

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_152256

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OUP—707—25-4-81—10,000.

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 131.34

Accession No. P.C. 1118

Author M74P

Title

This book should be ~~returned~~ on or before the date last marked below

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND POLITICS

By the same Author :

SUPERSTITION AND SOCIETY (1939)

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND POLITICS

*A Contribution to the Psychology
of Politics and Morals*

by

R. E. MONEY-KYRLE

*Social
Science
Studies*

GERALD DUCKWORTH & CO. LTD.
3 HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.2

First published . . . 1951

All rights reserved

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
EBENEZER BAYLIS AND SON, LTD., THE
TRINITY PRESS, WORCESTER, AND LONDON

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	7

PART I

A Theoretical Basis for a Psychological approach to Politics

CHAPTER

I ETHICAL RELATIVISM AND THE APPLI- CATION OF PSYCHOLOGY TO POLITICS .	23
II SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT	30
III EARLY STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE ORIGIN OF CONSCIENCE	46
IV THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL CHARACTER	57
V SOME VARIETIES OF CHARACTER FORMATION	69

PART II

Some Aspects of the Psychology of Politics

VI THE GROUP IN ITS RELATION TO OTHER GROUPS	91
VII THE GROUP IN ITS RELATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL	106
VIII THE STATE AS AN INFLUENCE FAVOURABLE OR UNFAVOURABLE TO THE DEVELOP- MENT OF NORMAL PERSONALITY	123
IX ON THE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL MOTIVES	147
INDEX	181

PREFACE

Some record of the influences, both general and personal, that led me to the questions and proffered answers in this book may help to introduce it and, at the same time, serve as the medium for the acknowledgement of many debts.

Anyone who spent his childhood in the late Victorian and Edwardian epochs, and is still alive to-day, has passed through a period of rapid change in morals and conventions. He grew up in a world where there was very little moral doubt. People did not always obey the code; but they did not question its authority. They knew what was right and what was wrong; and, since the code was puritanical, much of what they most desired to do was wrong.

Puritanism was not, of course, the only or indeed the main element in the morality of that time; but it was an important element, and against it there was an understandable revolt. To those brought up under its influence, the revolt was against something deeply incorporated within themselves. They therefore needed, in their struggle for internal freedom, all the external support they could obtain; and those who had an inclination to science and critical philosophy sought it in these disciplines. Science was quickly undermining the Old Testament conception of the world, and with it the concept of a jealous and vindictive God who enforced Victorian morals with the dread sanction of hell fire. At the same time, critical philosophy was making a more direct assault. Unlike statements of

Psychoanalysis and Politics

fact, which can be proved or disproved empirically, moral statements, so it was argued, were either concealed definitions or expressions of preference and, in neither case, susceptible of proof. Therefore the judgements of each individual's conscience, since they were the expression neither of the voice of an objective God, nor of rationally defensible beliefs, could be dismissed as the accidental products of the cultural environment in which he happened to be reared. And social anthropology, by pointing to a great variety of codes to be found in different cultures, seemed to support this view.

The Ethical Relativist who holds it renounces all claims to judge other people's moral standards and is rather apologetic about his own which he regards as an acquired if ineradicable prejudice. This was a congenial doctrine to a disillusioned generation, which had made such great, and seemingly such useless sacrifices for its ideals in the first world war. So the swing from Ethical Absolutism to Ethical Relativism was completed by about 1925. Hedonically judged, the new doctrine had certain negative advantages. If it provided no elation, it at least removed certain barriers to pleasure and was fairly comfortable to live with.

But it was soon most rudely challenged by the rise of a new, or the revival of an archaic, code in Italy and Germany, which demanded a fanatical obedience to a leader and an unbounded ruthlessness towards whatever he regarded as an enemy. As the ethical relativist read of the brutal and progressive extirpation of all freedom in fascist countries, he became aware of an increasing moral indignation rise within himself. Yet his theory told him that Mussolini's or

Preface

Hitler's morals were, from their point of view, as valid as his own from his.

In common with my generation, I had been influenced by these successive attitudes to morals, which followed and contradicted each other in so short a space of time. The last—that of Ethical Relativism—had become emotionally untenable. But can an intellectually satisfying alternative be found? My first attempt to seek an answer to this question appeared in a paper published in 1944¹ which gives an early form of part of the argument to be developed in this book.

Meanwhile, I was much influenced by a more personal experience. At the end of the second world war a branch of the Control Commission called the German Personnel Research Branch was formed, and operated in Germany throughout the greater part of 1946 under the able leadership first of Professor Oscar Oeser and then of Colonel Rendel, its two Controller Generals. 'G.P.R.B.' had been the spiritual creation of Professor Henry Dicks.² It had two aims: social survey, and the selection of suitable Germans as leaders in the new democratic Germany which it was hoped might arise from the ashes of the Third Reich. Everyone knew that, if Germany was to be reoriented on the democratic path, it would be necessary to fill all key posts in the administration with democrats. To this end existing holders of such posts were being screened to eliminate suspected nazi sympathizers. But Dicks believed that the test of past political alignment was quite inadequate and that it

¹ *Towards a Common Aim*. British Journal of Medical Psychology, Vol. XX, Part 2 1944.

² See H. V. Dicks: *Personality Traits and National Socialist Ideology*. *Human Relations* III 1950.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

should be replaced, or at least reinforced, by a more searching test of character. For this purpose he evolved a modified form of the War Office Selection Board procedure designed to separate those of democratic from those of fascist temperament; and the G.P.R.B. Selection Centre was formed to try it out.¹

In this modified procedure, a good deal of weight was attached to the 'psychiatric interview'. These interviews were first conducted by Professor Dicks himself and then by Lt. Colonel Brangham. But when both returned to England I was invited to carry on this part of their work, at first alone and later with the welcome help of Mrs. Margot Hicklin. Dicks had isolated a number of factors, the presence or absence of which seemed to indicate a fascist, authoritarian or a democratic character. But by degrees I began to think of these in terms of one single quality in which I was already interested. This was the structure of the conscience. Perhaps the strain to which our German 'candidates' had been subjected during the final stages of Germany's collapse may have made them unusually accessible. Perhaps also they are less prone to conceal their thoughts than some other peoples. At any rate, it seemed much easier to learn something of their moral character and what produced it in the course of a 90-minutes' interview than I had expected. I must confess that the very ease of the task often made it less congenial. To use what skill one had to induce a man to speak freely about himself always seemed retrospectively immoral if the evidence so gained had later to be used against him.

¹ That G.P.R.B. functioned only on a small and experimental scale and so influenced the selection of comparatively few officials was I think a great misfortune.

Preface

(I mention this difficulty because I believe it to be inherent in such psychological methods of selection.) But if the task of examining other peoples' consciences involved me in some conflicts with my own, it was also extraordinarily interesting and instructive.

Even among those who had not been active nazis,¹ two well-marked groups soon began to emerge in sharp contrast to each other. The difference was marked, for example, in different attitudes to the atrocities which were then being revealed for the first time in all their horror. I vividly remember one old man, who under the Weimar Republic had held high offices of state. While discussing the concentration camps he broke down and wept because, with the coming of the nazis, he had only sacrificed his position and his income instead of openly renouncing the regime. He could have accepted the consequences for himself and for his sons and grandsons; but he could not bring himself to accept them also for his infirm and aged wife. He, and those like him, felt tyranny to be the greatest evil; and were not only shocked and shamed by what Germany had done but also deeply grieved and acutely conscious of a sense of personal responsibility and guilt—if only for having been impotent to resist it. They displayed what may be called a 'humanistic' conscience. More often, however, at the first mention of concentration camps, the candidate's response was first an anxious denial that he had ever suspected what went on in them, and then a demand that the guilty should be punished. Here there was no conscious sense of guilt at all; but its unconscious presence was clearly be-

¹ The most active nazis had been screened at an earlier stage and were seldom sent to us.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

trayed by the vehemence with which it was repudiated and projected on to others. Yet these very people who had so little of the humanistic conscience were nearly always over-conscientious in another sense. They were obsessively loyal to whatever authority they served. The authority itself could be of many kinds. If it was a Catholic or Lutheran code of Christian ethics the resultant type of conscience might resemble the humanistic, but sometimes only in external form. Its deeper motives might be profoundly different. In some cases one had the impression that they were humanist in behaviour only, and not in feeling, because they feared their God but did not greatly love their fellow men. Even this external resemblance to a humanistic conscience was absent when the authority to be obeyed was secular. People of this type were not necessarily brutal or aggressive. But they were not conscious of any sense of moral obligation to resist the brutality of others, or of distress at their inability to do so. The only morality they did consciously possess was a deep sense of the duty of obedience to whoever was set over them, which included a compulsive drive to execute all tasks, of whatever kind, with the greatest possible efficiency. And of course they demanded of their subordinates an equally uncritical obedience to themselves. In short, their consciences were 'authoritarian' rather than humanistic.

Now it was very easy to correlate these two types of conscience both with different types of home and with different types of occupation. As Dicks had already discovered, and as Brangham and I were able to confirm, almost all the humanists came from homes in which there had been an unusual degree of both

Preface

freedom and affection; and they were more frequently to be found among those who had followed art or science as a career than among those concerned with administration. Conversely, the authoritarians, with an almost monotonous regularity, spoke of the strict patriarchal nature of their early environment to which they gratefully attributed their own regard for discipline. They later filled the ranks of the fighting and the civil services.

Such correlations certainly confirm what we should expect to find about the influence of the early home environment. They do not by themselves help to decide whether the career has also modified the character or whether it is only the character which has determined the choice of a career. But this issue was fairly satisfactorily settled by the exceptions. These were of two kinds. Those who had rebelled against an authoritarian background, and chosen a free profession, did not seem to have gained much inner freedom, and although anti-authoritarian could hardly be described as humanists. While those with a humanistic background, who had chosen, or been thrust into, authoritarian professions often seemed almost to have lost their humanism. True, it could be discovered by a little probing; but it had become something which they had first learned to be ashamed of, and which was later encrusted with so hard a shell of discipline that they themselves were usually no more aware of it. The influence of occupational environment was therefore by no means negligible—especially when it operated in an anti-humanist and pro-authoritarian direction.

What I think struck us most was the high proportion of authoritarians in Germany as compared with Eng-

Psychoanalysis and Politics

land. Of course we had expected this, but the reality was none the less impressive. The authoritarian conscience in an extreme form dominated the German official classes; and, for this reason, although traditionally opposed to national socialism, they had accepted its direction and become its docile and efficient executive.

I have no doubt—though this is an inference rather than an observation—that those in whom the early influence of a humanist home was overlaid by the influence of an authoritarian profession tended to produce homes more authoritarian than they themselves had been brought up in. If so, the extraordinarily high degree and prevalence of the authoritarian conscience among the German official classes, and to a lesser degree among the German people as a whole, is easy to explain: it is the cumulative effect, over many generations, of the huge hierarchy of authoritarian posts created to serve the German state religion. What is here significant is not that those who held them were trained to accept a particular moral code, but that they were trained to accept any moral code imposed on them from above—whether by the Hohenzollerns, by the Weimar Republic or by Hitler.

Here then is an example of the effect of social form on individual character. Most people have some idea about how it must have taken place. But those who, while themselves spectators of the process, have also a vicarious acquaintance with it through the life stories of participants are bound to be more deeply moved and to ask themselves more searching questions.

In the first place it raises the kind of ethical questions I have already mentioned. The fundamental task of the Control Commission was to reverse the process

Preface

which produced both the authoritarian conscience of the Germans and, what is not quite the same thing, the nazis who used it for their purpose. But by what right did we adopt this task? By the right of conquest? Or by some moral right that can be justified by reason? And, if this is answered satisfactorily, as I shall try to show that it can be, political questions of almost equal weight succeed it. If the process can be shown to be one of moral degeneration, how can it be reversed? And lastly, what are the moral consequences to be expected from social changes occurring nearer home?

If it is true that humanism is more easily destroyed than recreated, this last is perhaps the most urgent question. There can be little doubt that in Germany the authoritarian character was fostered, if not produced, by German bureaucracy. Is this an inevitable consequence of bureaucracy? Or can bureaucracy be humanistic?

While these experiences determined my choice of problem, an interest in philosophy helped to determine the method of approach. As a science specialist at school I had soon caught the prevailing enthusiasm for the idea of a unitary theory of the material world in which, some day, all biology would be reduced to chemistry and all chemistry to physics. But such an otherwise comprehensive system seemed to have no place in it for mind, that is, for the sensations, thoughts and feelings with which alone we are acquainted. This was at first disturbing until, under the influence of Hume on the one hand and of the Vienna School of logical positivists on the other, I came to think of the formal world of physics as something created by our-

Psychoanalysis and Politics

selves by a process of abstraction from the world of precepts, which is itself a part of the world of sensations, thoughts and feelings.

In the process of reaching this 'Weltanschauung' as a student at Vienna—where I had the good fortune to be a pupil of that most clear minded and sympathetic teacher, Professor Moritz Schlick—I had chosen the materialist-subjectivist controversy for my dissertation. It began with an attempt to clarify what is meant by saying we 'believe' that anything, say a table, exists when we are not looking at it, and concluded that nothing more was, or could be, meant than that we should be surprised if we did not see or feel it when we tried. If this was not a very original thesis, its elaboration earned me my degree and, what is more relevant, gave me a line of approach to the moral and political questions I have just raised here. For, any controversy between the protagonists of rival codes of morals or rival political ideals must end in empty verbiage unless it can be shown that what is in dispute is, not a mere preference, or a definition, but a belief—that is, something which must be, and which alone can be, either true or false. So here again, it seems desirable to begin with an attempt to clarify that vague and ambiguous word 'belief'.

My early interest in philosophy, with which I can claim only a superficial acquaintance, soon took me to psychology and psychoanalysis which has been my dominant interest since. Here I owe very much, first to Dr. Ernest Jones and Professor Freud, and later to Mrs. Klein who, by her technique of play analysis for young children, was able to carry Freud's investigations a stage further into the dark continent of the

Preface

human mind. In particular, she has been able to throw more light on the early stages of the development of conscience and so also of character. In psychoanalysis therefore, and especially in its more recent discoveries, one may hope to find some help with the kind of problems I have raised. That such help can indeed be found is already amply proved by books like Professor Flugel's *Man, Morals and Society*, which covers much the same ground, if from a slightly different point of view, as mine.

These were the main influences that determined both the choice of problem and method of approach in this book. On the one hand, the rise of fascism had left me profoundly dissatisfied with the ethical relativism which till then had seemed to me to embody the only scientific attitude to morals and politics. On the other, the development of psychoanalysis, especially of character analysis, had suggested a new approach to old problems of ethics and the possibility of a more adequate solution.

The solution, or rather partial solution, offered here is presented more or less deductively, and so by steps which are the reverse of those by which I gradually arrived at it. The book begins with psychoanalytic theory, from which certain moral and political conclusions are deduced. But in preparing it, I began by vaguely suspecting the conclusions and then considered whether psychoanalytic theory could be so formulated—which I believe it can—as to permit these conclusions to be drawn from it.

Take, for example, the most central and the oldest question of political philosophy: What is a 'good' state? An analyst would probably begin by saying

Psychoanalysis and Politics

that a 'good' or 'healthy' state must be such as to promote an environment that is congenial to, and favourable to the development of, mature and healthy, that is, 'normal' citizens.¹ But such an answer opens two fresh questions to be dealt with before it can be regarded, at least by philosophers, as being more than an empty and meaningless definition. The first of these supplementary questions is sociological. To give content to his answer he must be able to say what qualities a state must have to be congenial to, and to favour the development of, mature and healthy citizens. This question may not be easy to answer in detail, but at least there is no doubt that it is an empirical question and so well within the bounds of science. But the second supplementary question has philosophical difficulties. To protect his answer against the reproach that it merely replaces one arbitrary value, that of 'goodness' by another, that of 'normality', he has to show that his concept of the normal is in some sense not arbitrary at all.

Now the only value science can recognize as not being arbitrary is that of truth. He has therefore somehow to link normality with truth. If by normal be meant no more than not psychotic, this link could be easily established. For normal would then be equivalent to sane or rational in the sense of being free from serious delusions or hallucinations. Of course normality, in the clinical sense, means much more than this, for it already includes such things as freedom from hysterical, obsessional, depressive, hypo-manic, or paranoid character traits, as well as

¹ D. W. Winnicott has given an answer of this kind, and filled it out in detail in: *Some Thoughts on the Meaning of the Word Democracy. Human Relations III* 1950.

Preface

from specific neurotic symptoms and the more serious psychotic disorders. But if these lesser peculiarities, from which no one is entirely free, can also be linked with some disturbance in our rational capacity to form probable beliefs and correct percepts on the basis of our sensory data, then at last he will be in possession of the concept he needs. My aim in the first part of this book has been to present the psychoanalytic theory of development in such a way that this linkage, which I believe exists, is stressed. If I have not succeeded as well as I should have liked, at least I hope I have done no violence to psychoanalytic theory in the process.

A new approach to the similar problem of whether there is any sense in which one type of morals can be said to be in any way 'better' than another arises as a by-product of these considerations. For if the 'normal' is equivalent to the 'rational', and if there is a type of conscience common to normal people which differs from the consciences of abnormal people, then this type is an attribute of rationality. I am here expressing vaguely what I shall try to express more clearly later on.

But these problems of trying to find criteria which can be linked with the criterion of truth and which can be used to measure moral attitudes or political ideals, although philosophically interesting, are perhaps of not much practical importance. Whatever a 'good' or 'healthy' society may be, the one we have at present, charged so highly as it is with tensions, and in danger of physical destruction, is generally felt to be very far from perfect. What is required of psychology is, therefore, some practical contribution to the lessening of these tensions. I am afraid that the only contri-

Psychoanalysis and Politics

bution psychology can make as a science is an explanatory one. It can help to explain these tensions so far as their origin is in fact unconscious. This does not seem much, and is almost useless in an immediate crisis. But, in the long run, it is a means of lessening tensions, and the only means of lessening them permanently. In this book I have also tried to contribute to this kind of long range social therapy.

Lastly, I come to the acknowledgement of more specific debts. Several of my friends have read earlier drafts of this book. They include Dr. Nathan Leites, Mr. Paul Segal, Dr. Hannah Segal and Dr. John Rickman, and last but not least my publisher, the Hon. Mervyn Horder.

From them, as well as from my wife, I have received—what is more valuable than direct encouragement—many detailed and constructive criticisms. The final draft has been revised in the light of these, and has greatly benefited from them. That it remains an imperfect piece of work, and falls short of my intentions, is a fact of which I am uncomfortably conscious. But I hope it may stimulate others, who may understand what I am trying to say, to say it better.

PART I

A. THEORETICAL BASIS FOR A PSYCHO- LOGICAL APPROACH TO POLITICS

CHAPTER I

ETHICAL RELATIVISM AND THE APPLICATION OF PSYCHOLOGY TO POLITICS

Psychoanalysis is a young science barely fifty years old. But the kind of knowledge it has furnished has already been extensively applied to several disciplines—in fact to nearly all of those which deal with man or any of his activities. The present book is an attempt, and by no means the first one, to apply this knowledge to the field of politics.

The principle discovery of analysis is that all conscious desires, feelings and beliefs are, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by unconscious processes. The aim of any psychoanalytical inquiry is to discover the nature and extent of these processes. Therefore the primary aim of this application of analysis to politics is to discover the nature and extent of whatever unconscious processes may influence our political desires, feelings and beliefs.

What sort of results can be expected from such an investigation? That, if successful, it must add some interesting facts to knowledge is already obvious. But can it also be useful? And, in particular, can it help to determine which, if any, of a number of conflicting opinions is right?

Most sociologists, and until fairly recently I shared their view, would feel that this last question was quite outside the bounds of any scientific inquiry. In fact, they would probably dismiss it as being one of those

Psychoanalysis and Politics

philosophical questions which are unanswerable because, on a logical analysis, they turn out to be without significance.

Now whether the question is philosophical or not, the conclusion that it is without significance is a philosophical conclusion which claims to impose an impassable limit to the scope of any application of psychology to politics. As a first step, therefore, some review of the philosophical arguments for this limiting conclusion seems called for in order to discover if, in fact, it must be accepted as correct.

Certainly the most baffling of all political problems has always been the problem of how to prove the rightness of our own political opinions. We should like to be able to convince our political opponents by an appeal to facts, or by arguments derived from facts, in the same sort of way as we can reasonably hope to convince those who differ from us in their scientific opinions. Up to a point, so far as an opponent differs from us only in his beliefs about the most effective means of achieving an end we both desire, we may indeed succeed. But beyond this point, we seem to come upon irreducible differences of aim which no amount of argument can settle. So political disputes may be provisionally divided into two types: disputes concerned with differences of opinion about what means are most likely to secure an agreed end, which are in theory always soluble; and disputes concerned with differences of opinion about what end to pursue, which appear to be insoluble. Those who have felt baffled in disputes of this second kind have sought the reason for their failure in an essential difference between the two senses in which we have just used the word 'opinion'. An opinion about what

The Application of Psychology to Politics

means is likely to secure a given end expresses a belief, and beliefs must be either true or false. But an opinion about the choice of ends to be pursued expresses a desire, or more specifically an aspiration, and desires can neither be disproved nor proved—the categories of truth and falsehood do not apply to them. And from here it is easy to conclude, with the Ethical Relativists, that all ultimate political opinions expressing desires must be equally indefensible and unassailable.

This conclusion, sound as it may seem, is nevertheless to a great extent irrelevant. For there are no ultimate desires until we reach the most primitive desires of all, such as the hedonic impulse to avoid painful and seek pleasurable sensations. All other desires, and certainly all political ones, however irreducible they may seem, are always desires for means to still more elementary ends. Therefore they are influenced by beliefs, either conscious or unconscious, as to what means are in fact appropriate. Thus, for example, even such an elementary desire as that for any kind of food is influenced by beliefs about what the food will taste like and whether it will be nourishing and not poisonous. Similarly, our much more complex political desires for any kind of state are influenced by whole systems of beliefs about the relative validity of different social and economic theories.

These considerations suggest a way through the limit that seemed to be imposed on our inquiry. Since the beliefs influencing a desire must be either true or false, a desire must be something to which the criterion of rationality can be applied. It cannot in itself be either true or false; but it can be described as rational

Psychoanalysis and Politics

if all the beliefs that influence it are true, or as irrational if some of them are false.¹

Admittedly, this does not give us quite what we should have liked: a means of proving that if one political opinion is right another incompatible with it must be wrong. Two desires may both be rational, in the sense that the beliefs influencing them are all true, and yet incompatible with each other. Thus the category of rationality when applied to desires is not exclusive of opposites as is the category of truth. But at least it excludes what is irrational. If it still leaves us without an absolute criterion, it does enable us to advance some way beyond the relativist position. We need no longer feel that all ultimate political opinions are equally unassailable and indefensible. Those which are irrational can be assailed; those which are rational can be defended.

We still do not know how much or how little this philosophical advance may help us in practice. Some of the mutually hostile ideologies which, in different forms, have divided the world since the days of Socrates and Plato may be equally rational and equally unassailable. If so, the dispute between them can be terminated, if at all, only by force, and not by argument. But the dispute so far has been necessarily confined to the examination of conscious motives and beliefs. Now that it can be carried deep into the unconscious we must expect that many irrationalities, which have long remained concealed, will come to light, and that their discovery will help decide the issue at least in some previously insoluble disputes.

¹Instead of 'true or false', it would have been more correct to say 'probable or improbable with respect to the experience the beliefs are based on'. But this would have introduced a complication which is unnecessary for our present purpose.

The Application of Psychology to Politics

These conclusions must affect the attitude of anyone who is about to apply psychoanalysis to politics. So long as he accepts the ethical relativist position, which is usually considered proper to investigations in all such social fields, he must seem to take no more than an academic interest in his task. He will have much to say, for example, about the psychological differences between discipline demanding totalitarians and freedom loving democrats; but he will not expect to be able to pass any judgement upon either. Each will seem equally right from their own and equally wrong from the other's point of view. But if he has got beyond the relativist position, he will expect to be able to discover, in each case, whether these ideologies are rational or not, and in this sense to judge them.

This different attitude makes the task seem more interesting and more important. But it also has its disadvantages. The Ethical Relativist can make his sortie into the dangerous territory of politics without much risk of suffering a personal attack, for he is protected by the flag of his neutrality. Moreover, by suppressing his partisanship, he can avoid the semblance and perhaps the reality of prejudice. This may be one reason why the ethical relativist position has been so willingly adopted. A prejudice may be defined as an opinion influenced by unconscious motives and beliefs and which would be different if these were to become conscious. Any investigator who can understand such prejudices in others must be aware that they may also lurk concealed within himself. Therefore, in discarding the ethical relativist position, he must accept the risk that his own judgements, however carefully arrived at, may be influenced by prejudices of which he is unaware.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

But if he believes the ethical relativist position to be untenable, he cannot so easily avoid accepting risks of this kind. If political judgements are possible, the fact that they are also fallible is no excuse for not making them at all.

Such then is the attitude adopted in this book. Beginning with an outline of the unconscious factors involved in individual development, it is mainly concerned with the part played by these same factors in three kinds of political phenomena: in the relations of groups to each other, in the influence of the structure of a group on the character of its members, and in the shaping of ideologies. Had I approached these topics from the standpoint of ethical relativism, I should have been concerned only with the attempt to expose the operation of these factors and should have refrained from any further comment. But as I believe that the discovery of these influences permits a judgement as to the rationality of the resulting relation, character or ideology, I have also tried to arrive at judgements of this kind.

I do not claim that these judgements are by any means infallible. But I do claim that they are not meaningless and are therefore either right or wrong, and that, if wrong, they can be corrected by further research of the same kind as has led me to believe them to be right.

I do not claim that they lead to opinions that are new or startling, or in any way beyond those already widely held in democratic countries. My purpose has been the more modest one of trying to show that they can be arrived at, and therefore defended, scientifically. But perhaps this is not so easy; for of all tasks, the most difficult is sometimes to prove the obvious.

The Application of Psychology to Politics

Lastly, although claiming as I do that the analysis of political motives can, at least in principle, lead to valid judgements on the rationality of political opinions, I do not claim that this in itself is of very great practical importance. Basic attitudes are not much affected by argument; but they are affected by the act of analysing them. For this tends to bring any unconscious irrationality there may be in them to light and, by so doing, tends automatically to make them more rational. What is of practical importance is not so much the judgements based on analysis as the act of analysis itself.

CHAPTER II

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Since the social and political conclusions to be arrived at in this book are largely based on what psychoanalysis has led us to infer about the development of individuals in their ordinary domestic setting, it is essential to begin with a psychoanalytic theory of development. The next four chapters given for this reason to 'pure psychology' may seem disproportionately long in a short book about its social applications. But they are perhaps already too condensed and even desiccated to be easily consumed, so that to have condensed them further might have made them quite unpalatable.

