SUBTERRANEAN POLITICS: CRITICAL THEORY AND FREUD’S LEGACY

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Subterranean Politics: Critical Theory and Freud’s Legacy

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This dissertation reinterprets psychoanalysis within the context of and for use by critical theory. The central argument is that psychoanalysis has emancipatory potential that critical theory has yet to tap, and that a reimagined psychoanalysis thus has much to offer critical theory. The dissertation begins with a rereading of Freud’s critical method that highlights Freud’s heretofore-obscured militant optimism and compassion. The question of how critical theory can utilize this new understanding of Freud’s work is then considered in analyses of Horkheimer’s work on compassion and Habermas’s theorization of psychoanalysis as a model of communicative action. With this groundwork established, the dissertation turns to consider three directly political categories. Firstly, psychoanalytic Eros is critically juxtaposed with Herbert Marcuse’s account of the same. The author argues that psychoanalytic Eros, which is balanced more heavily towards the quotidian than the utopian, is more useful to critical theory because it speaks to concrete social agency and solidarity. Secondly, the critical category of guilt is considered. The author contests that critical theory has long understood the importance of working through guilt as a social problem, but lacks the nuanced understanding and methods for the resolution of guilt contained in psychoanalysis. Finally, sublimation and identification are considered in relation to the reality principle. The author notes that critical theory consistently rejects these theories, which are seen as processes that adapt
the subject to domination, and reimagines them as central to the development of autonomy and social agency. As a whole, the dissertation reclaims psychoanalysis as an ally to critical theory’s efforts to restore subjectivity and oppose systemic domination in modernity.
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# Contents

*Abstract*  
*Acknowledgments*  

Introduction  

1. Freud and the Critical Method  
2. Freud and the Critical Theory of Society  
3. Psychoanalysis is a Humanism: Reclaiming Eros for Critical Theory  
4. Working Through the Past: Freud, Critical Theory and Bad Conscience  
5. Wrong Life Lived Rightly: Towards the Restoration of Subjectivity  

Conclusion  

*Bibliography*
Introduction

Most interpretations of Freud, and particularly those produced by critical theorists, focus on the limits inherent in clinical practice that adapts the subject to live contently inside a dominating totality. This dissertation radically diverges with such interpretations, and presents Freud as a militant optimist, a compassionate actor and a radical intellectual concerned with reclaiming the betrayed emancipatory possibilities of past and present against that dominating totality. The purpose of this reimagining of Freud is to use radical psychoanalysis to strengthen and reorient critical theory today.

Critical theory has been concerned with subjectivity from the beginning, and that concern has never been more urgent than now. The cooption of the subject by what Marcuse called “one-dimensionality” is the chief cause of the reproduction of domination by the subject, who is objectified for use by the system through the subsumption of the subjective. As evidenced in Adorno and Horkheimer’s breathtaking reading of The Odyssey in Dialectic of Enlightenment, the order imposed by a society that seeks to master nature deadens the individual to his nature by degrees. To survive as social beings, therefore, individuals repress their genuine interests; they “preserve their existence by denying their subjectivity.”¹ The subject who denies subjectivity, “The man who, for the sake of his own self, calls himself Nobody,”² is caught in a dangerous pincers. As the system increasingly inverts human interests, he is less able to recognize and resist his plight due to hindrance of autonomy and reflection. The subject, in short, becomes actively complicit in his own domination as he becomes more dependent on the system.

that dominates him. The problem identified here, reification, *can* be met through criticism and resistance. To effectively challenge reification, as any critical theory must, emphasis needs to be placed on the restoration of the subjective. The foundation, that is to say, for reflection must be strengthened such that individuals can think critically and reach out constructively towards a world recognized for its impoverishment and injustice.

Critical theory, indeed, reveals the failure to bolster subjectivity as fatal error. Modernity not only envelops the subject in the illusion of comfort and freedom, but also uses systemic disciplines – contained in flattened instrumental language, mass culture and ideology – to shape the human subject as the object of history, through which power is developed for its own sake. The subject therefore is sufficiently anaesthetized to feel certain that he is free despite his domination, as Adorno warns, “The subject still feels sure of its autonomy, but the nullity demonstrated to subjects by the concentration camp is already overtaking the form of subjectivity itself,” which leaves the critical intellectual to “consider the evanescent as essential,” in light of the vanishing subject.³ This responsibility is exacerbated by the outraging conditions of modern life. There is an urgent need, therefore, to promote thinking and defend the subjective foundations for thinking. The turn to the subjective - which must be developed if theory and practice are to remain not only effective, but even *possible* - is thus no abdication. The purpose of dialectical work is to navigate the tension between the truth content of a situation and the factors restricting and concealing emancipatory alternatives so that meaningful resistance against all that inverts the world can emerge from theory. Because the engulfment of subjectivity is the point at which modernity becomes problematic for the subject who

might and ought resist the present system, it is possible to exposit the desiccated condition of the individual with explosive effect. In other words, the emancipatory possibility of rebuilding subjectivity in opposition to brutalizing contemporary norms and disciplines is obscured within the problem of “one-dimensionality” itself and must be reclaimed.

Today, critical theory alone retains the dialectical capacity to construct the new despite and out of the complex injustices of the present system. At the same time, however, critical theory has come under attack from many directions and seems to be caught in a “crisis of purpose.” It thus stands in need of reinforcement and reentrenchment, of new avenues for development. The nature and rectification of this situation is the subject of this dissertation. The central contention of this dissertation is that fresh engagement with psychoanalysis can effectually augment and reinforce critical theory at a needful moment. Critical theory, from the very beginning, utilized psychoanalysis as a key resource in developing a functional theory of society. When asked about the role of psychoanalysis in critical theory, indeed, Max Horkheimer responded, “We really are deeply indebted to Freud and his first collaborators. His thought is one of the Bildungsmachte [foundation stones] without which our own philosophy would not be what it is.” Over time, however, the relationship between critical theory and Freud became tenuous. In short, Freud became an important signifier of the systemic adaptation to domination for many critical theorists.

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4 Bronner, Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists, 11.
Freud’s claims about society, which this dissertation will reimagine, are indeed seemingly problematic for a critical theory pursuing emancipation. As a result, psychoanalysis continues to exsiccate within critical theory. Psychoanalysis, however, demands that the critic confront a perverse world in its perversions, by smashing illusions and meeting the structural forces that work against critical efforts precisely at their strongest point, in the willfully obscured reaches of the psyche. If one is to continue the project of criticism today, access to the powerful weapons psychoanalysis provides is wanting. Psychoanalysis, indeed, advances fundamental checks on and ways out of the disintegration of the subject. Without its foundations maintained in good order, in short, no edifice can maintain its integrity. This dissertation attends to a weakened root of critical theory, and thereby seeks to promote the health of the organism.

In the first chapter, I reimagine Freud’s critical method. My reading of Freud’s methods develops three central claims. Firstly, I argue that although Freud has long been read as an exemplar of pessimism, psychoanalysis is a lived process of criticism and contestation that is, to borrow Ernst Bloch’s term, militantly optimistic. Freud is often uncritically read as an unfeeling explorer of the mind, committed to advancing the interests of his school above the interests of his patients. A full accounting of Freud’s work, however, shows such interpretations to be spurious. Freud’s methods and categories are, indeed, meant to build the autonomy of the subject and cause him to recognize his social agency. Psychoanalysis’s power comes from Freud’s unshakable belief, expressed throughout his works, that through psychoanalysis, the subject can develop his social agency and become an emancipatory smasher of the structural illusions that ensnare society in domination. It is in its optimism, therefore, that psychoanalysis is
useful in contesting oppression. Secondly, I highlight Freud’s compassion and argue that psychoanalysis is helpful as a means of building the compassionate strain within critical theory. Psychoanalysis matured into a cathartic method that works against the resistance of the patient to prompt introspection. Psychoanalysis demands, furthermore, that the subject recognize the unpleasant facets of individual life and thereby primes him to recognize and reject dominating tendencies within society. Finally, therefore, I will argue that psychoanalysis is deeply supportive of the spontaneous engagement demanded by democratic processes, because it prepares the subject to resist the external injustices that ensnare him and builds his compassionate capacity to recognize the suffering of others as tantamount to his own. The main contribution to critical theory made here is the reclamation of psychoanalysis as a radical method for rebuilding subjectivity, supporting autonomy and contesting domination sociopsychologically that can be used in practice.

In the second chapter, I place Freud in direct dialogue with Max Horkheimer and Jurgen Habermas. Through an analysis of the works of the young Horkheimer, I will show that compassion (or, to put it differently an identification with and mobilizing respect for the suffering) is a necessary foundation for critical theory. Because compassion has faded as an emphasis within critical theory, critical theory’s capacity to build solidarity and foment emancipatory challenges to domination has been compromised. I present psychoanalysis as usefully restoring this aspect of theory, as it answers this need effectively in practice. I will argue that psychoanalysis provides concrete mechanisms for accessing the social relations, like the family, in which compassion and autonomy are compromised. I will also highlight psychoanalysis as a means of restoring these essential qualities through a privileged form of discourse. On
one level, as Habermas unpacks in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, psychoanalysis is a form of communicative action and discovery that allows both the analyst and analysand to reflect on human interests effectively. Because psychoanalysis sets up a privileged form of communication, indeed, Habermas discerned that psychoanalytic conversation has the potential to challenge structural alienation and domination.\(^6\) Habermas, however, has edged away from psychoanalysis over time, and has yet to fully develop an account of psychoanalysis as a powerful disruptive resource in the arsenal of critical theory. In this chapter, I will pick up this task. The main contribution of this chapter to critical theory, therefore, is the development of a new reading of Freud that seeks to maximize its liberating and compassionate potential through focusing on the radical, optimistic force of psychoanalysis as an ongoing communicative process.

The third chapter of this dissertation focuses on the category that enables Freud’s method to function, Eros, and juxtaposes Freud’s Eros with Herbert Marcuse’s. I argue that Marcuse’s vision founders in that it is regressive and overly utopian, whereas Freud develops Eros as a social force balanced heavily towards the quotidian. Psychoanalytically understood, Eros is an inborn creative and constructive passion that drives all men, not just philosophers, towards the loving building of connections, development of relationships and achievement of maturity. Freud’s Eros is effective precisely because it is a quality of real individuals in a flawed system, an instinctual energy that can be supported as a fruitful orientation towards self and world without and in spite of the absence of utopia. In short, my central contention is that Eros must be understood through psychoanalysis as a category that draws its potency from the fact that

it is a real lived process operative within and necessary because of the limitations of the human condition. Freud frames Eros as the primary antagonist of human aggression and the systemic injustices of modernity and thus, given Freud’s belief that human aggression can be sublimated in non-destructive directions, Eros is at the heart of any effort to draw radical insights, methods and challenges from Freud’s work. I also claim that such an Eros does not threaten to disenchant the world and, indeed, shapes a reciprocal and creative relationship between the subject and society. The major contribution of this chapter is the presentation of Eros as a realistic social force supporting solidarity and mobilizing challenges to domination that can be developed by critical theory.

The fourth chapter deals with the central psychoanalytic category of guilt, and analyzes its substantial impact on citizenship, groups and political processes. In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud identified guilt as the great disease of all civilization, a plague that intensifies apace with the historical development of societies and the superego. This finding was mirrored by The Authoritarian Personality, which consistently links the unchecked operations of unconscious guilt with prejudice and the predisposition to authoritarianism. One need not read psychoanalysis, however, as offering no means of contesting guilt, especially as a social problem. I will argue that psychoanalysis, by offering a method that supports the subject in contesting the superego and developing principled conscience, offers essential methods for the threshing out of guilt in modernity. I will further argue that psychoanalysis crafts citizens capable of facing difficult moments of decision and owning the consequences of the choices made. By placing the subject in touch with the repressed, moreover, psychoanalysis grapples with the internal foundations of guilt. In short, psychoanalysis is optimally situated to
answer questions that are only becoming more relevant with the passage of time. Groups that work through guilt, simply put, are better able to develop genuine democratic processes. Groups that fail to work through the tangle of guilt are prone, in contrast, to aggressively and defensively react to the past. Because psychoanalysis predicts and interprets the complex operations of guilt in modernity, it can be utilized to improve upon the translation of theory into effective social mechanisms for confronting guilt. Critical theory, therefore, has a vital interest in studying these approaches as means of serving and advancing its own goals. The main contribution of this chapter is the presentation of psychoanalytic means of contesting guilt (and psychological mechanisms related to guilt) as a social problem that can be used to enhance critical theory’s response to this problem.

The fifth chapter takes up the categories of sublimation and identification, both of which are core components of maturation that condition social agency. Sublimation, the redirection of impulses into secondary avenues of release and fulfillment, and identification, a catchall term for a set of processes that enable the individual to recognize and build identity through the recognition of desirable and undesirable characteristics of others, are preconditions for citizenship and intellectual tasks like criticism. To consider the modern subject and group without attention to these categories, therefore, is impossible. Despite this, however, critical theory often reads sublimation as an objectionable mechanism adapting the subject to his domination. Likewise, identification is frequently described as a process through which the individual is passively constrained and shaped by others. Both, indeed, are seen as a primary hooks ensnaring the subject in a disempowering order. Both processes are thus undertheorized within critical theory. The main goal of this chapter is to contest the dominant readings of the reality principle
and the related categories of sublimation and identification as submissions to a repressive
order indicative of the worst failures of Freud’s vision. Instead, I will show that if the
goal of securing vibrant subjectivity capable of supporting in modernity can be best met
precisely through the deployment of sublimation and identification in fresh ways. I argue
that the full significance of Freud’s optimism and the potency of the creative orientation
to world he demands of the subject can only be understood through a close and careful
reading of these categories. I will place Freud in direct dialogue with several critical
theorists, including Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno, and will work towards a reading
of these categories in relation to both the reality principle and the goals of critical theory.
I will thus reclaim these categories by showing that both can be utilized to build
subjectivity and support democratic processes just as surely as each contains snares for
the growth of agency and independence that are of grave importance to critical theorists;
this is the major contribution of the chapter.

A review of the many volumes written on Freud in the past might call this work
into question as a foray into an already overcrowded and exhausted area of discourse. My
project, however, is necessary. The central reading of Freud as a militant optimist,
compassionate practitioner and innovator whose work still provides key supports to
democratic processes and citizenship clearly contests many of the dominant scholarly
accounts of his work. The most important contribution of this dissertation is the
restoration of the psychoanalytic foundations of critical theory. Without a vibrant critical
theory, the strengthening forces of advanced industrial capitalism in a globalized
economy will continue, to borrow a phrase from Erich Fromm, to transform the world we
share into a poisonous place. The traumas of the twentieth century were neither an aberration nor exhausted by their enactment. We can expect that the factors, many of them psychological, driving aggression, disillusionment and disempowerment in modernity will continue to mar human life well into the future if they are not soundly confronted. A host of emerging trends, moreover, threaten to deepen the insecurities, alienation and experienced by the subject as time progresses. The nation state, a key marker of group and individual identity, value and security, for example, is drawn into deep question and practically challenged in diverse ways by globalization’s relation to borders, populations, language and economics. A return to its psychoanalytic foundations will restore the compassion of critical theory and grant crucial access to the psychological foundations of domination. Through psychoanalysis, in other words, advances in praxis will become possible and critical theory can return to the vitally important task of restoring subjectivity against domination and for the emancipation of society.

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Freud and the Critical Method

The First World War tested intellectuals confronted with an unprecedented display of what human beings are capable of, especially in increasingly reifying modernity. For psychoanalysis, from its inception concerned with the psychological foundations of dissatisfying modes of living, this challenge was especially important. If Freud’s concern was to merely fit his patients for an impoverished life in modernity (and thereby flatten their subjective resistance to alienation and oppression), the war should have caused him to confirm his pessimistic forecasts for humanity. Instead, Freud was mobilized by the war to radicalize in both theory and practice. Where death swept across Europe, Freud countered with instinctual Eros. Where ovine group mentalities threatened, Freud challenged the psychological dimension of groups. Where, above all, aggression and illusion held deadly court, Freud denied the efficacy of both, demanding that man become autonomous and develop a just, free and fulfilling social order. It follows, therefore, that Freud is better understood as an opponent of domination, internal and external, than as an advocate of the same. Coupled with his concern for the subjective, it also follows that Freud is more of an ally to the project of critical theory than critical theorists have given him credit for. Simply stated, it is time to reimagine what psychoanalysis can mean for critical theory. In this chapter, I present psychoanalysis as a process meant both to restore the subject to health and to propel the subject to grow into autonomy and social agency. The central goal of the chapter is to reveal psychoanalysis as an ongoing process of reflection, criticism and action with implications for critical theory that go far beyond the couch. I argue that direct engagement with psychoanalysis
reveals its militantly optimistic and compassionate character. Freud’s optimism is important because it informs a process of critique and action that challenges not only the suffering of the individual, but also the structural conditions that produce that suffering through the reorientation of subject to self and world. Psychoanalysis therefore, anticipated critical theory in terms of subjectivity and social agency, and has emancipatory potential that critical theory has yet to tap.

Reimagining psychoanalysis for critical theory, however, is challenging, as critical theory has a complex relationship with psychoanalytic methods. As Martin Jay recalls, the original push to couple Freud and Marx was audacious for its time. Early efforts, especially Erich Fromm’s, focused on using psychoanalytic mechanisms to mediate between the individual and society, and perhaps reveal something about each in speaking to the relation between the two. The critique of Freud as patriarchal absolutizer of the status quo arose from this work. Even Adorno’s “Social Science and Sociological Tendencies in Psychoanalysis,” which castigates the revision of psychoanalysis, ends with the gloomy assessment (borrowed from Benjamin) that, “It is only for the sake of the hopeless that hope is given” and contests, “I suspect that Freud’s contempt for men is nothing but an expression of such hopeless love which may be the only expression of hope still permitted to us.” Adorno here ascribes a clear pessimism and scorn for “men” to Freud; it is worth note that the Frankfurt’s School’s “intensified appreciation of

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9 Ibid. 91
10 Ibid. 101
Freud’s relevance” in the 1940s and beyond was bound to its “increased pessimism about the possibility of revolution.” Critical theory’s work with Freudian categories – gradually seen as more or less social in themselves due to the society’s engulfment of the subjective – eventually turned from the psychoanalytic process. Today, however, Freud must be picked up in an antipodal fashion: as a militant optimist compassionately contesting domination in the hope that mankind might be other than hopeless.

In rethinking critical theory’s utilization of psychoanalysis, it is important to remember Bronner and Kellner’s claim that, “Against the trends toward conformity, massification and submission, the critical theorists all advocate strengthening the ego and developing critical individualism.” This statement speaks equally to psychoanalysis. The common views of Freud as man, intellectual and practitioner, however, work against the correlation of psychoanalysis with this goal. To take an example, the reading of Freud as striving to “[turn] hysterical misery into mere unhappiness,” obscures the necessary relationship within psychoanalysis between “strengthening the ego,” a goal made clear in Freud’s work, and, “developing critical individualism” against the emergent dangers of “conformity, massification and submission,” an end of psychoanalysis frequently missed by those who read Freud as urging his own form of submission. In short, the major critical theorists read psychoanalysis as dogmatically crafting, particularly through authoritarian clinical practices, subjects capable of enduring, not challenging, the world

12 Ibid. 105  
14 See: Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, Studies in Hysteria (New York: Penguin Books, 2004). This line, penned in 1895 during the earliest period of psychoanalytic thought, is often quoted as Freud’s final assessment of his contribution.  
15 The reality principle speaks to the renunciations necessary for productive, peaceful social cohabitation.
around them. Critical theory has maintained that a non-dogmatic perspective is essential to emancipatory work from its inception. It is easy to see how the image of Freud as something of a primal father in his own right, policing an orthodoxy, not to mention the bourgeois biases that pepper his work, could color the perception of radical thinkers. Still the worse, the sale of Freud action figures, the proliferation of Freudian quips on sitcoms and the publication of endless “self help” volumes drawing on Freud in more or less crude ways (one could go on), might indicate that we have come far too close to Freud as commodity to ever substantively approach Freud as thinker who knew himself to be making contributions and sought to prime new discoveries which would surpass his own. In short, critical theory generally treats psychoanalysis as something of a fellow traveler, a source of potential insight, but one whose aims call its methods into question. Critical theory therefore approaches Freud’s work as exemplifying a genius that challenges the limits of alienation, but cannot transcend them.

