

Joel has himself outlined the reason that the Marxist ideal has come to seem dangerous to me. There are all sorts of reasons to avoid a direct analogy between the personality and society – they are qualitatively different, though intimately linked; each has its own laws of development, its own structure. But on this issue an analogy seems permissible. Just as an individual who seeks to be perfect, seeks some form of omnipotence over his or her own unruly desires, tries to avoid, remove moral chaos and uncertainty, does so at a cost to themselves and those around them, so a society which aims to be perfect must get rid of its disruptive elements. The more perfect the society aims to be, the more it must repress.

Yet I think the ideal is still necessary. We need a way of thinking about what might be possible, we need some direction in which to move and the vision offered by Marx and by socialism is still the best. The difficulty comes, somehow, when we believe that ideal is possible, that it can really be created. There will be times, when the world changes quickly, when it does seem possible. In the late 1960s it moved over the horizon, even if it did not come as close as we thought at the time. In other situations, it has perhaps seemed much closer. These experiences are, I believe, important, but so is the aftermath, the decline of hope. If in the face of this decline, we maintain the hope, the ideal, then we begin to try to force the world and other people, it becomes necessary to remove dissidents and the dissident part of ourselves. The experience of disillusion is important in politics, just as it is important in infancy, but so is the presence of the illusion.

I want to try to develop the psychoanalytic critique of the Marxist ideal that Joel himself begins to outline. He concentrates on the argument that it is a regression to an infantile oceanic experience, and to infantile omnipotence. I would add that involved as well is a denial of a very real and strong rivalry that we experience in relationship, initially, to parents and siblings. This is a very conservative psychoana-



lytic critique and I think psychoanalysis can do better, offering a critique which can, in one sense, be seen as more radical, but less utopian, less revolutionary.

In each case, the oceanic experience, infantile omnipotence, the denial of rivalry, we do not have to dismiss the experience or the defence because it is infantile. To do this is to deny a fundamental insight of psychoanalysis: that the infant within us remains, the unconscious is timeless, and must be catered for – it does not disappear with our access to maturity. Beyond this, I think the infant plays an essential role, in a modified form, in our adult life.

Let us take the oceanic feeling to begin with. It is true that as adults we can surrender ourselves to it, or rather to the search for it. We can seek a permanent high: the only alcoholic I have known intimately was a slave to such a feeling. We can seek such a high through our political practice and ideas, and if we are lucky, we might find it occasionally. The more desperately we seek it, the less likely we are to find it. Yet such an oceanic feeling can be there without overwhelming us, we do not have to become addicted to it. Just as we can drink occasionally without becoming an alcoholic, so we can allow ourselves such an experience. A conservative analyst such as Erikson points towards religious institutions as the social organisation to maintain and satisfy such a need, but we could also point to politics, the activity of working together to change the world, as a possible way of carrying out the necessary task of allowing such a feeling expression and a concrete realisation. The important point is that it can inform our relationships with others without hiding the other, less pleasant and downright destructive aspects of our nature.

Similarly infantile omnipotence has its place in adult life. It emerges clearly from Winnicott's analysis, for example, that out of this experience of omnipotence comes the infant's ability to learn, to do things and to withstand frustration. The Marxist ideal provides our politics with a sense of the possibility of change, of betterment. But again to believe the ideal can be realised is equivalent to the pathological continuation of omnipotence into adult life. It would be like believing that tomorrow I could retrain as a brain surgeon. Clearly I can't, but I could learn something about the physiological structure of the brain.