The account I will try to give of this theory of development is based mainly on the work of the psychoanalytic pioneers. But its point of departure and some of the basic concepts used have been derived more from philosophic than from analytic sources and have been chosen for a special purpose. As already stated at the beginning, the aim of this book is not only to analyse political attitudes, but also to assess them as rational or irrational according to the truth or falsehood of the beliefs that determine their formation. In considering the development of the individual, therefore, a priority interest must be given to the development of his beliefs. How do they originate? What factors tend to distort or to correct

General Principles of Cognitive Development

them? How do they influence, and how are they influenced by, feelings and desires? These are the sort of questions primarily concerned, so that the attempt to answer them involves me at the outset in what may be called a theory of cognition development which, although not itself a part of accepted analytic theory, may serve as a framework into which the details of this theory can be fitted—I hope without distortion.

1. The meaning of the word 'belief'

The first step is to try to clarify the meaning of the word 'belief' itself, which is vague in current usage. Since people tend to believe what they wish to believe, it is often used to denote a state of approving or desiring as, for example, when we say we 'believe in' somebody or something. All such usages must be rejected in any strict discussion, and the word confined to cases in which we 'believe that' something is true. But even when its sense is restricted in this way, it still remains most difficult to define explicitly. In fact the failure to do so is, I think, responsible for most of the paradoxes philosophy is engaged in trying to unravel.

There seem to be two things to consider: the state of mind called believing, and the state of affairs that would make the belief true, or more shortly, the 'belief' and its 'object' respectively. If these words have any significance they must be capable of being defined in terms of elementary experience. ◦

Biologically, the most primitive beliefs are what may be provisionally called 'imageless expectations',

Psychoanalysis and Politics

from which all other types of belief may well have been derived. So we may begin with these in the hope that whatever definitions apply to them will apply to all beliefs.

When an amoeba begins to envelop a particle of food, it may be presumed to have no anticipatory idea of the taste or smell. And when we are eating mechanically we have no anticipatory idea ourselves. But the amoeba may recoil from its particle, and we may experience a sudden feeling of surprise when we taste ours. So both of us were behaving as if we expected the taste to be different from what it was. Except when we act deliberately, we are nearly always behaving in this way. We are not conscious of anticipations; but each new experience, each new pattern of sensations in the series that constitutes our lives, is accompanied by feelings either of surprise or of familiarity. They may vary in degree from extreme surprise on the one hand to extreme familiarity on the other. Somewhere in between there is a comparatively neutral zone where it is hard to tell from the mere absence of surprise whether or not we have been behaving as if we expected anything. But if there is any surprise at all we have been behaving as if we expected sensory experience to be different from what it is. This suggests a definition of imageless expectations in terms of surprise. If food of a certain appearance but without a certain taste, or, more generally, if the experience 'A without B' surprises us, then we may say that we have expected 'if A then B'. And we can define the imageless expectation 'if A then B' as a disposition to be surprised at A without B. The sum of our imageless expectations that visual sensations will be followed by tactual ones probably forms the

General Principles of Cognitive Development

core of what we call our belief in the reality of the external world.¹

We can see at once what must be the 'object' of an expectation—the state of affairs that would make it true. Clearly this cannot be 'in the mind' at the time we have the expectation. But neither can it be 'objective' in the sense that it must always remain 'outside the mind'. For if it were, no expectations could ever be verified. It is in fact a possible combination of experience, the combination 'A then B' which, if it occurred, would verify the expectation.

Many expectations, though only a minority of the vast number which determine our everyday behaviour, are of course expressed by some idea. This may be almost any mental content from a vivid image to a verbal symbol of the expected sequence of sensory events. But although the idea may be part of our state of mind when we expect something, to add it to our definition would I think be both confusing and unnecessary. It is simpler, and quite sufficient, to regard all expectations, whether expressed by ideas or not, as being dispositions to be surprised at any combination of sensory experience which is incompatible with the expected combination.

A much greater simplification would be achieved if we could regard all beliefs, including beliefs about the past, as being derived from expectations and so capable of being defined in the same way. Suppose we have two expectations, one positive and the other negative, 'if B then C' and 'if A then not-B', and that we are at present experiencing A. Then the fact that we are experiencing A and therefore do not

¹ The 'belief' in the reality of the external world is not the same as the 'feeling' of reality.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

expect to experience either B or C, in no way alters our disposition to be surprised if B did occur and were not followed by C. So the expectation is still there, and constitutes what in ordinary language is a belief in the 'existence' of an event we do not expect to experience because it is beyond our range in space or time. (An isolated expectation 'if A then B' cannot be regarded as localized in space or time at all, since its localization would seem to consist solely in being incorporated in a system of other expectations. Thus localization in time must depend on the development of series of expectations with some member of which a specific expectation can be associated. Suppose, for example, we have developed some serial belief of the form 'if a then b then c then d', then the specific expectation 'if b then B' is, though perhaps only in a rudimentary sense, already localized in time. If we are now experiencing a, it is localized in the future, while if we are experiencing d it is localized in the past).

These considerations, incomplete as they are, at least suggest that our usual habit of regarding expectations as special types of belief can be reversed, and that we can regard all beliefs, including beliefs about the past, as special types of expectation. At first sight such a reversal is bound to seem absurd. But if we examine our state of mind when we actively and consciously believe that something either has happened or will happen, we seem in both cases to project ourselves either into the past or future as 'expectant observers' who would be surprised if the believed event did not occur. And logically considered, there seems no essential difference between an expectation about the future and a belief about the

General Principles of Cognitive Development

past. It is true that beliefs about the past are not directly verifiable; but this is a characteristic of the world of perception, not a logical necessity. We cannot directly verify our belief that Julius Cæsar landed in Britain in B.C. 55 as we can verify our expectation that Mr. Smith will lunch with us to-morrow; and we do not expect the clock to go backwards to enable us to do so. But in both cases we can analyse our belief into two expectations: in the first we do not expect the clock to go back and would be surprised if it did; but if it did go back 2,000 years, we should expect to meet Julius Cæsar. In the second we do expect the clock to go forward and when it has gone forward 24 hours we shall expect to meet Mr. Smith. That clocks go forward rather than backwards is a physical fact, not a logical necessity.

This allows us to regard all beliefs as expectations and so to generalize our definitions. If we believe that A implies B, the belief itself is a disposition to be surprised at A without B, its object is the possible combination of experience A with B which would verify it, and the idea which expresses it—if it is expressed by an idea—is a representation of this object.

I would not have evolved these laborious definitions if I had not hoped they would be useful in psychology as well as in philosophy. In philosophy they do seem, at least to me, to dispose of the dispute between those who maintain that a table does not exist when no one is looking at it and those who assert the opposite. For if our belief in the existence of the external world turns out to be no more than the sum of our sensory expectations, the whole dispute between materialists and subjectivists can be concerned only with different ways of thinking of or picturing the world and not

Psychoanalysis and Politics

with any difference of belief about it.¹ In psychology, the same definitions provide us with a basic concept wide enough to include all beliefs, whether their reference is to the past or to the future, and whether they are expressed by conscious or unconscious images or by no images either conscious or unconscious.

Now beliefs may have a much greater influence on behaviour than is generally supposed. We are accustomed to attribute the different behaviour of different people to the same situation, for example, a danger situation, to inherent differences of emotional response which we may describe as cowardly in one case or courageous in another. But I think it can be shown that such differences are more fundamentally the result of different interpretations of, that is, of different beliefs, especially unconscious beliefs, about the situation. In other words, an individual's beliefs when defined in this wide sense will, I think, turn out to be the principal determinants, not only of his attitudes in various situations, but also of his whole character, which, like his attitudes, might be described as rational or not according to their truth or falsehood. If so, some such concept as I have tried to form is needed in the theory of character development.

¹ The above theory of belief is developed in an unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation *Beitrag zur Wirkleikeitslehre* (1925) which I wrote as a student at Vienna University. Russell, in *Human Knowledge*, 1948, and also in earlier writings, to which I owe much of my first interest in Philosophy, makes clear use of 'surprise' and 'expectation' in his analysis of the psychology of belief. But he does not draw what seems to me a legitimate conclusion from his own analysis; namely, that where there is no difference in expectation there is none in belief. Since Hume would have been just as surprised as Dr. Johnson if he had not experienced hardness when he stamped on the visual stone, they were in my view both wrong in assuming that there was a primary difference of belief between them. They differed, I think, only in the verbal representation of the same belief, and in the fact that Dr. Johnson misunderstood the implications of Hume's brilliant analysis of the way in which this belief arose.

General Principles of Cognitive Development

2. Images Expressing Beliefs

Although the images which may express beliefs form no part of the essence of beliefs as defined above, they are of course exceedingly important in helping us to arrive at and to modify our beliefs. We can hardly doubt that the capacity to imagine anything was first evolved to improve our capacity to anticipate the future, and that the improvement it brought was the power to compare, and so to correct, contradictory expectations in advance. If so, the first images, even when in themselves reproductions of past experience, expressed not memories, that is, specific beliefs about the past, but expectations about the future.

Perhaps the sense of pastness, which is attributed to memory images, begins as a specific form of a sense of unattainability, and is brought about by disappointment. As Freud long ago suggested, hunger in an infant seems to produce an hallucination of the object that first satisfied it, which however soon collapses if the real, that is, sensory, object remains absent. It may be at this point that the hallucination becomes what we call a memory image. Since an hallucination is the imaginary fulfilment of an expectation, the whole sequence might be represented in four stages thus: 'It is coming; it is here (hallucinated); it is not here (disillusionment); I have already had it.' In other words, what begins as a false expectation about the immediate future is changed by disappointment into a true belief about the past and is accompanied by a paler image.

In some such way as this, I conceive a primary type of image referring to the immediate future to be differentiated into other types. Thus images expressing

Psychoanalysis and Politics

rejected expectations could not only come to express memories, that is, beliefs about what we have experienced, but also more complicated beliefs about what has been, or could have been, experienced by others in the past. Perhaps the last to be differentiated are images that once expressed beliefs but do so no longer, since the beliefs themselves have been discarded as untrue both for the future and the past. It is from these that day dreams and conscious fantasies are formed.

But for our purpose the most important images are unconscious ones. Probably all images begin by being unconscious and can only become conscious if sufficient affect is attached to them; but however great the affect, many remain unconscious because the affect is painful so that they are actively repressed. Now unconscious images of this kind seem always to express beliefs. That is to say, they seem to function like percepts in that they express those expectations which make up a 'belief in the reality of the object perceived'. The emotional response of anyone under the influence of what is called 'unconscious phantasy' is therefore the same as if the phantasy were part of the perceptual world.

3. The acquisition of knowledge and some impediments to learning

Having arrived at a definition of belief that seems both wide enough and precise enough for the purpose, and distinguished certain types of image which may express beliefs, the next step is to use these concepts in the construction of a general picture of cognitive development.

Cognitive development consists in learning to know

General Principles of Cognitive Development

the world we are born into and of which we form a part. And since our knowledge of the world—both internal and external—is the sum of our true beliefs about it, learning consists in substituting true beliefs both for ignorance and for false ones. This is a complicated process which I like to envisage in terms of the relations between four areas representing four totalities of possible experience. First there is the totality of logically possible experience. This contains every combination of possible experience which is not in itself contradictory. It may be called the imaginative universe. Secondly, there is the totality of physically possible experience. I will call this the real universe.¹ Thirdly, there is the totality of the objects of any one person's beliefs or expectations. I will call this his belief system. The real universe and a belief system are both sections of the imaginative universe. They may be conceived as intersecting circles. The common element represents the objects of all the true beliefs of the individual concerned. The part of his belief system which is outside the real universe represents the objects of his false beliefs, and the part of the real universe which is outside his belief system represents facts of which he is entirely ignorant and about which he had no expectations. Lastly, there is the totality of an individual's actual experience. To borrow a useful term of Bertrand Russell's we may call this his biography.² In a wide sense, it is his four dimensional self from his conception to the present.

¹ I include in it possible experience of which we can imagine the form but not the content.

² See Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, 1914, and *The Analysis of Mind*, 1921, where he shows that the same data of perception can be classified in two ways, one to form 'things' and the other to form 'biographies'.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

Learning consists both in increasing the validity and in widening the area of our belief systems: the belief circle moves into and expands within the circle of the real universe. It seems probable that we have a rudimentary belief system even at birth.¹ But this nucleus is continually enlarged and corrected by experience, at first rapidly, and then at a slower pace until it begins to contract again when we approach senescence. Since a belief begins as a crude generalization, our earlier belief systems are full of inconsistencies, which tend to be corrected by two tests. When a belief fails to correspond with real experience, surprise proves it false and suitably amends it. This is the reality test. But we can also test our beliefs against each other, and when they conflict eliminate one or other of the opposing expectations. This is the test of consistency, which, of course, is not necessarily valid in itself. But when combined with the reality test it is probably responsible for most of our advance in knowledge.

When beliefs are expressed by images, these as we know may be anything from almost identical copies of the object of the belief to merely verbal symbols. The complex of all images expressing our beliefs may be called our concept, picture or model of the world. In the widest sense, it is our 'theory' of the world which includes our various scientific theories as specific parts of itself.

The expression of beliefs by conscious ideas or images is extremely important in our education,

¹ Some of these innate beliefs may be expressed by images. But such 'innate ideas' need not be racial memories. If they are useful to the species we should expect mutation and selection to have produced whatever cerebral patterns are correlated with them.

General Principles of Cognitive Development

because it is by comparing them that the test for consistency is wholly or at least largely carried out. By means of this test, working in conjunction with the reality test, our picture of the world tends to become ever more accurate and more complete.

But this process is by no means an undisturbed one, especially in its early stages. For images express impulses as well as expectations and, at first, the child makes no distinction between the two. He wants an object, imagines it as vividly as if it were there, and expects its satisfying attributes. Or he is angry with it, imagines it destroyed, and expects never to see it again. This would not in itself be a serious disturbance in the development of a true belief-system, if such images expressing impulses always became and remained conscious; for then the beliefs also expressed by them would soon be corrected by experience and, in general, no images expressing impulses would continue automatically also to express beliefs in their immediate realization. But these corrections cannot take place if the image remains or becomes unconscious.

Now variation and selection have ensured that we should find pleasure in, and seek, those experiences which tend, on the whole, to promote the survival of our species, or at least of our group, and that we should avoid as painful those, on the whole, threatening its extinction. In doing so, we are aided by imagination which must have been evolved not only for predicting but also for pre-determining experience. But this purpose is to some extent defeated by the fact that consciousness has come to behave towards images in much the same way as the mind as a whole behaves towards sensations. Just as the mind as a whole seeks pleasurable and avoids painful sensations, consciousness

Psychoanalysis and Politics

tends to admit and retain pleasurable and to exclude or repress painful images. This I think is the 'defect in our mental apparatus' to which Freud alluded. Probably it too has a 'purpose' or 'survival value'; for without it, our minds might well be paralysed by too much distress and so become incapable of functioning at all. But while it may protect us from too much suffering even in imagination, it can clearly act as a serious impediment to the advancement of our knowledge. It leads in fact to two kinds of falsification. For not only is the exclusion of an image or idea from consciousness equivalent to the denial of a part of psychical reality, but at the same time the beliefs expressed by it are excluded from the tests of consistency both with each other and with real experience. If true, they cannot be consciously accepted; if false, they cannot be disproved. This applies with especial force to beliefs about that part of the world which is within ourselves; for these, when they are painful, are of all beliefs not only the most hard to tolerate, but also the least accessible to perceptual tests.

This impediment to learning, which results from what Freud called the Pleasure Principle, is of course most active in very early childhood and thereafter gradually diminishes as our capacity to tolerate pain increases. But it operates long enough to ensure that our first phantastic picture of the world—especially that part which concerns ourselves—is never wholly superseded. This survives as something still unconsciously believed to be physically, and not merely psychically, real to influence our conscious feelings and behaviour. Indeed, a whole hierarchy of such submerged phantasy systems, which often contradict each other, may operate in succession or even all at once,

General Principles of Cognitive Development

and may also undergo a further process of unconscious and therefore autonomous development.

The extent to which any given child represses and so fails to correct the phantasy systems which dominated the infancy of all of us probably depends both on the degree of his innate intolerance of pain and on the amount of pain he is exposed to by his early environment. They may also be revived or lulled to rest according to the unfavourable or favourable character of the environment of his later life. But, unless they (and the processes and motives involved in their formation) can be made conscious and exposed to the double test of self-consistency and consistency with real experience, they cannot be radically changed. Freud's legacy to the world was a technique which, for the first time, enabled this to be accomplished, not of course completely, but with a considerable measure of success.

4. Incomplete Integration and the Definition of Normality

The picture of the mind we have so far arrived at is of something divided into two main parts: One of these contains our conscious percepts, memories and thoughts together with those described by Freud as pre-conscious, that is, latent at the moment but not permanently shut out from consciousness. The beliefs belonging to this part are subject to the tests of reality and consistency. They are therefore as true as our limited experience can make them so that the feelings and behaviour they determine are rational.

The other part of the mind contains what is inaccessible to consciousness by all ordinary means. The beliefs associated with it are excluded from con-

Psychoanalysis and Politics

scious tests, are often false, and are therefore likely to give rise to irrational feelings which may be conscious, and to irrational behaviour. This is the picture of a mind that is incompletely integrated and therefore not wholly rational.

No mind is completely integrated or rational. But some minds are more so than others, so that we can form a concept of a limit, never reached in practice, which we can call an integrated mind. Such a mind, which contained nothing permanently excluded from consciousness, which 'knew' or was 'acquainted with' itself, and was for this reason rational, would not be free from conflict—for many of our impulses are inevitably incompatible with each other. But it would be free from all those illnesses which analysis seeks to relieve solely by making patients more conscious of their own unconscious processes, that is, more integrated. It would therefore be in the strictest sense a 'healthy' or a 'normal' mind.

In the ordinary and wider sense, a healthy person is anyone who has a good capacity for work and pleasure, or who is well-adjusted to his social environment. This concept is useful enough as a practical guide; but it is inevitably a little vague and also relative to the prevailing cultural standards. In contrast to it, the concept of an integrated person—of a person whose mind has nothing permanently hidden from itself, and who is rational in the sense that the belief-systems governing his behaviour are true within the range of his experience because they have been consciously tested—is at least precise. And although this is the concept of a limit not attainable in practice, it has the great advantage of being independent of all arbitrarily chosen cultural standards and linked with

General Principles of Cognitive Development

the absolute criterion of truth. It thus itself provides us with the kind of standard needed if we are to get beyond the relativist position in either politics or morals.

CHAPTER III

EARLY STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE ORIGIN OF CONSCIENCE

In passing from these wide and rather academic generalizations about cognitive development in general to the sequence of intellectual and emotional stages everyone seems to go through, we come on to the firmer ground of empirical discovery. Admittedly, the psychoanalytic theory of development is also speculative to some extent, and is itself still in the process of development. Not only is our knowledge of the earliest and most important period of a child's post-natal life still necessarily vague; but every advance in this knowledge increases our understanding of the later periods, and so modifies our description of them, and even changes the terms and concepts used as these are replaced by others better suited to the purpose. So I can do no more than give an approximate description of the mental processes analysts are trying to detect and record. But at least in some important respects it can be a close approximation than any that could have been given only a few decades ago; for since then our insight has been deepened by much research and several new discoveries.

The knowledge we now have we still owe ultimately to Freud, who not only discovered the unconscious but also devised the only technique that has so far proved effective for its exploration. But it was Melanie

Early Stages of Development

Klein¹ who first extended his technique of free-association in words to include what might be called free-association in play and so made it applicable to the direct study of very young children. This enabled her to carry Freud's researches a stage further into the forgotten part of early childhood, and at the same time to increase our understanding of the whole process of development.

What follows is an attempt to condense and systematize—I hope without distortion—the result of their principle discoveries.

1. Primitive Animism

In trying to reconstruct the way in which a newborn child builds a picture, idea or concept, of his own ego and of his surrounding world, we must suppose with Freud that he at first makes no distinction between the two. But since for the most part he can only feel himself whereas he can both feel and see his surroundings, we may also suppose that his concepts of what he will later call external objects begin by being more clearly formed than his concept of what he will later call his ego. The construction of concepts of enduring objects of this kind by associating percepts with memory images must be his first intellectual achievement.

In this he is probably assisted by the pre-existence of certain innate concepts—particularly of the breast and of the sex organs. We need not assume these to be innate memories. They are more likely to be the mental correlates of heritable mutations in cortical

¹ See Melanie Klein. *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, 1932 and *Contributions to Psychoanalysis* 1948.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

patterns which favoured the survival of their original possessors.

Such concepts of enduring objects express beliefs, for example, the expectation that a certain smell will be followed by a certain taste or, more generally, that the 'attributes' of an object imply each other's presence.

Now, in a grown up person, the memory images and affects associated with a percept are divided into two clear categories. When, for example, we have the visual experience called 'seeing an object' the memory images of its hardness, taste or smell are attributed to the object; but we regard our emotional response as something belonging to ourselves. To the child, however, this too is at first an attribute of the object. His emotional response to it, according as it gives him pleasure or pain, is either an excited desire which may develop into possessive and finally protective love, or rage and hate. And, since he attributes these affects to it, he feels it to be not merely the source of pleasure or pain but also 'friendly' or 'hostile' in itself. We express this by saying that he feels it to be either a 'good object' or a 'bad' one.

So the child begins by forming an animistic picture of the world as peopled with objects which are all alive, which reflect his feelings of love or hate, and are therefore either good or bad, and which are expected to treat him as he treats them in phantasy. Of course they often really do so. But it should be noted that his first beliefs about them are much less the result of experience than of what is called the 'projection' of his affects.

Much of this might perhaps have been inferred from the general principles of psychology and biology. What was not suspected was that he begins by forming

Early Stages of Development

two opposite concepts, one 'good' and the other 'bad', of what he will later call the same object. But this too might perhaps have been inferred. Since what is most important about any percept or memory image is the pleasure or pain it provides, he naturally begins by associating all the pleasurable members of a group of similar percepts and memory images to form one object, and all the painful ones to form another. And since he 'projects' his own love or hate upon them, the good one is felt to be loving and protective, and the bad one to be relentless in its persecutory hatred of himself and all he loves.

The fact that in reality the first object, the mother's breast, is sometimes satisfying and sometimes frustrating, in itself tends to initiate such splits. But this may not be their only cause. What later appear as the opposite emotions of protective love and destructive hate may be by no means simple representations of two eternally opposing groups of instinct.¹ To a great extent they may originate in one confused and violent desire which is inherently unstable because in its very greed it threatens to destroy what it would most ardently preserve. If so, the splitting of the impulse provides the force to split the object, which divides as it were along a natural fissure between its satisfying and frustrating aspects.

Some faint idea of the child's world as it must appear, at moments when it is under the influence of these early mechanisms of splitting and projection, may be con-

¹ Freud regarded all actual impulses as compounded in various proportions from two basic ones which he called the 'Life' and 'Death' Instincts, or *Eros* and *Ananke*. He himself spoke of this conceptual picture, reminiscent as it is of the speculations of early Greek philosophers, as a mythology (*New Introductory Lectures* 1933). But it has been an extraordinarily fruitful mythology, which shows no sign of being superseded.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

veyed by saying that it is peopled by gods and devils who are interchangeable because they are the affective opposite aspects of each other. And since they are apt to change together under the influence of his changing moods, we may add that this world itself must often assume the alternating aspects of a heaven and a hell. If it is remembered that our concept of these two places is derived from the forgotten memories of childhood, this imagery will not seem unduly lurid.

2. The construction of the concept of the self in its relation to the external world

The child's emotional response to objects, while being 'projected' into them, also determines what he does to them in phantasy. In the very early period, two basic actions are of dominant importance. These are the actions of taking objects into the body, mainly through the mouth, and of expelling them from it. He performs these acts as easily in imagination as in reality and, at first, makes no distinction between the two. Thus what he takes in or gets rid of in phantasy plays a most important role in the construction of his early picture of, and beliefs about, his own bodily ego and the world about him.

The imaginary acts by which an object is taken in, and then believed to be inside the self, or again expelled and believed to be once more outside are known as 'introjection' and 'projection'. (Thus the word 'projection' is used both for the attribution of affects to their object and for the imaginary ejection of objects believed to be inside the body).

The core of the child's concept of himself is almost certainly the all important sensation from his mouth.

Early Stages of Development

Into this receptacle he seeks to introject (imaginatively consume) only good objects of which the prototype is the satisfying breast. So far as he succeeds, he begins to think of himself as a 'good object' and, what is more, as a 'whole object' and not merely a collection of discordant feelings and sensations. In other words, his concept of himself as something with a stable and permanent existence, that is, his sense of his own reality, is largely based on introjections of this kind.¹

But either because his very greed is essentially aggressive, or because oral aggression is used from the beginning to destroy or master bad objects as well as to acquire good ones, he often feels that bad objects too have got inside, and must be destroyed there, or got rid of by projection. He feels, in short, as if he were possessed by devils.

3. The Persecutory and Depressive Positions

Enough has been said to show that, under the influence of his own anger, the small child's world may become hostile and dangerous in a wholly unrealistic way. At such times he feels threatened by enemies who not only attack him from without but also take possession of his body and who, as the projected representation of his own aggression, become yet more dangerous in proportion to his efforts to defend himself against them.

His liability to this sense of persecution probably reaches its climax sometime during teething, when it is so often expressed both in screaming tantrums and

¹ That distressing sense of their own unreality, which some patients complain of, seems to be largely derived from a very early sense of the lack of a whole 'good breast' inside.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

negativistic moods in which, for example, food may be rejected as if it were poison. Although such states of mind are common enough in all babies and so used to attract no particular attention, they are now recognized as essentially similar to, and indeed the basis of, the persecutory feelings of adult paranoiacs. They make up what Melanie Klein has called the 'paranoid' or 'persecutory position' of early infancy.

In healthy children they of course soon seem to be outgrown; but at least some part of this early sense of inner persecution survives in a modified form to compose one element—a persecutory element—in that specifically human feeling known as a sense of guilt.¹ As its presence in any large degree has a far reaching effect on moral attitudes, and so indirectly on political opinions, I shall have much more to say about it later. But for the moment we must return to the next stage of the child's development.

After the development of concepts of enduring good and bad objects and of an enduring ego, perhaps the most important intellectual step is the discovery that some good and bad objects are different aspects of the same one and that the same child both loves and hates them.² This discovery may seem obvious enough; but it is extremely painful. Since it occurs at a time when the distinction between perception and phantasy is still uncertain, and when aggressive wishes are therefore believed to be magically destructive, the child

¹ For economy of language analysts often use the word 'guilt' as a synonym for 'a feeling of guilt'. It should be understood that when we speak of a person's guilt in this way we in fact refer to his subjective feeling, either conscious or unconscious, and not to his infringement of some law.