Fresh study of Freud’s critical method has much to offer to critical theory. The question becomes: what is the psychoanalytic process, and how can it enrich critical theory? To answer this question, one must know how to read psychoanalysis as a process that evolved over time, and not just as it remains frozen in the most commonly read of Freud’s works. To read Freudian methods through the early case studies alone, for example, is to miss the forest for the trees. The case studies, most importantly the infamous account of Dora’s unsuccessful treatment, are windows on the development of

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17 “Dora” was Ida Bauer, one of Freud’s earliest patients. Freud handled the case (Bauer’s complaints stemmed from a series of abusive emotional entanglements with adults who took advantage of the teen) badly, imposing interpretations on Dora with little consideration for her interests or outcome. Dora broke off treatment quickly.
the psychoanalytic process, not examples of the deployment of mature methods. Freud used his early forays into clinical practice to refine his methods. The psychoanalytic process that emerged from this period, from the active linking of theory and practice in line with human interests, cannot be reflected upon unless Freud’s methods are examined in detail. This is because, as Freud famously noted in his controversial lecture, “The Question of a Weltanschauung,” psychoanalysis is not and does not lead to a set worldview, and is instead a critical push against the illusions, most importantly religion, which structure identity and reality. Freud argues that a Weltanschauung is:

…an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered…As a specialist science, a branch of psychology – a depth-psychology or psychology of the unconscious [psychoanalysis] is quite unfit to construct a Weltanschauung of its own: it must accept the scientific one.  

More than this, though, Freud fears that any reliance on or construction of a Weltanschauung is a troubling attempt to sate psychological needs, and that even science posits a uniformity that psychoanalysis cannot sanction. Critical theory errs, therefore, where it presumes Freud promotes a set worldview and seeks to adjust the subject to an inflexible system of principles demanding renunciations. Instead, psychoanalysis questions all worldviews with an eye to building autonomy that needs no “uniform” solutions to “the problems of our existence.”

Psychoanalysis, indeed, neither sets goals for the subject nor imposes interpretations and roles upon her in practice. Instead, the patient is empowered to make her own interpretations, and thereby take control over her unique life for her own ends.

19 Ibid. 196
Psychoanalysis is concerned with the subject’s work of uncovering the truth of her inner life and contesting the personal, ideological and dogmatic illusions that have heretofore restricted her from obtaining this clarity. It is thus an emancipatory process building autonomy and grounded in reflection, critique and constructive practice. For Freud, any Weltanschauung is necessarily suspect because it can rest on the same needs and fears behind other demobilizing forms of obscuring the real. He embraces science not as worldview, but as a means of contesting illusion and liberating the individual to live creatively in relation to society, as Freud elaborates:

Science takes notice of the fact that the human mind produces these demands and is ready to examine their sources; but it has not the slightest reason to regard them as justified. On the contrary it sees this as a warning carefully to separate from knowledge everything that is illusion and an outcome of emotional demands like these.  

This contestation can only occur as an ongoing form of resistance against the delusion and denial that mark mankind in what Freud elsewhere described as its long immaturity. Clinically, psychoanalysis seeks to liberate the patient from all that restricts autonomy and subjectivity, so he can also join this struggle. Psychoanalytic insights thus cannot be disentangled from psychoanalytic methods, as psychoanalysis, like critical theory, is an ongoing process of criticism and action, of fearless discovery and the bold push against all illusion, and nothing more.

The Development of Psychoanalysis and The Politics of Self-Interpretation

The ideas that became psychoanalysis began to take shape in Freud’s mind well before his earliest practice. Other scholars, most notably Ernest Jones and Peter Gay, have constructed meticulous genealogies of the long process of discovery that antedates

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20 Ibid. 197
Freud’s first concrete efforts. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, the origins of psychoanalysis must be considered in the deed, the first connection of theory with practice. By this measure, the opening act of psychoanalysis was the self-analysis Freud began during the waning years of the nineteenth century, most dramatically captured in his seminal work On the Interpretation of Dreams.

Before Freud’s self-analysis, he reacted without subtlety, without means for incisive critique, to his patients’ claims. His infamous early arguments about the extent of the sexual abuse of children, based largely on reports later understood as complex fantasies, is an example of his early literal reaction. Psychoanalysis, indeed, only became a workable method concerned with the nuances of mental life and supporting the subject in reaching autonomy through Freud’s self-analysis.21 Self-analysis, however, was not an easy transition to mature psychoanalysis. Although Freud employed free association,22 utilizing his dreams as the key material, the elements of the psychoanalytic situation that stimulate maturation and condition recovery, notably transference, rely on a dyad of practitioner-patient rendered impossible *prima facie* in self-observation. This dyad enables the patient to observe herself by using the analyst as a mirror reflecting her inner life. Freud’s effort, occurring without mirrors, left him with limited means of observation, reflection and judgment, and thus demanded an extreme manifestation of will.

This is where the political relevance of the self-analysis begins to become clear: as critical theory at its best understands, self-examination is the first step in disrupting the reifying normality that calcifies life. Neurosis is not simply a disruption of some normal

22 Free association is the “basic rule” of and most essential method in Freudian clinical practice.
condition. The everyday life held up as normal is actually structured by illusions that speak to common psychological needs and shape thought, feeling and behavior.\textsuperscript{23} Neurosis is merely an extreme form of coping with the difficulties of life and relating to society, or to put it somewhat differently, it is an understandable, but untenable, form of living.\textsuperscript{24} The conscious recognition of one’s own resistance, which Freud experienced directly in his self-analysis, is terrifying because it opens the possibility of letting go of the unhealthy, but comfortably dissociated, way one has been living, and taking something of a leap of faith towards autonomy. It is abandoning what one is in the name of not only what one could be, but also what psychoanalysis reveals one should be and has a duty to become. Critical theory also seeks this end, but lacks psychoanalytic means to directly confront the internal foundations for oppression that paralyze the subjective.

Freud, indeed, examples this process of becoming. Despite the difficulty of the work, and the painful nature of what it dredged up, indeed, “[Freud] was buoyant as he shed one illusion after another.”\textsuperscript{25} In a letter to Wilhelm Fliess, Freud proclaimed, “I believe I am in a cocoon, and who knows what kind of beast will crawl out.”\textsuperscript{26} Through this work, and the lifetime of self-examination that followed, Freud experienced himself as a social agent and embraced the unique potentiality that his existence presented. Self-analysis thus enabled Freud to seize upon his evolving methods as his creation, to be used in reaching constructively out to others. His self-reflection led him to contest

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\textsuperscript{24} As Sartre has the skeptical Meynert warn the enterprising young Freud of his \textit{The Freud Scenario}, “You know what neurosis is? A way of living. You’ll kill them.”


\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. 98-99.
normality and develop means of resisting the systemic forces corrupting life at the social level: in recognizing his own suffering, he grasped the need to contest the suffering of others. Psychoanalysis is not simply a course of therapy, therefore, with a beginning and an end. It contains within its framework a new way of living, a way worth living, one that can and must be deployed by the subject beyond the couch. It is up to critical theory, which takes up every aspect of the social totality, to develop this alternative mode of life.

Self-reflection is the correct beginning for this development. The first manifestation of psychoanalysis in action was deeply personal and decidedly political. What has been termed ‘the existential moment,’ indeed, is the foundation of Freud’s method and the end of his practice. As Jonathan Lear notes, psychoanalysis creates an ethical demand by raising the challenge that something is wrong with the way the subject is living, something that only she can fix through self-examination.\(^\text{27}\) When this confrontation is placed in the broader context of Freud’s works, wherein he consistently points to the need to contest the illusions that ensnare society, psychoanalysis emerges as a process that prepares the subject for a struggle that can only be understood as a radical sociopolitical project. In other words, it is a foundation upon which society can mature and take responsibility for its condition. Psychoanalysis is valuable because it supports what must found efforts to emancipate society: both the unflinching \textit{recherché du temps perdu} and the ongoing examination of the potential and dangers bound in the present.

Sartre’s reading of Freud in \textit{The Freud Scenario}, which emphasizes his gradual emergence from dependence and identity confusion, is useful at this point. Sartre’s Freud embraces his freedom and grows into the practice of his radical vision in and in spite of a

world that he has come to realize owes him nothing. In his synopsis of the screenplay, Sartre wrote, “The subject of the scenario is really: a man sets about knowing others because he sees this as the only way of getting to know himself; he realizes he must carry out his research upon others and upon himself simultaneously. We know ourselves through others, we know others through ourselves.”

The Freud Scenario is perhaps more interesting for what it reveals about Sartre than what it captures about Freud, but here uncovers an easily obscured aspect of Freud’s work: psychoanalysis only works as a process of mutual discovery. It is the relationship between the analyst and the analysand that supports the analysand’s self-interpretation. Above all, psychoanalysis makes self-reflection into a social question and power. The social agency modeled in the relationship with the analyst can be taken up as a lived process that provokes growth, critical thinking and self-reliance beyond the clinical setting. This requires the analyst to model the compassionate, rational subject one could be and with whom one can identify. In this performance, the intellectual begins to answer the compassionate duty to contest suffering identified by both Freud and Horkheimer.

To take up this performance in action opens up means of relating to the other that smash the artifices of one-dimensionality. Freud, as Sartre aptly captures, was intent to destroy the illusions that not only conditioned dissociation from reality and responsibility, but also created the social illusion of happiness. His Freud is repeatedly confronted with the charge that good people do not possess an unconscious, that he has touched on a “shameful secret” likely to undermine the “good” lives such people enjoy. Living psychoanalytically, however, transformed Freud into a critic driven by obdurate

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29 See, for example, Ibid. 230
compassion; as such, he could not but articulate ideas meant to liberate others from an unfree and, ultimately, unhappy way of living. Psychoanalysis recognizes that open introspection and self-recovery also spark the reevaluation of what the individual can and must become in society, and thereby reimagines society itself by linking inner possibility to social potentiality. It is crucial for critical theory’s purposes that the autonomy at the end of the process cannot be unmoored, therefore, from social agency and feeling.

**Dreams: Interpretation, Autonomy and Social Agency**

The humanistic capacity of psychoanalysis to spark reflection upon the self in ways that reach beyond the self, to support self-determination that reorients the subject constructively towards society, is evident even in Freud’s early works. In his masterful work on method, *On the Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud not only constructs a layered model for utilizing dreams to overcome the barriers to the unconscious, he also begins to indicate the need for spontaneity. Freud’s argument begins from the premise that all dreams can be interpreted through his method because they are psychical, not somatic, productions.  

In so framing the dream, Freud divests the subject of excuses for remaining opaque to himself and makes him responsible for the dream’s content (and, implicitly, the entirety of his mental life). Beyond this, the goal of interpretation is to “**turn the ‘involuntary’ ideas into ‘voluntary’ ones**,” signifying that the subject has a heretofore disavowed capacity to creatively own and shape his mental life, a degree of agency which modernity denies and blocks.  The process of interpreting dreams, moreover, is a standpoint upon which constructive self-criticism and new forms of self-reflection become possible. That is to say, it is not merely that dreams are an access point

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31 Ibid. 82
to the unconscious: the interpretation of dreams is a primary means to gain knowledge about the unconscious, \(^{32}\) a model of self-discovery which steels the subject to recall the repressed and make constructive use of these discoveries.

Freud’s dreams, above all the dream of Irma’s injection, \(^{33}\) come back again and again to his limits and disclose a corresponding wish to escape responsibility for and even awareness of the same. The very act of interpretation, however, forced Freud to confront these tendencies, the repressed and the wish to escape from knowledge of and responsibility for it, and positioned the repressed as a problematic to be overcome by the integration of the previously disowned aspects of mental life. Although Freud’s dreams, indeed, consistently reveal his desire to overcome oppression, they also disclose a fear of growing and creating. This is no contradiction: the dream is grounded in wishes that have remained completely or largely untouched from infancy, represents the power maintained by infantile mentalities and regresses to primary narcissism, the feeling of omnipotence common to infancy, \(^{34}\) as Freud claims:

Children are absolutely self-centered, they feel their needs intensely and aim quite ruthlessly at their satisfaction, particularly at the expense of their rivals, other children, and above all their brothers and sisters. But that does not make us call the child ‘wicked’; we call him ‘naughty’; he is not responsible for his bad deeds, neither in our judgment nor before the law. And rightly so. For we may expect that within the lifespan we ascribe to children, stirrings of altruism and a sense of morality will awaken…the length of the amoral childhood period is different in different individuals. If morality fails to develop, it pleases us to speak of ‘degeneration’, though obviously it is a matter of hampered development.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{32}\) Lear, *Freud*, 90.

\(^{33}\) In this dream, Freud encounters a patient who he initially blames for the pain she is experiencing. Upon examining her with the help of a colleague and two friends, he discovers abnormalities of the nose and throat. The dream, he interprets, is an attempt to absolve himself (and Fliess, who is not present in the dream, but who actually botched an operation on this woman) for mistakes in the care of this patient.

\(^{34}\) This feeling stems from infant’s inability to distinguish between self and world.

\(^{35}\) Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 193.
The dream is a pivotal means of reaching the unconscious because it not only allows the repressed to return to consciousness, but also evidences how it shapes mental life. Freud’s dreams, notably the dream of Count Thun, forced him to confront the residues of childhood not only in themselves, but also as they subsequently prevented him from reaching autonomy. For this reason, the interpretation of dreams forces a moment of decision: the current way of living is problematized, which forces the subject to reflexively determine what she will now become. Psychoanalytic interpretation, therefore, is a useful dialectical means of working out the problems of our inner histories and serves to unleash the promise of the present.

The very act of utilizing dreams rationally as material from which disowned truth content can be extracted was radical at the turn of the century; when coupled with Freud’s candid self-disclosure throughout the text, his dialectical encounter with dreams indicates a need to overcome the facades obscuring reality. Starting with himself, therefore, Freud evidenced a concern with the “self-interpretation of dreamers,” that outmatched his concern with interpreting the dreams themselves. The dreamer’s recognition that he endowed his dream with meaning becomes critical if he can grasp unconscious processes unfolding in the present. The act of interpretation is a perilous form of self-discovery, therefore, not only because it builds autonomy, but also because demands a way of living that challenges alienation, as Freud claims, “One cannot deny

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36 In this dream, Count Thun makes an insulting speech. Freud escapes the event through a series of ornate chambers and seeks to leave the city. At a railroad station, he becomes the attendant of a sick old man. For Freud, the dream symbolized a revolutionary fantasy, both against state and father, who here appears as the sick old man.
37 As Paul Roazen claims, “the notion that we resist realizations which endanger our self-image is a crucial aspect of the psychoanalytic system.”
38 Lear, Freud, 93, 103.
that it requires arduous self-conquest to interpret and report one’s own dreams. The
interpreter had to expose himself as the only villain among all the noble figures who
share his life.”39 The process of interpretation, indeed, casts a harsh spotlight on the
subject, particularly in his pained efforts to escape from freedom and reality. In so doing,
it importantly constructs autonomy as a social force.

Freud thus problematizes the myriad ways in which subjects dismiss the dream –
as being nonsense,40 for example - exactly where its content might be unraveled and used
productively. Repression is thereby made present in the interpretation, and can itself be
brought under critical scrutiny as resistance, as Freud affirms, “Psychoanalysis is right to
be mistrustful. One of its rules runs: whatever disturbs the continuation of the work of
analysis is a resistance.”41 Resistance to overcoming repression, revealed as a problem,
can be challenged. The act of interpreting dreams thereby requires the subject to
recognize, problematize and overcome the internal moorings that enmesh him in
oppression. Psychoanalysis, moreover, helpfully links dialectical thinking to self interest,
as Freud emphasizes, “it is precisely the slightest features of a dream that are
indispensable for its interpretation, and how long the delay in completing the task drags
out if we notice these things only late in the day…Nothing is arbitrary here.”42 The work

39 Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, 316.
40 Ibid. 112
41 Ibid. 336
42 Ibid. 334 Or, as Freud notes in the case of the “Wolf Man,” “It is often the case in
analysis that new material surfaces in the memory once the end is in sight, material which
up until then has been kept carefully hidden. Or else an inconspicuous remark will be
tossed casually into the conversation, in an indifferent tone of voice, as if it were
something quite superfluous, and then something else added on another occasion which
makes the physician prick up his ears, until we finally recognize that these passed-over
scraps of memory hold the key to the most important of secrets, glossed over by the
patient’s neurosis.”
of interpretation mobilizes the subject to find the emancipatory moment concealed in the mundane.\textsuperscript{43}

This new type of thinking, capable of navigating the layers of the dream without oversimplifying its content and associations, allows for the reconstruction of denied truths, as Freud notes, “It is left to the interpretation of the dream to re-establish the connections which the dream work has destroyed.”\textsuperscript{44} Psychoanalysis thereby restores the individual as the subject of his own history where before he was object to repression. The dream represents a disavowed layer of self and reveals that the surface of mental life is an artificial synthesis of defenses, illusions and repressions shielding him from reality and responsibility. Just as self-interpretation develops one’s capacity to develop the subjective, therefore, Freud presents the dreams themselves as an example of the human imaginative power to overcome social repressions. Freud claims that, “The central force of every dream is still a symbolizing activity of the imagination” and that “The dream represents a certain state of affairs being as I would wish it to be: its content is thus a wish-fulfillment, its motive a wish.”\textsuperscript{45} Interpretation thus recalls the subject to spontaneity as it uncovers the repressed: through interpretation, the subject can harness the imagination to push in a new direction, towards maturation and against the factors propagating his unfreedom. Psychoanalysis thus parallels most essential critical theory’s work in dealing with human interiority, and begins to build a bridge between external and internal emancipation.

\textbf{The Case Studies}

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid. 300
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. 238
\textsuperscript{45} Sigmund Freud, \textit{The Interpretation of Dreams}, 73, 94-5.
It is paramount for our purposes that psychoanalysis has reciprocally bound theory with practice from the beginning. The case studies are important because they reveal this linkage. In theory and practice, Freud’s concern therein is the regressive power of the repressed, as Freud noted of the “Wolf Man,”\(^{46}\) “I would maintain that childhood influence already makes itself felt in the initial situation of neurosis-formation, since its intervention is crucial in helping to determine whether, and at what point, the individual fails in his attempts to master the problems of real life.”\(^{47}\) In the case studies, Freud discovered that psychoanalysis is effective where it induces the subject to dialectically consider a youth that held the full promise of the growing being and the fears, insecurities and oppression of the helpless child in stark tension. As Freud noted in the case of “Little Hans,”\(^{48}\) becoming a social agent is difficult work contingent on the renunciation of the child’s defensive solutions to external and internal challenges.\(^{49}\) By renouncing infantile defenses, the door is opened to constructing mature alternatives.

Symptoms not only block working through, but also obfuscate underlying problems by seeming to be the trouble themselves. The work required to access the sources of the symptom takes a liberating form through free association, as Freud demands, “tell me everything that [comes to] mind, even if [it is] unpleasant, and even if

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\(^{46}\) The “Wolf Man,” Sergei Pankejeff (a Russian nobleman), sought treatment with Freud between 1910 and 1914 (and sporadically after). In his case, Freud is mainly concerned with a dream Pankejeff had as a boy of a tree filled with white wolves. Freud’s interpretation linked this dream to a repressed trauma from infancy.


\(^{48}\) “Little Hans,” Herbert Graf, was treated as a young boy by his father, who was consulted by Freud throughout the case. Graf was troubled by a fear of horses and leaving his home, which in the end stemmed from his fear of his father.

\(^{49}\) Ibid. 116
the thoughts seemed *unimportant, irrelevant or nonsensical.*\(^{50}\) Free association, for many, is the first time that open thought and expression - communication where anything is permissible, regardless of its correspondence with social normativity – is not only tolerated, but *demanded* as a basic responsibility. Free association thus forces a self to emerge and assume responsibility for thought and action where before the ego was actively complicit in its own alienation; this emergence is blocked at all turns in modern society, which psychoanalysis thereby defies. Once the subject turns towards reality, she can take the capacities developed by analysis and use them constructively. Of Little Hans, for example, Freud notes that his inner truth came “bubbling out” when he became able to drop his defenses and tolerate challenge.\(^ {51}\) Psychoanalysis can therefore not only assist critical theory in restoring subjectivity, but in doing so such that the subject is mobilized to challenge reification through his emerging autonomy.