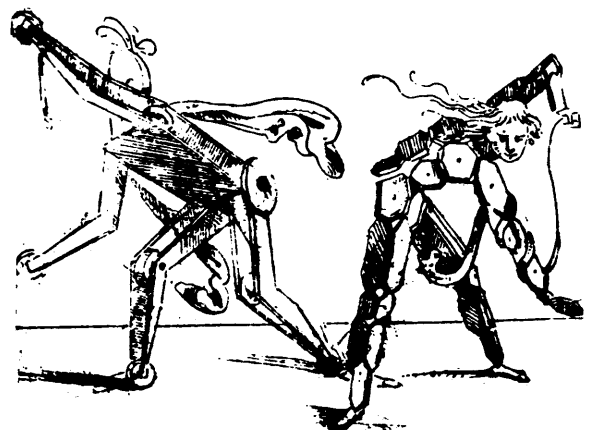
Finally we can, in a classical Kleinian way, find the

sublimation of destructiveness and envy in ideas of freedom and equality; the ideal offers us a protection against our worst desires. But again, it does not eliminate them.

Everything I have been saying moves towards this idea: that we can find a psychoanalytic critique of Marxism that recognises its value and modifies it. It says not that the Marxist project is infantile and pathological, only that it can be; it can also be a form of what for want of a better word I will call maturity, a desire and a vision of something better. It only becomes dangerous, pathological, if it involves the denial of everything that makes the vision impossible to achieve, if it becomes a sort of absolutist project.

The history of Marxist politics is full of debates about the correct line; I think that this is associated with the belief that the ideal (even if it is denied) is possible. The radical nature of my argument comes from the implication that all sorts of other politics become relevant, useful and possible once we get rid of this absolutism. It leaves us saying something like: Marxism gives us the direction in which to move. We will never get there, and there are all sorts of ways in which we can move in this direction which perhaps can't be envisaged by Marxism. Modern feminism and the ecological movement are perhaps examples; but so are the traditional liberal and social democratic ideas of industrial capitalism. At times the ideal will have to be emphasised, must be given its place. At other times, the impossibility of the ideal becomes important, and during these other times, emphasising the impossibility can open up different, less totalising paths to change. It is in this context that the Freudian critique becomes radical. Joel mentions Sartre's point that Marxism is as far as we can go; the implication of my argument is that as the inadequacy of Marxism becomes apparent, we might have to return to a range of pre-Marxist ideas as a way of going forward, or at least not losing too much.

I take Joel's point about the irrational, non-rational and rational. At least I did when I first read and was tempted to call back the manuscript of a recently completed book and rewrite it. I clearly had to think of a way out of such a horrendous task and I hope I have done so. It is a tenable interpretation of Freud that he can see only the rational and the irrational, the latter as 'the twisted, the distorted, the split apart and the violent'. But there is a different position, perhaps implicit in his work, and certainly present in the work of the Kleinian and British schools, that the irrational is the source of creativity and change, that it is closer to the things we dream of and the things we cannot yet dream of. Winnicott says somewhere that we are poor indeed if we are only sane. In the context of this argument, we could say that we are poor indeed if we are only grown up (rational and realistic), but if we are only infantile (Marxist and Utopian), then we are lost.



Ian and I both agree that one should not get trapped in splitting and totalization. More, I strongly agree that human society, like the individual, is headed for a monstrosity when it demands perfection. At least in the present, fallen age, such a demand must force a violent degree of repression. This is one reason, by the way, I have been attracted to the theology of liberation, even if I cannot share its theism: because it holds out an ideal with respect to which all social projects may be judged, and none may aspire to meet. I believe we have to build such an ideal into praxis – not as Ian suggests (following Erikson), by religious institutionalization, which reproduces the ‘opium of the people’ function of religion, but by an organic incorporation of the notion of transcendence into politics.

Here I feel myself led onto ice I know to be thin but feel the necessity to explore. For I do tend to grant ontological priority to those positions whose ideal is a society without domination. I would not mind calling this ‘communism’, were there not so much else to explain the term. In any case, for me, overcoming domination is more than a question of justice; it also, somehow, inheres in the ‘order of things’. This is the ‘thin-ice’ position, as it suggests the reintroduction of transcendental signifieds into a discourse from which they have long seemed banished.

I would say that there exists a primitive, ontological rationality within the category of the non-rational. That is, not all non-rational positions are equivalent; there is a priority among them, to be granted to those praxes whose content is the overcoming of domination. In other words, a revolutionary goal is closer to the marrow of things, despite its dangers and unreasonableness – or perhaps, as part of these.