² I have taken this wording, almost literally, from Clifford Scott's paper *A Psychoanalytic Concept of the Origin of Depression* (British Medical Journal, 1948).

Early Stages of Development

feels as he makes it that he has murdered, or is about to murder, what he most passionately loves.

So the discovery brings with it a period of early depressive moods which constitute what Melanie Klein has called the 'depressive position'. As it also makes the objects of his world much more realistic, and therefore less the targets of his terrified aggression, and as their continued existence disproves their expected annihilation even when they are attacked, he tends to outgrow this melancholic episode of childhood. But the depressive position must be securely reached before it can be outgrown. The discovery that good and bad objects are often different aspects of the same one is so painful that he at first tends to deny it by regressing, or partially regressing, to the earlier phase in which one aspect is idealized and loved and the other blackened and hated—a process which involves some corresponding splitting of his ego. In other words, a return to the persecutory and we may add, the schizoid, position is often used as a defence against depression.

It would seem that several oscillations between the persecutory and depressive positions take place before the child's concepts of himself and his objects become integrated into realistic representations of the corresponding percepts. And even then, he will tend, if only in a slight degree, to exaggerate the 'goodness' or the 'badness' of all he meets after the pattern of his earliest phantastic picture of the world. At the same time a relic of the depressive position will also survive as the basis of a depressive element in the sense of guilt he will later feel whenever he is in conflict with his conscience.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

4. *The sense of guilt*

The discovery of the persecutory and depressive positions of early infancy, which we owe to Melanie Klein, is of very great importance. It has enabled analytic therapy to be successfully applied at least to the milder forms of schizophrenic (including paranoid) and depressive disorders which, before it, were regarded as incurable. But what most concerns us here is that it has greatly increased our understanding of character development, and of the way in which different types of moral character originate.

Moral behaviour may be defined as behaviour dictated by the fear of a sense of guilt. It is now clear that guilt is not an elementary feeling but a compound of at least two, one persecutory and the other depressive. As these can be combined in any proportion, we should expect to find, as indeed we do, not one type of conscience but a whole range of consciences stretched between two theoretical extremes. At one end is the type based almost wholly on the fear of punishment; at the other, a type based almost wholly on the fear of injuring, deserting or disappointing something that is loved. The difference is also betrayed in the external behaviour aroused by guilt, which is propitiatory at the one extreme and reparative at the other.

Of course, in the early period we are discussing, a fully developed conscience does not yet exist. If this comes into being, it may be later felt as an internal mentor who, without apparent inconsistency, combines the functions of a judge with those of a guide, philosopher and friend. We can hardly detect the difference between the persecutory and depressive elements in guilt in conflicts with a figure of this kind. But we can

Early Stages of Development

detect them easily enough in the child's conflicts with the very different phantasy objects which are its fore-runners. For these are far more sharply divided into internal persecutors whom he dare not offend and internal benefactors whom he does not want to injure and wishes to preserve.

If the first attitude predominates in infancy, the later mentor will be much more judge than friend, and the resulting moral character will be authoritarian. If the second predominates, the mentor will be more friend than judge, and the character will be more humanistic.

These distinctions are of very great significance for our present inquiry. Therapeutic analysis is now capable, not only of relieving symptoms, but of producing widespread character changes as well. And it produces these changes solely by the insight it conveys and not by any other kind of influence. Its aim is to bring to light the content of unconscious phantasies. By doing so it permits the belief systems expressed by them to be corrected by the two tests of perception and consistency. Thus the affective changes are a direct result of the correction of unconscious false beliefs, so that they are changes in the direction of greater rationality.

Now the changes produced in moral character by a deep analysis are always away from the authoritarian and towards the humanistic end of the scale. This in itself must lead us to infer that the humanistic type of conscience is in fact more rational. And if we go back to the origin of conscience we can see at once that this conclusion must be correct. The persecutory element in guilt begins with such terrors as that bad internal parents will eat the child if he is disobedient, while the

Psychoanalysis and Politics

depressive element begins with fears that good internal parents will be injured or destroyed if he turns against, or fails to defend them. Neither of these fears is justified in fact, because civilized parents no longer eat their child,¹ nor are they so easily destroyed by him. But while the persecutory element is based on the denial and projection of the child's aggressive (and cannibalistic) impulses, so that he feels himself to be threatened by what is in reality their object, the depressive element involves at least the conscious recognition that they are after all his own. Moreover, his capacity to feel depression at all is only attained in the stage at which he can begin to think of his good and bad objects as different aspects of the same one. He can have no conscious depression about an ideally good object, since in splitting off this aspect of what is in reality a compound figure he has also diverted his aggressiveness from it. And of course he can have none about the 'ideally' bad one for which he feels nothing but fear and hatred. So the humanistic conscience is characteristic of a higher degree of both insight and realism, that is, of those qualities of integration and rationality which define a normal mind.

But in saying this I am already anticipating a conclusion to be arrived at in more detail after an attempt to reconstruct the next stage of character development.

¹ Roheim, in *The Riddle of the Sphinx* (1934) quotes examples of Central Australian tribes who do eat some of their children in the belief that by this means they will be born again.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL CHARACTER

1. *The oedipus complex and the super-ego*

It is on the foundations already laid in the persecutory and depressive positions of early infancy that the oedipus complex—that classical discovery of Freud—is built.

The mother, as the primary object of the new born infant's intense and anxious oral craving, is the first love for children of both sexes. Thus for girls as well as boys, the father, when he is discovered also to have some claims upon her, is the first rival. And as such he tends to become a 'bad object' identified both with the bad, destructive and repudiated part of the self, and with the bad half of the two aspects into which the mother has already been divided. But this orientation is easily reversed by rebuffs from the mother and advances by the father, and then tends to be restored again because of the sense of guilt aroused by deserting the first object. So, for a time, the child's attachments and dislikes may oscillate in opposite phases between each parent.

Quite soon these alternating attachments begin to acquire the character of an alternating sexuality. There can be no doubt that, by this time, the child already has a vague idea of both the sex organs and that he is stirred by an embryonic form of both the corresponding impulses. In accordance with these

Psychoanalysis and Politics

ideas and impulses, he forms a vivid if distorted picture of a secret relation between his parents, and in unconscious phantasy he plays the role of one or other of them himself. But at first his choice of role seems to be more influenced by his fluctuating choice of object than is his choice of object by his own anatomy. .

To explain these discoveries of analysis, it seems plausible to revive, in modern form and as a tentative hypothesis, the celebrated myth which Plato put into the mouth of Alcibiades to explain the origin of love. Psychiatrists give the name of 'body image'¹ to that sense of our bodily existence which forms the core of our picture or concept of the world. As is well known, it can include 'phantoms' of limbs that have been amputated. Now the body image of the child who in phantasy plays both sexual roles seems to include phantoms of the organs of the other sex, which he has never had. They survive in unconscious phantasy and can be discovered in a subsequent analysis. They are then found to be the result of very early identifications with the parent of this sex. But they could not have been attributed to this parent unless there was already some idea of their existence. And since this idea must be often independent of personal experience, it must in some sense be innate. In fact, I am inclined to think that it may belong to the child's body image from the beginning, and that before being acquired by an identification with the parent of the opposite sex, it is projected to complete the concept of this parent.

The concept of an innate and indeed hermaphroditic body image may be thought to assume the inheritance

¹ Clifford Scott has introduced a slightly different concept, that of the 'body scheme', into psychoanalytic theory. *Some Embryological, Neurological, Psychological and Psychoanalytical Implications of the Body Scheme*. *Journal of Psychoanalysis* XXIX, 1945.

The Development of Moral Character

of a racial memory. But this is neither a necessary nor a plausible assumption. The neurological correlate of the body image must be a cortical pattern which has roughly the same relation to it as a map to the corresponding landscape. To a great extent it is built up by impulses from the sense organs. But if an innate body image were of survival value to the species, variation and selection would be likely to have laid down an innate cortical pattern to give rise to it. Moreover this pattern might well be common to both sexes. The correlated body image that emerged would then have all the appearance of an innate memory acquired partly by cross inheritance, but would in fact be quite independent of ancestral experience.

It seems tempting to suppose, in accordance with Plato's 'explanatory myth', that this is exactly what has happened, and that almost from the beginning there is already a vague hermaphroditic body image which does not fully correspond with the monosexual body image built up by sensory experience. If so, the gradual awakening of a sense of something missing in himself may first help the child to divide his parents in a different way: into one who completes his psychically bisexual but physically monosexual ego, and one who is his replica and his rival.¹

But this bifurcation is still coloured by the bifurcation into good and bad which is already there. So it comes about that this parent is felt to be not only the rival but also the embodiment of the child's own aggression against the loved parent, and, as such, an object whom he not only wants but 'ought' to destroy.

¹ All that is claimed for this hypothesis is that it is capable of explaining certain facts and so achieves a measure of economy in thought. I do not claim that there is any direct evidence for it, or that it is the only hypothesis capable of explaining these facts.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

For failure to do so is felt as a desertion of the good parent and therefore arouses depressive guilt.

Although there is a physiological bias towards this attitude, it is by no means stable. The disappointments inflicted by the parent of the opposite sex, as well as the satisfactions given by the parent of the same sex, combine with the homosexual component in the child himself to produce many oscillations into the opposite homosexual attitude.

The normal heterosexual outcome involves a diversion of the sexual impulses on to a substitute for the parent of the opposite sex and an identification with the parent of the same sex. If, as Plato's myth suggests, there is a vague hermaphroditic body image as an innate endowment, the child's ideas of his two parents are to some extent the projection of his own masculine and feminine components. So in identifying himself with the parent of the same sex he is reintrojecting and as it were confirming his own heterosexual ego; and in loving a heterosexual object he is seeking to reunite with his projected homosexual self. If this were not so, his love object would remain an empty shell and would not be a 'person' whose thoughts, feelings and desires he can share and understand.¹

Such a heterosexual outcome, involving as it does a full capacity to understand the object loved, is helped rather than hindered by the homosexual oscillations that precede it. For each of these involves introjections of a parent of the opposite sex and so enriches

¹ But a condition of the ability to make a satisfactory marriage is that the love object, who is I think always to some extent identified with a lost part of the self, should also be allowed to be an independent individual. If this condition is not satisfied, if there is a demand that the love object should correspond exactly with a lost part of the self, the discovery of such an object of course becomes impossible in practice.

The Development of Moral Character

the 'phantom' or homosexual component of the ego which is to be in the end projected and sought in the external world.

It will be observed that, in what is called the normal outcome, the two halves of the originally hermaphroditic body image end by becoming identified with perceptual bodies with which they really correspond. In other words, that part of the phantasy world which includes the idea of the self and of its love object conveys a true belief. Thus here also in the sexual sense 'normal' is an attribute applied to impulses that are based on true beliefs and is therefore equivalent to 'rational'.

In practice an outcome that is wholly normal in this sense is never quite achieved. Opposite identifications always survive to some extent. And since they are 'false', that is to say, since they do not correspond with the body image of perception, they are always to some extent a source of frustration and distress. But if the impulses they give rise to are doomed to be frustrated in a primitive and literal way, their sublimations can at least be satisfied. Probably all creative work expresses unconscious phantasies in which the acts of begetting and conceiving are both involved, so that in them either sex can symbolically fulfil the purpose of both the 'phantom' and the real part of themselves.

Such partial survivals of homosexuality are probably linked with another defect of ego development which is also universal, though it varies greatly in degree. In the normal outcome of the oedipus complex the child introjects, and identifies himself with the parent of the same sex; and, as he has formed his concept of this

Psychoanalysis and Politics

parent, as humanity has formed its concept of the gods, in the image of himself, that is, by projection, the outcome includes a reintroduction of something of himself. But the fact that this very parent, in the role of rival, has become the depository of sadistic impulses which the child has disowned—in short, the fact that this figure has become to a great extent a 'bad' object must seriously interfere with its assimilation. So only part of what is introjected can be assimilated. The rest remains as an internal, but foreign element within the self.

This is the super-ego, or at any rate a great part of the super-ego as I conceive it to be formed. When Freud discovered that the internal mentor which is called conscience is only partly conscious, he also investigated the attributes of the unconscious part of it. He found a figure of archaic severity who seemed to threaten the most ferocious punishments, and in particular castration, for any infringement of its will. And he was quick to recognize in it the child's early idea of the parent of the same sex as a revengeful figure who is expected to exact a talion punishment for every hostile or defiant impulse. Indeed, the sadism of the super-ego reflects in every particular the disowned sadism of the child himself who once projected these impulses upon their object, and who later acquires this object as a dissociated internal authority within him. What makes it still more terrifying is that it contains many elements of the other parent too which were acquired during homosexual phases of hostility, so it is a combined parent that threatens to rend him from within if he is not good. •

It is true that the super-ego has another side as well. It is more than a god of vengeance and is not wholly

The Development of Moral Character

bad. Indeed, one aspect of it is idealized as a god of mercy and love. Why this aspect cannot be assimilated is, at first sight, less easy to understand. But one reason seems to be that its very idealization makes it into something that must be preserved, as it were from contamination, by the imperfect self.

So the super-ego turns out to be a discordant combination of two split off aspects of an object, one ideally good and the other ideally bad. Like the Calvinist God, it is an unstable compound of qualities that are diagrammatically opposed: infinite love and mercy on the one hand; implacable and sadistic vengeance on the other. There are indeed pathological states in which one or other, and perhaps both, of these aspects do seem to be absorbed into the ego. Then the ego believes that it has become god or the devil or both at once. But when it believes this it is no longer sane. Therefore the basic reason why the super-ego cannot be absorbed, without a loss of sanity, is because it is a self-contradictory compound of phantastically exaggerated qualities. And conversely, the condition for its absorption is that these discordant exaggerations should be brought to light and so reduced and recombined in a more harmonious and realistic way. To the extent to which this occurs in analysis, the super-ego is modified and then absorbed. As the super-ego diminishes so the ego expands.

2. Super-ego Morality

This raises a problem of some practical importance, which is closely linked with our main investigation. When Freud discovered the super-ego, he saw in it the sole guardian of morality. And from this it might be,

Psychoanalysis and Politics

and has often been, inferred that analysis, which weakens the super-ego, must be an immoral process. The answers made to this reproach are not, always very satisfactory. It may be said, for example, that only the archaic severity of the super-ego is reduced and that, anyway, analysis never goes far enough to undermine it altogether. But this is like defending an *enfant terrible* on the ground that he is not strong enough to do the damage he intends.

To discover whether such an apology is all that can be made, some examination of the nature of super-ego morality, and of the changes made in it by a deep analysis, seems to be required.

Since the super-ego has two faces, super-ego morality must be influenced by both of them. The bad aspect is basically hated and, for this reason, the ego lives in terror of reprisals, and seeks to avoid them by slavish obedience and propitiatory sacrifice. The good aspect is loved, but because it is indissolubly linked with the bad one it too seems in constant danger from the ego; so the ego is always anxious about its safety and strives to preserve it or to repair it if it seems to have been damaged. The guilt that arises whenever the ego feels itself to be out of harmony with the super-ego is, as we already know, a compound of these persecutory and depressive feelings; and super-ego morality is the conduct determined by the fear of this double sided sense of guilt.

But the stronger the super-ego the more does the persecutory element seem to predominate, though not necessarily in conscious feeling. Those extreme evangelicals or Calvinists who most feared their God were most apt to stress his mercy. But it is the fear of him that first brought about their surrender or con-

The Development of Moral Character

version; and their subsequent behaviour had all the characteristics of a compulsive and therefore terrified obedience. In other words, super-ego morality is predominantly of an authoritarian kind.

In those obsessional neuroses where it was first discovered, the super-ego inhibits, not only the sexual and aggressive impulses against which it was first directed, but interferes with nearly all their sublimations too, and also imposes many absurd rituals which have the unconscious aim of preventing or undoing any imaginable infringement of its will. In short, it exercises its power with an almost incredible unreason and frivolity. Here, then, in the obsessional neuroses, the authoritarian conscience appears in its most extreme and most irrational form. To oversimplify and so to stress an essential pattern in the picture, the obsessional neurotic may be depicted as someone who refrains from pleasurable and useful activities, and performs painful and idiotic ones instead, because he believes that only by so doing can he avoid being tortured and mutilated by a sadistic demon inside himself. Quite clearly, therefore, the effect of helping him to become conscious of this belief and of the way in which it first arose is to free him from it and so also from the avoidances and rituals it caused.

Such results are certainly not confined to the treatment of obsessional neuroses. Even when the super-ego is a far less serious impediment to freedom, the effect of analysis is always to weaken its authority so far as this authority is based on irrational fears. So to the extent to which morals are based on the fear of an internal figure, whether this is an irresponsible demon or a strict and upright judge, analysis must accept the accusation of being what authoritarian moralists would

Psychoanalysis and Politics

regard as an immoral process. In other words, to people who are unaware of any other kind of morality within themselves, the aim of analysis must seem the total obliteration of the moral sense—an aim the pursuit of which can in no way be excused by the fact that it is unattainable in practice.

That this view is fairly widely held is in part the result of the order in which analytical discoveries were made. The authoritarian aspect of the super-ego is much the most conspicuous, was investigated first and for a long time occupied the most prominent place in analytic literature. We now know, however, that the super-ego has another aspect and that this becomes more prominent in proportion as the authoritarian aspect subsides. In any deep analysis, when the persecutory anxieties of conscience-ridden patients gradually lessen in severity, they begin to become conscious of depression. The dread of offending something feared gives place to grief at having injured something loved. In other words, the kind of guilt they are capable of feeling is less persecutory and more depressive in character, so that the form of their conscience moves away from the authoritarian and towards the humanist end of the scale.

But the depressive element in this guilt still relates largely to 'internal objects', in fact, to the good aspect of the super-ego. Its content is the sense of having destroyed (crucified again), injured or at least grieved, a very perfect figure. And since this figure is a 'phantasy object' no less than the bad one, we come back to the question we were just beginning to think had been answered to our satisfaction: does analysis, by exposing the unrealistic nature of this figure, tend to reduce our capacity to experience a sense of guilt of 'any kind'?

The Development of Moral Character

And, if it were a perfect implement for the exploration of the unconscious, would it leave us with no morality at all? .

It would be an evasion of, not an answer to, this question to say that it is hypothetical and that the hypothesis cannot be realized in practice. The question is significant enough and of great inherent interest. Moreover, I believe the answer is no longer so difficult to give nor, as it turns out, in any way disturbing.

The super-ego is a being in the world of unconscious phantasy. It has opposite qualities of extreme goodness and badness which are incompatible with each other, and it is located within the boundaries of the ego. While it is supposed to represent the parents, its core is composed of the split affects of love and hate which the child has projected into them. Now, no such being is perceptible. It has no counterpart in the world of perceptual experience. Nor are the processes that formed it such as lead normally to valid expectations. So, as a patient becomes conscious of it and of how it was formed, which happens very slowly, it is slowly changed. It becomes more like the parents it is supposed to represent, its two aspects become less glaringly opposed and more fused into a consistent unity. And as this happens the ego gradually absorbs it, and in doing so reabsorbs something of itself.

The limit of this process, never achieved in practice, would be a mature that is, independent, and fully integrated person without dissociated elements to fear or to be concerned about. Therefore he would no longer have an internal source of guilt. But he would still be capable of experiencing guilt in his relations with external objects. Moreover the sense of guilt which he could experience would be predominantly of

Psychoanalysis and Politics

the depressive kind. Fear of legal sanctions, when no longer reinforced by a persecutory terror of the super-ego, is a comparatively weak deterrent—sufficient only to preserve us from offences that are neither easy to conceal nor attractive to commit. But in proportion as anyone is conscious of his own psychology he has an empathetic understanding of his fellows and can neither injure nor neglect them without distress—or what is the same thing, without depressive guilt. In other words, the place of an authoritarian super-ego morality is taken by an ego morality of a predominantly humanistic kind.

The changes in moral character brought about by deep analysis are always in this direction. They are brought about solely by conveying insight, which is a form of knowledge; and it is impossible to acquire this kind of knowledge without bringing about these changes. If therefore wisdom is another word for insight, humanism is an attribute of wisdom.

With this conclusion, analysis may perhaps claim to have provided an empirical answer to the sort of questions Plato raised two and a half millennia ago. But this again is to anticipate an argument to be developed more fully in a later chapter. In the meantime, we need only note that, as the result of the empirical discoveries of analysis, we have been able to add a new attribute to our basic concept of normality, an attribute which was not included in our definition. For these discoveries have allowed us to conclude that so far as people are normal, in the sense of being integrated, and therefore rational, they are also humanistic.

CHAPTER V

SOME VARIETIES OF CHARACTER FORMATION

Freud, in a celebrated passage, likened the human mind to the city of Rome, conceived four dimensionally so that all or at least many of its former buildings coexisted with later ones built upon their sites. This simile, through its very self-contradictions, vividly portrays the relation between the phantasy systems of infancy and the adult's conscious conception of the world.

The child's first picture of the world is largely the result of impulse operating on phantasy. But it is something he believes to be real, that is to say, he expects future perceptions to correspond with it. This expectation is often not fulfilled. Phantasy fails to correspond with perception and then tends to be corrected by it. So the child's imaginary picture gradually becomes more 'true'. That is to say, it expresses less false expectation and exposes him less frequently to surprise. If this were all, the most recent picture would be felt as real, and the earlier ones would survive, if at all, only as memories of phantasies which were no longer believed in, which were no longer the media of expectations. But, as we know, this process of learning by which his phantasy world with its belief system comes to approximate ever more closely to the real world of physically possible perception is liable to serious distortion under the influence of a

Psychoanalysis and Politics

hedonic flight from pain. What in himself and in his objects is too painful to be tolerated tends to be repressed, or isolated, or denied—processes which may be the phantasy equivalents of the flight from, or the destructive annihilation of, external dangers. In either case, it becomes unconscious and with it a section of the phantasy world is withdrawn from the test of consistency and real (perceptual) experience. The result is a twofold distortion. On the one hand the most recent and conscious picture of the world fails to contain some unpleasant truths which should have been discovered. On the other, the earlier pictures which should have been superseded survive in the unconscious with many falsehoods still undetected.

In particular, the old concepts of the world corresponding to the persecutory and depressive phases of development always to some variable degree survive to distort his conscious concept of the universe and especially of himself.

1. Defences against unconscious anxieties and their influence on character formation

The extent to which the early phantastic conception of the world survives as a permanent source of persecutory and depressive feelings may be taken as the measure of the extent to which the resultant personality deviates from health. But the precise nature of its illness depends on the nature of the defences erected against these two kinds of pain.

There is only one rational way of dealing with persecutory and depressive feelings, and that is to expose their unconscious source. But there are many irrational defences. We have already noted some of the primary

Some Varieties of Character Formation

ones—the splitting of the object into different aspects and their disposal by introjection and projection. These play the main role first in creating the early phantastic conception of the world with its unrealistic belief-systems, and secondly in excluding it from corrective tests. In this way, they help to secure the survival, at least unconsciously, of the very persecutory and depressive feelings against which they are directed. But, to such primary defences other secondary and tertiary ones may soon be added, which all have as their common purpose the protection of consciousness against immediate pain—often at the cost of much more prolonged suffering. They are the over-zealous and therefore inefficient servants of the Pleasure Principle.

It is the variety of these defences, and of their combination with each other, that constitutes the variety not only of illness, but also of character distortion. For, having first discovered these defences in obvious forms of mental illness, analysts have now learnt to recognize them also in various types of character which had previously been regarded as perhaps unsympathetic but certainly not in any way diseased.

All disturbances of character formation consist of what is manifest in the operation of defence mechanisms against persecutory or depressive anxiety or both. And when they also include a denial of depression and of depressive guilt, they involve a distortion in the normal functioning of conscience. In this sense—but not of course in a theological sense—they can then be regarded as moral defects. Three distinct types of such disturbed morality may be isolated in sharp if rather artificial contrast with each other, and outlined here

Psychoanalysis and Politics

because of their political importance. The first is found in those authoritarians whose strict super-ego makes them inhuman in the pursuit of whatever they feel to be their duty. They are obsessional in moral character, but need not be in any other way neurotic. The second is found in certain hypo-manics, in whom the super-ego seems to have been mastered by the ego.¹ They pursue their aims, whether personal or ideological with a ruthlessness unhindered by any conscious sense of guilt. If successful, they become the 'world historical personalities' so much admired by Hegel, and found new codes to be obeyed by the moral authoritarians. The third is found in many hypo-paranoids. Their sense of guilt is continually projected, so that they are sustained by a sense of righteous indignation against the real or imaginary sins of others.²

It is impossible to find pure examples of these three types, with each of which everyone has some elements in common. But perhaps Kant the philosopher of the Categorical Imperative, Napoleon as conceived by Dostoyevski's Roskalnikoff, and that aspect of Hitler which could be likened to a perverted Don Quixote, may serve to illustrate their outstanding traits.

The authoritarian morality, which parades obedience to some external power or inner code as the highest form of virtue, is a typical product of the oedipus complex as this develops in an authoritarian society

¹ In another form, which gives rise to 'phantasies of omnipotent reparation', the ego feels responsible for all the evils of the world, but avoids depression by also feeling that it can and will cure all of them.

² In this respect, they are the exact opposite of some depressives who are overconscious of a sense of guilt. If you tread on a depressive's toe, he is likely to apologize. But if a paranoid treads on your toe, he demands an apology from you. He may be described as morally self-righteous.

Some Varieties of Character Formation

and a patriarchal home. An early phantasy of the mother as a pure and loving figure forced against her will to submit to the sexual attacks of a sadistic father originates, as we know, in the projection of the small boy's own primary sadism, and, as such, always constitutes an important element in his oedipus complex. But if the father is really an autocrat whose considered word or unconsidered whim, are alike unbreakable commands, the phantasy is partially confirmed by fact. The child will have both a more intense desire to 'rescue' his mother, and a greater terror of his own destruction should he try to do so. He feels himself to be faced by the challenge of St. George, but to be in a far weaker position to defy the dragon.¹ Moreover, the challenge is not quite so clear cut, for while his mother is certain to have some qualities which make her an imperfect object for his love, his father is equally certain to have some qualities for which he can be admired and loved. So the probable outcome of the struggle between love and fear is to transfer the love to the feared object, to abandon the mother, who is thereafter felt to be good only so long as she is submissive, and to submit like her to an idealized father whose unlovable qualities are henceforth justified or denied. It is this father who then becomes the dominant constituent of the internal super-ego who is ever afterwards so assiduously obeyed. He thus remains the concealed sanction which enforces a fanatical loyalty to whatever external authority or internal code is later adopted as his conscious representative.