Through his patients, Freud came to understand that psychological symptoms represent the mind’s serious, but insufficient, attempt to work through oppression, as Freud claimed in the case of “Little Hans,” “neurosis does not express silly ideas, any more than a dream does. We criticize what we do not understand. And in doing so, we make things easy for ourselves.”\(^ {52}\) This recognition places responsibilities on the shoulders of both analysand, who must freely supply the material and interpretation, and analyst, who must “give a certain unbiased attention to everything that comes along,” as, “Nothing is arbitrary when it comes to the psyche; the unreliability of what children say is derived from the power of their fantasy, just as the unreliability of what adults say is

\(^{50}\) Ibid. 129  
\(^{51}\) Ibid. 86  
\(^{52}\) Sigmund Freud, *The “Wolfman” and Other Cases*, 21.
derived from the power of their prejudices.” Psychoanalysis, indeed, aims to strip away all that would “make things easy,” and forces the subject to seize his agency and push forward because he has come to embrace existence in a world that owes him nothing. In other words, psychoanalysis is potent because it builds reciprocal bonds between theory and practice and communicative ties between theorist and the subjects of theory.

It was through their treatment, therefore, that Freud linked his creative agency to his patients’ need for independence. After “Dora,” “Listening became, for Freud, more than an art; it became a method, a privileged road to knowledge that his patients mapped out for him.” In the case of Little Hans, Freud tellingly criticized the boy’s father, stating that, “Hans’s father asks too many questions and is pursuing his own ideas rather than allowing the boy to express himself freely. In this way the process of analysis becomes opaque and uncertain.” Psychoanalysis requires the subject to become open to criticism, which must be translated into action that builds independence and supports the independence of others. At the same time, psychoanalysis recognizes that if emancipation is to be achieved, it can only be through the commitment of critical, mature subjects capable of love, compassion and solidarity.

**Resistance**

A slight excursus on resistance is necessary at this point. In the case of the “Wolf Man,” Freud presents the psychoanalytic dictum that:

…the length of the road that the analysis must travel with the patient and the wealth of material that must be mastered on that road are as nothing compared to the resistance encountered during the work, and are only worthy of consideration in that they are necessarily proportional to that resistance.55

53 Ibid. 51-2, 85
54 Gay, Freud: A Life For Our Time, 70.
55 Ibid. 209
The prudent psychoanalyst therefore pursues his aims indirectly, “first interpreting his analysand’s resistance and then his transference”\(^{56}\): nothing can be achieved until the resistance becomes conscious to the subject. It is by unpacking the resistance, indeed, that the subject is able to own the contents of the id, as Anna Freud claims, “The more completely we succeed in bringing both the resistance and the defense against affects into consciousness and so rendering them inoperative, the more rapidly shall we advance to an understanding of the id.”\(^{57}\) The goal of the analysis of resistance is to create an indirect path to the unconscious so the subject can work through the repressed, as Anna Freud holds, “From the beginning analysis, as a therapeutic method, was concerned with the ego and its aberrations: the investigation of the id and of its mode of operation was always only a means to an end. And the end was invariably the same; the correction of these abnormalities and the restoration of the ego to its integrity.”\(^{58}\) Resistance, therefore, also brings the ego, which is the driver of repression, into relief, as Anna Freud attests, “the material which assists us to analyze the ego makes its appearance in the form of resistance to the analysis of the id.”\(^{59}\) It is precisely when the resistance is at its height that one can become consciously aware of it and discover the repressed impulses feeding it.\(^{60}\) Psychoanalysis, in contrast to the readings of most critical theorists, utilizes resistance to contest and overcome the matrix of need and fear that hinder the subject’s

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\(^{56}\) Gay, *Freud: A Life For Our Time*, 299.


\(^{58}\) Ibid. 4


development. The primary emphasis is building the subject’s autonomy; exactly what
Freud is typically seen as undermining.

The analyst’s ability to reach the unconscious is dependent on the construction of
a situation in which the defensive operations of the ego are temporarily paused, as Anna
Freud posits, “The bringing of the unconscious into consciousness and the exercise of
therapeutic influence upon the relation between id, ego, and, superego clearly depend
upon the analytic situation, which is artificially produced and still resembles hypnosis in
that the activity of the ego is curtailed.”61 Pausing the ego’s repressive functions is
necessary because, “[the] ego institutions regard the analyst’s purpose as a menace.”62 By
pausing defense, an intervention that could be taken into critical theory through the
development of communicative action, the subject is able to rationally approach essential
questions through the lens of his genuine interests. To put this clearly, psychoanalysis
problematizes the past as a driver of alienation in the present, thus, “in the treatment of
adult neurotic disturbances the analyst constantly reaches to the child or to the infant in
the adult.”63 It is therefore necessary for the psychoanalytic situation to induce regression
to the primal to build up a new subjectivity in place of the mutilated subjectivity
conditioned by internal reactions to modernity, as Peter Gay notes, “the psychoanalytic
situation invites the patient to regress, to free himself from the constraints that ordinary
social intercourse imposes. Whatever arrangements foster this regression – the couch, the
analyst’s silences and neutral tone – can only aid in the work of the analysis itself.”64

61 Ibid. 24
62 Ibid. 29
63 D.W. Winnicott, The Family and Individual Development (New York: Routledge
Classics, 2006), 146-7.
64 Gay, Freud: A Life For Our Time, 296.
this regressive situation, resistance is provoked by the direct engagement of primitive defenses. The temporary sheltering of the subject from the harsh pressures of society and superego, however, allow her the freedom and security to hold the defenses and, ultimately, what is defended up for critical investigation. This examination is actualized in the communicative relation of transference.

**Transference**

Transference develops the subjective through engagement with the compassionate other. The psychoanalytic process thus depends on the conscientiousness of the analyst.\(^65\)

It is the task of the analyst to bring into consciousness that which is unconscious, no matter to which psychic institution it belongs. He directs his attention equally and objectively to the unconscious elements in all three institutions. To put it in another way, when he sets about the work of enlightenment, he takes his stand at a point equidistant from the id, the ego, and the superego.\(^66\)

To put this differently, the analyst must be as neutral as possible to provide the subject’s unconscious with a stable and safe canvas onto which it can be projected, as Freud advises, “I can only say in favor of the physician’s standpoint that he must be as ‘timeless’ in his approach as the unconscious itself if he wants to learn or achieve anything. In the end this can only happen if he is prepared to renounce any short-sighted therapeutic ambitions.”\(^67\) Within the ideal psychoanalytic process, therefore, “the analyst…offers himself as a kind of screen onto which the analysand projects his passions, his love and hate, affection and animosity, hope and anxiety. This transference, on which the curative work of the psychoanalysis depends, is by definition a transaction


\(^67\) Sigmund Freud, *The “Wolfman” and Other Cases*, 208.
between two human beings.” Transference thus allows the subject’s idiosyncratic inner world to come into view, which is to say that, “The transference is the patient’s way, sometimes subtle and often blatant, of endowing the analyst with qualities that properly belong to beloved (or hated) persons, past or present, in the ‘real world.’” The subject can thus give up the certain, but limited, pleasures provided by the symptom for the uncertain creative possibilities of autonomy. This effort is sustained by the ethical obligation, including the absolute honesty, of the analyst. In this way, the analytic situation is a necessary counterexample to an outraging world. The patient in analysis ultimately advances “from the pleasure principle to the reality principle, progress which distinguishes the mature adult from the child,” through the gradual integration of self made achievable in a space which treats the individual as precisely that: an individual, an end in himself.

To develop the subject’s social agency, the analyst must first aid her in deconstructing the internal world in which she is captured. This occurs through the stark contrast between the unconscious content manifesting through the transference and the calm analyst, who refuses to rationalize or conceal that content, as Gay notes, “While the patient, swollen with grandiosity or bowed down with guilt feelings, distorts the world and his place in it, the analyst, neither praising nor condemning but tersely pointing out

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68 Gay, Freud: A Life For Our Time, 97.
70 Lear, Freud, 124.
71 Gay, Freud: A Life For Our Time, 253.
72 See: Gay, Freud: A Life For Our Time, 302.
73 Sigmund Freud, The “Wolfman” and Other Cases, 324.
what the analysand is really saying, provides a therapeutic glimpse of reality.”

The analyst thereby causes the subject to recognize the “falsity of her experience” and the transference as transference – unconscious mental activity thereby becomes conscious, which makes intervention possible. The subject glimpses her complicity in constructing the world and can take responsibility for her social agency, to “recognize their own activity in creating structures that they have hitherto experienced as an independently existing world.” In short, in transference the subject repeats the repressed. Through a privileged form of communication that aids the subject in exposition and critique, the repeated can be remembered, as Freud posits, “The main instrument, however, for curbing the patient’s compulsion to repeat and for turning it into a motive for remembering lies in the handling of the transference.”

In communication with the analyst, therefore, the subject can come together as a self-determining unit, “an expression of I AM, I am alive, I am myself. From this position everything is creative.”

Transference is effective where it demands self-actualizing communication, sparks reflection and supports individuation. Critical theory would do well to tap and develop the potency of this communicative action, in which, “the patient having felt secure and viable because of the analyst’s reliability, adaptation to need, and willingness to become involved, [now begins] to feel a need to shake free and to achieve

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75 Gay, *Freud: A Life For Our Time*, 97.
76 Lear, *Freud*, 142.
77 Ibid. 124
78 Ibid. 124
Transference sates the psychological needs that attract the subject to domination and sets the conditions for autonomy. The pivotal aspect of the analysis is, therefore, the subject’s ability to make use of the analyst to rebuild the subjective. The analyst’s support is necessary and mobilizing because, “‘Working through’ will require…working on the edge of too-muchness.” For the subject, this immediate and intimate process of learning about the self in and through the presence of the other grounds him in his own existence as creative agent, as a subject that need not possess the object, and can relate lovingly to others as ends in themselves. If critical theory is to mobilize and foster solidarity, it too must develop the faculties fed by transference communication: the theorization of transference, therefore, is of foremost importance to a critical theory seeking to undo the normativity of infantile resistances and develop mature resistance against that same normativity.

**Advances in Method and Theory**

The communicative bond with the other directly raises the question of society and turns the subject towards externality; it is thus unsurprising that Freud used his methods to uncover the social psychology undergirding repression. As psychoanalysis developed, Freud refused to be cowed by the grim social forces revealed to him in his work and crystallized in modernity. As the relevance of psychoanalysis to systemic domination became clear to Freud, he published metapsychological work urging mankind to

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81 Ibid. 145
overcome its present condition. It is indeed noteworthy that Freud felt compelled to make his most valuable methodological advances to psychoanalysis precisely as things fell apart in Europe, the international psychoanalytic movement and the Freud family itself. In short, Freud came to understand the urgent need for critical reflection and catharsis exactly where external pressures demanded the submission of the subject. Psychoanalysis became a means of strengthening the subject through the building of both subjectivity and new means of acting in defiance of all that would engulf the ego. Here, too, it anticipates critical theory.

Given the frequency with which critical theory returns to the threat of engulfment in its many forms – reification, the culture industry, administration, the decline of reason, etc. – this aspect of psychoanalysis ought be of particular note. The papers on technique are a valuable testament to this current in psychoanalysis. In them, Freud offers flexible standards meant to empower the analysand in each analysis, “rather than ironclad edicts.” The earliest phase of psychoanalysis, developed in tandem with Josef Breuer (and through the contributions of their patient, Bertha Pappenheim), “consisted in bringing directly into focus the moment at which the symptom was formed, and in persistently endeavoring to reproduce the mental processes involved in that situation, in order to direct their discharge along the path of conscious activity.” Freud’s language in discussing this method, which emphasizes the “persistence” of and “direction” by the analyst, indicates how little the subject was actually involved in this process. The early

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83 The relationship between clinical practice and the metapsychology becomes clear at this point. Clinical practice which builds autonomy must also confront the social trends undermining autonomy if it is to be efficacious.
84 Gay, Freud: A Life For Our Time, 295.
method required the analyst to perform the work of interpretation, which was in turn communicated to the patient regardless of her interests. The early process, therefore, did little to actually build the agency of the subject, and instead tried to hand the subject keys to a kingdom he was left unprepared to inhabit, much less rule.

The First World War impelled Freud to fundamentally rethink even his basic methods and claims, and one must consider these changes to interpret Freud’s methods. Following the cessation of hostilities, Freud published major works, most importantly *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, The Ego and the Id* and *Inhibition, Symptom and Anxiety*. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud begins by contesting that the essence of the psyche cannot be located in the conscious.\(^86\) The ego is, to borrow Freud’s framing, like a man on horseback who attempts to control the superior power of the horse – only the ego acts with borrowed energy, and tries to transform the id’s will into its own.\(^87\)To put this simply, the subject’s mental life is dominated by internal agencies which are foreign to the self, and over which the subject has little awareness and control: to be autonomous, the ego must strengthen itself by integrating the unconscious content. As a “frontier-creature” tasked with mediating between challenging externality and overwhelming id, however, the ego often loses the solvency to do more than defend against both. This is the internality of the situation often identified by critical theorists, in which the subject actively seeks out domination lest he have to face the consequences of freedom.

Psychoanalysis answers this need in that it “is an instrument to enable the ego to achieve a progressive conquest of the id.”\(^88\) Repression is especially problematic in that it

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\(^{87}\) Ibid. 19

\(^{88}\) Ibid. 58
does not eliminate what is repressed; it merely prevents the impulse from acting upon the world and redirects it at the self. Because the ego is simply the organized part of the id, it is reliant on the id for its strength. The id, however, shows its strength in making the repressed impulse into a symptom independent of the ego. The ego presupposes a concourse amongst the elements of the mind, and seeks to bind them: it is natural that it attempts to bind symptoms to itself and adapts to the symptom.  

The symptom comes to represent vital interests: it becomes indispensable as a mode of living and a source of narcissistic satisfaction. Repression is not an event, therefore, it’s a process that requires continual expenditures of energy. If the ego succeeds in warding of danger by repression, it fails in that the impulse is given independence within the unconscious: the ego loses a vital measure of sovereignty with each repression. The ego is vitiated by the continuous work of keeping the repressed out of consciousness, and is thus complicit in symptom formations that answer this ongoing problem.

Repression is therefore the key site at which the subject becomes complicit in his own domination. Freud, however, also identifies it as a key liability – because of its ongoing demands – that can be challenged. Although most subjects grow past childhood anxieties, fresh dangers constantly threaten to provoke regression, thus, “a great many people remain infantile in their behavior in regard to danger and do not overcome determinants of anxiety which have grown out of date.” Through the integration of the formerly intolerable into the ego, the subject recognizes his complicity in domination,

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90 Ibid. 20
91 Ibid. 86
92 Ibid. 90, 38
93 Ibid. 81
regains his sovereignty over himself and the strength to work within and in spite of his limitations.94 At its best, therefore, psychoanalysis is no self-help project: Freud places the analysand on a path towards autonomy that requires self-reflection stripped of defense and pretense, as he reminds us, “The benighted traveler may sing aloud in the dark to deny his own fears; but, for all that, he will not see an inch further beyond his nose.”95 Psychoanalysis is a genealogy which reaches both without and within, forcing the subject to take responsibility for himself, his potential and his impact on the world by inducing him to take a hard look at the dangerous living past, as Freud notes, “the less a man knows about the past and the present the more insecure must prove to be his judgment of the future…the present, that is to say, must have become the past – before it can yield points of vantage from which to judge the future.”96 Without the ownership and integration of experience, the constructive capacities of the subject, therefore, remain submerged in a past that subsumes even the best of present intentions and efforts.

Freud’s method came to fully reject this subsumption, and thereby allowed fresh alternatives to emerge. In Freud’s mature technique, the analyst:

…the analyst contents himself with studying whatever is present for the time being on

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94 Ibid. 87
95 Ibid. 6. The paucity of control the subject possesses over his own mental life is revealed clearly in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, wherein Freud shows how the quotidian reveals our unfreedom and demands serious critique. To take one example, Freud cites the common inability to remember proper names, “To be sure, I wished to forget something other than the name of the master of Orvietto; but this other thought brought about an associative connection between itself and this name, so that my act of volition missed the aim, and I forgot the one against my will, while I intentionally wished to forget the other.” Not only does Freud recognize internal processes that work in spite of the ego (through recognizing them, he has taken the first step towards overcoming them), he also recognizes the complicity of his ego in repression.
the surface of the patient’s mind, and he employs the art of interpretation mainly for the purpose of recognizing the resistances which appear there, and making them conscious to the patient.\textsuperscript{97}

With this innovation, psychoanalysis ceased to be for the analyst, and instead became a situation in which the analysand could use the analyst to perform a liberating “subversive reading” of himself.\textsuperscript{98} The psychoanalytic situation frames the acting out of the repressed, through the transference, such that it becomes clear to the subject that his actions are irrational and speak to deeper factors. Psychoanalysis thereby makes the subject transparent to himself, \textit{especially} where the resistance is strongest. Because resistance is exposed, the defenses can likewise be problematized, “The patient brings out of the armory of the past the weapons with which he defends himself against the progress of the treatment – weapons which we must wrest from him one by one.”\textsuperscript{99} Left unable to conceal his inner truths, the patient must finally confront his unfreedom and unhappiness, and “The way is thus paved from the beginning for a reconciliation with the repressed material which is coming to expression in his symptoms.”\textsuperscript{100} Through this reconciliation, the subject can begin, “to \textit{work through} it, to overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it, the analytic work according to the fundamental rule of analysis.”\textsuperscript{101} Psychoanalysis, indeed, teaches and supports defiant living in a communicative space built on reciprocity.

It is through this alternative model for relating to others that constructive intervention is possible. Working through is difficult, but, “Nevertheless it is a part of the work which effects the greatest changes in the patient and which distinguishes analytic

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid. 147
\textsuperscript{98} Gay, \textit{Freud: A Life For Our Time}, 298.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid. 151
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid. 152
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid. 155
treatment from any kind of treatment by suggestion."\textsuperscript{102} Working through, indeed, develops agency, and refuses easy answers and hollow solace (of the kind which would merely adapt the subject to tolerate passivity, outrage and violation). Freud cautions that the paramount thing for the psychoanalyst is that he, “does not forget that it is in fact only through his own experience and mishaps that a person learns sense.”\textsuperscript{103} In other words, psychoanalysis crafts simulacrum of reality in which it is safe for the self, elsewhere vulnerable and threatened with engulfment, to be exposited so that the subject can reflect on and take control over himself.

**The Cost of Narcissism and the Need for Autonomy**

Properly understood, psychoanalysis is like a depth charge penetrating into the unconscious; despite the violence of this image, it is key to understanding psychoanalysis as an emancipatory, compassionate process. Repression potentially fixes us in the mental condition of fearful children. Infantilized, one is driven to repetition because it feels safe and allows for the indirect fulfillment of some repressed desires. If we cannot learn from the past, we repeat mistakes and leave society stagnant, politics incapable of serving human ends and the community unable to rise to new challenges, as Anna Freud notes, “repression is not only the most efficacious, it is also the most dangerous mechanism. The disassociation from the ego entailed by the withdrawal of consciousness from whole tracts of instinctual and affective life may destroy the integrity of the personality for good and all.”\textsuperscript{104} Achieving self-reflexivity is the only means to overcome this danger; psychoanalysis places an ethical demand on us that we do so, beginning with Freud’s

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. 155-6
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. 153
\textsuperscript{104} Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanism of Defense*, 50.
plea, “Turn your eyes inward, look into your own depths, learn first to know yourself! Then you will understand why you were bound to fall ill; and perhaps, you will avoid falling ill in the future.” It is a sad comment on modernity that the challenge to become autonomous remains a radical one. The infantile behavior psychoanalysis seeks to overcome, however, is difficult to recognize because it is embedded in normative society, which deproblematises immature thought and behavior. Psychoanalysis, in contrast, premises autonomy on learning to tolerate limitation, pain and operating on what Shengold calls “the edge of too-muchness” and within what Winnicott calls “the muddle.” Without these capacities, responsible democratic citizenship is utterly impossible. With them however, the individual can constructively reach out towards the external world, motivated by the empathetic rejection of suffering.

In highlighting the disavowal of the unconscious as a failing, psychoanalysis places a duty on us both separately and, more importantly, collectively. The critical thing is that growth is a lifelong process built on integration that must be lived, as, “Each individual is engaged in a living experience, a problem of existing.” Psychoanalysis pursues a society healthy enough to meet the person’s needs and challenges without effacing or curing him, which allows for self-affirmation and determination. Narcissism speaks to the continuing vulnerability of an ego that can tolerate neither challenge nor difference; the need for certainty and the illusion of control forecloses mature engagement with self and society. The narcissistic subject, indeed, would rather live

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105 Quoted from: Roazen, Freud: Political and Social Thought, 12.
106 See: Lear, Freud, 41.
107 Ibid. 115
through delusion than risk living openly, with the possibility for pain, failure and loss. Like critical theory, psychoanalysis refuses to accept this choice.