Here, if I am not mistaken, Ian would tend to conclude the game was not worth the candle – that the risks of totalization outweighed the benefits of emancipation. If I differ, it is perhaps because of a different attitude toward the oceanic experience. Ian concedes the validity of the oceanic experience – ‘we do not have to dismiss the experience’, he claims at one place – yet his treatment of the theme is mainly psychological, in terms of the feeling state associated with it. My tendency, rather, is to emphasize that the oceanic experience is not a mere feeling, but the perception of an ontological existent. It is not so much a memory of an impossible wish which can be at best integrated into an adult life from which hope and joy are otherwise banished. It is, rather, the first occasion in which a human being can grasp the actual interconnectedness of all beings. It provides ‘proof’ that we are, in fact, all one, and sets into motion the demand for justice and the affirmation of freedom, across the immense panorama of human history. I believe that the demand posed by the oceanic experience keeps rising so long as we have flesh whose desires are unrealized. Put onto the world stage, the unrealization of the flesh takes the form of imperialism, capitalism, the domination of nature and patriarchy, all linked together. I would like to show, too, that the root of these evils (I would not shrink from this word) can be derived ontologically as well, as a kind of flight from, or splitting of, being. But whether I am capable of doing so or not, and however my views may place me in the camp of quixotic believers, I think that we have within us a spirit which insists upon the realisation of the human species. And that is why I think we should all join hands and smash imperialism.

Notes

- 1 I take a position within which the ‘world-view of an individual is decisively anterior to the philosophy s/he adopts. In my opinion we are idealistically prone to think in terms of autonomously generated intellectual positions rather than in terms of (socially produced) predispositions which lead us to find intellectual and political justifications for the way we are. Of course this way of thinking is essential to both Freud and Marx ... and of course the quality of the said justifications is by no means an indifferent matter.
- 2 Similarly, the limits of psychoanalysis, which mainly come under the heading of subjectivism, are peculiarly well disclosed by Marxism. Freud’s claims to universality are severely undermined once the Marxist perspective is taken, revealing the character of the bourgeoisie to which Freud was and psychoanalysis is loyal, and the obvious self-interest and hypocrisy expended by Freudians in rationalizing their allegiance. Thus a Marxist viewpoint makes it impossible to sustain the moral and intellectual claims of psychoanalysis.
- 3 Freud said that Marxism was grounded in a ‘fresh idealistic misconception of human nature. *Civilisation and its Discontents* was largely written to counter Marxist tendencies within psychoanalysis.
- 4 Along with the corollary that repression does not ultimately work, but makes matters worse; hence the unpleasantness associated with one-party states. Again, I do not wish to oversimplify the complexities surrounding Leninism or Stalinism. Nevertheless, to take only the instance of Stalin, it is

obvious that those sorts of things Freud built his discourse about somehow played an overriding role in Stalin’s development. It seems to me that the burden of proof is on those who would argue that elements such as narcissistic rage, sadism and paranoia were merely accidental in the emergence of Stalinist terror.

- 5 Another major limit to Marx’s thinking – his attitude toward nature – is, by contrast, in no way ameliorated by Freud’s contribution. Both Marx and Freud share the dominant Western view of nature as radically Other. For Marx nature is largely inert (at best, ‘man’s inorganic body’), while for Freud nature is largely hostile. An interesting distinction, but not significant in practice.
- 6 Just as psychoanalysts have usually been unable to take the disabling implications of Marxism seriously. In my own case, taking Marxism seriously had a good deal to do with the fact that I am not currently practising psychotherapy.
- 7 This historical version of self is inscribed as the Ego in established psychoanalytic discourse, where it is mystified as a quasi-biological substance.
- 8 This is scarcely the place to develop the theme, but the irrational should not be regarded as a subset of the non-rational. The critique of science and technocracy depends upon recognition that the greatest unreason occurs dressed as reason – witness the nuclear arms race.
- 9 By which we mean, capable of being mapped and comprehended by the Freudian canon, or, better, some de-bourgeoisified version of it.