Our justification for describing this type of character

¹ In men in whom this conflict was particularly strong, a compulsive impulse to throw themselves defiantly in front of trains or buses may be in part the expression of such a forlorn attempt to defy a 'bad' father image.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

as not strictly speaking normal is that it is founded on the unconscious denial of two painful truths: on the one hand, there is the denial either that the feared internal figure has 'bad', that is, hated, qualities, or that such qualities, if admitted, are unconsciously hated.¹ These alternatives may be illustrated by the attitude of nazis towards an actually brutal Hitler, or of some narrow sects of Christians to a supposedly sadistic god. The hells which one actually, and the other supposedly, created for those who disagreed with them were either distorted into benevolent reformatories, or praised as expressions of superior justice and integrity. On the other hand, there is the denial that the loved object, which has been deserted out of fear, has qualities which make it loveable and that its desertion has aroused great quantities of depressive guilt. This too can be clearly seen in the tendency of those who surrender other people's interests to a powerful enemy to blame those whom they have deserted and to argue that they have deserved their fate.

Whereas the obsessional or authoritarian conscience is the outcome of a surrender to an inner persecutor, the amorality of some hypo-manics is the outcome of an identification with this figure, by means of which it seems to be controlled. In both cases, a precondition is the unconscious survival of an uncorrected persecutory concept of the world. But in hypo-manics we may perhaps suppose that the earlier pre-oedipean components of the super-ego are particularly terrifying. This at least might explain why an earlier form of

¹ At a still deeper level there is also the denial that the qualities that make this figure hated are derived from the disowned aggression of the self.

Some Varieties of Character Formation

defence than surrender to the object of anxiety is used. After all, the persecutors were originally projections of the child's own ego, which can be reabsorbed. What produced their separation, and impedes their reacceptance, is the grief or depressive guilt which would follow the ego's discovery that it hates the thing it loves. But this can be avoided either by denying the love or by denying and projecting the hate; and, in certain types of hypo-manics—those admired by Hegel—it is the love that is denied. I do not mean that his 'World Historical Personality' loves nothing; but he does exclude love and, with it, pity and remorse, from a great section of his world, and so removes the barrier to a partial re-identification of himself with the ruthless offshoots of his ego in all his dealings with this section. Indeed, he must deal ruthlessly with it; for, if he fails to do so, his identification with his persecutors (ultimately his own sadistic offshoots) breaks down and he becomes himself their victim. Like Faust, the demon he has evoked seems to be his abject slave and gives him all the elation of omnipotence—but only so long as he desires what the demon wishes. If he once allows himself to grieve for the Gretchens of his career, his demon slave at once becomes his fearful master. Perhaps for this reason there is a Faustian destiny in the lives of the most notorious hypo-manics. The debt of pity, grief and guilt, which is accumulated, becomes too great, and the ruthlessly successful egoist brings about his own destruction. One feels that the fall, as well as the rise, of Napoleon (and of Hitler who was manic as well as paranoid) was an essential part of a self-created life pattern.

Many people are inclined to regard hypo-manics of this kind as supernatural just because they are usually

Psychoanalysis and Politics

successful—at least for the greater part of their careers. But their character, like that of the authoritarians, is based on the denial of important truths about themselves. Not only is the persecutory world they inhabit in unconscious phantasy an uncorrected distortion of the real one, but their own unconscious emotional reactions to it are also falsified. Somewhere in their unconscious, the spontaneous feelings of love, pity, grief and guilt, have survived, and are continually increased by each new step in their ambition. But, until the final collapse which is equivalent to the manic-depressive's swing into the depressive phase, the existence of all these real feelings is denied.

The hypo-paranoid is like the obsessional and the hypo-manic in that he has to deal with large quantities of persecutory anxiety. But he defends himself against it more by projecting his inner persecutors than by surrendering to, or identifying himself with them. Perhaps a condition for his being able to do so is that the split between 'good' and 'bad' aspects of what were originally the same objects of his ambivalent feelings is unusually pronounced and permanent. At any rate, the paranoid always has a schizoid background. To him the world is divided into a few good objects most of which are felt to be inside himself, and many bad ones, all of which are felt to be outside him.

Since no bad object is consciously felt to be inside himself, he is consciously free from the authoritarian conscience of those who sense the dictates of a strict and sadistic super-ego. And since some good objects, which he loves and wishes to defend, are felt to be outside him, he will have, if only towards these objects, something resembling what we called a humanistic

Some Varieties of Character Formation

conscience. But the resemblance will be that of a grossly distorted caricature. Not only is the humanism restricted to a narrow field of idealized objects; even there it will be highly unstable, for, as a result of any trifling disappointment, his good objects of to-day may become the bad ones of to-morrow. Moreover, since the slightest hostility or even failure to pay sufficient respect to his inflated ego is exaggerated into a persecution, the bad objects, against whom he has to defend himself and his good ones, are likely to be bad only in his phantasy. Lastly, and this distinguishes him more from the humanist than any other trait, he is consciously incapable of depressive guilt; any good object he injures immediately becomes a bad one in his eyes, so that he can see no reason for pity or remorse. In spite of his instability and the rapid changes in his attitude, surrounded as he is by an impregnable defence of self-satisfied self-righteousness, he lives secure, if not from persecutors projected into the outer world, at least from the reproaches of his own conscience.

That the hypo-paranoid's character is the result of a gross distortion of his concept of the external world is so obvious that it hardly needs stressing. He lives in a kind of private jungle, full of false friends and treacherous enemies always waiting to entrap him, and against whom he must constantly defend himself by means of his superior ability. If the world were really of this nature, his emotional reactions to it would not seem pathological. The basis of his illness is the conceptual distortion of the truth about the world. Once this is established by the denial and projection of what is really in himself, his characteristic emotional attitude follows naturally enough.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

2. *The concept of a normal mind*¹

The three types of character just described would now all be classed as to some extent abnormal. But they were not so classed until their aetiology had been discovered. So, as often in other sciences too, discovery led to the widening of a definition. Psychology began with a small class of pathological complaints defined by enumeration. It was discovered that these were all the manifest result of various defences against 'irrational' anxiety—that is, against anxiety appropriate to the world of unconscious phantasy rather than to the world of perceptual experience. Soon other traits not at first regarded as abnormal, were discovered to have the same factors in their aetiology and added to the list. And we are now inclined to regard all traits that have this kind of origin as pathological by definition—indeed we must so regard them if we are to avoid endless disputes as to where to draw the line.

But in thus enlarging the scope of the pathological that of the normal is correspondingly reduced. So we come back by contrast, to our original concept of normality which we can now fill out in rather greater detail.

We have already defined a normal person as someone who is integrated in the sense that no part of his mental life is permanently excluded from his consciousness. For this reason, his early phantastic picture of the world has been corrected by testing and can survive, in its crude form, only as a memory and no longer as the carrier of beliefs. His conception of the

¹ I owe this subtitle, as well as much of the stimulus to the inquiry it gives rise to, to Ernest Jones' paper *The Concept of a Normal Mind*, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* XXIII, 1942.

Some Varieties of Character Formation

world (and of what feelings belong to him and what to other objects in it) is therefore true and undistorted as far as his knowledge of it goes, so that his emotional reaction to it will be rational.

We know that he himself is a 'limit' or 'convenient fiction'. But we now also know the direction of the character changes that take place in actual people as they become more integrated and rational, so that we can form a fairly detailed idea of the 'characterological limit' towards which such changes converge.

Most, perhaps all, of the characteristics of a normal person result from his freedom from irrational persecutory anxiety and from the need to adopt primitive defences against it.

He will be able to admit anxiety when this is justified by actual dangers. But as he will not exaggerate them in the external world nor feel threatened from within himself, he will not be over-dependent on the support and approval of others, but rather self-reliant according to a realistic assessment of his abilities in relation to his tasks. In other words, he will be mature.

In particular, he will have no need to surrender, like those with obsessional consciences, to a strict internal figure and its external representations, nor to worship and admire them to conceal his fear. He will have no need to control, by imitating them, like the hypomanic. And he will have no need, like the 'hypoparanoic' to project internal enemies into the external world.

All this, as we already know, will have important repercussions both on the extent of, and on his capacity to bear, depression and depressive guilt, and so on his moral character. Normality which implies freedom from both conscious and unconscious delusions of

Psychoanalysis and Politics

persecution, does not imply freedom from conflict or ambivalence. A normal person will therefore have his conflicts; his emotional attitudes to things and people will still be a blend of various degrees of love and hate and fear. But his ambivalence will not be exaggerated either by internal persecutory feelings or by protective over-idealization, and will be comparatively slight. For this reason, his hatreds will less often injure, and his fears will less often betray, the people and values he loves. He will therefore have less occasion for depressive guilt. But he will not be altogether free from it. We can no doubt imagine an individual who is without ambivalence, and therefore without a sense of guilt, but this freedom is not a consequence of freedom from delusion, and is therefore not a derivative of the concept of normality. What we can say, however, is that a normal person has less guilt and, what is more, that he knows when he has it because he does not deceive himself.

There are, as we know, many defences against the sense of guilt, such as denial and projection, which involve various degrees of self-deceit. But so far as it is not evaded, it inevitably becomes the stimulus to attempts at reparation. In a normal person, therefore, the reparative impulses, which contribute so largely to creativeness, will be well developed, so that he will be positive and constructive in his general attitude to life. At the same time, he will be capable of hatred against those who injure what he loves; but, since they will not also be the scape-goats for his own projected guilt, he will not be vindictive. And, since he will understand himself, he will not be without sympathy even for his enemies—especially when they are no longer dangerous. All this may be expressed by saying that his conscience

Some Varieties of Character Formation

will be well developed and of the humanistic type.

It is no part of the concept of normality to be without egoism, so that a normal person will be fully capable of rivalry; but his competitiveness will be free from that ruthlessness which always expresses a concealed anxiety.

Lastly, a normal person, who is free from the incubus of the persecutory form of conscience, will have an uninhibited capacity for pleasure. But since he is also capable of suffering, and cannot deny or evade it when it comes his way, he is not always necessarily happier than those less normal than himself.

Many ideal characters have been imagined. The theological ideal is a man without sin, that is to say, a man who always obeys his conscience. The hypomanic ideal is a man without a conscience. The hypoparanoic ideal is a man without fear, who is superior to his many imaginary enemies. The hedonic ideal is a man without suffering, and so on. The therapeutic concept of normality is not to be confused with any of these; nor is it strictly speaking an ideal at all because no claim is made that people 'ought' to strive for it. It is simply the concept of a person who is integrated and therefore rational as defined in Chapter II. We have now added some of the other qualities which are found to go with these. They include 'maturity' and a 'humanistic conscience' as well as the practical criteria of an uninhibited capacity for work and pleasure.

3. Conditions Favourable to Normal Development

If this outline of the psychology of individuals is to provide an adequate background for the social and political inquiries to follow, it must also include some-

Psychoanalysis and Politics

thing about the conditions that hinder or promote the development of normal personality. These may be studied under the four heads of the influence of heredity, of the home, of the social system, and of special therapeutic treatment such as analysis.

We do not know much about the influence of heredity. It is certainly less than was formerly supposed. Neuroses and psychoses often run in families; but the fact that neurotic or psychotic parents provide an environment favourable to the development of similar illnesses in their children seems to be a sufficient explanation for this. There must be innate differences in the strength of instinct components, in the amount of primary aggression, and conversely in the degree to which frustration can be tolerated. But the same qualities of aggression and intolerance of frustration, which in an unfavourable environment would produce neurosis or psychosis, might in a favourable environment produce an unusually forceful and energetic personality. There seems therefore no reason to suppose that the mentally ill are in any way biologically degenerate.

As to intellectual qualities, it would seem that some degree of precocity is often a condition for illness as well as for ability. Thus those who are ill often give the impression of being people who, far from being degenerate, are in fact potentially above the average.

The most important and usually the decisive influence is of course the home environment—especially in the first few months of infancy when the child is beginning to discover the perceptual world mainly through the medium of his mouth. In this period of extreme helplessness he is most prone to those attacks of rage and panic which are at once the cause and the

Some Varieties of Character Formation

effect of the phantasy world of destructive 'bad' objects and destroyed 'good' ones inside and outside himself. And in this period his perceptual world consists mainly of his mother and his mouth. So his contacts with her, and especially with her breast, play the main role in confirming or correcting his phantastic concepts. A mother who is herself normal, and not misled by bad advice, devotes herself with enjoyment to the understanding and satisfaction of his oral needs, both restrains and quickly soothes his tantrums, and is not disturbed by the excretory activities with which he expresses his affection, his anxiety, or his enraged distress. In short, by being what she is she helps him to discover that the world is not composed of live bad objects and dead good ones; and so provides him with the best possible environment in which to form the basis of a sane and normal personality. At the slightly later oedipean stage, the relation of his parents to each other, as well as to himself, become decisive. Their own mutual love and happiness is the best corrective of his sadistic concept of a world of mutually destructive demons. All these favourable conditions will be automatically fulfilled if the parents themselves are mentally healthy and well adjusted to each other. If they are not, no amount of sound advice will do very much to make up for this deficiency.¹

The influence of the social system on the child's

¹ D. W. Winnicott, in his paper *Some Thoughts on the meaning of the word Democracy* (Human Relations III 1950), has suggested that, at the present time, the most important contribution medical science can make to improve the home environment is perhaps a negative one: to refrain from disturbing the spontaneous impulses of healthy parents towards their children. This point of view has also clearly determined the form and tone of his recent broadcast talks: *The Ordinary Devoted Mother and her Baby* (1949). For they contain much encouragement and no specific warnings.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

subsequent development is of course less vital than that of his home; but it is probably more important than is commonly supposed. A persecutory environment, such as existed in Germany under the Nazis, precipitated a great deal of overt illness which would otherwise never have developed, and helped to produce widespread character changes of a pathological kind. I have no doubt that, in some degree, this is true of any authoritarian society which imposes a rigid code of behaviour and is intolerant of any independence. Conversely, a benevolent and liberal environment which provides not only the necessities of life but also opportunities for creative sublimations, is likely to favour the maintenance and development of normal personality. Such conclusions, if correct, are clearly of great political importance.

Lastly there is the influence of psychotherapy and of analysis. Strictly speaking the former includes the latter; but they have now come to be regarded as alternatives. In this sense the aims of the two need not be identical. Psychotherapy may seek to reassure and strengthen the ego by restoring its belief in its creative and reparative impulses, or to promote a decision in conflicts between the ego and the super-ego by taking sides.¹

The aim of psychoanalysis is to help the patient to understand himself, or, as we may now put it, to give him that insight or wisdom of which normality consists. It does this by interpreting his free-associations. Originally it sought mainly to recover forgotten memories of specific traumatic events. Now it is more con-

¹ Religion is a form of psychotherapy which promotes a belief in the existence of idealized good objects as a defence against persecutory and depressive guilt.

Some Varieties of Character Formation

cerned with the whole pattern of a patient's behaviour. As the analyst listens to his words and observes his gestures, he gradually becomes aware of an under-current of patterns belonging to other situations than the present one. Something is being repeated from the past. Consciously, the patient is talking about his current affairs. But what he says and does and feels is not entirely appropriate to this current situation. Some part of it, or rather some under-current in it, seems more appropriate to an entirely different setting. The perceptual world he is living in is being distorted—perhaps only to a slight and barely perceptible degree—by unconscious phantasy, and it is the distorted picture to which he is emotionally reacting. This is particularly evident in the patient's personal relations to the analyst whose art largely consists in the ability to detect the various subsidiary roles he is playing in the patient's mind at any moment. The analyst's primary role is of course that of the person whom the patient sees only in the consulting room. But because he confines himself almost solely to the giving of interpretations and therefore does not obtrude his own personality in any other way, he remains a sort of dummy (Rorschach ink blot!) which the patient inevitably dresses in the garb of the figures of his phantasy world. The analyst's task is to infer the form and content of this world, and his own changing role in it and to describe it and the way it has been formed to the patient as clearly as he can. Each time he succeeds, some small part of the phantasy world is recognized as such so that the belief systems expressed by it are to this extent corrected. The process is analogous to the awakening from a dream. No one is entirely awake even when he is out of bed, for everyone

Psychoanalysis and Politics

has moods of irrational depression, anxiety or irritation which reflect the unconscious influence of phantasy. The neurotic or psychotic is someone who lives more in an unconscious dream world than other people, the unrecognized influence of which accounts for the irrationality of his emotional behaviour. As he gradually wakes under the influence of analysis, he may have to face some sorrows which he previously evaded; but he will also discard some nightmare-like anxieties.

This brings us to a final but important issue. We have seen that being well, being rational and being awake are equivalent to being normal. We have considered some of the influences—parental, social and therapeutic—that favour normal development. But how far do we desire normality? As soon as we ask this question we can see that the answer is by no means obvious. We know already that delusion, which is the cause of abnormality, is itself ultimately the result of an interference by the Pleasure Principle with our cognitive development. Taking the short view, therefore, we must admit that we often want to be deluded or, what is the same thing, to be clinically abnormal. We also know that the Pleasure Principle is a short sighted servant of our wishes. The immediate pain it saves is usually at the cost of much more prolonged and greater suffering; so that, generally speaking, a more enlightened hedonism would lead us to desire normality. But this would not always be true. In a very troubled world, or in a very pathological society, those who take flight from reality may well be happier than those who cannot do so. Moreover, even if normality were always, in the long run, a means to greater happiness, we may doubt whether a

Some Varieties of Character Formation

long range hedonic calculation of this kind would much affect our mental development.

There remains, so it seems to me, one constant motive operating in the direction of integration and normality, and that is the desire for truth. This, however, is only one motive among many operating in our lives; and its relative importance differs greatly in different situations. Patients come to analysis for many reasons. Some desire freedom from suffering, others are more concerned with the increase in their capacity for work. But perhaps only when such motives are reinforced by a strong desire for insight for its own sake will they achieve the best results. And what applies to individuals may apply to society as a whole. Perhaps it can be 'healthy' (in a sense to be defined) only so far as its members wish to understand the unconscious factors that influence their political discontents and aspirations.

PART II

SOME ASPECTS OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
POLITICS

CHAPTER VI

THE GROUP IN ITS RELATION TO OTHER GROUPS

1. *Two views—idealist and cynical*

The deeper understanding of individual development, which the psychoanalytic technique has enabled us to gain, is clearly capable of helping us towards a better understanding of many social problems. We may begin with that of inter-group relations.

Among the various views expressed on this problem, two stand out in glaring contrast with each other. According to the first, inter-group relations must always be ruthlessly competitive. This view is often assumed to be an inevitable consequence of the Darwinian theory applied to group selection. If indeed only the strongest, the most skilful and most aggressive groups can survive in the struggle for existence, selection must favour the development of groups that are ever more cunning and ferocious in their dealings with their fellows. Some people who argue in this way accept their own conclusions with regret, as a bitter truth which they would escape from if they could. But others seem rather to flaunt it with triumph as if to justify their personal admiration for whatever is strong, or ruthless, and their contempt for humanistic scruples which they equate with weakness. According to the opposite view, the natural state of man is one of universal peace and brotherhood. Those who believe this differ in their opinions about whether such a

Psychoanalysis and Politics

state ever existed in the past, and, if so, about whether it was lost through the sins of Adam or the greed of capitalists. They also differ about how it is to be gained, whether by an inner change of heart or by some external revolution. And those who believe it can be gained by social changes differ about the kind of changes required. But they all agree that the aim they share in common can somehow be attained.

In the light of our understanding of unconscious guilt and of the various defences against it, we can see one reason why so many people should wish to hold one or other of these opposite views on the future of group relations. For, if their own conscious or unconscious predatory impulses arouse strong feeling of unconscious guilt, they will tend to deny either the guilt or the impulses. Those who exalt the inevitability of conflict deny their sense of guilt and develop a defensive pride in their freedom from all scruples. Those who cling to a vision of a world without strife, or even competition, deny at least some part of the predatory aggression that threatens to disturb their relations with their fellows. And they usually project it on to scape goats who, at the same time, provide them with an excuse and an object for it. But for the moment we are less concerned with the subjective motives for these opposite beliefs than with their objective truth or falsehood. We want to discover more about the determinants of group relations and the extent to which conflict is or is not inevitable.

2. A constitutional factor—the ambivalence of human impulses

We should begin by allowing full weight to the instinct legacy bequeathed us by the rigorous con-

The Group in its Relation to other Groups

ditions that brought our species into being. Natural selection in a competitive environment favours the development of self-preservative instincts which are always egoistic and usually predatory as well. But we must remember that it does so only so far as these instincts favour the survival of offspring to inherit them. Indeed the so-called 'law' of evolution, reduced almost to a tautology, can be stated thus: of all possible lines of instinct development those are most likely to be 'selected' which most favour the survival of the offspring of their possessors. A line deficient in egoistic instincts would soon be without parents to have offspring. But a line without altruistic instincts, to protect the family, would also perish for lack of mature children to continue it. So we may distinguish two groups of instincts, or rather two groups of their derivatives since the same instinct may have derivatives in both: the egoistic which indirectly, and the altruistic which directly, favour the survival of offspring to inherit them.

Since these two types of impulse are inevitably in conflict with each other, every species, and not least our own, evolves to maintain its life, as on a tight-rope, in uneasy balance between the two. A step on either side leads equally to extinction.

Among ourselves, and to a lesser extent among all higher animals, it is not only the biological mutations one way or the other which determine our fate, but also the cultural tradition which, by moulding our instinctive endowment too far in one direction or another, may bring about our end. Nature with an admirable economy uses the same instincts for a double purpose; but culture may determine which half is better served. Freud showed long ago that self-love

Psychoanalysis and Politics

(narcissism) and object-love are largely interchangeable. In particular the egoism of children is increased by their tendency to 'introject' parents they admire and love, while that of parents is diminished, and converted into altruism, by the 'projection' of parts of their own egos into their children. Both results favour the survival of the children, and both are achieved by the same protective impulse directed in the one case to an internal, and in the other to an external object. Such a shift from a comparatively egoistic to a comparatively altruistic expression of an instinct, which accompanies the passage from childhood to parenthood,¹ is so universal, and so essential to the survival of the species, that we must regard it as conditioned by our innate endowment. But the extent to which it occurs varies greatly in different cultures. In New Guinea, the self-assertive Mundugumor lose numbers of children through sheer neglect, while the kindly Arapesh, who dote upon their children, are too inhibited in their egoism to assert themselves at all.² From Margaret Mead's description, both seem in danger of extinction from the exclusive development, the one of an egoistic, the other of an altruistic, trend. The conditions of survival have so far favoured cultures that encouraged a more even balance between the two.³

¹ This change is already anticipated in the child's attitude to its imaginary children.

² Margaret Mead. *Sex and Temperament*, 1935.

³ There is a widespread feeling, fostered by Christianity but by no means confined to Christians, that the altruism evolved for the protection of families and clans should be extended, undiminished in intensity, to embrace mankind. But any group which acted on such feelings, while remaining in a competitive environment, would soon vanish from the world. It would be a condition of its survival that all other groups should be as indiscriminately altruistic as itself.

The Group in its Relation to other Groups

The conditions of survival do not, of course, always stay the same. An important change in them must have occurred at that time in our prehistoric past when our ancestors, having outdistanced their other rivals, multiplied exceedingly and became each other's chief rivals for selection. What then became of greatest survival value was the capacity to co-operate for war. The dice were loaded in favour of any people who, in virtue of their innate endowment and cultural tradition, were best able at once to love their neighbours as themselves and hate all strangers like the devil.¹

In producing such a character both biological and cultural selection must have played a part; but the fact that two thousand years of Christianity have altered it so little suggests that it is mainly a biological endowment. The nature of this endowment, at least in broad outline, has in fact been discovered by analysis. It is an intense ambivalence—a primary attitude of mind in which every object, and especially every human being, can simultaneously provoke the extremes of love and hatred. And since such conflict is felt to be intolerable, we can also assume an innate tendency to split the original objects of ambivalence into two. Cultural tradition does not create the ambivalence, but it can increase it, and it can and does determine the choice of objects on to which the opposite impulses will be displaced. That is to say,

¹ This is one of the main theses in Sir Arthur Keith's *Essays on Human Evolution*. But with the discovery of atomic weapons, it may be that the conditions of survival have changed again. We cannot say that the most pacific group is now most likely to survive; for this is obviously false. But we can say that any group that starts a war is now quite likely to be destroyed together with its victim. So we may be approaching a time when we must either learn to co-operate as a species or become extinct. I do not think this likely—as some form of world dictatorship would seem a more probable outcome of another war—but it is not impossible.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

it determines who are the neighbours to be loved and who are the strangers to be hated.

It may also determine the extent to which hatred is obscured by fear. In developing our capacity for fear, which is essential to our preservation, nature may have made use of our capacity to hate. For analysis suggests that our own aggression is the ultimate source of most of our anxiety, and that we first learn to feel threatened by objects by projecting our hatred into them.¹ If the fear is great we may be conscious only of a wish to avoid, or to propitiate them; but unconsciously we shall wish to destroy them all the more. Here then is the source of another conflict, this time between hate and fear. Its outcome in each case is partly determined by the cultural pattern. Cultural selection increased the solidarity of groups by adding the fear of killing neighbours to the other forces of cohesion. It also encouraged the hate of enemies in war, even when they were greatly to be feared. But it did not create the conflict between hate and fear.

3. The influence of 'false' identifications

A being endowed by nature with such conflicts, with such intense and opposite emotions, could not be expected easily to strike a happy balance between his loves and hatreds or his hatreds and his fears. But the task becomes much harder if his hatreds and his fears are being constantly increased by the influence of unconscious phantasies.

¹ The child 'perceives his anxiety arising from his aggressive instincts as fear of an external object, both because he has made that object their outward goal, and because he has projected them on to it so that they seem to be initiated against him from that quarter.' Melanie Klein. *Early Development of Conscience in the Child*, 1933. Reprinted in *Contributions to Psychoanalysis* 1947, p. 269.

The Group in its Relation to other Groups

Now unconscious phantasy, as we know, is always operating in some degree to distort our concept of the external world. And since this concept is the resultant of two factors—unconscious phantasy and conscious inference from sensory experience—its accuracy will depend on how much of each there is. In psychosis, where the influence of phantasy is all pervading, the sensory data of experience may be used to construct hallucinations in the place of percepts. In neurosis, only the inferences from sensory experience will be disturbed. For example, indifference may be interpreted as hostility, or, in defence against the distress aroused by too much suspicion, obvious cheats and tricksters may be embraced as the most reliable of friends. But the comparatively normal person in whom the influence of phantasy is much less important, only distorts his concept of those parts of his world with which he is unfamiliar. His concept of his own part of the world comprising his acquaintances, his private enemies and friends, is fairly accurate. His emotional relations to it are not bedevilled by unconscious processes. And, for this reason, he is able to find a satisfying balance between the different components of his inevitably conflicting feelings.