For Freud belief is illusion when wish-fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in holding the belief we disregard reality, or as he claims, “Illusions are recommended to us by the fact that they spare feelings of displeasure and allow us to enjoy satisfactions in their place. We must then accept it without complaint if at some point they collide with a piece of reality upon which they shatter.” Until we resolutely “own what we are and what we are stuck with,” thereby renouncing omnipotence and becoming someone, “we are tied to the past in ways that compromise our future.”

Psychoanalysis awakens us to the promise bound in the present, denied in the past and subsumed by our submission to the past: it demands the investigation of narcissism, and the critical intellectual must play the guiding role in this exposition:

…delusions result in resistances to change in life…the analyst must recognize the delusional or near-delusional qualities and convey them to the patient. Patients often have to struggle to see and especially to own, to become responsible for, these sometimes but not always subtle breaks with reality and reason. They often must learn how much they want to hold on to the promise of intense gratification and protection of powerful infantile defenses against intense bad feeling.

Where society demands submission and offers opiates, therefore, psychoanalysis insists that subjects “break through these rules and establish themselves as themselves.” In so doing, outward control is modified into self-control and found to be objectionable. Psychoanalysis demands a society, and individuals, that can tolerate all of human nature,
or as Lear claims, “The human task, then, is to create an environment in which humans can become most fully themselves.”\textsuperscript{114} We are not able to advance in building society beyond the limit of our current ability to integrate the personality. Each integrated individual, indeed, helps to create the group, because, “the mature adult is able to identify himself or herself with environmental groupings or institutions, and to do so without loss of a sense of personal going-on-being, and without to great a sacrifice of spontaneous impulse, this being at the root of creativity.”\textsuperscript{115} Psychoanalysis works, therefore, as a democratic process of communication that links critique and practice and conditions the individual to use democracy in line with the human interest in emancipation.

**Psychoanalysis and Compassion**

At this point, the compassion of psychoanalysis becomes clear: at core, it turns on the deployment of cathartic truths, the insistence on autonomy and the rejection of all forms of submission. True compassion, indeed, negates reactive pity: it insists, even where the subject equivocates, that he build a fulfilling life, as Gay claims, “It may sound callous, but the analyst must not permit pity for his suffering patients to overwhelm him; this very suffering is an agent in the curative process.”\textsuperscript{116} Psychoanalysis opens the wounds of complex human beings, valued as they are and supported in expression and creative practice. Exposing what festers under the surface to the healing force of the truth restores the unique potency of the subject. In short, “To tell the truth, however appalling, [is] the greatest kindness.”\textsuperscript{117} Freud offered his patients no quarter, except the drastic step of breaking off the analysis, to disavow the repressed; he was effective in aiding them in

\textsuperscript{114} Lear, *Open Minded*, 169.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. 71, 137
\textsuperscript{116} Gay, *Freud: A Life For Our Time*, 304.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. 425
overcoming because he eschewed the false comfort of illusions, as he contests, “It is simply a fact that the truth cannot be tolerant, that it admits no compromises or limitations, that research regards every sphere of human activity as belonging to it and that it must be relentlessly critical if any other power tries to take over any part of it.”

Whereas Freud, therefore, identifies the problem that despite the greater strength of the adult, “his insight into the perils of life has also grown greater, and he rightly concludes that fundamentally he still remains just as helpless and unprotected as he was in his childhood, that faced by the world he is still a child,” he offers the solution of a constructive self-protection, “incapable of bringing consolation and exaltation” that mobilizes the individual to investigate the world, seek out errors and press towards truth.

Psychoanalysis provides compassionate support, especially in the difficult work of renouncing infantile omnipotence, as it recognizes and meets, “the fundamental paradox: at the very moment of realizing our own independence, we are dependent upon another to recognize it.” Even in the emergence of dependence, indeed, the need for independence begins: psychoanalysis meets this tension through the provision of a compassionate authority capable of resisting pity and the temptation to narcissistically use the subject. Valued as himself, the subject is able to recognize that dependence is untenable. Freud demands, however, that if, “Life, as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks,” we must find means of reconciling ourselves to freedom which do not sacrifice the promise of the present to

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118 Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, 198.
119 Ibid. 201, 211, 213
avoid possible pains.\textsuperscript{121} The analysand, stripped of resistance, is prepared to live openly in the world by opposing the normative disciplines checking autonomy. Integration draws on the subject’s disowned outrage at his alienation, and through psychoanalysis, indeed, “One comes to see that anger, outrage and even hate can be expressed in ways that will not destroy the object... gradually one works beyond them through the flourishing of creative and compassionate capacities developed through the working beyond mere fear and submission.”\textsuperscript{122} Psychoanalysis, therefore, is grounded in a compassionate solidarity with the suffering that is immediately translated into practice.\textsuperscript{123}

**Psychoanalysis and Optimism**

In contrast to the many accounts of Freud as a pessimist,\textsuperscript{124} I counter that a radical reading of Freud must reclaim a heretofore-obscured tendency: his optimism. The

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\textsuperscript{122} Winnicott, *The Family and Individual Development*, 7, xviii.

\textsuperscript{123} Winnicott’s illuminating case study, *The Piggle: An Account of the Psychoanalytic Treatment of a Little Girl*, exemplifies this process. Winnicott’s treatment of the Piggle, which took place through play and used transference to allow the Piggle to experience the unconscious, emphasized and supported the girl’s growing independence and ability to tolerate “muddle.” Near the end of her treatment, Winnicott is finally able to cede his authority over her with the statement, “you mended it yourself, and you can mend yourself.” Health is about maturity, not “freedom from symptoms” – we need to cultivate the ability to tolerate and create *now* in spite of our limits and the failings of the system, which is precisely what the Piggle achieved and Winnicott was able to recognize and respect.

\textsuperscript{124} A typical example of this reading of Freud is found in Joshua Foa Dienstag’s *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit* which defines Freud as a “metaphysical pessimist.” Despite his acknowledgment that Freud’s concern was enabling subjects to live differently, Dienstag claims that “Freud describes consciousness as the detour an unconscious wish takes on the way to its satisfaction; and life as a detour from death to death. Our situation is out-of-joint with the universe to begin with. We cannot hope to set it right – we can only await the release from this predicament provided by death. In the meantime, we merely manage our condition.” Dienstag errs in focusing exclusively on Freud’s metapsychology, which he in turn divorces from the psychoanalytic process. Dienstag is therefore unable to recognize and think through the radical fabric of
appearance of pessimism on the surface of Freud’s works, therefore, ought not confuse us: pessimism would be fatal to an emancipating, compassionate psychoanalysis. It is my contention, indeed, that psychoanalysis is a strong form of what Ernst Bloch called “militant optimism,” optimism which, “assumes the existential commitment to make good on the ‘latent’ possibilities existing in the present and help in actualizing a new world for the future.” Critical theory must build its own militant optimism today, and psychoanalysis is a useful support for this work.

The text that most clearly speaks to Freud’s optimism is The Future of an Illusion, in which Freud flatly rejects both religion and the tolerance of religious illusions on the grounds that, “Ignorance is ignorance; no right to believe anything can be derived from it. In other matters no sensible person will behave so irresponsibly or rest content with such feeble grounds for his opinions and for the line he takes.” For Freud, religion makes people guilty of “intellectual misdemeanors” because it sustains the childish escape from responsibilities and limitations:

We shall tell ourselves it would be very nice if there were a God who created the world and was a benevolent Providence, and if there were a moral order in the psychoanalysis, which is evident in statements like, “The work of psychotherapy is thus the task of improving this condition for us, of making the swings of the pendulum less violent” and “Psychoanalysis only intervenes when the demands of the superego are out-of-kilter...the whole function of psychoanalysis is not to oppose these processes of repression or sublimation, but to enable them to function as smoothly as possible.” When Dienstag further claims that, “we are never (or only momentarily) released from desire, but we pursue our objects as if they might satisfy us. The condition of unsatisfied desire is the true constant in our lives,” he misses that for Freud, this hunger speaks to the presence of an Eros that pushes lovingly towards autonomy and manifests as a social force. In short, Dienstag is correct that “Optimism, in whatever form, demands that we see our life as a project, with achievement and happiness as goals at which everyone can justifiably aim and, indeed, is entitled to.” This is precisely, however, what psychoanalysis demands at every turn.

125 Bronner, Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists, 75.
universe and an afterlife; but it is a very striking fact that all this is exactly as we are bound to wish it to be. And it would be more remarkable still if our wretched, ignorant and downtrodden ancestors had succeeded in solving all these difficult riddles of the universe.\(^{127}\)

As we have seen, Freud sought an “education to reality,” and saw himself as a “destroyer of illusions,”\(^ {128}\) as Roazen claims, “As a therapist Freud was not noteworthy, by today’s standards, for being accepting or tolerant. And that was his greatness, for he expected people to change, to overcome themselves.”\(^ {129}\) Where Nietzsche wanted to overcome ‘man,’ Freud seeks to overcome ‘this man,’ mutilated by socially sanctioned illusion and oppression, by building the subject’s capacity to tolerate and work through truth.

Freud upheld, therefore, the godless man who accepts human limits, finitude and responsibility as his ideal; as Roazen asserts, “Freud’s was a protest against inauthenticity, an appeal to man’s original inner unity. By abandoning neurotic defenses against anxiety, by cleansing the social order of religion, the most creative impulses of childhood could be liberated.”\(^ {130}\) Freud found hope in the juxtaposition of the curious, intellectually potent child with the alienated adult. Rather than taking the adult’s condition as an unfortunate reality, Freud developed methods that reach back to the child’s potential and provide the conditions, at last, for actualization. The essential question about the relation of the individual to society, therefore, is: “How can we expect people who are under the dominance of prohibitions of thought to attain the psychological ideal, the primacy of intelligence?”\(^ {131}\) Inhibition and repression, the cost of

\(^{127}\) Ibid. 41, 42
\(^{129}\) Roazen, Freud: Political and Social Thought, 161.
\(^{130}\) Ibid. 165.
\(^{131}\) Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, 61.
comforting illusions, hinder the integration of personality and allow society to mutilate the subject. Freud did not submit, however, to this trend: he believed men could do without illusion, even religion, that their stunted condition stems from being force-fed illusion as a consolation since the cradle. To mature, men:

…will have to admit to themselves the full extent of their helplessness and their insignificance in the machinery of the universe; they can no longer be the center of creation, no longer the object of tender care on the part of a beneficent Providence. They will be in the same position as a child who has left the parental house where he was so war and comfortable. But surely infantilism is destined to be surmounted. Men cannot remain children forever; they must in the end go out into ‘hostile life.’

The “appointed task” of psychoanalysis is thus to reconcile us to the conditions of our existence, such that the subject can own his creative powers not only to improve his own existence, but to help build a mature, non-repressive social order.

Although, upon surveying the world around him, therefore, Freud found men as they are ‘little accessible’ to argument, he pressed forward firm in the conviction that effective mediation was possible because nothing binds them necessarily to this condition, and Eros demand they transcend it. Freud, however, was cautious: he was happy to claim impressive advances for secularism, “but refused to commit himself to an easy optimism.” Instead, Freud bound theory immediately to practice meant to draw out the repressed emancipatory potential contained within the inner and social lives of human beings.

Freud found the grounding for his optimism in theory divorced from weltanschauung and the historical capacity of society to mature. In disentangling science

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132 Ibid. 62-3
133 Ibid. 57
134 Ibid. 60
from the prevailing scientific worldview, Freud preserved its potency while challenging its alienating, instrumentalizing modern form, as he attests:

The scientific spirit brings about a particular attitude towards worldly matters; before religious matters it pauses…and finally there too crosses the threshold. In this process there is no stopping; the greater the number of men to whom the treasures of knowledge become accessible, the more widespread is the falling away from religious belief – at first only from its obsolete and objectionable trappings, but later from its fundamental postulates as well.\(^{136}\)

Freud here invokes, as he does elsewhere in his work, an abiding conviction that the constructive powers of society will triumph as surely as they do in the individual psychoanalyses of subjects: that as individuals divest themselves of illusion, so too will society. Freud was emphatic that as “small shareholders” we could learn to use the resources at our disposal in such a way as to supports ourselves and our community, as he clearly affirms, “by withdrawing their expectations from the other world and concentrating all their liberated energies into their life on earth, they will probably succeed in achieving a state of things in which life will become tolerable for everyone and civilization no longer oppressive to anyone.”\(^{137}\) From the basic level of the analysis of the individual to the most complex levels of Freud’s metapsychological critique of modern society, psychoanalysis demands a level of reality-testing and self-determination that belies the accounts of Freud as oppressive bourgeois skeptical of the masses. For Freud, mankind would in every case be better off with law and order understood to be of human origin, reliant on its own creative agency.\(^{138}\) In a system where human order was tailored to constantly improving human ends, our attitude towards law would change: “instead of aiming at their abolition, [individuals] would aim only at their improvement.

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\(^{137}\) Ibid. 63

\(^{138}\) Ibid. 52
This would be an important advance along the road which leads to becoming reconciled to the burden of civilization.”\textsuperscript{139}

It is here that we can be clearer about the often-misunderstood theme of “the burden of civilization” in Freud’s work: it is not that society needfully imposes oppressive burdens on the subject. It is that psychoanalysis reveals an ethical duty for each individual to contribute to the building of a liberated and humane world through a historically evolving project of civilization, a much more radical and optimistic Freud than we have been conditioned to see. Unlike Marx, however, Freud finds the material for this historical process of development in the individual, as we begin to see in his claim that, “The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest until it gains a hearing.”\textsuperscript{140} He is confident, therefore, that the psyche moves towards reality even where the conscious mind resists: the repressed surges forward through repetition and dreams, and resistance can be overcome. It is thus that Freud can contest that society is progressing towards the primacy of the intellect, as he asserts, “Our God, Logos, will fulfill whichever of these wishes nature outside allows us, but he will do it very gradually…He promises no compensation for us, who grievously suffer from life.”\textsuperscript{141} Although Logos, he warns, is “not very Almighty,” it offers the real aid of increasing our knowledge and ability to arrange life according to human ends. It is Freud’s optimism and faith in man that strikes us here. If he is wrong, he claims to be willing to go back to the view that failed to offend the religious: that we are weak creatures ruled by instinctual

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid. 53
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid. 68
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid. 68, 69
wishes.\textsuperscript{142} In contrast to this view, often ascribed to Freud despite his sternly optimistic rejection of it here and elsewhere, Freud assures us – through analysis and the metapsychological works – that we have the strength, creativity and ability to live openly with the fundamental questions of individual and social existence, and “to avoid assuming that there are any fixed answers which are already given.”\textsuperscript{143}

This is why psychoanalysis attacks narcissism in the name of reason, “which he believed would ultimately triumph.”\textsuperscript{144} The psychoanalytic subject is free in that he is not bound to the defense of increasingly limiting illusion, and thus \textit{actively seeks out} correction, “Since we are prepared to renounce a good part of our infantile wishes, we can bear it if a few of our expectations turn out to be illusions.”\textsuperscript{145} Atheism, therefore, is one example of the uncompromising behavior psychoanalysis demands of each of us: it opens everything to \textit{human} constructive thought and action, as Freud explains:

What we do is to emphasize the fact that what is in question is not in the least an invasion of the field of religion by the scientific spirit, but on the contrary an invasion by religion of the sphere of scientific thought. Whatever may be then of value and importance of religion, it has no right in any way to restrict thought – no right, therefore, to exclude itself from having thought applied to it.\textsuperscript{146}

For Freud, all of the things that take us out of a conscious possession of self within world – starting, but not ending with, religion – must be “repulsed in the most general interest.”\textsuperscript{147}

Freud’s attack on \textit{weltanschauung}, including \textit{weltanschauung} as it impacts science, is directed at its chilling impact on creativity and curiosity, its tendency to give

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid. 62
\textsuperscript{143} Lear, \textit{Open Minded}, 4.
\textsuperscript{144} Gay, \textit{A Godless Jew}, 64.
\textsuperscript{145} Sigmund Freud, \textit{The Future of an Illusion}, 70.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid. 211, 212
illusions the status of absolute revelation; in the end, for Freud, “No belittlement of science can in any way alter the fact that it is attempting to take account of our dependence on the real external world, while religion is an illusion and derives its strength from its readiness to fit in with out instinctual wishful impulses.”¹⁴⁸ This is why Freud insisted on preserving psychoanalysis as a theory, and would not allow it to become mere therapy. This is also why the therapy itself must be understood as part of an evolving theory. It is especially important that his optimistic take on science comes in the same work as his extremely negative discussion of science as currently deployed by men as they are. Freud, in spite of the appearance of pessimism, never abandoned – and was, in fact, strengthened in – the belief that psychoanalysis could lead to positive outcomes, that subjects could develop into autonomy and society as a whole would become sane. His militant optimism, coupled with the compassion and democratic potentialities of psychoanalysis, is the key to the development of emancipatory forms of compassion and communicative action.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 222, 216
Freud and the Critical Theory of Society

Psychoanalysis has a major contribution to offer critical theory in the present: the restoration of its compassion, its firm insistence that an unjust world and its disillusioned subjects be prodded to recognize the basic interpersonal demands of shared humanity. The project of critical theory is indeed, at its best, driven by a compassion for those we might term, to borrow from a favorite framing of Ernst Bloch’s, the lowly and insulted. Although some critical theorists, notably Max Horkheimer, never lost the firm and mobilizing footing found in compassion for actually suffering human beings, critical theory too often forgets the human grounding of essential rejection of the ongoing immiseration of life. Critical theory, indeed, must remain rooted in compassion if it is to continue to speak to needful and effective practice and to work against the disempowering tendencies modernity has drawn forth even in reason itself.

In short, the compassionate concern for those who suffer under modernity is the driving aspect of critical theory, but this thread is in danger of being lost today, as Stephen Eric Bronner notes, critical theory’s “original ability to identify with the suffering of the exploited and disenfranchised has been compromised.” As a therapeutic, reflective and critical process, psychoanalysis begins from the compassionate goal of compelling individuals (and, through the metapsychological works, society itself) to heal, grow and create in new ways necessary to the achievement of a good life. More importantly, perhaps, for our present purposes, Freud consistently translated that compassion into theory and practice that speaks to individual and social needs and challenges. In this chapter, I contend that the compassionate strain in critical theory can

149 Bronner, Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists, 11.
and must be rediscovered and reclaimed in praxis today, and that psychoanalysis has much to offer in this effort to restore the foundations of theory and its immediate relation to effective practice. Because psychoanalysis is a militantly optimistic and compassionate process, it can be deployed (as Freud himself began to do in works like *Why War?* and “Timely Reflections on War and Death”) as a check on aggression, violence and terror and as a key support of conscientious democratic citizenship and mature democratic processes. Finally, I argue that the work begun by Jurgen Habermas in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, that of developing psychoanalysis as a disruptive form of reflection and communication through the recognition of its potential to challenge structural alienation and domination must be taken up anew today.

**Compassion and Critical Theory**

The early works of Horkheimer are often overlooked, which has been a great detriment to critical theory. These works must be the focus of renewed attention because they contain the roots of an important, although easily obscured, compassionate strain within critical theory that must be seized upon and used to animate present work. Psychoanalysis, furthermore, can be used to support and develop this strain. First, however, it must be located in critical theory. As Bronner notes, Horkheimer in particular never surrendered his commitment to the negation of suffering and the affirmation of the liberating potential of subjectivity.\(^{150}\) This commitment is nowhere more clearly presented than in his early writings, particularly in the notes and fragments collected in *Dawn and Decline*.

\(^{150}\) Ibid. 78
Dawn begins with the problem of increasing cruelty juxtaposed against a dialectical image signifying that even, or better yet precisely, these bleakest trends can spark critical thought and the development of humane alternatives. The framing concern linking the collected fragments, indeed, is the need to mobilize the subject as a compassionate agent who can identify with the suffering of others, and who recognizes a duty to resolutely uncover and resist the systemic forces degrading life through that identification. The implication of Horkheimer’s work is that the need for this subject antedates and drives the work of critical theory. For Horkheimer, the potentially crushing recognition from which, in various forms, critical theory begins, that, “Dusk: The less stable necessary ideologies are, the more cruel the methods by which they are protected. The degree of zeal and terror with which tottering idols are defended shows how far dusk has already advanced,” holds in itself the promise of “dawn,” as he claims, “The enemies of the Inquisition turned that dusk into the dawning of a new day. Nor does the dusk of capitalism have to usher in the night of mankind although today it certainly seems to be threatening it.”151 Only a subject driven by an irrepressible concern for the rights and status of others, therefore, can tolerate the invariably painful process of looking through the rigorous lens of dialectical materialism into the worst of human conduct, much less find the strength and creativity left over to realize the potential contained within those historical moments.

Horkheimer immediately links his hope for a new dawn to the main factor blocking its realization, the monadism prevalent in modernity which suffocates the affective bonds linking individuals, as he contests, “Men relate to each other, yet they do

no see each other."\textsuperscript{152} The function of critical theory, then, must in part be to correct the narrowing and distorting experience the alienated subject can glean from a reifying world; for Horkheimer, this demands a highly specific cure, “I know of only one kind of gust that can open the windows of the house wider: shared suffering.”\textsuperscript{153} Here lies the great difficulty: as Freud recognized, most famously in \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, the average subject never reaches a condition of mature autonomy, carefully avoids the mobilizing recognition that he is unhappy and unfree, and actively avoids the direct experience of his suffering through reliance on what Freud called “palliative measures.”\textsuperscript{154} Just as Horkheimer seeks to open the individual up to shared suffering, however, psychoanalysis works to force the individual to attend to the psychological needs, fears and insecurities that drive him to turn from the real conditions of his existence. For both critical theory and psychoanalysis, therefore, it remains to engender an \textit{education to reality}\textsuperscript{155} and mobilize the individual to deal concretely with the forces, internal and external, hindering his ability to live humanely, freely and well.

Psychoanalysis and critical theory, however, note a common problem: the defensive rejection of the truth content of lived experience - the only knowledge capable of crafting lasting solidarity and commitment to emancipatory and self-actualizing praxis - is undertaken on all sides. Internally, the uncontested superego punishes the subject for feeling even the impulse to challenge normativity and established authorities. The unconscious, furthermore, factors as an “internal foreign territory” that the timid ego distances itself from through diverse psychological mechanisms. Externally, the culture

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid. 17
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid. 18
\textsuperscript{154} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, 23.
\textsuperscript{155} Sigmund Freud, \textit{The Future of An Illusion}, 63.
industry, propaganda, artificial needs and the administered demands and rationality of the advanced industrial system create a smooth one-dimensional functionalism. This is particularly difficult to penetrate because it appears to the uncritical subject as the highest form of human organization, production and achievement. The repressed and disavowed sense, however, that something is wrong with the way both the individual and group are living remains, a discontent bubbling up from the underground. Much of this anxiety is handled problematically, through projection, to take one example, of personal and group shortcomings onto persecuted others. These defensive checks against a full accounting of human suffering and of the subject’s potential to work against that suffering, therefore, not only signifies a failure for which both psychoanalysis and critical theory seek to hold the subject culpable, but also continuously poisons human life. “Shared suffering,” which in psychoanalysis is put into practice as the sharing of suffering, indeed, reawakens and feeds an empathy that demands a cure for this fatal process.

Defensive modifications of consciousness made to obscure systemic contradictions and injustices, furthermore, warp inner life. There is thus a real want for a theory capable of building practice that actualizes the subject’s potential for autonomy, develops his ability to test reality and compels him to confront the injustices of the world from a mature standpoint. Both critical theory and psychoanalysis speak to this need, although only psychoanalysis gives practicable methods for confronting and dealing with the “internal foreign territory” of the unconscious and superego. Both disciplines, moreover, seek to expose and challenge the subject’s uncritical and dehumanizing adaptation to the demands and norms of the system. In a world where the massacre is as

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156 It would perhaps be more accurate to claim that there is a need for a theory that speaks to both practice and praxis, and works to unite them.
common, if not more frequent, a testament to the flowering of the creative potential of man as the substantive improvement of the human condition, the subject must become uncritical and develop a “good conscience.” Without this submissive adaptation one cannot maintain both calm mental operations in the face of such staggering contradictions and the identification with power that conditions prospects for material success.\footnote{Horkheimer, \textit{Dawn and Decline}, 116.} The prospects for identification with the shared humanity of living beings, the recognition of the dignity and rights of others as ends in themselves and the compassionate effort to construct a better shared life with and for those others are thus dubious at best, as Horkheimer recognizes, “Of course, there are people that shed tears over ‘Sunny Boy’ at the movies. And they do that at the very moment that, in the service of their own interests, real persons are slowly being tortured to death, simply because they were suspected of fighting for the liberation of mankind.”\footnote{Ibid. 19} Our rightful outrage is “submerged in a general suffering” that overwhelms an ego that feels helpless. The subject, furthermore, diverts the attention that should be trained on constructing emancipatory alternatives to the lights of Hollywood, the barren pages of the harlequin and the endless effort to sate the appetites a life filled with artificial needs engenders.

More importantly, the search for the right formula that can rationalize the misery of living beings, the right gesture that can obfuscate their pain with a sense of having done one’s part, is made necessary and taxes the subject’s loving, constructive faculties such that little is left over even if there is a desire for meaningful action. Horkheimer, for example, notes that one constantly hears that resistance is unnecessary – and even unjust
– because “a few instances of decency can be named,”¹⁵⁹ that evils ought not disturb us
because fixed beliefs and pet theories account for them and their basic incontestability,¹⁶⁰
or that all efforts are useless and even immoral if they fail to help everyone. These and
myriad other constructions enable the subject to “hide behind a theory to excuse their
failure to do their duty in a concrete case.” If one can simply send a text message to one’s
cellular provider to donate to relief efforts, e.g., one can quickly forget the real and
lasting suffering of the victims of the disaster. The individual thereby removes himself
from the anxiety produced by compassion and the potential for constructive engagement,
and can even turn to the voyeuristic observation of the calamity on any number of real
time media sources with a clear conscience.

In exposing this trend, Horkheimer troublingly juxtaposes the failure of human
compassion with the dangerous countering tendency to rationalize both the subject’s
inhumanity and violence undertaken in the name of the groups to which one belongs.¹⁶¹
The subject’s desire to conform to and reproduce the conditions that dominate him, to
excuse the outrages dealt to self and others, is heightened by the relegation of morality to
the small population of the most entitled within the inverted world of capitalism.
Horkheimer notes, indeed, that morality itself easily becomes a luxury that only those at
the top can afford. The capitalist who spends thousands on pleasure while denying his
workers minimal concessions is not considered immoral, even though the revolutionary is
expect to exhaust his resources, and even his life, in the work of achieving a life worthy
of those same employees and those like them, as he further explains, “The danger, the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 20
¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 24
¹⁶¹ Ibid. 35
suffering, the constraint, the narrowness, the insecurity, the convergence of these negative elements of life on the exploited class is today a result of the convergence of the positive elements on the absurdly small number of the free.”¹⁶² Revolutionary awareness is effectively replaced with identification with the aggressor, with both the capitalist one hopes to become like and the system itself, despite its vampiric nature. The subject that cannot confront the reality of suffering, therefore, is left as a pliant and eager victim, as Horkheimer understands, “their dependence stems not just from being given enough to eat, but that they are also kept in a wretched intellectual and psychological state.”¹⁶³

For Horkheimer, however, this ought not induce despair: it should instead inspire and steel the activist to the heroic labors demanded by an intolerable order that must be defeated so that humans can build a free and satisfying world. The great power of materialism is that, “It frees of illusions, unmasks reality and explains what happens.”¹⁶⁴ Critical theory, in particular, uses social philosophy not to seek “immutable truth,” but rather couples it with various forms of empirical work, moving towards synthetic goals through interdisciplinary methods.¹⁶⁵ It marshals all germane forms of seeing, therefore, to understand both the nature of the present system and the emancipatory potentialities it contains, and all this in an era where willful blindness is rampant despite the omnipresence of evidence showing the depths of modern man’s plight. The ultimate worth of this contribution, however, can only be measured by the degree to which effective, uncompromising action is built from the encounter with the horror and possibility that exist in dialectical tension in each historical moment.

¹⁶² Ibid. 54, 74
¹⁶³ Ibid. 88-9
¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 94
For both Horkheimer and Freud, therefore, a heavy burden is placed squarely on the shoulders of the critical intellectual. The theorist needs to open the wound, to induce the subject to recognize and take responsibility for his despairing state. It is only then, when the subject has begun the arduous work of integrating an autonomous self in a challenging world, that he can begin to recognize the structural conditions within the expanding circles of society, starting with the family and ending with the system itself, which condition his misery. One of the failings of society the young Horkheimer consistently identifies is the abdication of the educated, who seek out the reifying training that will enable them to succeed in a dehumanizing world rather than contest the injustices of that world; despite their impressive accomplishments, therefore, “these same intelligent, trained, self-assured persons utter the most pathetic drivel the moment discussion turns to socially significant topics. Their cleverness is such that it can become stupidity, should the protection of their good conscience require it. They know how to live harmoniously.”166 The critical intellectual that would work towards practice capable of realizing the truth content of theory, however, must endure disquieting insights, the fragile chances for real progress and troubling questions in regards to what should be done that never cease.

Horkheimer, indeed, warns us against self-indulgence in merely academic work as he recalls that, “Because he was interested in his science, Archimedes forgot that people were being slaughtered all around him, and so he perished. Because they are interested in their science, today’s philosophers forget that people are being murdered all around

166 Horkheimer, Dawn and Decline, 27.
them.”  

This trend has hardly abated,  

and must be squarely confronted by critical theory today; Horkheimer’s consistent work to meet this demand, the compassionate concern with linking his work to a practice capable of ending the suffering of subjects who take their immiseration as a benefit and abide no challenges to it, is thus a necessary example for all critical theorists who would cultivate the promise of the future even in the disempowering present. Critical theory has done and continues to do its best work in developing the social consequences of Horkheimer’s legacy, as he recognized:

Insight is not enough, of course, to change this state of affairs. For the error is not that people do not recognize the subject but that the subject does not exist. Everything therefore depends on creating the free subject that consciously shapes social life. And this subject is nothing other than the rationally organized socialist society which regulates its own existence.

To develop this subject, however, disparate individuals must be capable of overcoming alienation and finding solidarity in the pursuit of human emancipation, and critical theory has been largely inconsistent in theorizing how this transition might be achieved.

In his later works, works that evidence a pessimistic response to the troubling trends he spent his career identifying, Horkheimer rejected the possibility that psychoanalysis could answer this need, as he believed that psychoanalysis, “leaves those defeated by life without hope that therapy is not the highest judge, for to him life is that judge. And all [the psychoanalyst] could say to someone dying in spiritual anguish is that

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167 Ibid. 34
168 Ibid. 34
169 Ibid. 51
he failed to go into analysis in time.”\textsuperscript{170} Psychoanalysis, however, does not fall into despair; by definition, it picks up the work of educating the subject to reality in the face of great resistance, and uses that resistance to work creatively towards salutary and transformative ends. In the psychoanalytic process, the subject comes to recognize the cause of his discontent and is able reject it as unacceptable; this enables him to see \textit{our discontents and understand them as a problem that likewise demands confrontation.}

Psychoanalysis, indeed, stretches beyond the clinical: it prepares the subject to live an examined life replete with the work critical reflection prompts.

\textbf{Compassion, Domination and the Family}

Compassion is the foundation of critical theory, which makes the family, the site at which compassion ought be developed, the foundation of social theory. The social sites where compassion could be developed are, indeed, an important issue for critical theory. The most basic of these sites, and perhaps the most important, is the family. Freud’s injunction that we must take responsibility not only for our incomplete development, but also for our natures is very radical.\textsuperscript{171} To successfully achieve this degree of responsibility, the individual requires support that ought be provided by the family. The family is the determining site where individuation must occur: the individual makes use of the family to develop identity and requires, therefore, the freedom to defy the normative demands of parents and culture.\textsuperscript{172} In individuation, the individual rejects the family’s illusory capacity to satisfy all of his needs and desires, or, to put it differently, “To live with others on terms of mutual interdependence and equality, people have to

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid. 122
\textsuperscript{171} Lear, \textit{Freud}, 106.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid. xiii
transcend the narcissism in which we all begin life.”\textsuperscript{173} Psychoanalysis becomes useful where the family fails to carry out this necessary function (as it so often does). The analyst works as a healthy authority readying her charge for eventual, encouraged independence, as Freud claims, “The physician is one step ahead of him in understanding; the patient follows along his own paths until they meet at the designated goal.”\textsuperscript{174} Psychoanalysis thus anticipated critical theory’s concern with subjectivity and autonomy, and aimed to take over the functions that families enmeshed in domination cannot carry out. By providing a non-dominating alternative to the family, which has the added efficacy of providing a standpoint for critiquing the family and the system it represents, psychoanalysis crafted means of intervention that critical theory can develop today.

Patriarchal control within the family is the purest model of patriarchal control within society. This presents a major problem and a critical opportunity. Because the family shapes the matrix of psychological needs, fears and so forth that unconsciously shape adult behavior, where the family reflects and supports domination, domination is written into the inner life of the subject. If, however, the family represents such trends (as it does today, to take one example, in the manic imposition of normative visions of success on babies being taught to read from the cradle and toddlers being prepared for the SATs) it exists as a useful microcosm wherein these trends can be exposited and contested at the most intimate and important juncture of personal and social life. Critique and resistance originating at the level of the family, indeed, has the potential to smash the division between public and private by revealing to the subject how fully they are

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid. xix

\textsuperscript{174} Sigmund Freud, The “Wolfman” and Other Cases, 99.
intertwined in his oppression. Reflection grounded in self and family, therefore, has a unique ability to build and link autonomy and social agency. Early critical theory understood this, and focused significant effort on the analysis of the family as a social unit.

The family was a particularly important concern for Erich Fromm, whose work frequently dealt with the family as a site at which economic, political and cultural behavior and belief were internalized by the subject and grounded in social practice. For Fromm, the patriarchal family positions the powerful father such that a dangerous model of control and submission is written into the relations amongst family members:

Whether father’s expectations are more on development or on obedience, the son has a chance to acquire father’s love, to produce father’s affection by doing the desired things. To sum up: the positive aspects of the patriarchal complex are reason, discipline, conscience and individualism; the negative aspects are hierarchy, oppression, inequality and submission.175 Left unchecked and unchallenged, this script of domination creates social conditions ripe for authoritarianism. Only in growing well, is the subject able to contribute to the group well, as even, “family units in turn depend on the integration which takes place in the growth of each individual member. In other words, in a healthy society, one in which democracy can flourish, a proportion of the individuals must have achieved a satisfactory integration in their own personality development.”176 Fromm identifies, therefore, a real problem that needs to be picked up anew by critical theory: if the family blocks autonomy rather than supporting individuation, submission is literally written into to the subject, obfuscating uniqueness, independence and critical thinking. He also echoes Freud in sensing that the family must be used as a source of critical insight.

If critical theory is to build compassion, it must contest the social tendencies that promote authoritarian modes of relating to the other; these tendencies are at their most problematic in the family because of its formative impact. As Fromm recognized in the wake of the Second World War, millions are *eager* to surrender their freedom. The roots of this desire lie in the family, because, as Fromm notes:

> The answer is not only that the parents — aside from certain individual variations — apply the educational patterns of the society they live in, but also that in their own personalities they represent the social character of their society or class. They transmit to the child what we may call the psychological atmosphere or the spirit of a society just by being as they are — namely representatives of this very spirit. *The family thus may be considered to be the psychological agent of society.*

The family both reflects and shapes society, and codifies certain normative modes of belief and behavior, which are in turn internalized by the growing subject. Dependent on the parents in a society that would make all abnegatingly dependent on the system itself, the child identifies fixedly with the patriarchy which forms one root of the dominating totality. As such, growing subjects “become controllable” and “learn to obey and to submit” because they believe authority, starting with the father, to be unquestionably superior and necessary. Above all, patriarchal love is the antipode of life-affirming mutuality, because it is “conditional love. Its principle is, ‘I love you *because* you fulfill my expectations, because you do your duty, because you are like me.’” In any form, therefore, the patriarchal order studied by Freud and the critical theorists is based in conformity and submissiveness, and promotes obedience to external interests that oppose one’s own as the core of virtue. This is because, as Fromm notes, patriarchy emerged as a means of “control of nature, control of slaves, women and children” necessary because

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178 Ibid. 247
“patriarchal man literally ‘makes’ the earth. His technique is not simply modification of the natural processes, but their domination and control by man.”\textsuperscript{180} Because, however, the roots of domination, through the family, are in love, the subject identifies with, not against, domination as the family crystallizes it. The family thus simultaneously implants the two axial strains of what Fromm calls “the authoritarian character,” the desire to submit to outside power and have power over others.\textsuperscript{181}

The family is, therefore, problematic in itself because of patriarchy and the demands of the capitalist system. Because the family is seen, however, as the foundation of associational life and virtue, it possesses an unfortunate degree of immunity from critique and contestation. Because the family is privileged in this way, what Fromm calls the “\textit{pathology of normalcy}” develops through the modeling of relations and normativity there.\textsuperscript{182} The strains of submission, conformity, aggression and so forth enmeshed in the family are thereby rendered invisible as social problems. Even where the child recognizes the parents as wrong or objectionable in their embodiment of social normativity, therefore, the insight must be suppressed and critical thinking is thereby abandoned. This acquiescence easily carries over into adult behavior, both within and without the family.

Because the validity of individuation and autonomy are denied by the family and obscured by the family’s position, the subject comes to abandon these aims as impossible and, still the worse, bad. Submission thus becomes a primary mechanism of relating to authority, and the domination of the other is internalized as the ideal of success and potency. Although the development of identity and independence should be supported by

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid. 190
\textsuperscript{181} Erich Fromm, \textit{The Fear of Freedom}, 204.
Therefore, the need to submit to an effacing authority stems from “the thwarting of the child’s expansiveness and spontaneity and by the consequent anxiety” normalized by the modern family. A pattern is thereby ingrained into the psyche, down to its deepest levels, of what Fromm calls the “escape from freedom,” wherein:

The frightened individual seeks for somebody or something to tie his self to; he cannot bear to be his own individual self any longer, and he tries frantically to get rid of and to feel security again by the elimination of this burden: the self. Masochism is one way towards this goal. The different forms which the masochistic strivings assume have one aim: to get rid of the individual self, to lose oneself; in other words, to get rid of the burden of freedom.

Nazism represents an extreme solution to this aim, which is also met through “compulsive conforming as is prevalent in our own democracy.” Both solutions are rooted, ultimately, in the vitiated subjectivity cultivated by the family.

A further problem identified by Fromm and other critical theorists deepens these concerns: the family is in decline, and is being engulfed by anonymous social normativity and authority. As Fromm notes, anonymous authority operates through conformity, which has engulfed parents and restricted them from fulfilling their normative roles. The family’s potential as a site of contestation and is thereby being bankrupted. In authority is not internalized through the ambivalent relations within the family, it is left

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183 This is a critical point also recognized by psychoanalysis. The family is, at its best, a site of contestation wherein autonomy is supported and the child is able to contest normativity, especially as it is captured in the family unit. As Fromm notes, love is a faculty that must be developed, as he claims, “Mature love is union under the condition of preserving one’s integrity, one’s individuality. Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow men, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet it permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity.” The family could be a critical site in this development, but is here revealed as a quicksand preventing it.

185 Ibid. 131
186 Ibid. 115
as an external, anonymous force demanding compliance and conformity: it cannot, as such, be recognized and contested through introspective criticism. Because the family, moreover, is denuded as a source of identity and development, the external world cannot be effectively critiqued, as the very standpoint from which alternatives can be developed is hamstrung, as Fromm fears, “Instead of overt authority, ‘anonymous’ authority reigns. It is disguised as common sense, science, psychic health, normality, public opinion. It does not demand anything except the self-evident. It seems to use no pressure but only mild persuasion…one never suspects that there is any order which one is expected to follow.”

Man is thereby atomized within a reifying totality; the failure of the family accelerates this tragedy. In light of the tension between the emancipatory potential to use the family as a site of contestation affirming the value of independence and uniqueness and the dangers of allowing the flattening of the family to continue unchecked, critical theory must intervene. To do so, the focus must be twofold: identifying compassionate alternative modes of relating to the other and the development of effective communication that supports autonomy and mutuality. The ultimate goal should be to link these strains in communicative action.