This domestic world of concrete sensory objects is, however, by no means his only one. His body may be confined to it; but his thoughts may move in many others. There is, for example, the world of mysticism and religion where there are only the unproved speculations of others to control his own, so that the influence of phantasy is paramount. And somewhere between these two extremes is the world of politics. Here he is surrounded by personified abstractions

*Psychoanalysis and Politics*¹

which represent his own and other groups, but which cannot easily be compared with the corresponding entities. His idea of a neighbour is continually compared with the original, and so prevented from deviating too widely from it. But the Russians, the Germans or the French, the Communists, the Socialists or the Conservatives, the Employers or the Workers—these and other collective inhabitants of the world of politics are not encountered in the street. And because of the difficulty of comparing the idea with what it stands for, it is an easy prey to the distorting influence of phantasy. So the ordinary individual, who is realistic and balanced enough in his domestic world of concrete objects, is very apt to think irrationally as soon as he moves into the political world of personified abstractions. Here his emotional response is often far more relevant to phantasy objects than to the real ones with which they are associated and, like the neurotic or psychotic, he is quite unable to achieve a conscious balance between his loves, his hatreds and his fears. So all the defence mechanisms, which operate against the anxieties aroused by unconscious conflict, come into play and give one-sided solutions or none at all.

Of course, if he were more wholly normal, that is to say, if he were less dissociated and more fully conscious of what goes on within himself, this would not be so. His political thinking would approximate to the same degree of rationality as he attains in dealing with the concrete and immediate problems of his life. But, as Ernest Jones has pointed out, such a degree of normality is seldom achieved even by people whose insight has been deepened by a personal analysis.¹

¹ 'An impartial observer cannot fail to be struck by the disconcerting

The Group in its Relation to other Groups

Their 'political egos' can remain as it were the seat of an encapsuled illness in otherwise sane and normal personalities.

Perhaps the most fundamental source of all later disturbances in thinking is to be found in those splitting mechanisms by means of which the child first deals with his ambivalence. To his unconscious, as we know, there is not one father or mother but two; one phantastically idealized, the other phantastically evil. The purest representatives of these early 'good' and 'bad' phantasy objects are to be found in the religious concepts of God and the Devil; but the old split objects reappear, though in less extreme form, in the persistent exaggerations of the difference between our own and the other side in almost every national, class or party conflict.

The distorting effect, on both thought and feeling, of such 'false identifications' is greatly increased by the anxieties aroused. These we know are of two kinds, persecutory and depressive; and, although they are always mixed in varying degrees, it will be convenient to discuss them separately.

The most usual consequence of unconscious persecutory anxiety aroused by the identification of some other group with a 'bad' phantasy object is to make us unduly suspicious of it, and, in extreme cases, to make us attack it unnecessarily in the supposed interests of self-defence. But sometimes the outcome is altogether

fact that analysed people, including psychoanalysts, differ surprisingly little from unanalysed people in the use made of their intelligence . . . Analysts and other analysed persons often continue to hold heatedly the same convictions and to employ in support of them the same rationalized arguments as unanalysed people in such matters as political controversy. . . .' Ernest Jones: *The Concept of a Normal Mind*, International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXIII, 1942.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

different. If the anxieties unconsciously aroused are very great, we may evade them by consciously denying or underestimating the hostility of an enemy who is in reality implacable. The classical example of such 'wishful thinking' is the desperate tenacity with which so many people, up to the eve of the second world war and against all the accumulating evidence, clung to the belief that Hitler would be satisfied with an 'honourable' settlement. A still more surprising outcome of extreme anxiety, when the unconscious split between good and bad objects is itself unstable, is a sudden change of sides. Our own group with its interests and ideals is betrayed and the enemy becomes idealized instead. This kind of idealization, based as it is on the surrender to what is still unconsciously felt to be a predominantly bad object rather than on an over-estimation of a good one, tends to be particularly exaggerated. The new loyalty has to be limitless because, in the unconscious, its object is so hated and so feared. The fanaticism of many nazi converts was of this type—both in Germans who turned against their old more democratic ideals and in non-Germans who turned against their country. Yet another outcome when unconscious anxieties are stirred is for grave situations to appear as altogether hopeless. Then we may take refuge in a cynical or depressive apathy. In the first, we feel that what cannot be defended is not worth defending; in the second that a hopeless defence is not worth attempting. Both these attitudes were fairly common among the opponents of fascism before the second world war and since then have reappeared in some of the opponents of communism. To produce them is of course the object of the so-called cold war or war of nerves, as practised

The Group in its Relation to other Groups

between 1933 and 1939 by Germany and since 1945 by Russia.¹

Thus an uncorrected identification of other groups with a 'bad' phantasy object arouses persecutory anxiety and distorts political thinking and feeling in either of two directions: it can either increase aggressiveness towards these other groups; or it can diminish resistance against them when they are really hostile and dangerous. In both cases the excess or the reduction in conscious aggressiveness is irrational in the sense that it is attributable to a false identification.

All such disturbances in political thinking and feeling, which originate in false identifications with 'bad' phantasy objects, are also greatly increased by the depressive anxieties aroused. The first bad objects are split off halves of the good ones. In one layer of unconscious phantasy they are kept isolated as fit only for destruction. But in another layer, they are reunited with the good ones and felt to be different aspects of them; so that if they are hated and attacked, both are felt to be in danger of destruction. The feeling that the good objects have been destroyed together with the bad ones is the basic content in the despair of the melancholic, which in a weaker form appears as the feeling that they have been injured and endangered. There are extreme cases, never wholly realized in practice, when it might be possible for us to hate and endeavour to destroy another group without any sense of guilt at all—either conscious or unconscious. When, for example, an aggressive country launches an unprovoked and brutal war against inoffensive neighbours, our own aggression in their defence seems

¹ I have tried to develop this theme in my paper, *The Psychology of Propaganda*, *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1941, Vol. XIX.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

almost wholly righteous. Indeed, we should feel acutely guilty if we did not unleash it. But so far as our hatred of another group is determined not solely by what it is and does, but by a false identification with a bad object which is a split off aspect of a good one, then some sense of guilt, at least in the unconscious, is inevitably aroused. And this in turn gives rise to one of two opposite results. The most usual one is for the guilt to be denied and projected on to its own object. Then we seek to punish our enemies for our sins as well as their own—a motive which is responsible, in particular, for the gradual change of wars of liberation into wars of vengeance, and, in general, for nearly all political vindictiveness. The other and opposite result is that the sense of guilt arising from a false identification paralyses the capacity to hate, and we become pacifists incapable of defending our own interests or even those of our closest friends. Such depressive guilt also plays its part in those sudden surrenders, or changes of side, which are mainly determined by intense persecutory anxiety. Many nazi converts would not so easily have come to worship Hitler if, in becoming the symbol of the 'bad' father who inspired their terror, he had not also become the symbol of the original split object's other half, which inspired their love and admiration.

If such unconscious guilt can be aroused in conflicts where it would seem least justified by the actual situation, it is still more apt to be aroused in conflicts with groups which have done much less to injure us or our friends or values. If, for instance, our own is the aggressive nation, both the guilt feelings⁸ aroused and the difficulty of accepting it may be so great that we can defend ourselves against it only by a definite

The Group in its Relation to other Groups

delusion—the delusion that we have been attacked.¹ Or to turn to domestic politics, there is no doubt that the denial, projection, and sometimes the over-estimation, of guilt plays an enormous role in all class conflicts. The inescapable ambivalence of our relations necessarily involves us in some conflict between the impulse to take from others what we want, or to withhold from them what we already have, and the impulse to renounce what others have, or to give them what they want. It is therefore by no means easy to find a satisfactory balance between guilt provoking greed and self-destructive abnegation. We may achieve this fairly well in our relations with other individuals. But as soon as we begin to think politically in terms of 'have' and 'have-not' classes our difficulties tend to be enormously increased by the additional guilt aroused by unconscious identifications. Those classes which seem so greedily determined either to withhold the good things we want, or to take from us the good things we already have, symbolize the 'bad' parents who deny us what we most desperately need, or demand back from us what we have got from them. But these bad parents are originally split off aspects of the good ones, and, what is more, the good objects in dispute are originally parts of the body which cannot change hands without a destructive mutilation. Thus the economic conflict between capital and labour is liable to arouse great quantities of unconscious guilt in both classes involved; and, as usual, it can be expressed in either of two opposite ways: it can either paralyse aggression or enormously

¹ It might be thought that only civilized and over sensitive people could have a sense of guilt about wars in which they are engaged. But judging by their rites for the purification of warriors, savages have it too, and more acutely.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

increase it. The first of these may be clearly seen, not only in those long periods of history when an unnaturally docile proletariat makes no protest against almost intolerable conditions, but also in those short ones when a powerful but threatened aristocracy becomes incapable of self-defence. But perhaps we are more familiar with the second alternative, that in which the guilt is projected to justify and increase aggressiveness. By this means phantastic pictures are painted; on the one hand, the Marxian concept of the vampire capitalist, who lives on, but contributes nothing to, the work of labour, and so deserves to be destroyed; on the other, the nineteenth century concept of the poor who owe their poverty to sin, and therefore deserve to be left, callously, in their condition.

4. Rational group relations

Thus all group relations tend to be very much influenced by unconscious processes. Like individual relations, the friendliness or hostility in them is determined by the pictures or beliefs which the members of each group form of or about their own and other groups. But while in individual relations, these pictures or beliefs tend to be kept accurate by daily contacts, in group relations there is little to prevent them from becoming completely falsified by identifications with objects of unconscious phantasy.

Now, if the various mechanisms which produce all these distortions were to become more generally understood, the distortions themselves would tend to disappear. In other words, the wildly different caricatures now painted of the same nations, classes and

The Group in its Relation to other Groups

parties would tend to converge towards a common likeness to the originals.

This would not abolish conflict; but it would enable rival groups to discuss their rival interests in an atmosphere of greater realism and so with more mutual sympathy and much less tension. Since each group would be likely to be the 'priority good object' to its own members, they would still be likely to put its interests first, which, if threatened, they might indeed defend more stoutly than at present. But they would not be able to ride roughshod over the interests of another group or to desert those of a friendly one without some sense of guilt; nor would they be so prone, in resisting an aggressive group, to project their own guilt upon it and so paint it blacker than it is. In short, our political behaviour would not only be more consistently loyal to our own group and its values, but also less callous towards its rivals and less vindictive towards its enemies. Since such group relations would be the result of replacing false by true pictures of, or beliefs about, our own and other groups, they could be described as rational, or what is the same thing, as clinically normal.

CHAPTER VII

THE GROUP IN ITS RELATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL

1. *Social spirals—humanist and authoritarian*

One of the politically most important problems to which analysis can be applied is that of the interdependence between social form and individual character. The existence of a reciprocal influence of some kind between them has of course been recognized ever since alternative political structures became a matter of debate. But the psychoanalytic study of such influences began, I think, with Roheim who, in the course of his field work with Central Australians and other primitive tribes, noticed a link between social structure, character and specific experiences in infancy. The search for such links, first in primitive and then in advanced cultures, soon became an important element in anthropological research and was brilliantly conducted by such authors as Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Geoffrey Gorer. They and their colleagues in this field have shown by a number of examples how social, and in particular parental, influences mould the character of the rising generation, and how this in turn creates the social setting for the next one. In isolated cultures, the causal chain is almost circular, so that each generation is indistinguishable from the last, and social change, even over long periods, is almost imperceptible.

The Group in its Relation to the Individual

But the almost perfect circle may become a spiral, so that social and characterological change is rapid—as it has been during the last few centuries in Europe.

Such spirals are of many different kinds, each tending to produce a different kind of character, which students of culture investigate with an equally impartial interest. From their point of view, the character typical of any culture is defined as normal to it. But from the clinical point of view arrived at in this book, normal is equivalent to rational, and rational characters are seldom typical of any culture. What specifically interests us, and what we are most anxious to discover is, therefore, the essential difference between those spirals which go downwards to a higher degree of irrationality and illness and those which go upwards towards greater mental health, or, what we now know is the same thing, towards greater humanism and rationality. These we may call 'vicious' and 'benificent' spirals respectively. Such terms admittedly imply a moralist approach. But if, as I have tried to prove, there is a common humanist pattern in the morality of all rational or normal people, this can be used as a standard to judge the moral direction of a cultural change.

It was with what seemed to have been a downward spiral of this kind in Germany, and with the practical problem of whether anything could be done to reverse it, that Henry Dicks was concerned when he planned the work of the German Personnel Research Branch of the Control Commission already outlined in the Preface. The argument that follows in the next two chapters owes much to the stimulus of his ideas. But, in gratefully acknowledging this debt, I am not also

Psychoanalysis and Politics

claiming in advance that he would necessarily support every detail of the theory here developed or of the conclusions I have drawn from it.¹

To abstract what for our purpose is the essence of such spirals we may regard them as the product of three successive influences. The first is the influence of the state on the moral character of adults. The second is the influence of the moral character of adults on that of children. And the third is the influence of the moral character of these children, when they become adults, on the state.

The influence of the state results in the main, I think, from the fact that it is nearly always personified as a parental figure. It is something into which we tend to project our super-egos. In many ancient civilizations there was a single individual, the divine king, who clearly played this role. He no longer exists in democratic countries; but we still have our super-egos and we still tend to project them into the collective Authority which now performs his legislative, judicial and administrative functions. One consequence of this is that we tend to think of this Authority in terms of the nature of our super-egos. If we feel them to be tyrannical or benevolent we shall attribute more of these qualities to Authority than it already has. But at the same time the actual nature of the State Authority must be expected to have the same sort of influence—though in much less degree—on the character of its adult citizens as the actual nature of parents has on the character of children. The child's picture of his parents is as we know, partly

¹ Dicks has recently published the results of his preliminary investigation of German prisoners in this county in his paper: *Personality Traits and National Socialist Ideology*. *Human Relations* III, 1950.

The Group in its Relation to the Individual

determined by what he 'projects' into them. But their actual nature tends to modify the picture, and this modified picture, by being 'reintrojected' tends to modify his internal super-ego. In exactly the same way the actual nature of the State Authority in its contacts with us will tend to modify our picture of it, and this in turn though only to a slight degree, must tend to modify our pre-existing super-ego. Such modification may be very slight indeed in adult individuals even among the official classes who are most influenced by changes in the state. But since they are very widespread, the cumulative effect may be considerable. Admittedly, this is an hypothesis which is difficult to prove. But if it is correct, as I believe it is, it explains what seems to be an observable fact: that an increased authoritarianism in the state does produce an increased authoritarianism in the morality of individuals. And conversely, it would lead us to expect that an increased humanism in the state by reducing the strictness of individual super-egos, would at least clear the way for the appearance of a more humanist morality.

The second influence to be considered, that of a modification in the moral character of adults on the moral development of children, is of the same nature, but it operates more directly and on a material which still retains a pliability it will subsequently lose. There can therefore be much less doubt about its effects which are both greater and more lasting. What the child introjects to form his super-ego is, as we know, his idea of his parents, especially of the parent of the same sex as himself. This idea is itself a projection, and, in some cases may remain wholly different from the real parent into whom it is projected. But in

Psychoanalysis and Politics

general the idea is modified by the object it refers to, so that what is reintrojected tends to resemble the actual parent. Therefore those parents whose moral character has been influenced by their 'introjection' of the state morality will tend to pass on the same modification to the children who 'introject' them in turn. The same process of 'psychological inheritance' will also operate, to a smaller degree, between teachers and pupils. And of course the effect of this influence will be greatest in the official classes who are most closely in contact with the state of which indeed they form a part.

These first two influences—that of the state on the moral character of adults and that of adults on the moral development of children—are both examples of the influence exerted on the internal super-ego by the actual qualities of the objects into which it is projected. The third influence—that of the child who has become an adult on the state—is an example of the reciprocal influence which may be exerted on these objects by the super-ego. But to understand its operation we must distinguish sharply between the unconscious and the conscious forces involved. If the super-egos of a people are on the average becoming harsher, there may be an increased conscious desire for freedom. But this will be defeated by an unconscious impulse to remodel the external authority until it accords more closely with the internal authority which is projected into it. So in the end they will make the state stricter than it was before, and compensate themselves, for their actual loss of freedom, by identifying themselves with it and so acquiring the sense of a vicarious power. And of course the same result will be achieved, and more directly, if the

The Group in its Relation to the Individual

conscious reaction to a harsher type of super-ego is not revolt but a greater tolerance of serfdom.

An insidious influence in this process is the increase in the desire for power which accompanies a decline in the desire for freedom. The state, as we know, is personified as a parent figure. We try to make it the kind of parent which we want to have or which we want to be. If we unconsciously want a harsh parent, we shall tend to make the state harsh too, however much we may consciously desire the opposite. And the more we sacrifice our freedom and independence, the stronger will be our need for a vicarious power in identification with the state to which they have been surrendered. For the people as a whole, the enjoyment of its authority must remain vicarious. But certain careers, those of the official and still more of the politician, hold prospects of the reality of power; and this real power will seem the more enticing and will be fought for with a more desperate ardour in proportion to the loss of both internal and external freedom. And the greater the desire for power, the more will those who win it use it to make the state more absolute.

Conversely, any weakening in the severity of the internal super-egos of the growing generation will increase the capacity for freedom and decrease the desire for power either actual or vicarious. Both these changes must tend to make the state more liberal. At the same time the greater humanism which both characterizes a milder type of super-ego and is released by a decline in authoritarian morality, may be expected to move the state, as a parental figure with which we identify ourselves, more in the humanist direction. That is to say, the combined influence of an increased capacity for freedom and the release of a

Psychoanalysis and Politics

more humanist morality must tend to make the state not only more tolerant of freedom but also more actively benevolent.

There are of course many other factors in such vicious or benevolent spirals which change the nature of a culture. I have only tried to isolate those that seemed most important for this investigation. These, to repeat them once more, are the influence of the state on the super-egos of adults and indirectly on their children; and the reciprocal influence of the super-egos of their children, when they become adult, on the nature of the state.

In looking for examples of the operation of these forces, we must again abstract what is needed for our purpose from the vast complexity of historical events. For of course the spirals, which I have been trying to explain by isolating the more active forces that seem to produce them, are themselves never found in pure and simple form. At most they occur as dominant trends in a complex of different and often opposing movements. Thus, during the last two centuries, liberal forces of considerable but not decisive strength have operated in Germany and reactionary ones in England; but, as long as these are not forgotten, we are entitled to turn to Germany for an example of increasing authoritarianism and to England for an example of increasing humanism. To do so is not to falsify events, but to abstract a particular sequence from a complex manifold, and it is only by means of abstractions of this kind that we can ever attain to the intellectual mastery of anything.

The Group in its Relation to the Individual

2. The authoritarian movement in Germany

An intensification of the authoritarian nature of the German state and people is generally, and I believe rightly, supposed to have spread downwards and outwards from the Prussian court of Frederick William and his son Frederick the Great. Of course they themselves were the products of forces operating on them, and their influence was one of many operating on their country. But theirs was a relatively great influence, and, since we must begin somewhere, this seems to justify us in beginning with them. Another advantage in the selection is that the influence the father exerted on the son seems to illustrate in miniature the influence both exerted in widening circles of diminishing intensity on their country as a whole.

Frederick as we know was at first the subject of conflicting possibilities and at one time it looked as if the liberal and artistic elements in him might maintain their freedom. But in the end, and after a long struggle with his father, he became a more despotic tyrant than even his father had been. Put analytically, we can say that he 'introjected' and assimilated an image which was more ruthless than the personality it represented.

We can hardly doubt that similar mechanisms tended to operate outwards and downwards from the court, each grade of officials tending to assimilate some of the additional authoritarianism from their superiors and to pass it on to those below them: for this form of 'transitive introjection' can be clearly seen in any hierarchy. And since each official demanded allegiance in virtue of his office, and not of his private personality as such, what was passed down was felt

Psychoanalysis and Politics

as something that partook of the sacred essence of the king and of the state. Such a process, once begun, must of course have been accelerated by the selection or promotion of those most adapted to the stricter discipline of the new regime. In particular, chairs of Philosophy tended to be filled by those who most eloquently preached the duty of obedience, or who, like Hegel, made obedience attractive as a means to a greater sense of power in identification with the absolute state to which all freedom was to be surrendered.

It is easy to imagine the effect on the new generation, first only in the official classes, then, to a smaller extent, in the country as a whole. Parents and schoolmasters in whom the sense of discipline was increased could not fail on the average, to pass on stricter super-egos to their children and pupils, and so to fix and perpetuate the more authoritarian morality which may have been still superficial in themselves.

The new generation, which had been subject in their childhood to these influences, were inevitably less capable of freedom than the generation they replaced, and more in need of an external authority to discipline and guide them all their lives. At the same time, with the decline in independence, they developed a stronger wish to enjoy the sense of power in identification with the state and to feel themselves to be a part of it. And the more absolute the authority of the state became the more they could enjoy this vicarious power. So the impulse to dominate grew in proportion to the impulse to submit, and both combined to mould the state into something that could be worshipped as a god and in whose apotheosis they could also feel their own.

The end result of these successive influences, oper-

The Group in its Relation to the Individual

ating through many cycles, was the well known character of the German military and official classes, and to a lesser degree of the German people, as manufactured by the old system up to the time of Hitler. I have already (in the preface) described the impression they made on me when I was working for the German Personnel Research Branch of the Control Commission. A minority, always from atypical homes, were men of humanist conscience, who often with supreme courage had both maintained their inner freedom and done what they could to counter or mitigate the nazi tyranny. But the majority seemed hardly able to conceive of any other kind of conscience than that which always obeys whatever authority is placed above them. Several of them said with pride that they had served the Kaiser, the Weimar Republic and Hitler, with an equal loyalty which they were now prepared to transfer to the Control Commission. Such elderly and senior civil servants were able, industrious and profoundly honest men; but they appeared to have no spark of moral independence. They did not create the Nazi Party, and often personally disliked it. But they were incapable of effective opposition to the Party's frantic lust for power, and by doing with a compulsive and conscientious ardour whatever they were told they later formed the perfect executive for its policy and plans.¹

3. The Humanist movement in England

In contrast to the German movement towards an increasing authoritarianism, a movement rather in the

¹ It would be fair to say that the lack of effective moral resistance by the German Civil Service to the rise of Fascism was in part the result of their loss of economic independence at the time of the inflation.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

opposite direction had long been taking place in England. Perhaps authority was weaker or more divided against itself and so easier to overthrow. The first and more important step to independence was probably the Reformation when the quarrel between crown and church was used to throw off the spiritual dominance of Rome. The revolt against the excessive power of the crown, which soon followed, at one time threatened to overreach its aim; for its immediate result was the more effective despotism of the Protector. But after two more revolutions, in which the Stuarts were first restored and then again cast out, a constitutional monarchy was established on something like its present basis. The Hannoverian kings who next ruled had neither the inclination, nor the opportunity, to follow the example of their Prussian neighbours, so that further stages in decentralization and division of power were peacefully achieved by successive Acts of Parliament.

How far the initial stages in this process of political emancipation are to be attributed to the weakness of the central authority and how far to the strength of a pre-existing love of freedom is a matter we need not enter into here. For even if the English character of early Tudor times was already more independent than that of many other nations, it certainly became still more independent as the result of the political changes it may have helped to bring about; and what we are primarily concerned with is the way in which characterological and political changes influenced each other. Now each of these political changes weakened the real power of an authority, either religious or secular; and both of these authorities were external representatives of the super-ego—objects

The Group in its Relation to the Individual

into which the super-egos of adults were habitually projected. The effect of this must of course have varied with the different characters of individuals as pre-determined by their home environments. But if each stage in external emancipation permitted the outbreak of a certain amount of licence, the decline in inner rigidity and strictness must also have removed an impediment to the gradual emergence of a slightly more humanistic type of conscience.¹

The development of a conscious tradition that promoted liberty to the first place among political values must be distinguished from the development of an inner maturity of character which tolerates and demands the fullest independence, and is humanist rather than authoritarian in its moral outlook. Probably the conscious tradition developed a good deal faster. But there can be no doubt that in the course of several hundred years a profound increase in psychical maturity did in fact take place—especially in those sections of the people whose independence was not only political but also economic.² To a great extent we grew out of that early type of conscience which is concerned only with the duty of unquestioning obedience and developed a militant humanism instead. Of course this was sometimes a little paranoid.

¹ This process might have been checked or reversed if the last revolution had not been bloodless. Had James II lost his head like his father, the unconscious guilt aroused might well have led first to a tyranny of guilt-denying regicides and then to a successful counter-revolution.

² If, as I believe, economic independence with the free choice of occupation it confers is one of the conditions favourable to independence and maturity of character, then some form of national dividend, which conferred this freedom on everyone, would remove one barrier to a rise in the general level of maturity. People can of course have external freedom without maturity; but it is not easy for them to have maturity without external freedom.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

Some of the more distant ogres we were so ready to see may have been windmills; and, while attacking them, we may have missed some actual dragons nearer home. But on the whole our crusades were balanced and realistic.

At first this maturer type of conscience was manifest only in isolated reformers. But its wide prevalence at least in latent form is proved by the response which they aroused. People became more sensitive than they had been before to any appeal to right the wrongs of others or to liberate them from oppression. To some extent we must admit that they were over-sensitive, that the oppressors they were so willing to attack were sometimes scape-goats for themselves, and that they were magnifying the cruelty of others, for example, towards animals, in order the better to overlook their own callousness towards some object nearer home. But even such 'projections of guilt' are evidence of the stirring of a different type of conscience which, in fact, achieved many positive reforms to humanize our culture; slaves were freed, children were protected against exploitation and a long series of factory acts helped to mitigate the inhuman effects of the industrial revolution.

A feature that seems to me to be typical of this changing outlook, and of special significance for its development, was to be found already in the schools. The English schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not, of course, ideal seminars for the free blossoming of character and genius. But if they were still repressively authoritarian in many ways, a significant revolt against a certain kind of despotism was both accepted and approved. The successful bully in authority, who seems to have been

The Group in its Relation to the Individual

formerly admired, or at least tolerated, in England and was still admired in Germany, had become the villain of every schoolboy story of adventure. Whether he appeared in the guise of a sadistic prefect, a domineering master, a Portugese slave-trader, a German official or the chief of the Russian secret police, the dramatic climax always ended in his discomfiture, and the liberation of his victims, by the hero with whom the reader was obviously intended to identify himself.

Thus the humanism gradually developed was of a St. Georgian type and militant rather than pacific. It modified our internal institutions and constantly erected fresh safe-guards against the opposite human tendency to exploit or oppress those weaker than ourselves. In particular, it profoundly modified our attitude to war. On the one hand, a pacifist movement was aggressively directed against those of our own statesmen or parties who were supposed to desire imperialistic wars; and, on the other, there was a militant demand for altruistic wars against various tyrants beyond our shores. In practice, the two agitations, which were not always well informed, tended to defeat each other's aims; but both sprang from the same militant humanism which is an essential ingredient in the character of a normal healthy people.

England may never have fought a war which she did not believe to be in her self-interest; but she now became unable to fight one unless she also believed it to be in the cause of freedom. The Boer war will of course be cited as a contrary example. But even this last of our imperialistic ventures could hardly have been fought if Kreuger had not presented us with many popular excuses. And what is more significant, it was

Psychoanalysis and Politics

the first successful war about which we consciously developed an uneasy conscience as soon as it was over. In the next decade the reaction against our own imperialism left us nearly defenceless against the imperialism of our German neighbours. Our desire for expansion was politically dead and even the desire to maintain our pre-eminence against an obvious German challenge was politically too weak to ensure an adequate rearmament. But that our pacifism in pursuit of further gains, or even in long-range self-defence, could be converted overnight into a militarism in defence of other people's independence was proved by our reaction to the 'rape of Belgium'. When Germany first declared war on France in 1914, it looked as if England might have remained a spectator at least until the defeat of France and her own more obvious peril forced her into war. Then came the unprovoked assault on Belgium in accordance with the Schlieffen plan. The English, or rather the British, reaction—for by now it was empire wide—must remain a unique and unforgettable memory to anyone old enough to have experienced it. The timid indecision of the past few days changed overnight into a universal fury which, in spite of its suddenness, yet remained to sustain us through more than four years of adverse war.

The English humanist movement was, I repeat, only one element in the social dynamics of the country. Those members of what was still a ruling caste, who had been so ready to give their lives to right an international injustice, had been slow to recognize, or to make much sacrifice to mitigate, many injustices at home. But in spite of its imperfections, and the unevenness of its advance, it was a movement which in depth

The Group in its Relation to the Individual

and breadth remains unparalleled in history. And, since its direction was away from the authoritarian and towards the humanistic type of conscience, it was essentially a movement in the direction of greater maturity and health.

• It reached its peak, I think, at the time of the first world war. What has happened since may be too recent to assess. The war itself, which gradually became less a war of liberation and more a war of vengeance, and the partial disillusionments of victory were certainly factors of the greatest weight. But whatever the cause, the next two decades saw the development of an anxious pacifism quite out of keeping with the humanist tradition. The English of 1914 would not have applauded the settlement of Munich. Not until the second world war was actually upon us did the militant humanism of the earlier period break through again under the leadership of Churchill who so well expressed it.

To discover the present trend is still more difficult. The attack on the oppressive threat of unemployment is certainly in the humanist tradition. So, to some extent, may be the attack on great inequalities of wealth. But this seems to me to be fused with another, less healthy element. For the extreme egalitarian is less concerned with the defence of others against oppression than with the destruction of those who make him feel inferior. And he would not so easily be made to feel inferior if he felt mature and potent in himself. If therefore I am right, there has been some shift of emphasis from the attack on power that is used tyrannically to an attack on any individual power above the average whether it is abused or not.

If indeed this shift of emphasis is taking place, its

Psychoanalysis and Politics

cause may perhaps be sought in some adverse change in early environment. But whatever the cause, one of the effects is to transfer more power to the state, which had already become more centralized under the necessities of war and economic readjustment. This may or may not be desirable on other grounds. But I should expect the growth of the Leviathan to foster the re-emergence of a less mature and more authoritarian morale. Those who speak of the need to 'educate' the public conscience—instead of allowing it more freedom to develop—may be presumed to desire exactly this result.

4. Conclusion

The above two examples from Germany and England, over-simplified as they are by the neglect of many factors, do seem to provide clear evidence of a causal link between two types of state and two types of character. In both, a change in the nature of the state, either towards the authoritarian or the humanist end of the scale, tended to be reproduced in the home and school, and so favoured the development of a character that modified the concept of the state still further in the same direction.

Of the sequence of influences, that of the home is much the more important. Unfortunately, favourable homes are more easily destroyed by social cataclysms than created by socially favourable conditions.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STATE AS AN INFLUENCE FAVOURABLE OR UNFAVOURABLE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORMAL PERSONALITY

What I have called a social spiral may be represented as consisting of two halves: on one side the influence of the character of individuals on the structure of the state; on the other the influence of the social environment and of the state on the character of individuals. Now political activity is designed to make widespread changes in the structure of society and of the state. We may feel these to be desirable in themselves, or believe them to be advantageous from an economic or some other materialistic point of view. But unless we can also foresee their probable repercussions on national character, we may find we have brought about some unexpectedly unwelcome results. Therefore a good understanding of the second half of any social spiral is of very special political importance. This seems to justify us in isolating it for further study—even at the risk of repetition. In particular we want to be able to give a more detailed answer to the question: what social conditions are likely to be favourable, and what unfavourable, to the development of mature and healthy personality?

1. *On the influence of the home environment*

In any search for those social conditions that

Psychoanalysis and Politics

impede or favour the mental health and maturity of adults we have an initial guide in what is known or suspected about the domestic conditions that impede or favour the development of mental health in children. We know that the child's persecutory and depressive anxieties tend to create, and to be fostered by, a distorted picture of his world, and in particular of his parents. Anything, therefore, in his real environment that seems to confirm this picture tends to set up a vicious spiral of mental illness or character-defect, and anything that corrects it tends to set up a beneficent spiral of greater rationality and health.

Although it would be unsound as well as impracticable to conclude that a child should never be denied or thwarted, most of the unfavourable influences do, I think, come under one or other of the twin heads of deprivation and frustration. The amount of deprivation a child can stand without harm depends of course upon his age. In the early period he can stand very little. To be kept waiting for the breast or bottle, or for the satisfaction of any other urgent need, may throw him into paroxysms of rage and panic which, if prolonged, may end in a kind of depersonalized depressive apathy sometimes mistaken for contentment. For the deprivation first confirms his sense of living in a world of enemies, and then the rage engendered makes him feel that whatever good objects it might have contained are now destroyed.

To the rule that active frustration is also harmful there is certainly at least one exception. Since the child is terrified of his own destructive impulses against himself and his loved objects, some restraint of them, when they burst out in extreme form, is a

The State as an Influence

psychological reassurance, as well as a physical protection, which he cannot do without. But if he is never allowed to be aggressive against his good objects he can never learn that the damage he can actually do is much less than he imagined; and, if he never learns this and remains too frightened of his own aggression, the result may be an ineffective impotency in later life, not only in sexual relations, but in their sublimations too. I think it is also harmful to be too intolerant of his oedipean aggression in defence of good objects against phantastic bad ones. For, this may lead to an inability to defend good objects at all, even in the most realistic situations, either because of an unconscious feeling that they do not want to be defended or because in phantasy the bad ones have become omnipotent.

As to the frustration of his constructive impulses, this is obviously unfavourable to his development. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of a high degree of freedom to pursue, and encouragement in, the arts he wishes to acquire and the hobbies he wishes to take up. The pleasure he derives from doing or making anything successfully is not only a sublimated libidinal gratification, it also expresses his returning confidence in his capacity to recreate what in phantasy he has destroyed. Without this freedom to create, he cannot adequately work through his early depressions, and so has to defend himself against them in some other, less healthy way. To deprive him of it may be to condemn him for life to an uncreative apathy which hides a deep depression. Of course, children vary greatly in resilience and flexibility. The attempt to direct and canalize their activities by prohibiting what they spontaneously want to do is

Psychoanalysis and Politics

obviously much less harmful to those who have many outlets than to those who have few—or perhaps only one. But there can be little doubt that far too much control of this kind is exercised; for creativeness in adults is a comparatively rare phenomenon—instead of being what it should be, almost universal.

2. Unfavourable and favourable social environments

The factors that constitute an unfavourable or favourable environment for the adolescent in the school, or the adult in the state, must be much the same, with only quantitative differences, as those that constitute an unfavourable or favourable home. The state guarantees us a certain measure of protection. It demands from us a certain measure of obedience. It inspires, or may inspire, our loyalty. In short, our relation to it as an object is of the same general form as our relation to our parents, so that it is inevitably personified as a parental figure. Now what is particularly significant for our inquiry is that this new parent plays the same role as the old ones in confirming or correcting our earliest phantastic pictures of them. If it is actually tyrannical, the old sense of inner persecution will be increased together with all the distortions of thought and feeling that occur as defences against the old anxiety. But if it is actually beneficent, all these distortions will be correspondingly diminished.

In the kind of state which, for example, the Nazis created in Germany, even those who had developed normally seldom maintained their mental health. An external world so persecutory in character re-awakened the early sense of inner persecution, and so

The State as an Influence

produced in them the paranoid feelings of being ceaselessly observed by an omnipotent and omniscient enemy. And their impotence to defend its victims, whom at least unconsciously they felt they should protect, aroused in them a deep depressive guilt. The easiest escape from the strain of this position, to which they were exposed not for weeks or months only but for years on end, was to reverse their values and idealize the dark authority they so much feared. Since this 'adaptation' to the society in which they lived involved a widespread distortion of the truth about the world, it may justly be described as a flight into collective madness. In much the same way, though we know much less about it, we may be sure that the communist tyranny has created an environment in which it is almost impossible for anyone deeply embedded in the system to stay quite sane.

To a lesser degree, even those authoritarian regimes which are not in themselves malevolent, seem to promote a shift in the type of conscience of its subordinates away from the humanist and towards the authoritarian end of the scale. There is, for example, a noticeable difference between the official conscience of the average soldier or civil servant and that of the average member of less authoritarian professions. And this I think affects their private consciences too. Those who are constantly imbued with the 'duty of obedience', or to whom it has become habitual to function only 'within their terms of reference' and never to question a policy decision made at a higher level than their own, tend, without their knowing it, to become a little insensitive to the more generous, and perhaps rebellious, promptings of the other kind

Psychoanalysis and Politics

of conscience. They cease to feel so responsible for injustices which fall 'outside their province' and may even commit them, without conscious guilt, when told to do so. We are familiar with extreme forms of this development in those German officials who, in carrying out mass executions ordered from above, obediently committed 'crimes against humanity' for which they were subsequently hanged. But we are unwilling to admit that a similar sacrifice of moral independence, less only in degree, must have been imposed on those of our own officials who, after the war and in accordance with agreements, were required to hand over Russian and Jugoslav anticommunists to be executed in the country of their origin. Or, to take a less remote example: the ejection of an inefficient farmer from his home and livelihood may increase our food production. But it is usually inhuman. The official who has only just been appointed is unable to recommend it without experiencing what we call depressive guilt. But by the time he has been ten years in the service he is perhaps only conscious of having done his duty. There remains a wide difference between him and the German officials who committed crimes against humanity; but there is also an essential similarity. The difference is that the smaller act of inhumanity, unlike the larger one might, even to a humanist, seem a justifiable sacrifice in the interests of national survival. The similarity is that the official authoritarian makes it without conflict or distress.

An authoritarian or over-regulated state not only favours an authoritarian at the expense of a humanist morality; by promoting a type of conscience based on fear alone, it also breeds a regard only for such laws,

The State as an Influence

whether humanist or not, as are easily enforced. This is because there is a reciprocal interaction between the outer and the inner authority. Where the outer authority is feared, it symbolizes, and is reinforced by, the terrifying aspect of the super-ego; where it is not feared, but regarded only as a nuisance, it ceases to symbolize and loses the support of its indispensable ally. We can see this clearly in Germany, and especially Prussia, where generations of authoritarianism have produced the most docile and law-abiding of European peoples. But they have sometimes also shown themselves to be the least law-abiding when, for example after defeat, the law's long arm was temporarily weakened. In our own country, an enormous increase in social regulation was brought about by the necessities of war. The moral consequences of this may have included some decrease in normal humanist morality and its partial replacement by the authoritarian alternative. As a people we may have become a little less sensitive to injustices to individuals and more fearful of disobedience to the law—but also less law-abiding wherever disobedience is comparatively safe. Such changes, if they have occurred, are very difficult to measure. My impression, for what it is worth, is that something of the kind has taken place.

An environment that is passively frustrating is different of course from one that is actually persecutory; but it has certain parallel effects. The importance of creative and reparative sublimations is almost as great to the adult as to the child. Many people, far more than is generally supposed, owe their mental health to their success in some occupation which they have found and chosen for them-

Psychoanalysis and Politics

selves. So to frustrate them in it is to invite depression, or a depressive apathy which may be concealed by the pursuit of any time-killing amusement.

The centralization and hierarchical control of industry brought about by the rise of capitalism produced just such a frustrating environment for the majority. And in this respect, one may well doubt whether there is much difference between capitalist and socialist centralization¹ except that the latter extends the area of the frustrating environment to include the minority who had so far escaped it. One would like to hope that there is a third alternative. If such economists as Röpke are right, the trend of technical development may once again favour the smaller industrial units and a return to a higher degree of craftsmanship.² And, for those who could not benefit by a change of this kind, improvements in the monetary technique for maintaining an adequate demand for labour may be expected to provide at least a greater freedom in the choice of work.³

A clearer example of a frustrating environment is that provided by a conscript army in peacetime. In the present condition of the world, conscription may be a military necessity. (It has obviously become so since the outbreak of the Korean war, which began after these paragraphs were written.) But this is no excuse for consoling ourselves with the belief that it is

¹ We have to ask ourselves two questions: which is more likely to behave in a frustrating manner, a private employer or a civil servant? And, which is more likely to be felt as frustrating? Even a benevolent authority from which there is no escape may be felt to be more persecutory than a tyrannical one which can be deserted.

² Röpke, *Civitas Humana*, 1948.

³ But it should be noted that inflationary conditions and a demand for labour in excess of the supply may produce a maldistribution which can only be corrected by the control of employment and so defeats the aim of greater freedom.

The State as an Influence

also psychologically beneficial. We already know that it tends to produce a shift in the form of conscience from the humanist to the authoritarian end of the scale. What we are concerned with here is its effect on the creative impulse of individuals. In this respect, we can expect it to be beneficial only to those who either enjoy and find their natural outlet in the service, or are already apathetic towards other occupations because their confidence in their creativeness has been lost at some earlier stage. Many of the rest, or so it seems to me, tend to become apathetic as the direct result of the interruption in their chosen careers, and lose a spontaneity which they are slow to regain after their release. Apathy is the defence of those who cannot find a creative outlet in the army. Those who can neither find such an outlet nor renounce their individual bents, that is to say, those who are unable to be either interested or apathetic, tend to break down altogether.¹ These results of compulsory service can of course be mitigated. Army educationalists are trying their best to do so. But nothing is gained by denying that they exist.

(If the psychological disadvantages of conscription were generally acknowledged, it is just possible that conscription—or at least so long a period of it—might turn out to be unnecessary after all. We need armed forces both to meet our present commitments and as a nucleus for rapid expansion in the event of war. To fulfil the first of these requirements, a conscript army has to be much larger than a voluntary one, because so large a part of it is under training; for the same

¹ There can be little doubt that many of those who are discharged as mentally unfit, although predisposed to illness, would not have broken down if they had not been forcibly displaced from their own environments.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

cost therefore it cannot be so well equipped or paid. To fulfil the second, a conscript army has the advantage of a large civilian reserve of partly trained men; but against this, a voluntary army, in which almost every man is a potential N.C.O., might well prove easier to expand. Moreover, it may be that more voluntary recruits could be got by a different sort of propaganda. Among all the attractions offered the recruit, one, and that the most important, seems often to be missing in peacetime. He is told about his pay and his chance to see the world; but he is not told much about the cause for which he is to be employed. This may not always be easy to define; for there are borderline cases where it is difficult to distinguish between defensive and predatory war, or between the maintenance of order against revolutionaries envious of power and the support of despotism against a people struggling to be free. But in most cases a distinction of the kind exists, and is clear enough—in spite of many efforts to obscure it—to all whose perceptions are not distorted by the influence of their own unconscious phantasies. In general, therefore, the defence of order and the support of freedom can be combined. If to combine and to serve both these ends was the consistent basis of our foreign policy, and if this were clearly understood, recruits would perhaps come forward more willingly. For they would be made to feel that they were regarded more as rational beings whose concurrence and co-operation in policy was sought and valued, and less as automata of whom nothing was required but unquestioning obedience. Changes in this direction are already taking place, but they might well go further.)

In discussing the conditions unfavourable to the

The State as an Influence

development of children, I argued that these for the most part fell under one or other of the twin heads of deprivation and frustration. But in discussing the conditions unfavourable to the maintenance of mental health in adults I have so far only mentioned frustration. This is not because the effects of deprivation are less serious—for of course they are more so—but because at the present time their importance is less likely to be underestimated. If they were often ignored, even in the comparatively recent past, by those who had had no direct contact with distress, there seems little immediate risk of their being ignored in future now all parties regard social security as a prior obligation of the state. But there is still the risk that those who have experienced or seen distress may go to the opposite extreme of ignoring the effects of frustration. This is what happened in Germany. In the decade after the first world war, the Weimar Republic was the most liberal in Europe. But like all other democratic governments at that time, it had not yet acquired the technical knowledge needed to counter the worst distress from unemployment ever known by that or any other country. So the people who were already predisposed to an authoritarian regime accepted the nazi yoke with a greater willingness because it offered what then seemed the only cure for unemployment.

Turning from unfavourable to favourable environments, it is clear that the factors to be enumerated must be, in some sense, the reverse of those just described. So far as frustration is bad, freedom must be good. But such broad statements can be misleading if accepted without reserve. There is I think an important qualification to be made to a simple

Psychoanalysis and Politics

reversal of this kind; for, while a frustrating social environment may be enough to prevent a people from being healthy and mature, a free environment is only a necessary, and by no means a sufficient, condition for their health. It permits them to remain well if their early home environment has already been favourable; but it does not make them so if this condition has been absent. So for each people there is probably an optimum balance between freedom and control which varies with their latent capacity for maturity as predetermined by the nature of their home environment. A people who have been subjected for generations to an authoritarian regime, which permeates and is reproduced in the family unit, acquire strict and indeed ferocious super-egos. The external despotism is not only supported by, but is also a counterweight to, the internal tyranny, and, if not too severe, relieves rather than exacerbates the sense of inner persecution. Such a people is seldom aware of any widespread wish for freedom. But as a result of defeat in war, or of a conspiracy, or even of a voluntary abdication, freedom may be thrust upon them. Then, when their external authority is suddenly removed, they may feel lost without it and more than ever exposed to persecution from within. The result may be a widespread outbreak of more overt paranoia—expressed by the disintegration of society into factions passionately hostile to each other. Something of this kind happened in Germany after the fall of the Hohenzollerns, and similar symptoms were again apparent after the fall of Hitler.¹

Moreover, the possession of almost any freedom

¹ That it happened also in India, if only as a temporary symptom, after our withdrawal, shows that we had not altogether succeeded in what we, perhaps too belatedly, accepted as our mission.

The State as an Influence

implies the power to use it to the injury of others—or at least to their annoyance. And among an immature people the likelihood of its being so used is greater than among a more mature one.

Lastly, the possession of a high degree of freedom may not always be compatible with material welfare or even with survival. Wars cannot be won without its temporary sacrifice, and, during economic crises, extensive controls which are in themselves frustrating, may be temporarily needed to secure the production and distribution of necessities.

To discover what is the optimum degree of freedom—personal, political and economic—for any given people at any given time would of course be very difficult in practice.¹ But at least this much we can be sure of: no immature people can become psychically mature and develop what maturity implies, a humanist as opposed to an authoritarian morality, so long as they live under a system of religious, political or economic authoritarianism; and conversely, no people can remain mature if they pass under one. Thus psychology supports the basic tenets of philosophic liberalism. A 'good' state, that is to say, a state that favours the development of and maintenance of a moral maturity in individuals is liberal and democratic; and it seeks to provide freedom and opportunity in ever greater measure.

This need not have been stressed so much if people had not lost faith in the liberal states of the past because of their failure to provide security. If the state is to be a good environment for the growth of a mature and healthy population it must of course

¹ It becomes still more complicated when the different maturities of different sections within one people have to be taken into account.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

provide both security and freedom. But much will depend on how the security is provided. We know that, in the child, the best correctives for the unconscious persecutory conception of the world, which he inevitably forms, are love and understanding from his actual parents. The adult's need for these reassurances is less only in degree; and since the decay of religion, he has come to demand them increasingly from the state. In response to this demand, the state has given him an increasing measure of security, but if this is given him only with an impersonal benevolence it largely fails to meet his need. He forms his concept of the state from his contacts with its officials, and according to their behaviour he feels it to be sympathetic, fussy, domineering or actively tyrannical. It is through them that the state not only imposes its negative prohibitions and positive requirements, but also provides security, and the state can be a 'good' parent figure only if they fulfil both these duties with sympathy and understanding.

Now, as I have already argued, the moral character and behaviour of officials is partly determined by the structure of the service they work in. If the service is hierarchical, a sense of duty to authority will tend to replace a sense of responsibility to those whose welfare they are ostensibly appointed to promote. So, for example, the National Health Act could defeat its purpose if it changed the status of doctors from that of free and equal members of a profession into that of controlled and unequal members of a civil service. If, therefore, the state is to provide security in a form that satisfies people in their inner as well as their outer needs, it must first secure a sense of freedom to those who carry out its plan.

The State as an Influence

The picture I have tried to draw of a 'good' state—that is, of a state that provides the most favourable environment for the development of normal, humanist character in its citizens—is still by no means precise. But at least certain of its essential features have emerged; a high degree of freedom, a wide choice of creative sublimation, and the sympathetic, rather than mechanical, provision of security and welfare. These features, indistinctly drawn as they may be, are yet sufficient to distinguish it sharply from some of its competitors. It is wholly different from the extreme but opposite despotisms of the fascist or communist ideal. It is unlike the opposite paternalisms of those sections of conservative and socialist opinion which share the view that the people must always be treated as a child. It has much in common with, but differs from both the 'free liberal' and the socialist 'welfare' states; for its aim is to secure welfare without encroaching upon freedom. In practice therefore while planning for welfare it must, in the execution of its plans, rely, as far as possible, on inducement rather than compulsion.

3. The concept of a 'Good' State

To arrive at the end of so long an inquiry at this concept of a 'good' state may seem something of an anti-climax. The qualities of liberalism and benevolence ascribed to it are no more than have always been desired by very many people. Nevertheless, I believe the achievement is not so insignificant if with the aid of the new science of psycho-analysis the concept has been arrived at by new arguments that, perhaps for the first time, permit it to be defended empirically.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

To do so, we have to prove, from premises which can be empirically tested, that this kind of state is the only kind that can be rationally desired. Many people do not desire it. Some Tories want freedom without welfare; some socialists want welfare without freedom; some nazis and communists, whose state religion shows no concern for individuals, apparently want neither. Now suppose we were asked to put aside whatever personal predilections we may have and, solely on the basis of our analytic knowledge, to adjudicate in a dispute between a supporter of this liberal-welfare state, and an opponent who favours some alternative.

The first thing to notice is the personality of this opponent. If he is a humanist, the disputants will have a common background. They would both prefer to live in society of mature and humanistic people, and differ only in their beliefs about the kind of state most likely to favour the development of this kind of character. While one believes that both freedom and welfare are essential to this end, the other may believe, for example, that a strict but paternal discipline is much more important. Here the dispute is clearly of a kind that can be settled by an appeal to facts. And our analytic knowledge, incomplete as it may be, seems at least sufficient for us to give the verdict in favour of the first disputant.

But his opponent may not be a humanist at all. He may be an authoritarian who prefers to live in an ordered hierarchy of superiors to lean on and subordinates to dominate. Or he may be the kind of hypomanic personality who despises the human race, or a paranoid who distrusts it. In such cases, there will be no common background of agreed ends, and until recently, we should have been quite unable to

The State as an Influence

adjudicate between them. We might have seen that their characterological differences were the result of different early environments, but we should not have been able to say that one type of character was more rational than the other. This, however, is exactly what recent advances in character analysis do enable us to say. We can now be certain that the character of the non-humanist opponent is an elaborate defence against unconscious and ultimately irrational anxieties within himself. What is more, we can also be certain that if he could be made conscious of these anxieties and their origin and so freed from their domination, his character would change. As he became mentally more integrated and therefore rational, he would become characterologically more humanistic. In the meantime, since his political preference is here too influenced by false beliefs, though this time unconscious ones which operate through their influence on his character, we can again adjudicate in favour of the first disputant.

Our point of view can be expressed, more shortly perhaps, in a slightly different way. Two types of knowledge seem to be relevant to these disputes: sociological knowledge of the probable effect of social form on character, and psychological knowledge about ourselves. They may be called 'foresight' and 'insight' respectively. Then, in the dispute before us, the attitude of the opponent of the liberal-welfare state seemed to us to be determined, in the first case, by his lack of foresight and in the second by his lack of insight. It was this that enabled us to adjudicate against him.

What is important in our position is not so much that we claim to have judged rightly as that we claim

Psychoanalysis and Politics

to be able to judge at all. We have not taken our stand, like the philosophers, on the unassailable rock of a definition, but on the more uncertain ground of sociological and psychological theory. Here we must always be prepared to retreat in the face of any adverse facts; but as long as we stay on it, we can be sure that any such retreats will take us to new positions which the facts themselves will better help us to defend. What we have done then is to offer an empirical solution to a very ancient problem of political philosophy.⁶

The classical Greeks exceeded all other peoples in creative genius because they asked so many questions no one had ever asked before. In particular, they questioned their social structure, and were the first to ask: what is a good state? Anyone can answer the question by describing his ideal state and so defining what he means by a 'good' one. But definitions are neither true nor false, so that in this form the question does not invite the kind of answer that ever can be proved. Nevertheless, I think the question always had, latent in it, a more significant meaning which Plato was perhaps the first to bring into the open. For in effect he seems to have put it in this way: what kind of state can be rationally desired? Or, what kind of state is desired by people who are wise? Thereafter, his concept of wisdom as acquaintance with ideal forms and ultimately as acquaintance with the good, seems to have entangled him in the coils of a new tautology. But, if by wisdom we mean the possession of empirical knowledge, that is, the possession of empirically verifiable beliefs, his question becomes empirically significant. Political ideals are clearly affected by knowledge and we can significantly ask: how are they affected by increasing knowledge? Or

The State as an Influence

more specifically, how are they affected by increasing insight and foresight?

If we had asked this question before the days of psychoanalysis, it would not have helped us very much. We should have noticed that people's political views sometimes change as the result of study; but we should not have been able to observe any convergence in the basic political aims of different kinds of people. We should have concluded that different kinds of state are congenial to different kinds of equally enlightened people. If this were true, it would certainly justify the relativist attitude. But our psychological and sociological researches have now led us to the opposite conclusion. For if enlightenment, when carried far enough, would bring about a convergence towards a specific kind of character, it must also bring about a convergence of desire for the kind of state most congenial to people of this character.