**Psychoanalysis and Communicative Action**

Even at the basic level of the family, communication becomes an issue in terms of individuation and building effective social units. The fundamental goal of psychoanalysis is twofold: to aid the subject in achieving autonomy and to enable and encourage the subject to reach beyond self through a new identification with the suffering of others and against the systemic factors that produce unfreedom and unhappiness. Beyond this,

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psychoanalysis reveals that these two achievements are the basic, and interrelated, duty of every individual, as Lear claims, “The ego’s developmental task is not merely to develop itself, but to develop its relations with what, for it, is an ever more complex world.”

Psychoanalysis, above all, teaches us that we consistently hinder our own freedom, make ourselves unhappy and use values for malign ends; its efficacy arises through the immediate binding of reflection with action, of critical knowledge and the human interests connected to the use and meaning of the same. In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Jurgen Habermas recognized this quality, and began to discuss psychoanalysis as an example of the kind of critical social science he hoped critical theory would become, a reflective pursuit motivated by shared human concerns developing technique and knowledge for constructive use in seeking the emancipatory ends of human subjects.

Habermas’s work is driven by a central concern with restoring the useful aspects of the Enlightenment, smashed along with the negative strains of the Enlightenment by the critiques of Adorno and Horkheimer. For him, critical theory must overcome the modern tendency to confuse constructive action with mere control by reworking the legacy of Marxism and restoring theory to a genuine relationship with practice, within which theory conceives, “society as a dynamic complex of communicating human beings who have to bring social intercourse into the context of conscious communication and within that context form themselves into a collective subject capable of action.”

Habermas’s focus on communication stems from his concern with oppression’s roots in systemically distorted communication through which, “interactions are determined by an

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189 Lear, *Open Minded*, 130-1.
institutional setting which is not freely accessible to the consciousness of the actors; they are acting under the violence of intentions which are not immediately their own. These are the latent intentions of social systems acting, so to say, behind the back of the individual actors.”

Clear, open communication is integral to the functioning of democratic processes, because whereas emancipation from the threatening forces of nature is answered by technically viable knowledges, “Emancipation from the compulsion of inner nature succeeds to the degree that institutions based on force are replaced by an organization of social relations that is bound only to communication free from domination.” Critical theorists, therefore, must clarify and develop communicative action in their works.

Habermas identifies a problem that ought concern all critical theorists pursuing undistorted modes of communication. Because the subject can only attain absolute knowledge through the impossible uniting of subject and object, she remains prone to illusory solutions found most commonly in disavowal, dogmatism and ideology. The reflection demanded in undistorted, open communication, indeed, “destroys, along with a false view of things, the dogmatic attitudes of a habitual form of life: this holds even for the first stage, the world of sense-certain.” Communicative action is distorted wherever systematic factors sever action from intention; the split of symbols and needs is problematic, as this schism can, “depreciate the reality content of perceptions and thought processes, unbalance the emotional economy, ritualize behavior and immediately impair

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192 Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 53.
193 Ibid. 17
bodily functions.”¹⁹⁴ In revealing and opposing the distortion of communication, Habermas attempts to pragmatically use social theory to illuminate the “emancipatory interest.”¹⁹⁵ To challenge distorted communication, strictly interpretive science must be contested and replaced by critical social sciences that:

…develop theoretical frameworks which are designed to grasp both aspects – the subjective aspect of, let me say, the culture components and the intentionality of social system on the one hand, and also the quasi-natural aspect of social systems which are ‘unseen’, which are ‘withdrawn’ from what is immediately accessible to the consciousness of the actors.¹⁹⁶

Critical social sciences therefore enable and feed on the recovery of the disowned, disavowed, disillusioning content of individual and group lives manipulated by and for the maintenance of oppressive forms of communication.

Beyond this, critical social science self-reflectively investigates its own foundations, assumptions, operations and goals, and thus demands true investigation and requires, “the use of language that is not confined to the limits of technical control over objectified natural processes. It arises from symbolic interaction between societal subjects who reciprocally know and recognize each other as unmistakably individual.”¹⁹⁷

Through the deployment of critical social sciences, the individual is able to recognize self and other in an affirmative fashion, as the critical work divests language of distortion, clarifies the meaning of symbols and renders each subject capable of and hungry for autonomy. The empowerment of the subject, indeed, is sustained by the ability of theory to “cure its false consciousness and be brought to consciousness of itself as reflection”: if theory is to escape the fear of its own implications, much less speak to emancipatory

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 227
¹⁹⁵ See also: Bronner, Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists, 9.
¹⁹⁷ Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, 137.
practice, it must take a full accounting of the “subjective conditions of the objectivity of possible knowledge.” Only consciousness, indeed, which is self-reflexive is able to become self-certain.

Where theory is split from practice, society, “is threatened by the splitting of consciousness and the division of human beings into two categories: the social engineers and the inmates of closed institutions.” Against this danger, critical reason “is equated unquestioningly with the talent for autonomy and responsibility and with a sensitivity to the evils of this world. It has long since made its decision in favor of justice, welfare and peace; the reason that resists dogmatism is a committed reason.” The problem facing the theorist today is the restoration of this strain of reason through reflection. Philosophy, as Habermas brilliantly shows, has been fully complicit in the reduction of reflection to the level of instrumental action. Instrumental reason meets the constraints of external nature through man’s technical skill and power, but easily turns to ends that undermine human interest, subjectivity and autonomy if it operates in a vacuum. Habermas’s project, in line with the goal of defending Enlightenment and human reason as a means of bolstering democracy, is to restore communicative action through the use of critical social sciences. If we are to utilize reason progressively and to deploy knowledge for emancipatory ends that make human beings the constructive subjects of their own histories, knowledge and interest – which positivism rips asunder – must be brought back together through the “forgotten experience” of reflection.

198 Ibid. 10, 11
199 Seidman, Jurgen Habermas on Society and Politics, 46.
200 Ibid. 32
201 Ibid. vii
Habermas demands, in short, that the knowing subject direct the critique of ideology at himself: reflection generated through critical social science is able to spark and support the self-formative process of the autonomous, but social, subject of the democratic public sphere: this formative process requires critical reason in that it, “is marked not by new technologies but by stages of reflection through which the dogmatic character of surpassed forms of domination and ideologies are dispelled, the pressure of the institutional framework is sublimated, and communicative action is set free as communicative action.”

It is through this social-self formative process that Habermas seeks to liberate subjects to use reason and the legacy of the Enlightenment in emancipatory ways, whilst still maintaining autonomy.

Undistorted communication, indeed, affirms the uniqueness and agency of each participant because it is able to tolerate the incomplete knowledge that results from the separation of subject and object:

Not every communication, however, is merely the subsumption of an individual under an abstract universal…every dialogue develops on an entirely different basis, namely that of the reciprocal recognition of subjects who identify one another under the category of selfhood…and at the same time maintain themselves in their non-identity. The concept of the individual ego includes a dialectical relation of the universal and the particular, which cannot be conceived in the behavioral system of instrumental action. Through open inquiry, the subject forms herself through an intersubjectivity found in the communication, with respect for and in shared struggle with others, which is the first step in surmounting domination as imposed from without and reproduced from within. This self-reflection and formation remains a paramount problem, a priority for the present, and

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202 Ibid. 55
203 Ibid. 138
one from which the left is hardly immune.\textsuperscript{204} Habermas’s insight is of urgent importance, therefore, to the left today, and we must begin developing concrete practice by returning to the ally Habermas originally identified in his work: psychoanalysis.

Habermas recognized psychoanalysis as a science that both reflected upon itself and induced participants in its methods to reflect upon themselves and their interests in gaining the knowledge produced through psychoanalytic communication; its efficacy stems, moreover, from the unique communicative situation produced by the analysis, in which the analyst is able to recognize and affirm the analysand as an independent, valid individual \textit{as she is and ought become}. Because Habermas is interested in the distortion of communication (verbal and behavioral) by material factors, he sought to use, “psychoanalysis in order to grasp the hidden, unconscious and suppressed activity of individuals distorted by class societies.”\textsuperscript{205} Habermas, therefore, understood Freud in terms of a communication model, which he admits costs us the heavy price of being able to speak only of “intelligible needs.” Habermas upholds psychoanalysis’s capacity to access the hidden content of mental life and make it subject to self-reflection; Freud’s value is held to begin in his establishment, “that there is something destroyed only by comparing the given behavior with a state of say, ego strength or undistorted communication.”\textsuperscript{206} The individual feeds the creation of culture and social reality, and is held together by “ego identity”: psychoanalysis reveals both how much stands opposed,

\textsuperscript{204} Frankel and Habermas, “Habermas Talking: An Interview,” 42.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid. 39
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid. 53
within and without, to this ego identity and provides a communicative, reflective mechanism that arms the subject to resist these factors.\textsuperscript{207}

Psychoanalysis gives vertical access to the repressed by tapping the horizontal level of “the intersubjectivity of communication common to different subjects” where life experiences are also formed, and where the subjective can be recognized through the juxtaposition of “me” and “not me.” The common allows the subject to understand herself both as unique individual and as social being, especially because, “…in communication individuals can also keep a distance from one another and assert against each other the inalienable identity of their egos.”\textsuperscript{208} Identity is blocked in that it communicates itself indirectly within the norms and categories that define its life experience, and does not manifest itself immediately with them, but psychoanalysis promotes reflection and communication within a safe, artificial situation that shatters this blockage. Psychoanalysis not only constructs a situation in which undistorted communication is tolerated and demanded, it also requires reflection that cuts through the external and internal factors distorting communication.

In this way psychoanalysis harmonizes the universality of critical social science with the function of comprehending and supporting “individuated historical processes,” as Habermas claims, “Freud developed an interpretive framework for disturbed and deviant self-formative processes that can be redirected into normal channels by therapeutically guided self-reflection.”\textsuperscript{209} The presence of the analyst allows for experience to be mediated by interaction, and allows for reflection and understanding to

\textsuperscript{207} Habermas, \textit{Knowledge and Human Interests}, 153-4.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid. 156, 157
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid. 186, 189
unfold through the experience of communication. In analysis, the other allows the subject to recognize herself as consciously engaging in processes that were formerly unconscious, and to navigate the self-formative process in light of this critical inquiry, and as Habermas claims:

The experience of reflection articulates itself substantially in the concept of a self-formative process. Methodically it leads to a standpoint from which the identity of reason with the will to reason freely arises. In self-reflection, knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy and responsibility…the pursuit of reflection knows itself as a movement of emancipation. Reason is at the same time subject to the interest in reason. We can say that it obeys an emancipatory cognitive interest, which aims at the pursuit of reflection.

In short, communication is systemically undermined by factors that block the integration of ego identity and the maturational achievement of individuation. Psychoanalysis is a critical and emancipatory corrective that works through undistorted communication.

Because the ego becomes transparent to itself in self-reflection, “the moral quality of a will to emancipation,” arises, which is necessary “for the ego to raise itself to intellectual intuition.” Or, as Habermas claims, “In the interest of the independence of the ego, reason realizes itself in the same measure as the act of reason as such produces freedom. Self-reflection is at once intuition and emancipation, comprehension and liberation from dogmatic dependence.” Autonomy is the achievement of the ego which is at last able to recognize itself as a self-determining, self-positing and creative, invested with both responsibility and agency in society. In other words, psychoanalysis demands self-reflection in which the rational subject comes to understand his interest in actualizing freedom and meeting responsibility. Freud thus undoes the blockages of positivism by

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210 Ibid. 181, 195
211 Ibid. 198
212 Ibid. 205, 208
incorporating self-reflection into the method, practice and refinement of his science, and this is a major reason why psychoanalysis retains value for critical theory today. 213

Psychoanalysis is also useful as a form of critical inquiry that holds the power to dissolve dogmatism and defense through its insight and feed a passion for critique that enables the subject to surmount false consciousness; 214 that is to say, psychoanalysis is a powerful tool for the revolutionary, because it reflexively unites theory and practice through praxis and turns them towards emancipation. The conscious possession and liberating use of freedom is only possible where Kant’s charge of sapere aude is fully met, and the subject is actualized through unfolding introspection linked to extrospection carried forward in solidarity with others: where self-reflection, to borrow Habermas’s language, can be completed on the level of intersubjectivity. 215 For Habermas, indeed, the optimal development to ego identity occurs through communicative action, which makes the subject both critic and actor in the self-formative process. 216 The efficacy of psychoanalysis, grounded in self-reflection is that it causes moral insight: in reflection, theoretical and practical knowledge are not yet undone, and the subject can truly own that the symptom is part of the self and, “assume responsibility for his illness.” 217 This assumption of responsibility fundamentally alters communication: the defensive flight from self that created the need for analysis was carried out through language and must be rejected.

213 See: Ibid. 214
214 See: Ibid. 234
215 Ibid. 251
216 See: Ibid. 259-60
217 Ibid. 235
Freud’s method uses communication to block language’s ability to enable flight, and works to construct a new language (drawing on speech and behavior) that stabilizes, “processes of consciousness in such a way that the ‘internal’ is fastened to symbols and obtains ‘external’ existence.” Psychoanalysis is able to accomplish this because it turns from what is consciously intended, because repression works by excluding troubling content and impulses from public communication. Freud is instead concerned with the, “omissions and distortions that it rectifies have a systematic role and function. For the symbolic structures that psychoanalysis seeks to comprehend are corrupted by the impact of internal conditions. The mutilations have meaning as such.”

Self-deception is undone by self-reflection made possible by communication with the other, and in this way, psychoanalysis models ideal, open communication necessary to restore and maintain the public sphere. Through psychoanalytic practice, the repressed returns to public communication, and must remain a part of public discourse and consciousness now that the subject has developed a critical reason which grasps both personal and social interest in pursuing emancipation.

Rather than maintaining its power and distorting the present, the traumatic and problematic can be directly confronted through psychoanalysis as a subject of personal and social importance, and can thereby be overcome. Autonomy is secured as the infantile is surmounted, as through the overcoming of the infantile, the subjection to normative, deindividuating authorities must be critiqued and contested; as Habermas claims, “The analytic situation makes real the unity of intuition and emancipation, of

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218 Ibid. 239
219 Ibid. 217
insight and liberation from dogmatic dependence.”\textsuperscript{220} The individual emancipates himself by becoming a self-conscious subject present in the dialogue with the analyst, who in turn aids this liberation by becoming the “interaction partner” who “makes himself the instrument of knowledge: not, however, by bracketing his subjectivity, but precisely by its controlled employment.”\textsuperscript{221} The mere translation of unconscious content into conscious language by the analyst alone is insufficient: it is the inducement of self-reflection, made necessary if the patient is to live up to the demands of undistorted communication of the other, that is the core of the analyst’s compassionate recognition of the subject’s ego, freedom and worth.\textsuperscript{222} The repressed “can only become understandable at the level of an intersubjectivity that must be created between the subject as ego and the subject as id. This occurs as physician and patient together reflectively break through the barrier to communication.”\textsuperscript{223} What distinguishes psychoanalysis as a \textit{critical social science} is its reflexive subjection of method and the knowledge extracted through the use of method to human ends: the interpretation is not valued in reference to its correspondence to fact, but instead is judged against its impact on the patient, its ability to speak to his interests. If the interpretation meets the interests uncovered in the formative process of self-reflection, it can be owned by and work to empower the subject.

Although psychoanalysis does not give the analyst the technical control possessed by a normative scientist over his subject, it therefore, “achieves more than a mere treatment of symptoms, because it certainly does grasp causal connections... owes its

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid. 287
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid. 237
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid. 228
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid. 257
efficacy to overcoming causal connections themselves.”224 As a science, psychoanalysis is effective because Freud reflected on its own foundations in theorizing, and thus the metapsychological is fed by insights derived from the intersubjective experience of analysis and is formed through self-reflection bound with practice. Metapsychology thus cannot subsume the individual: one cannot be subjected to psychoanalytic methods, as one can only be made subject through them. Psychoanalytic theory allows the analyst to reconstruct and interpret this case – it enables one to see a story the subject is as yet unable to tell, which is then corroborated by the continuation of the interrupted self-formative process through the completion of self-reflection. As a science, therefore, psychoanalysis is at its most radical in technically utilizing knowledge in an emancipatory fashion disconnected from the pursuit of control for control’s sake: psychoanalysis instead deploys knowledge to achieve self-control for the subject’s sake, as Habermas claims, “Self-reflection is determined by an emancipatory cognitive interest. Critically oriented sciences share this interest with philosophy.”225 The take away we, as critical theorists, must make is that it is only through self-reflection that knowledge and interest become and remain one, and it is only through the compassionate work of reaching out to the other openly that self-reflection becomes fully possible.

Habermas, however, had a limited view of psychoanalysis that hindered him in fully utilizing Freud’s methods to construct an emancipatory, democratic mode of communication. It is evident from Habermas’s interpretation of psychoanalysis that his views are predicated mainly on Freud’s early work. One major piece of evidence supporting this contention is that for Habermas, in分析, “The intellectual work is

224 Ibid. 271
225 Ibid. 310
shared by physician and patient in the following way: The former reconstructs what has been forgotten from the faulty texts of the latter…while the latter, animated by the constructions suggested by the physician as hypotheses, remembers."\(^{226}\) Although this reading is certainly accurate of Freud’s earliest practice, Freud’s methods only achieved full potency once the work of interpretation, reconstruction and critique was assumed (to the fullest extent possible) by the analysand. Habermas, indeed, sees psychoanalysis as constructing a situation defined only by the weakening of defense through the relaxation of control and the repetition of content in front of the analyst.\(^{227}\) This understanding of analysis obscures the compassionate core of psychoanalysis, which for critical theory must remain the heart of the enterprise.

It is here, indeed, where the limit of Habermas’s account becomes evident, as Bronner notes, Habermas’s “penchant for procedural and systematic thinking often works to the disadvantage of his emancipatory objectives.”\(^{228}\) Habermas’s concern, despite his interest in psychoanalysis, does not lie with subjectivity; it is instead the institutions of the present system and the possibility of “democratic will formation.” Habermas approached psychoanalysis for the same reason he turned away from it in his later work: because he pursued undistorted communication, and rejects the “muddle” the psychoanalytic subject must come to tolerate. It is thus that he must posit an “undistorted” form of communication, and requires an analyst with no personal interest – no meaningful compassion – in the analytic situation.\(^{229}\) Because he sweeps the messy condition the analysand must come to tolerate and live in spite of under the rug,

\(^{226}\) Ibid. 230  
\(^{227}\) See: Ibid. 232  
\(^{228}\) Bronner, Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists, 190.  
\(^{229}\) Ibid. 194
Habermas domesticates the potent unconscious; as Joel Whitebook notes, “Habermas, in other words, believed that psychoanalysis provided a model of the type of methodologically legitimate, self-reflective science on which a critical theory of society should model itself.” Because he did not distinguish self-reflection from reconstruction he, “could assume that his reconstruction of the universal presuppositions of the species’ capacities for knowledge and action...was at the same time emancipatory critique.”

To move away from the underground, however, deradicalizes psychoanalysis and gravely hinders it from adding anything to critical theory.

Freud recognized that the depths of the unconscious cannot be fully explored, and the effects of the unconscious on everyday life cannot be fully owned and overcome. Undistorted communication is thus utopian in the fullest sense of the word: we can find it “no place.” The primary mental states are a prelinguistic core that never dissipates, and in turning from this, Habermas naively underestimates the truculence of our “deeper and often darker impulses.” Habermas’s effort to defend modernity thus obscures the core of the anxiety of the modern subject because, “Habermas – the communications theorist par excellence – ironically proffers a limited conception of communication.”

What psychoanalysis offers is a means to make communication with self and world meaningful despite inevitable distortion from both without and within, through engagement precisely with the perverse: this capacity needs to be taken up by critical theory today. In his effort to ground freedom, knowledge and justice in the very structure of communication, Habermas leaves little space for venting, grasping and dealing with an unconscious that

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230 Joel Whitebook Perversion and Utopia, 82-3.
231 Ibid. 9
232 Ibid. 11, 9
stands beyond language. Habermas, without a grounds for dealing with the unconscious, cannot deal with the proclivity of subjects to embrace suboptimal and non-rational options: if we want to challenge the haphazard forms resistance increasingly takes today, the unconscious, however, is where we must start talking.