•It is worth noting that our conclusion differs not only from that of the ethical relativists, but also from that reached by Plato who first asked the question. In his view, wise people would like the state to be authoritarian in a high degree, and even to use myths and other subterfuges for maintaining order. In ours, they would prefer one that provided welfare without curtailing freedom.

4. The influence of science on the social spiral

Now this result, if sound, must be of more than purely academic interest. It should be able to help answer such practical questions as 'what is the probable future of society?' and 'what can be done to shape this future in accordance with our wishes?'

Psychoanalysis and Politics

Our earlier inquiry into social spirals may have suggested that sociological and characterological changes have a very considerable momentum, but that, of the two, the upward spiral is more easily reversed than the downward one. So it would seem to follow that if we are now in an upward spiral, we can be by no means sure of remaining in it; and that if we are in a downward one, we can be fairly sure of not being in an upward one, at least for several generations. These conclusions, so far as they go, are not very reassuring even about the immediate future, and in the long run, promise only the brief satisfactions of a Sisyphaen cycle with its slow upward toil interrupted by shorter periods of cataclysmic fall. But before accepting so gloomy a prognosis, we must consider the effect of introducing a new factor into the dynamics of social change—the factor of increasing scientific knowledge.

Knowledge itself has certainly not made any continuous advance. There have been periods of history in which the accumulated store of many generations has been almost completely lost. But since true beliefs tend to be confirmed and false ones to be disproved, the dice are loaded in favour of knowledge rather than of ignorance and superstition; so that in spite of its vicissitudes knowledge does advance. Moreover, in the last few decades, that particular branch of knowledge which provides psychological insight and sociological foresight has been advancing very quickly. And this may be expected to exert an increasingly important influence on the direction of the social spiral.

One side of the spiral represents the influence of character on the form of the state; the other, the influence of the form of the state, and the social

The State as an Influence

environment generally, on character. In the first half, character, by determining whether our political aims are humanist or not, helps to mould the state. But the actual political decisions that so far-reachingly affect it are determined not only by the ends we seek but also by our beliefs about the most appropriate means to their achievement. Increased foresight of this kind may not, like insight, affect the aims of those whose characters tend rather to promote a downward spiral, but it can and does affect the choice of means by those who already desire the upward one. In this lies the practical value of all sociological research—in particular, of research into the dynamics of social change, in which field we have tried to isolate the operation of some factors. The knowledge gained cannot change authoritarian aims into humanist ones; but it can help those whose aims are already humanist to avoid supporting policies likely to lead to the opposite result.

In the other half of the spiral, the influence of knowledge, though slower, is much more profound. The form of the state and the whole structure of society helps to mould our basic character; but this basic character, as I have tried to show, can be modified by whatever new insight we can subsequently acquire. And this insight, as again we know, exerts a force always in the humanist direction.

The outlook, even on the short view, is therefore perhaps brighter than it seemed, and on the long view, since the dice are loaded in favour of truth, we can expect eventually to attain what is after all a fairly modest goal—a social environment that favours rather than impedes the psychological maturity of individuals.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

We can also see that the only permanently effective means of furthering this result is to promote research and education in the two sciences psychology and sociology, which pursue insight and foresight, that is, those two forms of knowledge that are of most political importance.

That the way to a 'good' society is through knowledge or enlightenment is again no new discovery. The Victorians knew it very well. But they were vague about what kind of enlightenment to give. They believed, quite rightly, that a 'good' society was to be achieved by means of education, and, quite wrongly, that the education they had to offer was sufficient for this purpose. Indeed the leaders of enlightenment, who believed most ardently in education, often seemed to stress what in education was sociologically of least importance. In the days before psychology or sociology were heard of, insight and foresight could still be taught through literature and history. But these subjects, being too closely associated with the study of dead languages, began to be neglected for the sake of a science not yet qualified to fill the gap. For the only science then available, while valuable both technically and as a training in systematic thought, did not help us to understand ourselves or to predict the psychological consequences of legislation.¹

Even the secularization of education was by no means an unqualified advance. Cosmologically and historically considered, religious beliefs may be largely mythological. But embedded in them were psycho-

¹ To some extent nineteenth century physics may have warped the judgement of those brought up on it by arousing an aesthetic preference for mechanical simplicity in fields where it is not appropriate.

The State as an Influence

logical truths of the first importance which, like the baby in the bath, have often been discarded with them. Of these probably the most important is that man suffers from a sense of guilt (as distinct from the fear of punishment), and that this is increased rather than disposed of when it is ridiculed, denied and eventually projected into others. Religion created many arbitrary offences, but it also kept our forefathers conscious of those they committed against their own affections, and so helped to preserve them from too much false self-righteousness. No psychological change during the last half century is more pronounced than the change in the attitude to guilt. At the beginning of this period nearly everyone, at least on Sundays, was over-conscious of his offences; now we have gone to the opposite extreme and hardly anyone can admit that he is ever in the wrong. But since the sense of guilt is still there in spite of its denial, the loss of the capacity to feel it is a loss of insight to set against our other gains in rationality. And it is the loss of a form of insight which is essential to the preservation or development of a humanistic culture.

But if the last half century of education has been disappointing because of its omissions, we may, for this very reason, continue to find hope in an education that stresses what was previously neglected.

What should be stressed, as we know, is whatever promotes insight and foresight—the insight that enables us to understand ourselves and others, and the foresight that enables us to foresee the effects of what we do to our society. But of all forms of knowledge, insight and foresight are perhaps the most difficult to acquire or to convey. We know that a ‘good’ society is to be achieved by means of research

Psychoanalysis and Politics

and education; we even know the kind of research and education required; but research in these fields is particularly difficult, and the problem of communicating the results so slowly achieved is by no means adequately solved.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL MOTIVES

1. *The therapeutic value of analysis*

So far we have been using analysis in an unusually ambitious way to arrive at conclusions of an ethical or philosophical nature which at first sight might seem unattainable by any scientific method.

Our point of departure, as we can now see in retrospect, was a dissatisfaction with the concept of 'normality' generally employed. By a 'normal' person, the statistician means someone who is 'average', the sociologist someone who is 'well adapted' to the society to which he happens to belong; and it is fairly generally believed that the analyst also means something of this kind. But the result of a successful analysis is not an average person. Nor is it by any means necessarily a person who is well adapted to the society in which he has to live. For, to take an extreme example, if between 1933 and 1939 any 'well adapted' German had sought analysis, he would have found that he was very ill adapted to his society by the time his analysis was over. The result of a successful analysis is therefore not someone who is normal in either of these senses, but someone who has achieved a large measure of self-acquaintance and integration, and whose emotional life has been to that extent freed from the influence of an unconscious phantasy world which he was falsely confusing with the world of his

Psychoanalysis and Politics

perceptions. As I have tried to show, this is equivalent to a person who is free from the influence of unconscious false beliefs and who is therefore 'normal' in the sense of being 'rational'. Having got so far we were led, in effect, to reverse a question that is often in the minds of members of selection boards, and to inquire about the qualities, not of an individual who is well adapted to society, but of a society that is well adapted to rational individuals. We do not know enough to give these qualities in detail; but two of them at least appeared to be essential; a benevolent provision of security and tolerance of a high degree of freedom. Clearly, therefore, no normal rational person could desire to live in a society deficient in either of these qualities, or, what is the same thing, they must be possessed by any state that can be rationally desired.

But if analysis can be employed in this ambitious way to clarify our political and social aims, it can also be employed, more modestly and more in accordance with its customary usage, to further social ends which, while retrospectively recognizable as desirable, need not be envisaged in advance.

To assert that desirable ends can be furthered when their nature is unknown may seem paradoxical. But this is exactly what many analyses have done for individuals in the past. The analyst need have no idea of what his patients will be like when well. Indeed too definite an idea may impede his efforts, either because he may be wrong or, worse, because it may tempt him to be pedagogic. All he has to do is to help his patients to discover the unconscious impulses and phantasies which influence their conscious thoughts and feelings. And the more closely he sticks to his last,

On the Analysis of Political Motives

the more likely will they be to find themselves freed from their specific difficulties and with some changes of character that are welcome to themselves as well. That such changes turn out to be in the humanist direction may be also welcome to the analyst. But this is not something that he deliberately tries to bring about. He does not try to force any particular character on anybody, both because he knows he would probably fail and ruin his analytic work and because such a totalitarian use of moral force is incompatible with his own psychology.

All this suggests that a clear concept of a 'good' society is not a necessary pre-requisite to action designed to further its achievement. If the political striving that so agitates the world is influenced by unconscious motives, any action that helps to make these motives more conscious must tend to make the striving more rational and so more likely to further the achievement of whatever kind of world can be rationally desired. In other words, what may be called 'political analysis' is likely to be socially therapeutic, and so well worth pursuing on its own account.

The change in orientation from the ambitious to the more modest—and perhaps more effective—use of the analytic method in our political inquiry is analogous to a change from a Platonic to a more purely Socratic technique. For, while Plato's Socrates seems to arrive by argument at Plato's idea of a perfect state, the real Socrates was perhaps content merely to ask questions. And he seems to have done so in the hope of inducing his contemporaries to examine their own motives for adhering to any particular value or political ideal. Since most of their motives turned out to be irrational, his efforts were resented as destructive.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

But he himself may be presumed to have believed that his method must lead in the end to the emergence of values and ideals that could really survive the most exhaustive criticism. With the same belief, the same method of inquiry can be pursued to-day, and with the help of analysis can now be carried far into the still dark continent of the unconscious.¹

2. Three examples of the overdetermination of political opinions

To illustrate the kind of results to be expected from this new form of Socratic investigation, I will suppose it to be applied to three imaginary individuals. The first two are violent in their political opinions, one on the socialist and the other on the conservative side, while the third is a neutral whose main political desire is to reconcile other conflicting parties. Since each of them is an oversimplified and therefore artificial figure chosen to illustrate only one of the innumerable ways in which political attitudes may be influenced by unconscious complexes, none of them should be regarded as typical of the parties, or bodies of opinion they support.

The first is a single woman with no great desire or aptitude for marriage. She has had a hard struggle to make her way in life, but is now successfully established perhaps as a teacher or a civil servant. If

¹ The fate of Socrates must warn us that any such endeavour is not likely to be well received. The analyst in practice with individuals knows that his interpretations often meet with strong resistances, and that he himself often becomes the object of very great hostility. Such reactions are inevitable and tend to disappear as they are analysed in turn. But the analyst who writes on political motives cannot do this, and so must be prepared to become the target of some hostilities that he cannot analyse away. Moreover, since he is not infallible, he cannot avoid errors if only those of disproportionate emphasis to become the focal point of all the irritations he has caused.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

some Socratic sociologist were to examine the motives for her socialism he would begin by noticing her deep sympathy for those who are thwarted or deprived. So here at the outset he would find a humanistic motive which no analysis would undermine and which may therefore be expected to remain a constant determinant in her enthusiasm for a welfare state. But he may soon discover that her sympathy for the underprivileged is combined with a surprising degree of callousness or open hatred towards those who seem to her to be privileged too much. Then, if he pursued his questions further, he might well find that as a child she had been one of those girls who had desperately wanted to be a boy, that she had never outgrown her grievance, and that it was the unconscious source of her hatred of the overprivileged. At this point, she may be expected to offer him the hemlock. But it is just possible—assuming a high level of intellectual honesty on her side and of tact on his—that by degrees she might accept his interpretation. If so, her political attitude could hardly fail to undergo a change. Her sympathy for the underprivileged would indeed remain and with it her interest in welfare. But her hatred would become discriminating and would be reserved for those of the overprivileged who were deliberately trying to deprive and thwart their fellows.

It is worth noting that among men, too, an unconscious sense of organic defect, when combined with economic deprivation, can lead to very much the same result—an intense hatred of those whose phallic superiority is suggested by such symbols as their streamlined cars, their old school ties, or their top hats.¹

¹ I should add that among men a sense of inferiority about not being

Psychoanalysis and Politics

Turning to the conservative—whom I repeat I do not choose as in any way typical of the party he supports—I will assume him to be a married man of independent means and a little over sensitive about his position as lord and master of his home. He is economically free to dispose of his life as and how he likes; and I will further suppose that he employs it in ways that he and those who know him best regard as useful and creative. To him freedom is the highest value, and he is therefore profoundly opposed to a regulated and bureaucratic state. All this seems rational enough. But his attitude to the other side is not. In his eyes, their sole aim is to deprive and thwart him and the class he belongs to. He can hardly credit them with any other motive, and cannot see that they are also, and perhaps even primarily concerned to help those less favourably situated whose anxieties and troubles seem remote enough to him. Moreover, his fear and therefore his hatred is excessive. Threatened perhaps by some further cuts in income he feels himself in danger of utter destitution. A clue to his underlying motives is suggested by his attitude to his wife, and indeed to women in general. He only cares for those whom he feels to be 'feminine', by which he means seductive and submissive; and heartily dislikes those who enter what he regards as a masculine profession—especially if they are successful in it. Further inquiry into his early childhood would probably reveal one of those typical conflicts which so often end in a permanent, but unconscious, terror of castration. In his case, perhaps, an over anxious nurse may have really threatened him in an effort

masculine enough sometimes covers a much deeper sense of inferiority about not being feminine, and not being able to do what women can.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

to stop an early tendency to masturbate; and he may have attributed her threat, not altogether without reason, to her envy of his masculine superiority. At any rate, this is the situation as it survives in his unconscious phantasy, which now influences his politics. To his unconscious, the socialists are a band of deprived and envious women whose sole aim is to castrate him. The first example will suggest that there may even be an element of truth in this unconscious picture. But it is one-sided and exaggerated. If therefore he can be made conscious of it, and this of course will not be easy, his political attitude will inevitably be modified. As his anxiety lessened, he will become better able to understand the needs of those less privileged than he is, and more sympathetic towards all positive attempts to improve their opportunities. But his hostility would be undiminished towards merely negative attempts to restrict the opportunities of those who already have them, and he would probably remain an opponent of bureaucracy.

It can also happen that the same combination of external circumstance and internal complex results not in ultra-toryism, but in a pseudo-socialism designed to propitiate those whose envy and malice is so much exaggerated in phantasy.

Both these two examples are of people with strong and divergent political opinions. The third is so overwhelmed with the desire to reconcile opponents and to induce them to conciliate each other that he seems to have no clear views of his own at all. In particular, he is obsessed by the threat of war. His desire to prevent war, especially atomic war, is surely rational enough. But what needs explaining is that he does not seem to be in the least concerned with the rights

Psychoanalysis and Politics

or wrongs of the impending conflict. If this is between two incompatible ideologies, he is not interested in discovering which of them can be more rationally desired, nor is he anxious to secure the triumph of one rather than the other. He may have a preference, but even his pacific partisanship seems to increase the danger and must therefore be suppressed. It is enough for him that a quarrel is brewing which must at all costs be prevented from breaking out. He cannot be concerned about which side will win if it does break out, because its breaking out is to him the ultimate calamity at which his mind stops short. Such an attitude is exactly that of some children to impending quarrels between their parents. So inquiry would probably expose an early situation of this kind; as a child, he was by no means neutral, nor pacific. He was exceedingly jealous of his parents, sometimes of one, sometimes of the other, wanted them to quarrel and in phantasy supported each side in turn. Perhaps a real divorce or death, and his subsequent neglect, may have seemed at once the fulfilment and the appalling punishment for these uncharitable wishes. So ever after, it is conflict itself, rather than the winning or losing of battles, that seems to him to be what it was in his childhood, the ultimate calamity to be prevented at all costs. But if he became conscious of the motive of his attitude, the attitude itself would change. He would continue to strive for peace, but no longer with complete neutrality; for he would be able to feel that, while war is bad, the loss of a war by the right side is unquestionably worse.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

3. *Persecutory and Depressive Anxieties as basic factors in the Psychopathology of Politics*

Such concrete, if oversimplified examples, suggest the need for a more systematic survey of the kind of disturbances in political thought and feeling most likely to occur. It seems reasonable to start with two assumptions: that all of them must be traceable to the unconscious survival of phantasy systems belonging to 'the persecutory and depressive phases of early infancy; and that each of them expresses one or more of the known defences against these anxieties. In making the survey, therefore, it would seem best to go through these defences once again in this rather different context, and to try to discover what disturbances in political thought and feeling each is most likely to produce.

The ultimate source of persecutory anxiety may be obscure, but as far as it can be traced, it seems to begin with the sense of an indefinite and terrifying threat to the self from something inside the self. There is a familiar type of ghost story in which a malignant spirit begins by manifesting itself in small ways outside a house, then haunts the house inside, and ends by taking possession of the victim's body.¹ The more formless and indefinite the evil essence, the more closely do such stories depict a return to the earliest known form of persecutory anxiety. They also depict the gradual breakdown of the most primitive known defence against it; for the 'indescribably malignity' was first felt to be within the self before it was projected into the outer world. There it was still an object of terror, but at least it had become something which

¹ See for example the films '*A Place of Our Own*' and '*At Dead of Night*'.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

could be fled from, barred out, or attacked and, if possible, destroyed. In other words, an aggression within the self which endangers not only the self but all loved objects both internal and external, was disowned and attributed to someone or something else.

We are all familiar with this defence in the delusions of persecution of the paranoiac. We are also familiar with the 'political paranoia' of Hitler and the German nation which did so much to produce the second world war. We are less willing to admit that it can play a part in intensifying our own political anxieties and animosities. But few people are wholly free from it. Most of us, if we critically examine our reactions—say to political defeat—will find that the fear we sometimes feel includes an element of indefinite foreboding which is more than appropriate to any actual danger. And this paranoid element in an anxiety, which may be otherwise realistic, correspondingly increases our hate.

Although the basic anxiety is felt as an indefinite foreboding¹ it soon becomes the focus of many other terrors that are definite enough at least to the unconscious. These include the fear of being sucked dry and robbed, of being starved, of being overwhelmed and smothered, of being eaten up, of being castrated, of being controlled and denied all freedom, of being forcibly separated from loved objects and so on. Whenever any of them appear in analysis we can be sure that the patient unconsciously desires to do to someone else—usually to his analyst—exactly what he is

¹ Melanie Klein describes it as the fear of annihilation by the Death Instinct. M. Klein: *Notes on some Schizoid Mechanisms*, International Journal of Psychoanalysis XXVII, 1946.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

now afraid of having done to him. So these secondary and more definite anxieties are again the result of the projection of aggressive impulses, which he may have originally mobilized in his offensive-defensive war against his primary anxiety, but which now come back on him like boomerangs.

Precisely the same mechanisms tend to disturb much of our political emotion. If the personified abstractions of parties or ideologies other than our own already stir in us primary feelings of persecution, we shall unconsciously attack them by any or every device known to unconscious phantasy, and we shall expect and fear the same treatment in retaliation. Of course, in ordinary healthy people, who are not paranoid in their private lives and paranoid only to a slight degree in politics, such fears do not create imaginary dangers; but they do exaggerate the dangers that are there. The victory of another party may be justly feared if it is likely to reduce our wages or increase our taxes, or put us more in the power either of employers or of officials we have reason to distrust. But our emotional response is often appropriate to a much greater threat. Even this, like all paranoid anxieties, may have a real basis in our intuitive perception of the sadistic component in the other side. But if it were not for our own sadism, our own unconscious desire to rob, castrate and dominate them, we should not be so ready to react emotionally as if there were a real danger of these things being done to us. And if our own fears were reduced to realistic proportions, so would be our hates.

But as we know, real dangers are by no means always exaggerated. There is a secondary defence against anxieties arising from projection which has

Psychoanalysis and Politics

the opposite effect. To avoid the recognition of a replica of our disowned malignity in others, we may deny it in them when it is really there. The most recent, the most widespread and the most disastrous example of this mechanism has been already cited. It was the persistent refusal to recognize the danger of fascism before the second world war.¹ And, by a strange perversity of thought, those who did sense it often attributed it to exactly the opposite quarter from which it came. Thus, while the bulk of the conservative party clung to the hope that they could reach a settlement with Hitler, the bulk of the labour party attacked them as warmongers because of the few meagre preparations they did at least try to make.

With these two opposite mechanisms constantly at work, the one tending to over-estimate, the other tending to under-estimate, every concrete danger, it is not easy to preserve a balanced judgement. Thus, for example, the danger of totalitarianism, conceived as coming by war from without, or more subtly, by evolution from within, tends with equal unreality to be exaggerated into a veritable nightmare or dismissed as entirely groundless. It is not easy to arrive at that just assessment of the risk which is presumably to be found somewhere between these two extremes.

The secondary defence against persecutory anxiety, in which a real danger is under-estimated, consists in a denial of the real malignity of a terrifying object. We have seen it carried a stage further in Germany and end in the idealization of the object feared. But this defence, which seems so strange and so repugnant to our conscious feelings, is by no means confined to hero

¹ See Ernest Jones: *The Psychology of Quislingism*, International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXII, 1941.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

worshipping nazis. It is in fact a very common element in all religions, whether theological or secular.

It appears in its simplest and most honest form in the devil worship of many savages. They are aware that they are propitiating what they regard as evil. But precisely the same mechanism operates unconsciously in those Christians—so common half a century ago—who praised the perfect love of a God whom they believed had condemned the greater part of humanity to hell. For to the extent to which their good God had the diabolic qualities they gave him, they were as much devil worshippers as the savages they endeavoured to convert. During the last half century, the hell, which was a nightmare to earlier generations, has become a reformed and humanized Borstal for delinquents, and the Christian concept of God has been purged of its more sadistic elements. But Christianity itself has correspondingly declined in strength. The impulse to worship may express either spontaneous gratitude to what is loved or a compulsive idealization of what is feared. It would seem that the second motive is often stronger than the first and that many of those who believe in a personal creator cease to worship him as soon as they have ceased to believe him to be at least in part a devil.

But among those in whom the more awful and perhaps more exciting figure is felt to be still within themselves—and that of course is where he originally came from—the need to project him into the external world, and to idealize and worship him there, remains a necessary defence against an intolerable sense of inner persecution. In other words, they will be impelled to imagine or create something in the external world to correspond with him, something

Psychoanalysis and Politics

which will inspire fear as well as love, and demand great sacrifices from them as well as promise great rewards. And now that they can no longer find what they need in orthodox theology, they are ready to become converts to some new religion.

At the present time the main competitor of Christianity is political philosophy of which there are many forms. And here too we can observe that the sort of welfare state which is both liberal and benevolent seems to inspire a much less intense devotion than the totalitarian state, which is without pity or remorse in its treatment of mere individuals. The greatest theologians of political philosophy were Plato and Hegel; and both, in their state idolatry, came as near as Calvin and John Knox to being devil worshippers disguised. The state they painted had all the qualities of a most jealous God. It demanded an absolute obedience, the total surrender of the individual will, and promised the rediscovery of perfect freedom by means of an identification with itself. The unconscious response to this leviathan is hate and fear, not love. Yet just because, as a projection of the most strict and sadistic type of super-ego, it was so feared and hated unconsciously, it had to be idealized into something deserving the most passionate, and masochistic love. And the work of transvaluation of spontaneous values was done with such consummate skill that those who did it deceived not only themselves but half the world as well.¹

This defence against persecutory anxiety, in which a sadistic super-ego is projected and then idealized, is in my view one of the greatest impediments to the achievement of a humanist society. 'The idea of a

¹ See Russell, *Philosophy and Politics*, 1947.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

welfare state that is really liberal as well as benevolent is threatened not only from without but also from within the ranks of those who consciously desire it. The threat from the 'crypto-authoritarians' is easy to overlook—especially as we do not wish to find it in our friends—and, for this reason, it may be the greater of the two. Or to be more accurate, it is as easy to deny a real danger as to imagine one that does not exist. Some of us imagined we saw the hidden hand of totalitarianism in the rationing of sweets; others denied the existence of any risk at all in the order to control employment.

In describing these various defences against persecutory anxiety I have treated each as if it could operate alone. This device seems to be legitimate, and indeed inevitable, for perception itself depends on our capacity to ignore all sensations other than those of the 'object perceived', that is, on our capacity to abstract a few factors at a time from a complex manifold. But we must not forget that the defences we have abstracted, one after the other, do not in fact occur in isolation. If, with this in mind, we now return to our examples of the defence of idealizing feared objects we shall at once see that another mechanism has been simultaneously at work. The most terrifying qualities of the object idealized tended to be split off from it and to appear elsewhere. The God of mediaeval Christianity was a mixed object, a compound of the most selfless love and the most cruel sadism that could be conceived. But while the terror he inspired increased the need to worship him, his sadism which was the source of the terror, tended to be split off and attributed to another figure—the Devil. In fact two mechanisms were operating at once. A mixed object,

Psychoanalysis and Politics

at once loving and sadistic, was not only being idealized; it was also being split into two.

This splitting mechanism as we know is very primitive. The child who is sometimes satisfied and sometimes frustrated by his parents, not only loves and hates them with a great intensity, but in accordance with his own emotions, conceives them in unconscious phantasy to be both loveable and hateful to extreme degrees. These mixed phantasy objects, however, are either kept apart from the beginning, or split into two in the process of being formed. The bad half is the prototype of all subsequent persecutors, and is made yet blacker by the projection into it of all the child's aggression towards the good half, which in turn is idealized the more as a protection against the bad half. In this way two opposite concepts, one of an absolute goodness and the other of an absolute badness, or evil, are built up and remain in unconscious phantasy to distort his subsequent assessments.

That in particular such early splitting mechanisms tend to distort our political thinking so far as this is concerned with inter-group relations is a point I have already stressed. Not only the unrealistic exaggerations of the virtues of our own nation and the vices of our enemies in wartime, but also the exaggerations of party politics are examples of it. One party may be wiser than another, or more concerned with common welfare; but each side often seems to feel—what cannot possibly be true—that it alone has a monopoly of wisdom and virtue, and that its opponents are all fools or knaves or both.

It is often argued that, without party politics as we know them, a secure administration would be impossible. This may well be true so long as the

On the Analysis of Political Motives

alternative is between two parties or many all to some degree over-suspicious of each other and so constantly changing their alliances. But it is also true that, without the paranoid disturbances in thought produced by the mechanisms of splitting and projection, the party system as we know it would not itself be possible. Differences of opinion and differences of loyalty would of course remain to divide us into parties. But since each new issue would produce a new alignment, the parties would not stay the same.¹ If such a collapse of party discipline were to come about as a result of a genuine decline in the exaggerations produced by schizoid defences against anxiety, a competent administration might well be more secure than it is at present. It could certainly not expect the kind of acquiescence that is based on apathy. It would enjoy a less continuous support from its normal sympathizers. But it would also have a less frivolous opposition to contend with.

So far we have been considering the political expression of defence mechanisms in their operation against persecutory anxiety alone. The political effects of their operation against depressive anxiety remains to be considered. Depressive guilt—perhaps the only kind that deserves the name—begins as we know, when the child first realizes that he has hated, and in phantasy destroyed, the very objects he most dearly loves. In this primary form it is thus a direct result of his ambivalence. But it soon also appears in a different situation—that in which he feels he has

¹ In any case rigid party discipline would be impossible without a fairly high degree of authoritarian morality in politicians and this too would decrease with any decrease in unconscious persecutory anxiety.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

deserted or betrayed a good object because of his terror of a bad one.

Now situations unconsciously equated with those situations that first aroused depressive guilt of both these kinds continually confront us, and perhaps most of all in our political activities. If what we consciously hate is to our unconscious a 'mixed' rather than a wholly evil object, unconscious guilt at our excess is certain to be aroused if we totally destroy it. And, conversely, if from fear of it, we refrain from defying it at all, we shall feel unconscious guilt at the betrayal of whatever values have been surrendered to it. But since such feelings are exceedingly painful to admit, we shall be likely to defend ourselves against admitting them.

Perhaps the most primitive defence against the sense of having destroyed a 'mixed' object is to regress to the schizoid mechanism which first split it into two. We can see this operating, sometimes for generations, after a successful revolution. Kings, as symbols of the father, always arouse ambivalent feelings of which one aspect only becomes conscious at a time. Charles I, Louis XVI and Nicholas II, as kings, may have been both obstinate and weak; but none of them were in themselves cruel and evil despots, and each had qualities that would have made a private citizen liked rather than detested. So, not only because they were father symbols, but also because of their actual personalities, the killing of them must have aroused enormous quantities of unconscious guilt. This guilt in fact was too great to be acknowledged; and as a defence against it, the well known splitting mechanisms were reinforced. The dead kings, and the old regimes associated with them, were painted blacker even than

On the Analysis of Political Motives

they seemed at the time, while the benefits derived from the revolution and the virtues of its leaders were correspondingly exaggerated. Even now, long after the event, the historian who values the freedoms won in the French or English revolutions is very apt to overstress the vices of the royalists and the virtues of the revolutionaries. It looks as if he too, by identifying himself with the successful regicides, has also to defend himself against their sense of guilt.

Not only the deed, but the wish alone arouses guilt in the unconscious, which makes little or no distinction between the two. When, for example we envy another class or nation, in unconscious phantasy we may have already destroyed a parent, a brother or a sister, who is more favoured than ourselves. If so, we shall be likely to defend ourselves against unconscious guilt by denying that the objects of our envy have any good qualities at all. We shall see in them only their predatoriness and greed; while we ourselves and our supporters may seem to be inspired only by altruistic motives.

Another defence against guilt is to project it. This in part accounts for the excesses that so often characterize the later stages of a successful revolution, when the revolutionaries begin to execute each other. But in fact no revolution is wholly a success. Much may indeed be gained, but the expected millenium does not come about. This partial failure brings guilt feelings nearer to the surface and greatly increases the need for scape-goats.¹

The same defence operates after an unsuccessful war

¹ For an account of the psychology of revolution see Ernest Jones *Evolution and Revolution*, International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXII 1941.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

of conquest. The German people feel that they were the victims of nazi ambition, driven like sheep into a war they did not want. Of course there is some truth in this belief, for at the beginning and at the end of the war they really did not want it. But, on the whole, they were pleased enough when it was going well; and no one can doubt that, had it been successful, they would have been eager to accept the credit. So whatever their actual responsibility, an acute sense of guilt was stirred in them; and, as always, those who were least able to accept it were foremost in their hunt for scape-goats and did their best to convert denazification into a veritable witch-hunt.

In both these last examples, it is not only the deed but also the unconscious wish that counts. This incidentally explains the excesses of a counter-revolution. The loyalist has not been free from unconscious feelings of revolt so that he too has an unconscious load of guilt to project. He projects it on the revolutionaries and so punishes them for a double crime, his own as well as theirs. Similarly, though this is even more repressed, the consistent anti-nazi may in part be punishing the nazis for the repressed sadism which their example has stirred within himself.

The defence by projection of guilt is by no means an occasional phenomena which follows wars or revolutions. It is institutionalized in our law courts. The criminal has done what good citizens have desired to do unconsciously. By his act he has stirred their buried wishes and aroused their sense of guilt, so that, in punishing him, they both satisfy their latent sadism and punish themselves for it—by proxy.¹

¹ This mechanism was I think first described by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, 1919.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

The projection of guilt presupposes its denial—another defence which sometimes seems to operate almost by itself. Man is by nature one of the most ferocious and predatory of animals; and, as he preys for the most part on his own species, which opposite instincts have made him love and protect, he is often in situations that inevitably arouse some feelings of guilt. Again and again nations have chosen that leader who promised most and best expressed their greed or arrogance. Yet when, instead of the promised benefits, which often could only have been obtained at the expense of others, they are overtaken by calamity or hardship, they claim that they had always wished to live at peace and treat the whole world as a brother.

In order to support this myth, the very limitations of our world are themselves denied.¹ In reality, there has so far never been enough for all, and we have lived by competition. If we have enough to eat, it is often because someone, perhaps in India or China, has too little; and what luxuries we have could be enjoyed by someone else only if we are deprived of them. With a better organization of resources no doubt more could be provided; but the fact that more could be made available is often exaggerated into the assertion that there is enough and to spare to satisfy all reasonable demands for necessities and luxuries. And this has never yet been true. I do not suppose that anyone seriously believed it. But it is implied by

¹ One form of this denial is that any reference to the concept of an optimum population is almost taboo in political debate. Yet it is clear that, with respect to any given desideratum whether cultural or economic, and any given area and time, such an optimum must in fact exist. This was a point stressed by Dr. G. C. L. Bertram in his Galton Lecture for 1951 (to be published in the *Eugenics Review*).

Psychoanalysis and Politics

the conclusion which is believed and very widely, that our own desires can be met without depriving others.

This is a comforting belief, especially for nations or individuals who have great possessions. It was used to deny that there was any germ of fact behind Germany's aggressively over-anxious obsession with the need for *Lebensraum*. And throughout the nineteenth century it was used in an ingenious form to still the uneasy consciences of those who were both wealthy and extravagant. It may be true that the industrialist who founds a factory has caused his organized employees to produce many times as much as they would have done without him, and that the difference is something which he has 'created'. It may be true that this difference greatly exceeds his profits, so that he has benefited the community more than himself. But all this does not make it less true that in consuming his profits he is consuming what others may need more than he does. For this reason the enjoyment of the rewards of his labours, in the face of the poverty around him, did disturb his conscience. And because his conscience was disturbed, he invented an elaborate economic myth—long happily exploded. Since a given sum spent, let us say, on building creates the same demand for labour whatever kind of structure was put up, he was able to assert, with economists to back him, that his employees would benefit as much if he built a large house for himself as if he built several smaller ones for them.¹

It may seem absurd to maintain that his employees too felt unconscious guilt when they combined to

¹ I do not argue that no moral justification for large scale private building can be found, but only that this one is fallacious: and even if I did, it would still not necessarily follow that such building should be prohibited by law.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

force up their wages. But that they did so is suggested by their readiness to accept another myth—the myth that the employer who organized them contributed nothing whatever to the wealth they created jointly. Moreover they have always tended to believe that any increase in wages they won was won from him alone, and have denied that employees in other trades, whose real wages fell in proportion to any rise in prices, had lost something through their gain.

A similar conflict of interest and similar denial of it recurs in the economy of nations. Those with higher standards try to raise or at least maintain them by a protective control of imports—above all the importation of labour—from those with lower standards. This may well seem a legitimate form of national egoism. But that it does arouse some feeling of guilt is proved by the persistent tendency to deny that there is any egoism at all and to forget that the whole purpose of such controls is to maintain the standard of one nation at the expense of other nations.

In short, throughout the whole field of economics, civilized man's competitiveness arouses so much unconscious guilt that he has to deny, not only that he is selfish, but also that without some selfishness he could not live comfortably and perhaps could not live at all. What makes the sense of guilt so hard to admit is probably that it is excessive. A patient in analysis behaves as if the money he takes from others, or is taken from him, is a part of the body the loss of which is a mutilation. So the guilt felt at depriving others of commodities they need tends to be appropriate to the much more serious injury, and because it is excessive there is a stronger need to deny that they have been deprived of anything.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

Yet another defence against the guilt feelings aroused at depriving others is to exaggerate their failings, which serves the purpose of denying that any sympathy need be felt for them. There is no doubt that in the nineteenth century the distress produced by the industrial revolution did disturb the consciences of the prosperous and the comfortable. It disturbed them all the more because at that time there seemed little that could be done to lessen it. They could feel charitable towards, because they could really help, isolated individuals. But because of their impotence in the face of so great a mass of poverty, they had to deny their concern together with their sense of guilt and persuade themselves that the deprived had brought their sufferings on themselves and were being justly punished for their sins.¹ Similarly, an element of the same defence appeared in the indignant argument, often heard after the second world war, that we should not deprive ourselves to feed the starving Germans because they had deserved their fate. In all such cases, the real faults whether great or small, of other people are exaggerated to justify their deprivation and deny the unconscious guilt aroused in those who rightly or wrongly feel responsible for it.

These are all examples—and they could be multiplied indefinitely—of defences against a sense of guilt that has its source in ambivalence, in the conflict between love and hate. But, as we know, the same kind of depressive guilt is also aroused by conflicts between love and fear. The most outstanding recent example of a situation of this kind in the political

¹ The more rational explanations offered first by Malthus (pressure of population) and later by Keynes (periodic shortage of purchasing power due to excess of savings over investment) both aroused great opposition. See Flugel: *Population, Psychology and Peace*, 1947.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

field was the Munich agreement. Whether it was or was not possible to defend Czechoslovakia at that time, there is no doubt that most of us, at least unconsciously, felt a moral obligation to challenge the aggressor, and that our failure to do so aroused a great deal of unconscious guilt. And as this was very painful, all the familiar defences were mobilized against it. Some denied that there was any obligation; others admitted it, but put all the blame for the desertion on our French allies; while yet others asserted that Czechoslovakia had brought her troubles on herself.

As we know, this kind of conflict between a sense of moral obligation and an anxiety occurs also when the source of the anxiety is the internal super-ego. There can be a direct conflict within the self between two kinds of conscience: one demanding loyalty to something loved and the other obedience to something feared. Many Germans, under the Third Reich, experienced this in its acutest form. Some whose super-egos were closely identified with the state felt 'morally' compelled to surrender to it, but remained acutely conscious of having by so doing betrayed another morality within them. In such cases, a common solution was to apply for a transfer to the front in the hope of getting killed. They felt compelled both to serve the state and to punish themselves for doing so. But many were able to erect defences against this depressive guilt and served the state, if necessary as executioners in concentration camps, without conscious qualms beyond the sense of having faithfully performed a disagreeable duty. They provide typical examples of the extent to which normal humanist morality can be submerged in any people who sur-

Psychoanalysis and Politics

render their consciences to a church, a party or a state.

In the twentieth century it may seem absurd, and embarrassingly reminiscent of revivalism, to stress so much the importance of an unconscious sense of guilt. For many people believe that guilt was manufactured by religion and that both will disappear together. It would be truer to say that religion was created to relieve a sense of guilt which was there already and which people have always been trying to get rid of. Not only Christianity, but also a good deal of the political philosophy which tends to take its place, begins with a myth about guilt. And both myths, while admitting guilt, express the impulse to project it. Thus the myth of original sin puts the primary blame on our first parents. Similarly, the newer myth of 'primal innocence', which we owe to Rousseau and which has had and still has an enormous political importance, admits the 'badness' of man as he is but puts the blame on the social environment that nurtured him. We may certainly agree that unfavourable homes and an unfavourable society can be blamed for the delinquent, criminal or merely unpleasant character of many adults. We can go further and agree that, if we had a 'good' society including as it would the best home background, we should nearly all be healthy and agreeable people; and that, as a result, we should have much less cause to feel either conscious or unconscious guilt. But the myth serves merely to deny, without in the least diminishing, the guilt that people as they are do feel unconsciously.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

4. System building and the construction of Ideologies

One defence against depression seems to me to be of such overriding political significance that it deserves to be singled out for a separate treatment. I will introduce it by describing an experience which is fairly common in analysis.

The experience is the almost accidental discovery of the clinical importance of certain beliefs, usually of a religious or philosophical nature, which a patient has hitherto belittled rather than concealed. He has always been aware of them, but they have seemed to him to be quite irrelevant to his analysis and he has hardly mentioned them. If, however, he is asked about them, another reason for his previous avoidance of the subject may come to light. He may, for example, find to his surprise that he cannot describe them clearly to his analyst even when he tries; and this at once suggests that they must be important after all, and that he unconsciously wants to conceal them because he is very much afraid of their being undermined. He may then admit that he does feel them in some obscure way to be the mainspring of his life which would be meaningless without them.

This may be all that can be elicited at first. But it is enough to make the analyst suspect that, whether true or false in themselves, they are being used to deny some truth which is felt to be intolerable.

Perhaps the most painful truth anyone is ever called upon to face is that some loved person is dead beyond recall; and it can become intolerable if this loved person was also envied so that former death wishes and a present sense of triumph adds a supercharge of guilt to the already heavy load of grief and deso-

Psychoanalysis and Politics

lation. The patient as a child may have been faced with such a situation, for example, by the death of his father. At the time, he may have accepted the event with an apparent insensitivity almost undisturbed by any conscious feelings of distress—but only because unconsciously he has succeeded in denying its occurrence.

Often, a kind of private myth is built on the foundations of this initial denial of an intolerable truth. He may begin by regressing in unconscious phantasy to the period before the disaster, to a time when it could still have been prevented. Then, instead of feeling responsible for it, because his own past death wishes have magically contrived it, he will feel responsible for preventing its occurrence. Even his sense of triumph, of having ousted and become his father, which is the source of his sense of guilt, and fear of retaliation, is used in the service of an omnipotent phantasy of reparation. For, if he is his father, his father is still alive inside him, and what is more, he has absorbed the magic power to defeat death by creating life in the external world as well.

All this, when combined with a strong creative impulse, may be expressed in the sense of a vitally important mission. In place of the despair at the early loss of one object, there is the elated certainty of being able to achieve some enormous purpose. But as if to divert attention still further from the centre of distress, his original purpose which was the prevention of a death that has already taken place, becomes the symbolic prevention of something felt to be indirectly responsible for it. Thus, if the death is attributable to hate, and the hate to envy, it will be the envy that is to be eliminated; and, since it will

On the Analysis of Political Motives

haunt him in its projected rather than its original form, it is to be eliminated not so much from his own heart where he denies its presence, as from the entire external world. From here he may go on to evolve a new system, or to adapt an old one from religion or philosophy, for the salvation of mankind.

Such mechanisms have surely played their part in the lives of saints and the founders of new religions, in whom also the sense of guilt, which is denied by the omnipotent phantasy of reparation, so often leads in the end to the desperate alternative of an expiatory self-sacrifice. The systems they create with such dynamic genius provide others with a similar escape from some dark despair. And, since in the minds of these others the infallibility of the system to which they owe their happiness depends on the infallibility of its founder, he too becomes a part of it and shares its immunity from criticism.

Now it can be no accident that a decline in religion has been accompanied by a recrudescence of political ideologies, each promising in a less exaggerated and more prosaic form, a restored and better world. The sociological theories behind these great expectations may or may not be true. But those who hold them often feel that, if they were not true, there would be nothing left to live for. It is this which makes them potentially so dangerous. If they are believed with the degree of conviction usually accorded to scientific theories, no great harm could result from trying them in practice, even if they should prove to produce results the opposite of those intended. But if they are believed as articles of faith they can never be disproved. The result of trying them may be a decline, instead of the expected increase, in general prosperity

Psychoanalysis and Politics

and happiness, and indeed a whole series of calamities each more grievous than the last. But the dogmatist has only to introduce a few additional hypotheses to explain away these unfortunate effects and to support an increased, rather than a diminished conviction of the truth of his original system of beliefs. If this is his reaction, we may be sure that his additional hypotheses will be of a paranoidal kind. His benevolent intentions will seem to him to have miscarried, not because of a defect in theory, but because his opponents have somehow queered his pitch. So all the hatred he believes he is trying to eliminate from the world will well up within him against them. And because, by their disbelief they threaten the system by which he lives, he will pursue them with an implacable vindictiveness.

Any system of this kind is very recalcitrant to analysis. But when it appears as an ideology common to a sect or party, there will be many in whom it is accepted more as a convention than because it has any great psychological importance to them. In such cases, we may reasonably hope that increasing insight will bring about a substantial change in the collective outlook. The aim of all ideologies is a society in which people can be happier than they are at present. This is a natural expression of creative and reparative impulses and is likely to be pursued with more tenacity as these are brought into the open. But the beliefs as to the means by which this end is to be achieved may be expected to become less religious and more scientific in character. Instead of being maintained with a degree of conviction proportional to the evidence against them, as they sometimes are at present, they would then become more open to empirical tests and

On the Analysis of Political Motives

so more susceptible of intelligent modification whenever these tests demand an adverse verdict. Then perhaps a more satisfying world might really come within our grasp.

5. The concept of political analysis

We may now feel that we have found some of the main impediments to a 'good' society. If what we want is a 'perfect' society without hate or greed or conflict, this is certainly an utopia incompatible with the basic ambivalence of man. But a 'good' society, which is a favourable environment for healthy and mature development and in which there would be much less frustration and conflict than there is at present, might not be beyond our grasp if our political thinking was more consistently realistic and not so disturbed by the distorting influence of unconscious phantasies. These are the main impediments to be overcome.

We can also see, in principle, that the only way to overcome them is to make them more conscious. In other words, the remedy for the psychopathology of politics must be political analysis.

The difficulties that such an analysis presents are, of course, enormous. On the one hand a 'political ego' is a peculiarly recalcitrant material. On the other, we can approach it, if at all, only indirectly, through the medium of books, papers, lectures or broadcasts; and these are poor substitutes for the analytic situation. Therefore, it may well be argued that political analysis is theoretically impossible. Nevertheless, something of the kind has been practised for some time. Every book by an analyst on a social subject is a contribution to it.

Psychoanalysis and Politics

And following the lead of Freud himself, and such pioneers as Ernest Jones and Flugel, analytic books on social subjects have been accumulating since the beginning of the century. The effect of these may not and was not expected to be spectacular; but it is by no means negligible—except in countries where such books are banned. And given time, the accumulation of small effects must eventually become decisive.

To many people, this conclusion must seem profoundly disappointing. There is a widespread belief, not perhaps explicitly expressed, that the social therapist ought to be able to find some magic to lessen all social tensions and, above all, to remove the present threat of war. There is a half truth in this belief which may be exaggerated into a most dangerous falsehood.

The ideological disputes of the past have been settled sometimes by argument and sometimes by force. This present essay may be regarded as a contribution^o to their settlement by argument. I have tried to show that a humanist character and a humanist morality are attributes of a kind of wisdom which consists of insight into ourselves and others. I have also tried to show that humanism and wisdom thrive most easily in the kind of state that seeks to provide welfare without curtailing freedom. And lastly, I have argued that the main impediment to the achievement of such a state is the political influence of unconscious motives, and that this can only be lessened by becoming conscious of them. Now arguments and explanations of this kind, if true, should in time be capable of converting those who at present hold opposite moral and political opinions. But this presupposes^h that they are at least prepared to listen.

On the Analysis of Political Motives

If like the Russian communists they will not listen, but rather persist in trying to impose their political philosophy by force, arguments, however true, are no substitute for military defence.

Under these conditions all that such arguments can do—and this is by no means negligible—is to strengthen the belief of those who are already humanist and liberal that their values are worth defending. To hesitate in this belief, or merely to neglect defence while seeking a magical alternative—in short an over-anxiousness to escape war at almost any cost—is perhaps the surest way to bring it upon us. But if, while believing that our values are founded upon truth, we remain vigilant to defend them by force, it is possible that we may never have to do so. And the period of vigilance need not be eternal; for if the truth survives at all, it will slowly penetrate even where it is at first least welcome and so gradually remove the danger.

INDEX

- Alcibiades, 58
- Ambivalence, 76, 103, 164, 170,
176-79: in normal person, 80:
of egoistic and altruistic in-
stincts, 92-96
- Analysis, 17, 23-29, 63-68, 84,
147-50: and approach to political
philosophy, 17-19, 99-102:
influence of, on normal develop-
ment, 84
- Anxiety, depressive and persecu-
tory, 70-81, 99-102, 155-72
- Arapesh, of New Guinea, 94
- Authoritarianism, and authori-
tarian morality, 12-15, 55, 65-
68, 72-74, 108-115, 122, 135,
138
- Belief, meaning of, 16, 31-44, 48:
religious, psychological truths
of, 144-45
- Benedict, Ruth, 106
- Bertram, Dr. C. G. L., 167n.
- 'Body Image', 58-59
- Brangham, Col., 10, 12
- Cæsar, Julius, 35
- Calvin, 160
- Calvinists, 63-64
- Charles I, 164
- Christianity, and altruism, 94n.,
95: and devil worship, 159-60:
decline in, and substitution of,
by political philosophy, 160, 172
- Churchill, Winston, 121
- Communism, 100
- Communist, 98, 127-28
- Conscience, authoritarian and
humanist, 11-15, 55, 65-68, 74,
80-81
- Conscription, psychological
aspects of, 130-32
- Conservative, 98, 152
- Control Commission, 14, 115
- Darwinian theory, applied to
group selection, 57, 91
- Depressive feelings and depressive
guilt, 66-68, 70-81, 101-102,
155, 163-72
- 'Depressive position', 51-57
- Devil Worship, 159
- Dicks, Professor H. V., 9-10, 107,
108n.
- England, humanist movement in,
112, 115-22: the Reformation
in, 116
- Ethical Relativism, 8-9, 17, 25-
28, 141
- Fascism, rise of, 17: depressive
apathy towards, 100: lack of
resistance to, by German Civil
Service, 115
- Faust, 75
- Flugel, Professor, 17, 170n., 178
- Frederick the Great, 113
- Freud, Sigmund, 16, 37, 46-47,
178: on Pleasure Principle, 42:
on pre-conscious, 43: on 'Eros
and Ananke', 49n.: on Œdipus
complex, 57: on super-ego, 62:
on Rome and the human mind,
69: on narcissism and object
love, 93-94: his '*Totem and
Taboo*', 166n.
- German, prisoners, investigated
by H. V. Dicks, 108: Civil
Service, lack of resistance by, to
Fascism, 115: officials, war
crimes by, 128: nation, political
paranoia of, 156: people, post-
war guilt of, 166
- German Personnel Research
Branch, 9, 107, 115
- Germans, fanaticism of Nazi con-
verts among, 100: conflict of,
with super-ego, 171

Index

- Germany, under Third Reich, 8-9: under Nazis, 84: and 'Cold War', 101: and downward spiral, 107: increasing authoritarianism of, 112-15: declaration of war on France by, 120: Nazi state in, 126: unemployment in, 133: disintegration of society in, after fall of Hohenzollerns, 134: and *Lebensraum*, 168
- Gorer, Geoffrey, 106
- Guilt, depressive and persecutory, 52, 54-56, 60, 64, 66-68, 74, 77, 102, 145, 163-72, 175
- Hegel, 72, 75, 114, 160
- Heredity, influence of, on development, 82
- Hicklin, Mrs. M., 10
- Hitler, attitude of Ethical Relativists towards, 9: attitude of Nazis towards, 74, 102: rise and fall of, in self-created life pattern, 75: 'wishful thinking' about, 100: disintegration of German Society after fall of, 134: 'political paranoia' of, 156:
- Home, influence of, on development, 82-83, 123-26
- Homosexuality, and 'phantom' component of ego, 60-61
- Humanism, and humanist morality, 11-15, 55, 66-68, 80-81, 115-22, 135, 137: militant, 119, 121
- Hume, 15, 36n.
- Hypo-manic, 72, 74-76, 79
- Introjection, 50-51, 60, 94, 110: and identification with parent of same sex, 61: as defence, 71
- Jones, Ernest, 16, 78n., 99n., 158n., 165n., 178
- Johnson, Doctor, 36n.
- Kant, 72
- Keith, Sir Arthur, 95n.
- Keynes, Lord, 170n.
- Klein, Melanie, his technique of 'free association in play', 16, 46-47: on persecutory and depressive positions, 52-54: on anxiety arising from aggression, 96n., on death instinct, 156n.
- Knox, John, 160
- Leites, Dr. N., 20
- Logical Positivists, 15
- Louis XVI, 164
- Malthus, 170n.
- Marx, 104
- Mead, Margaret, 106
- Morality, and super-ego, 63-68: and Œdipus complex, 72: see also 'authoritarianism' and 'humanism'
- Morals, Victorian, 7: Fascist, 8
- Mundugumor, of New Guinea, 94
- Mussolini, 8
- Napoleon, 72, 75
- Nazis, non-active, two groups among, 11: attitude of, towards Hitler, 74, 102: Germans under, 84: converts, fanaticism of, 100
- Nicholas II, 164
- Normality, definition of, 18-19, 43-44, 78-81: equivalence of, to rationality, 56, 61, 68: conditions favourable to, 81, 87: various concepts of, 147-48
- Œdipus complex, 57-63, 125
- Oeser, Oscar, 9
- Persecutory anxiety and guilt, 64, 66, 68, 70-81, 99-101, 155-63
- 'Persecutory Position', 51-56
- Phantasy, 38, 48, 50, 61, 66, 70, 96-99, 175
- Phantom, 58, 61
- Plato, 26, 58-60, 68, 141, 149, 160
- Projection, 48-50, 56, 60-62, 94, 166: concept of parent proved by, 62: as defence, 71: of aggressive instincts with external objects, 56: of super-ego into the State, 108-109

Index

- Prussian Court, influence of, on authoritarian nature of Germany, 113
'Psychiatric Interview', 10
Psychoanalysis—see Analysis
- Religion, as form of psychotherapy, 84n.: decline in, and substitution of, by political ideologies, 175: psychological truths of, 144-45
Rendel, Col., 9
Rickman, Dr. John, 20
Rohcim, Dr. G., and Central Australians, 56n., 106
Rorschach ink blot, analyst as, 85
Röpke, 130
Russell, Bertrand, 36, 39, 160n.
Russia, 101
Russians, 98, 128
- Schlick, M., 16
Scott, Dr. Clifford, 52n., 58n.
Segal, Paul, 20
Segal, Dr. Hannah, 20
Self, concept of, in its relation to external world, 50
Social System, influence of, on personality, 83-84
Socialists, 98, 137, 150
Socrates, 26, 149
Socratic investigation, political analysis as, 150, 151
State, influence of, on character, 108-109, 123, 126, 128, 135-146
Super-ego, 57, 62-68, 171: and Calvinist God, 63: modification of, by analysis, 63: and persecutory guilt, 64
Super-ego morality, and authoritarianism, 65
- Victorian morals, 7
Victorians and education, 144
- Winnicott, Dr. D. W., 18n., 83n.