Although Habermas is right to seek a vibrant, diverse democracy, we also need to focus on *how to build the individuals capable of sustaining and tolerating that democracy*. This requires the confrontation of an unconscious that cannot be fully tamed, and needs psychoanalysis at its most radical: a psychoanalysis that demands play, creativity and construction because and in spite of human limits. The communication Freud demands, indeed, is necessary *because it cannot be complete* - because it operates at the limits of human understanding, language and tolerance of the “muddle” – it enables us to strike at the foundation of socially-sanctioned, dangerous mass delusions in light of its recognition of the persistence of the same. And as Adorno and his collaborators recognized in *The Authoritarian Personality*, “In the history of civilization there have been not a few instances when mass delusions were healed not by focused propaganda but, in the final analysis, because scholars, with their unobtrusive yet insistent work habits, studied what lay at the root of their delusion,” therefore, “To gain access to these deeper trends is particularly important, for precisely here may lie the individual’s potential for democratic or antidemocratic thought and action in crucial situations.”

Psychoanalysis, indeed, is compassionate and optimistic in that it divests us of excuses for abdicating our responsibilities to society and self despite the limits of possible communication, because it does more than simply spark internal communication:

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psychoanalysis allows the subject to own and restructure the very fabric of mental life, most importantly by demanding the modification of the superego.

Whereas Habermas sought to draw on a psychoanalysis that adapts the subject intelligently to modernity, we must draw today on an explosive psychoanalysis that orients the subject to contest it compassionately and constructively. We must work towards a critical theory that supports and demands the Eros I will describe in the next chapter. Ultimately, psychoanalysis would allow us to mediate between Habermas’s pragmatism and the utopianism of the critical theory that preceded his work; Habermas’s turn away from Freud represents a loss for critical theory, as psychoanalytic communication effectively couples the strengths of both. In *Dawn and Decline*, Horkheimer presents the compassionate ideal that, “The very nature of language is to create ties, to establish community, to be urbane. To give verbal expression to an animosity is the first step toward surmounting it.” Psychoanalysis not only demands reflection on, exposition and the overcoming of animosities, but creates an intersubjective space in which the value, rights and uniqueness of the individual can be affirmed even as trauma, aggression and insecurity is voiced – even, that is to say, where the individual is at her least acceptable in terms of social normativity. It is in this experience of valuation and affirmation that psychoanalysis finds and restores the subject’s potency and mobilizes her to utilize the same in light of her interests and those of others. Habermas is correct in that what matters in psychoanalysis is, at core, precisely “communication – the experience of being understood.” Freud mediates between subject and system in the

234 Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline*, 75.
name of an achievable better world. His analysis generates and illuminates both in their relationship to each other, shows both fail and demands each do better: as Bronner claims, theory must, “rise above the individuality that exists as well as above the society that exists.” The return to Freud, indeed, allows us to become concretely and productively concerned with how the public engulfs the private, with how the subject abdicates the duty to contest this subsumption. To actively challenge these tendencies, however, requires the work of Eros.

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Psychoanalysis is a Humanism: Reclaiming Eros for Critical Theory

The psychoanalytic process can neither be theorized nor practiced without an accounting of the drive that allows it to heal, unite and, above all, to mobilize: Eros. To understand Eros, however, is a tricky prospect. Eros figures primarily in Greek mythology as the companion and child of Aphrodite, the agent who directly placed love’s directives into action by firing his arrows into the hearts of mortals. This image is worth unpacking. While the myths of Aphrodite are as like to involve violence as life-affirming passion (she is described as the lover of Ares and as the jealous persecutor of Psyche to take but two examples), Eros is linked to a love that is at the core of any project of critical resistance. Firstly, while Aphrodite remains, at best, a passive ideal of love, Eros fuels the potency of love in the real world. Without Eros, indeed, love would neither drive the creative, passionate and constructive efforts of men nor support relationships based in true solidarity amongst them. Eros is thus linked, from the start, with an unyielding impulse to bind together that which must come together – most importantly, disparate human beings - in a passionate unity that pushes society closer to a mature, fulfilling mode of life.

Secondly, Eros refused to punish the innocent Psyche, and instead was guided by compassionate feeling for the would-be victim. Upon removing her to his home as his bride, he importantly refuses to allow her to see him, proclaiming that he would rather be loved as an equal than adored as a god. This highlights that Eros’s compassion is not based in the desire to subtly acquire power as the savior of the suffering, who are thereby cast in the role of permanently weak victims. Instead, Eros rejects the suffering of the
other as wrong in itself because the other ought not be a means to someone else’s ends. Eros, moreover, acts out of a real desire for equality and seeks a mode of relating with the other without domination, despite his superior power. It is crucial that as Psyche is punished by Aphrodite, the normative ideal of love, for transgressively observing her sleeping husband, Eros steadfastly supports her. In the end, he has her elevated to the station of a true equal and made a goddess serving the ends of love. Although his first effort to achieve a non-oppressive order failed, Eros evolved (by relating with the other) into the capacity for genuine equality: it is this progressive quality that the best dialectical work captures. Psyche, who through her name and initial vulnerability symbolizes the human soul, moreover, is elevated and strengthened through Eros, who recognizes her value in herself and encourages her to overcome jealousy, coercion, and the violent machinations of power. Of this union, as it could only be of such a union, Pleasure is born. Erotic dialectal engagement therefore leads directly to mutually benefiting action and builds a new mode of living.

Above all, Eros is frequently shown resisting normative authorities that would oppress him (and suppress his impact on the world). One example ought suffice. After his defeat of the Python, Apollo boasted that his were the only hands worthy of wielding that “warlike weapon,” the bow, and urged Eros to abandon “his” weapon. Recognizing Apollo’s attempt to install himself as an oppressive patriarch, Eros rejected his argument. Utilizing a potency of the bow that Apollo could not harness, Eros wounded him with a one-sided love for Daphne. The punishment fit the offense: Apollo is revealed, through Daphne’s flight, to be violent and unlovable in the figure of the oppressive hegemon. Not only does Eros exposit the grotesque nature of oppressive power, indeed, he aims to bring
that power low by deploying love as an alternative to the construction of the products of reason as implements of war and domination. By dialectically reimagining the arrow, Eros is able to take a symbol of aggression - a deadly production of reason applied to dominating ends - and turn it to the purposes of emancipation.

Pulling these threads together, Eros is essential to critical theory because it is a drive that combines critique, compassion and resistance in a mobilizing, life-affirming passion directed constructively at a suffering, oppressed externality. It is understandable, however, that Eros remains Janus-faced: it is by necessity grounded in both the utopian and the quotidian. The question, ultimately, becomes: what strain of Eros ought be privileged by critical theory? Eros was a major intellectual current, especially in Vienna, while Freud was developing his method because of this potent dialectical tension. In unpacking Eros, we find a grounded passion operative in the world. It is Eros that pushes the mundane to transcendence by promoting loving, egalitarian and mutually enriching relations with others. At the same time, however, there is a strong utopian strain in Eros. The beautifying relationships crafted by Eros, and even more clearly the equality demanded by it, are largely missing from societies based, throughout history, in an increasing scale of domination and power. Psychoanalysis promotes, I contest, an Eros heavily weighted towards the quotidian, because it is in this form that Eros works constructively against all tendencies oppressing autonomy and freedom in spite of the dominating character of modernity. Freud’s concern, throughout, is with supporting men as they are in the realization of their potential autonomy and social agency. Critical theory, especially Herbert Marcuse, has favored the utopian aspects of Eros, those that point towards an emancipated condition at the end of history. In light of the increasing
scale of reification in modernity, however, favoring the utopian is no longer a tenable option.

As Marcuse understood, Eros is at the heart of any effort to draw upon Freud’s work and develop praxis capable of resisting systemic oppression. Marcuse’s Eros, however, is tied to a regressive utopianism Erich Fromm rightly criticized for abandoning the emancipatory aims of critical theory. This account, furthermore, obscures the potency Freudian Eros. In short, I contest that while Freud was able to end his masterful *Civilization and Its Discontents* with an Eros armed against the dehumanizing aspects of modernity, Marcuse’s Eros is unarmed by a utopianism that in regresses towards primary narcissism. Today, critical theory must break with this categorization. In this chapter, I argue that critical theory is hindered by the emphasis on the utopian elements of Eros, which has led to the insufficient theorization of Eros as a social power. I will begin by analyzing Marcuse’s account of Eros and the limitations it places on critical theory. I will then turn to psychoanalysis and argue that Eros is better understood as a passion that drives all men to lovingly build connections and alternatives in the real world.

**Marcuse’s Utopia: Eros in the Theory and Practice of Critical Theory**

Marcuse’s Eros reflects his commitment to emancipation at a time when the prospects for revolution were quite bleak. Drawing particularly on the experience of the death camps, Marcuse sought to counter the negative transformation of human nature with the possibility of a positive transformation in line with the human interest of emancipation and the dialectical demands of revolution. He is an example, therefore, of the resolute political commitment that must ground critical theory. Marcuse responded, indeed, to the major philosophical impasse critical theory identified, notably in *Dialectic*
of Enlightenment: that alienation is enmeshed in human reason, which is thus an engine of the domination of man. In short, Marcuse identified a Gordian knot: freedom is becoming more homogenous with domination, which is further masked by the comfort with which we seem to live. As such we produce domination within ourselves, and domination grows more obscure and incontestable. The age itself is thereby totalitarian in character. In response, he strikes at the strongest links in these chains: externally, against the advanced industrial mode of production, internally, in opposition to the psychological tendencies that feed domination and suppress the subject’s need to be free.

Marcuse’s primary answer to this theoretical knot is his turn to utopia for alternatives to an irrevocably repressive system and to aesthetic experience as the means to challenge the oppressive totality. In turn, Marcuse links utopia and aesthetic experience to Eros. Eros is, for Marcuse, repressed by both socially necessary renunciations that allow for work and through controls for control’s sake. The manufacturing and management of needs, a longstanding aspect of the industrial system, weakens Eros, and this manipulated Eros supports unfreedom. The strength of the system, its material ability to answer these needs, is thus anathema to the Eros that would impel us to be free, as Marcuse claims, “…intensified progress seems to be bound up with intensified unfreedom.” Marcuse recognized that is the duty of any critical theory to confront this problem, a project that still speaks urgently to the needs of the present.

For Marcuse, it is in Freud’s metapsychology that one can see the extent, internally and externally, to which, “Domination is the internal logic of the development

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238 Ibid. 4
of civilization.”

If reason is enmeshed in oppression, external possibilities for change are negated by the internal reproduction of domination. Civilization begins where the objective of the pleasure principle, the satisfaction of instinct, is renounced for the secure, but delayed and sublimated, pleasures of the reality principle. The most significant renunciation is the restriction of sexuality, the limiting of permissible object choice necessary to modify subjects to the reality principle. Because of this, Marcuse posits, Eros is weakened and, “Civilization plunges into a destructive dialectic: the perpetual restrictions on Eros ultimately weaken the life instincts and thus strengthen and release the very forces against which they were ‘called up’ – those of destruction.”

Marcuse, therefore, sought to change mental life such that instrumental reason might be replaced by a sensuous relationship with self and world. Building on Marx’s conception of surplus capital, Marcuse posits that we can identify what he calls “surplus repression” under the historical iteration of the reality principle, or the current performance principle. In the context of one-dimensional modernity, Marcuse’s concern is to highlight the unnecessary repression rife in capitalism, a process of reification that must be rejected and resisted.

The performance principle is problematic because it hinders the autonomous development of the instincts; Marcuse claims that the instincts are thus fixed at the childhood level, a dangerous and vulnerable point, binding the timid subject to the status quo ante. By reconceptualizing the reality principle as a socially situated standard necessary for performance at a certain historical moment, Marcuse unmoors the subject

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241 Ibid. 44
242 Ibid. 32-3
to question the specific performances demanded of her and to seek the possibilities that can be developed into alternative principles. In short, Marcuse frames society as engulfing the subjective, down to the instinctual impulses, thereby domesticating the individual. On the surface this is a bleak denouement, however, Marcuse finds hope in the very reach of the state: the system has absorbed psychological functions, making psychological categories into political ones that can be picked up in emancipatory ways.\footnote{243}

Marcuse’s target, therefore, remains the ideological framework of domination throughout his work. Marcuse’s answer to the problems of alienation, the “Great Refusal,” reaches beyond the psychological and rejects the false needs produced by industry and the one-dimensional choices facing the subject. It is thus, as Bronner claims, an “anthropological break,” a social rejection of a dominating order meant to build a liberating mode of living.\footnote{244} The liberation of Eros presupposes the rejection of the “entire realm of competitive performances and standardized fun, all the symbols of status, prestige, power, of advertised virility and charm, of commercialized beauty” which dulls awareness of unfreedom and destroys the “very disposition, the organs, for the alternative: freedom without exploitation.”\footnote{245} In the great refusal, society comes to understand that happiness “depends on the real solidarity of the species ‘man,’ which a society divided into antagonistic classes and nations cannot achieve.”\footnote{246} Real social unhappiness, obscured by reifying satisfactions, can be used to expose alienation and mobilize resistance of all that hinders autonomy determination and solidarity. Above all,

\footnote{243} Ibid. xxvii
\footnote{244} See: Bronner, Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists. 172-188.
\footnote{245} Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 17.
\footnote{246} Ibid. 14
both individuals and technology must become vehicles of freedom, and “be reconstructed in accord with a new sensibility – the demands of the life instincts.”\textsuperscript{247} The urgent need to reimagine technology that has developed to the point of being able to kill millions in moments, indeed, requires, “man intelligent enough and healthy enough to dispense with all heroes and heroic virtues, man without the impulse to live dangerously, to meet the challenge; man with the good conscience to make life an end-in-itself, to live in joy a life without fear.”\textsuperscript{248} This, I believe, is Marcuse at his most Freudian. It is also the point where we must begin to question Marcuse’s reading of Eros.

Marcuse’s project of liberation is made possible by the very technological infrastructure deployed one-dimensionally by the industrial system, which signifies that although human industry is currently transforming the world into a “hellish place,” we could also turn the world into “the opposite of hell.” Because the technological foundation to meet necessity already exists, Marcuse believes this transformation would, “mean the end of utopia, that is, the refutation of those ideas and theories that use the concept of utopia to denounce certain socio-historic possibilities.”\textsuperscript{249} Reclaiming the emancipatory possibilities of technology would smash all justifications for surplus repression, and would transform the modern subject into “a type of man with a different sensitivity as well as consciousness: men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, follow different impulses; men who would have developed an instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness,” a subject, that is to say, of Eros.\textsuperscript{250}

This transformative process begins for Marcuse with the negation of the repressive needs

\textsuperscript{247} Marcuse, \textit{Essay on Liberation}, 19.
\textsuperscript{248} Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, xiv.
\textsuperscript{249} Marcuse, \textit{Five Lectures}, 62.
\textsuperscript{250} Marcuse, \textit{Essay on Liberation}, 21.
that make that subject complacent in his chains, and the development of new needs in line with an emancipatory performance principle.\textsuperscript{251} At the same time, however, Marcuse presents the sober demand, one that reverberates strongly with psychoanalysis, for, “An opposition…that is free of all illusion but also of all defeatism.”\textsuperscript{252} The limits of Marcuse’s of Eros thus first become visible in his belief that Eros is crippled by surplus repression.\textsuperscript{253} Psychoanalysis remains valuable in the present because it provides a method that draws on Eros to challenge domination, at its very psychological foundations, especially in the face of oppression and resistance. In other words, the quotidian Eros is most potent and valuable exactly where turned again surplus repression.

Erotic subjectivity, genuine autonomy, opposes the illusory autonomy of the subject in the industrial system, as Marcuse warns, today, “Self-determination, the autonomy of the individual, asserts itself in the right to race his automobile, to handle his power tools, to buy a gun, to communicate to mass audiences his opinion, no matter how ignorant, how aggressive, it may be.”\textsuperscript{254} Critical theory must oppose this mentality through the development of Eros. Marcuse rightly saw that the greater the emphasis on the liberatory potential of existing knowledge, the more pressing the need for a liberated consciousness capable of rising to the free use of human creations.\textsuperscript{255} In the one-dimensional world, the psychological thrall of the subject is guaranteed by the ascendancy of “aggressive over libidinal energy,” a binding not through Eros but through

\textsuperscript{251} Marcuse, \textit{Five Lectures}, 66.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid. 69
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid. 35
\textsuperscript{255} Marcuse, \textit{Five Lectures}, 74.
shared hatred and rage,\textsuperscript{256} and through the checking of our original “polymorphous-perverse” sexuality via taboos.\textsuperscript{257} Because civilization is the almost exclusively the work of constructive Eros, it requires a withdrawal of libido from all subjects, who are left dependent on the external world for satisfaction.\textsuperscript{258} Eros is thereby weakened, carried outside of the subject, and cannot bind the death instinct effectively.\textsuperscript{259} Instrumental reason and technical progress have thereby been able to relegate Hegelian “human freedom” and “humanitarian progress” to utopia, to a place that cannot exist.\textsuperscript{260} For Marcuse, the revolutionary confrontation of surplus repression would undo renunciations and restore the Eros of the subject, re-sexualize the body “in a resurgence of pregenital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy,” restoring the body as an instrument of pleasure.\textsuperscript{261} The foundations for the new consciousness are thereby laid through the reclamation of Eros.

This reclamation would move also transform society itself, as Marcuse claims, “the repressive structure of the instincts would be explosively transformed: the instinctual energies that would no longer be caught up in ungratifying work would become free and, as Eros, would strive to universalize libidinous relationships and develop a libidinous civilization.”\textsuperscript{262} The ultimate goal of the Great Refusal is thus the, “Emergence of a new reality principle: under which a new sensibility and a desublimated scientific intelligence

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{256} Ibid. 155
\item \textsuperscript{257} Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, 49.
\item \textsuperscript{258} Ibid. 82
\item \textsuperscript{259} Ibid. 81
\item \textsuperscript{260} Marcuse, \textit{Five Lectures}, 28-9.
\item \textsuperscript{261} Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, 201.
\item \textsuperscript{262} Marcuse, \textit{Essay on Liberation}, 22.
\end{itemize}
would combine in the creation of an aesthetic ethos, capable of supporting “new relationships [which] would be the result of a ‘biological’ solidarity in work and purpose.” Under a new reality principle - that is to say, under conditions that promote the immediacy of subject and object – Eros evolves, making the subject more potently sensuous. This evolution is possible because the rejection of the repressive sexuality of the performance principle fuses sexuality with the life instincts; as such, “they would provide the libidinal energy for work on the development of a reality which no longer demands the exploitative repression of the Pleasure Principle. The ‘incentives’ would then be built into the instinctual structure of men.” The transformation of the subject demanded and sought by the Great Refusal is, if we connect these threads, one that regresses back to a point before the emergence of dominating civilization, as Marcuse notes, “the driving force is the refusal to grow up, to mature, to perform efficiently and ‘normally’ in and for a society.” For psychoanalysis, however, if one fails to grow up, or still worse, if the mature subject suffers psychological disintegration, there is not only the danger of primary narcissism, but also of disengagement with reality.

Marcuse’s reenvisioning of Eros is predicated on the belief that while psychoanalysis can provide us with insight that makes the need for revolution clear, “Freud’s theory precludes the construction of any psychoanalytic utopia.” By questioning psychoanalysis’s utility in practice (which Marcuse fears will merely adapt the subject to the one-dimensional system), Marcuse blocks our ability to discern the full

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263 Ibid. 24
264 Ibid. 88
265 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 212.
266 Marcuse, Essay on Liberation, 91.
267 Ibid. 62
268 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 131.
extent to which psychoanalysis would be antagonistic to the means he uses to seek his valid and just ends. Through a psychoanalytic lens, Marcuse’s erotic subjectivity appears as a defensive reaction to an overwhelming problem, a reaction with consequences for both critical theory and politics.

**Desublimation and Regression**

The key elements of Marcuse’s desired transformation of the subject are *desublimation* and *regression*. For Marcuse, desublimation is the result of the liberation of erotic energy currently tied up in meeting necessity (or rather, what seems necessary given the inflated needs of capitalism). The liberation of this energy would not simply release Eros, but allow Eros to return to an earlier state of development, transforming the balance between the antagonistic instincts and, by extension, society:

> The basic trend of such liberation, as indicated by Freudian theory, would be the recovery of a large part of the instinctual energy diverted to alienated labor, and its release for the fulfillment of the autonomously developing needs of individuals. That would in fact also be desublimation – but a desublimation that would not destroy the ‘spiritualized’ manifestations of human energy but rather take them as projects for an possibilities of happy satisfaction. The result would not be a reversion to the prehistory of civilization but rather a fundamental change in the content and goal of civilization, in the principle of progress.

In the context of Eros, focus must be placed on the regression which Marcuse’s account demands. It is only in light of regression, indeed, that desublimation becomes clearly problematic.

> There is, one must note, a radical politics at work in the claim that our present state of maturation is barbaric, and thus a measure of social regression is necessary to reclaim the emancipatory potentialities bankrupted in the present. This is not, however,

269 Ibid. 56
270 Ibid. 4-5
the radical politics that critical theory, which must do more than negate, ought draw on. Marcuse’s aim is to challenge surplus repression, to compromise the tyranny of false needs and the morbid fetishization of commodities, and regress to the pre-civilized moment, dominated by the pleasure principle, where Eros was still uninhibited. Eros would thereby become an antagonist of the present order, as it presupposes an instinctual need for liberation that leads to a pacified social existence in harmony with nature.\textsuperscript{271}

Despite Freud’s insistence, most emphatically in the final chapter of\textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, that it is the mature Eros developed through the binding of primary narcissism that stands armed against domination, and his warnings that the failure to bind omnipotence is the root cause of the worst modern tendencies, Marcuse’s Eros regresses towards this point. His utopia is thus no \textit{eu topos}, as it is grounded in a very real space that remains buried, but – like a fault line -very much alive in human mentality.

Marcuse’s assurance that, “Regression assumes a progressive function. The rediscovered past yields critical standards which are tabooed by the present,” thus provides no clear answer to Freud’s finding that the basic structures of the early mental life, those marked by sadism and primary narcissism, remain intact and active in the unconscious.\textsuperscript{272}

Regression takes us back to these states, and undoes (at least momentarily) the maturational accomplishments that support autonomy, identity, creativity and other-regarding morality. Marcuse fails to grapple with the function of regression, which is a \textit{defensive} process poorly suited to a strong \textit{offensive} against an unjust system. Regression, furthermore, is a primary engine feeding the conformist and uncritical “group

\textsuperscript{271} Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, 92.
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid. 19.
psychology” that concerned Freud even before fascism showcased its terrible power.\textsuperscript{273} Although Marcuse, therefore, is right that, “The \textit{recherché du temps perdu} becomes the vehicle of future liberation,” his emphasis on regression blocks the \textit{mature subject} from performing this critical task in orientation to a past understood as \textit{fixed and surmountable}, a past that can be used to impel new growth and to inspire a creative relationship with a world that can be similarly improved.

Marcuse’s erotic subjectivity therefore must be critiqued, particularly as an account of Eros, because it is founded on the “oceanic feeling” of infantile omnipotence, which psychoanalysis works to overcome in both subject and society. The return to the oceanic feeling is evident in Marcuse’s description of the “perpetual pleasure” and oneness of subject and object that would emerge from the liberation of Eros. Of Rolland’s\textsuperscript{274} famous feeling, Freud reports, “It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded – as it were, ‘oceanic,’” and interprets that, “he means the same thing by it as the consolation offered by an original and somewhat eccentric dramatist [Christian Dietrich Grabbe] to his hero who is facing self-inflicted death. ‘We cannot fall out of this world.’”\textsuperscript{275} Rolland’s feeling appears, at a glance, to be driven by Eros, which always seeks to build unities, as it presents the sensation of an “indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a

\textsuperscript{273} Marcuse claimed that the regression he envisioned did not match the regression made by group psychology (see: \textit{Five Lectures}, 60), but I believe that this is a case of theory by fiat.

\textsuperscript{274} Romain Rolland, now largely forgotten, was a French author and the 1915 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Largely responsible for the idea of the “people’s theatre,” Rolland sought to open art to the direct experience of the masses. His most important work, \textit{Jean-Christophe}, examples this theme. His friendship and correspondence, moreover, with Freud undoubtedly impacted psychoanalysis.

\textsuperscript{275} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, 11-12.
whole."\textsuperscript{276} It seems, indeed, that this feeling is a real answer to alienation, the separation of man from nature, including his own. Freud, however, quickly smashes that possibility by recalling the painful fragility of the ego, plagued by enemies on every border. Rather than pursue the grueling path of growth towards autonomy, the ego finds illusory solace and strength in the regression back to the undifferentiated ego of the infant, which haunts human existence like a lost paradise. The fear of falling “out of this world” might not have seemed immediate to Freud in 1930, but for Marcuse, writing in the post-war period, it must have felt very real.\textsuperscript{277} By placing the “oceanic feeling” at the opening of his discussion, however, Freud reminds us that it is this stopgap solution to a challenging world which stands \textit{at the start of our discontents}. By utilizing Rolland, a great man and friend, furthermore, as the example of this feeling, Freud highlights primary narcissism as an impoverished solution that even well intentioned intellectuals can easily reach.

\textbf{Utopia and Nirvana}

It is thus unsurprising that in \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, Freud claims that utopianism “may also spring from the remains of the original personality, which is still untamed by civilization and may thus become the basis in them of hostility to civilization.”\textsuperscript{278} The residues of primary narcissism are especially clear in Marcuse’s belief that timelessness is the ideal of pleasure, and his claim remembrance serves its highest function in contesting the power of time by “redeem[ing] the past.”\textsuperscript{279} He notes

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{276} Ibid. 12
\item \textsuperscript{277} As it was for Kant, who postulated that human life would lose its value without justice, and yet asserted that the crooked timber from which men are composed could never be straightened (meaning justice is a tenuous achievement which is in peril at all times).
\item \textsuperscript{278} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, 43.
\item \textsuperscript{279} Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, 231-3.
\end{itemize}
that while Eros pushes endlessly forward, pleasure is a temporal thing; it is thus he
presents regression to the pleasure principle as a solution to an intractable dilemma.
Marcuse claims that the strengthened Eros - liberated in a condition of being, not
becoming - could absorb the Nirvana objective, and thereby negate death as an
instinctual objective. In psychoanalysis, in contrast, the past is never framed as a
history to be redeemed; it is instead a continuing problematic, one that motivates the
subject to do better for self and world, as Joel Whitebook claims, “Whereas
Marcuse…envisages the utopian ‘conquest of time,’ which would comprise an attempt at
the omnipotent denial of Ananke, Freud formulates a program for the always-relative
coming to terms with transience.” It is thus the recognition and rejection of the traumas
of the past that drives the subject to seek a mode of living that would render those
traumas impossible.

Whereas psychoanalysis demands that the subject accept his finitude and live
creatively in spite and because of transience, Marcuse falls back on an Eros that utilizes
utopia to mask finitude and thereby loses the capacity to inform effective practice. The
Nirvana principle does not correspond to the pleasures of an emancipated and mature
human society, a “sane society” which, as Fromm hoped, would be capable of supporting
a community of autonomous individuals capable of true solidarity. Instead, the Nirvana
principle eschews all responsibility, action and intellectual engagement. Nirvana is the
bliss of eternal stasis, one that presupposes a return to the womb that would isolate the

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280 The “Nirvana objective” is the drive, related to the death instinct, to return to a state of
nothingness and thereby achieve a kind of peace.

281 Ibid. 235
282 Whitebook, Perversion and Utopia, 73.
283 See: Ibid. 4
individual, making solidarity impossible and other-regarding principles meaningless. This placid nothingness would block both individuals and the societies they inhabit from ever feeling the need to become something, something better, something free. Marcuse claims that those with an erotic subjectivity “reconcile Eros and Thanatos,” creating an eternal order of gratification. The radical erotic subjectivity contained in psychoanalysis, however, never rests and is never satisfied, although it certainly enables one to persist despite hardship. Through Freud, it becomes clear that the attack on time and belief that Eros could bring forth Nirvana, however romantic, is an “omnipotent denial of reality,” one that compromises the ability of the subject to critique the real world in which the suffering of living beings demands an immediate response from critical theory.

It is a mistake, therefore, to read what Marcuse sees as Freud’s “repressive modification” as located only in, “the lack of sufficient means and resources for integral, painless and toilless gratification of instinctual needs,” and thereby see Freudian renunciations as driven solely by exogenous factors. For Freud, these renunciations were the heart of the subject’s effort to integrate as a person and mature beyond engulfing condition of omnipotence. They are thus absolutely necessary in the development of creative autonomy and a social order based in other-regarding engagement, as Whitebook warns, “Any scheme for radical social transformation that does not include a mechanism for decentering infantile omnipotence stands condemned of utopianism in the pejorative sense.” Supporting Marcuse’s libidinally cathected world is a hidden strain that seeks to dominate and a narcissism that proclaims the capacity to do so. Marcuse remains

284 Ibid. 40
285 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 132.
286 Whitebook, Perversion and Utopia, 41.
certain, indeed, of the total capacity of this new order not only to beautify, but also to control and pacify. Even the sensuous relationship to nature contains a hidden drive to dominate the natural world for man’s pleasure. To better understand this tendency, I will now turn to the primary examples of erotic subjectivity that Marcuse utilizes in *Eros and Civilization*.

**Exampling Erotic Subjectivity**

The “culture heroes” Marcuse uses to example erotic subjectivity, Orpheus and Narcissus, merit special attention; it is through these examples that the limits of Marcuse’s Eros are clearest. One must reject the vulgar critique of Marcuse’s choices of examples, and take the models of Narcissus and Orpheus seriously. Both figures, indeed, provide a standpoint from which it is possible to critique the dominating and unsatisfying world they – and we - inhabit. For this reason alone, Marcuse is right to hold them up as feeding an erotic relation to the world. In Narcissus and Orpheus, Marcuse seeks the “culture heroes” who live imaginatively in a reifying world, those who contrast our experience with, “joy and fulfillment; the voice which does not command but sings; the gesture which offers and receives; the deed which is peace and ends the labor of conquest; the liberation from time which unites man with god, man with nature.” For Marcuse, the paths taken by Narcissus and Orpheus represent “the revolt against culture based on toil, domination and renunciation,” and thus reorient us to the experience of a lost world to be liberated through the release of Eros, not dominated by man. Through their antiestablishmentarian Eros, Marcuse claims they awaken the potential in all things.

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288 Ibid. 162
289 Ibid. 164
by attending and loving nature, thereby moving all to joy.\textsuperscript{290} Orpheus and Narcissus figure for Marcuse as liberator and creator: they embody the Great Refusal in its purest form, as a, “refusal to accept separation from the libidinous object (or subject). The refusal aims at liberation – at the reunion of what has become separated.”\textsuperscript{291} For Marcuse’s heroes, therefore, the erotic drive is to subsume the object in the name of an eternity of pleasure.

The fundamental question is whether it is possible to link theory and practice through these engulfing examples, or to put it clearly, whether these myths contain emancipatory possibilities that allow critique to support effective challenges to the order these figures rightly reject. Marcuse is correct that Orpheus was able to beautify and pacify society and nature, softening even the trees and rocks. His journey into the underworld to reclaim Eurydice, although one might note that it transgressed human finitude with the claims of omnipotence, was undertaken out of a genuine love for her. Orpheus, however, could not master himself sufficiently to surmount the challenges incumbent in saving Eurydice, a victim of a would-be rapist in a society that disregarded the rights and suffering of women. For the critical theorist, \textit{this} must be the test that matters: Orpheus could not translate his significant gifts into practice in his moment of crisis, because he was foiled by a selfish desire to possess his object without further delay. Whereas Freud’s Eros, \textit{especially in the face of loss},\textsuperscript{292} persists in creatively reaching beyond the self to build new unities, moreover, Orpheus shut down due to his

\textsuperscript{290} Ibid. 165-6
\textsuperscript{291} Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, 170. It is perhaps notable that Plato chose to internally critique such a “reunion of what has become separated” within \textit{Symposium} through the famous encomium of Aristophanes.
\textsuperscript{292} It is in relinquishing of our claims to omnipotence and the other losses of youth that we come by degrees to integrated, autonomous personhood.
inability to possess the object of his desires. After the second death of Eurydice, he became indifferent both to nature and others, which ought cause one to question the sharpness of the distinction between Orpheus and the Dionysian revelers who rent him limb from limb in their own frustration at not being able to possess their object of choice.

Narcissus, furthermore, could neither reach beyond himself nor penetrate the illusion that obscured the real suffering of Echo. Because of his indifference, Echo (a nymph with a more legitimate claim to a loving bond with nature than her would-be love), was ossified by grief into barren rock, her voice alone left to recall her misery to the world. Marcuse contests that Narcissus did not know the reflection he fell in love with was his own, and Narcissus therefore represents an Eros that transcends self-love. This does not explain, however, why Narcissus was only brought to care for the external world when it reflected his own image back at him, and met those who reached out to him before his fatal encounter with callousness and even cruelty. Narcissus represents the engulfing synthesis of subject and object, a promise of self-effacing union that psychoanalysis emphatically rejects. Narcissus, ultimately, cannot be said to truly possess a self. He was only able to fall in love, after all, with a trick of light on the surface; the real depths of the other overwhelmed and subsumed him. His ability to test reality, much less participate creatively in society, therefore must be found wanting. Through the lifestyle of his heroes, Marcuse believed that, “The opposition between man and nature, subject and object, is overcome. Being is experienced as gratification, which unites man and nature so that the fulfillment of man is at the same time the fulfillment, without

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293 Ibid. 167
violence, of nature.” This engulfing relationship, however, is a fatal impossibility, as the deaths of Orpheus and Narcissus indicate. Their inability to actually support and nourish the object meaningfully from an autonomous position, moreover, shows this mode of living to be undesirable, particularly as a revolutionary program.

In contrast to Marcuse, Horkheimer made the admirable claim that, “True heroism is unmindful of its own interests but passionately concerned with a socially significant value.” I believe that contemporary critical theory must uphold this standard more viscerally than ever. By this standard, however, Orpheus and Narcissus can only fail, and against it they reveal the degree of narcissism that pervades (and the moment of abdication within) Marcuse’s erotic subjectivity. Marcuse took primary narcissism as the archetype of an alternative existential relation to reality, as he claims, “usually understood as egotistical withdrawal from reality, here is connected with oneness with the universe, reveals the new depth of conception: beyond all immature autoeroticism, narcissism denotes a fundamental relatedness to reality which may generate a comprehensive existential order.” Freud, however, recalled us to the fact that this “oneness” is precisely where our discontents start from; Marcuse’s work, in attempting an escape from human unfreedom and misery, tautologically supports a key aspect of the psychological foundations for that unfreedom and misery. The ability to tolerate the separateness of the object, the renunciation of infantile omnipotence, is a central goal of the psychoanalytic process: autonomy, through which alone other-regarding and mutually fulfilling relationships are possible, is a necessary precondition for erotic subjectivity.

294 Ibid. 166
295 Horkheimer, Dawn and Decline, 38.
296 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 168.
297 Ibid. 169
Fromm’s work is consistent in recognizing this necessity, for example his recognition that, “attempts for love are bound to fail, unless [one] tries to develop [one’s] total personality, so as to achieve a productive orientation…love cannot be attained without the capacity to love one’s neighbor, without true humility, courage, faith and discipline.” In the effort to link theory and practice, both of Marcuse’s heroes fall short in precisely this regard, leaving them unable to resist the suffering of others and putting us in a terrible bind: although we can see clearly that the present system is rotten to its core, the means of refusal we are left with by Narcissus, Orpheus and Marcuse himself are ultimately impossible. We are thereby left in a true “no place.”

Towards a Radical Eros

Radical Eros is at peace with neither perpetual pleasure nor defensive regression; it is this mobilizing and persevering quality of Eros that psychoanalysis can restore for critical theory. Where Marcuse seeks to pass from Marx back to Fourier, we ought recall that from Fourier to Marx was a real advance, one necessary for a politics that speaks to a world in which real people are suffering. Where Marcuse contends that, “Eros, when uncontrolled, strives for nothing further than obtaining more intensive and perpetual pleasure,” we must recall that the perpetual pleasure is more accurately the goal of the death instinct in its quest for Nirvana. For Freud, Eros’s main task is to continuously oppose this pursuit of “perpetual pleasure” with new insights, interests, challenges and complications. It is telling that Marcuse’s brilliant, critical and unflinching work in One-Dimensional Man is disconnected from his presentation of Eros

299 Marcuse, Essay on Liberation, 22.
300 Marcuse, Five Lectures, 33.
in the works studied here. It is also deeply problematic: Marcuse leaves us with no clear means to implement his utopian vision, despite the solvency of his critique. In response to a question along these lines in an interview, Marcuse responded, “Your objection is that, for new, revolutionary needs to develop, the mechanisms that reproduce the old needs must be abolished. In order for the mechanisms to be abolished, there must first be a need to abolish them. That is the circle in which we are placed, and I do not know how to get out of it.”

Given the constantly increasing capacities of the dominating system we inhabit, and the inverse inability of the people to seize on these same technologies as means of emancipation, we cannot afford to remain in this circle today.

Marcuse was right to bring a focus on feeling and beauty into the resistance of a disenchanted world, but he was wrong to divide his theorization of Eros from what Freudian Eros perpetually demands: a hard, mobilizing accounting of reality. The extent to which Marcuse’s philosophy of psychoanalysis speaks only problematically to such an accounting of reality is clear, for example, in his discussion of perversion. For Marcuse, perversion serves a critical function in rousing the subject from the dogmatic slumber of dominating reason, as he claims, “Against a society which employs sexuality as a means for a useful end, the perversions uphold sexuality as an end in itself; they thus place themselves outside the dominion of the performance principle and challenge its very foundation.” Whitebook, recalling the case of the Wolf Man, however, reminds us that perversion is not just pure id impulse, an unconscious wish to translate the pleasure

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301 Ibid. 80
302 The use of social networking mediums both by protestors seeking democracy and the state opposing them in Iran, Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere speaks to the multiplication of this tension since Marcuse’s death.
303 Ibid. 50
principle transgressively into practice, but instead is generally of *traumatic origin*.
Perversions, despite the appearance of sexual liberation, are at core a stopgap attempt to integrate the self by overcoming traumas *without confronting its real content*. Marcuse thus can only approach perversion in a “utopian manner” because he “excludes the problems of trauma, disavowal and aggression from his analysis.” By excluding them, he obscures the suffering of the subject, and immunizes the past from critical dissection.

In short, the need Marcuse identified to uncover the past is in this case blocked by his vision of Eros. Elsewhere, it is blocked by the emphasis on regression: the drive to repeat, not remember, *les temps perdu*. To concretely resist the injustices of the current system, one must be willing to participate, as the critical psychoanalyst participates, in that system. To clarify, one ought participate through ongoing reflection that penetrates into the psychological and historical structures of trauma and domination, so that one can maintain conscience and autonomy in spite of them, as Whitebook claims, “the basis for a distinction between the radical reformer, who accepts the basic structure of civilization and rebels against particular injustices within it, and the transfigurative utopian, who rebels against civilization as a whole, can already be found in Freud.”

It is because of his reliance on regression and utopia that Marcuse recognizes the centrality of imagination, play and spontaneity, but cannot harness them as emancipatory forces; psychoanalysis gives us precisely this ability. Marcuse saw fantasy as the one aspect of human mental life left free from the domination under the reality principle. Fantasy thereby preserves the pleasure principle, and can be used to envision alternatives

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305 Ibid. 21
to and recognize the failings of the reality principle. Because it is a mode of thought free from the reality principle, fantasy alone is capable for Marcuse of, “[linking] the deepest layers of the unconscious with the highest products of consciousness (art), the dream with the reality; it preserves the archetype of the genus, the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom.”

Fantasy thus appears as a bridge between theory and practice, a means of linking the “dream with the reality” through the preservation of emancipatory impulses. The liberation of Eros, indeed, frees the subject to be “what he ought to be” by allowing him to become imaginative. Resistance, especially “surrealistic forms of protest,” assumes a “total character” and reaches into “what as aesthetic dimension, has been essentially apolitical,” thereby invoking the power of the imagination. The whole being is changed and animated through the rejection of the norm, allowing reason to become a gaya scienza, and not an agent of domination. This sensuous conquest of mental life, of thought and practice, is what Marcuse believes will enable the Great Refusal to remain true to its emancipatory content, as “Imagination envisions the reconciliation of the individual with the whole, of desire with realization, of happiness with reason” and thus primes the subject to find that “behind illusion lies knowledge.”

For Marcuse, therefore, “The whole person must demonstrate his participation in a pacified, human world. The established order is mobilized against this real possibility. And if it harms us to have illusions, it is just as harmful, perhaps more harmful, to preach

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306 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 142.
307 Ibid. 140-1
308 Ibid. 189
310 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 143.
defeatism and quietism, which can only play into the hands of those who run the
system.”311 The contestation of illusion, which psychoanalysis demands, must not mean
the abandonment of the ability to dream otherwise. Psychoanalysis shows, particularly in
the use of dreams as the “royal road” to the unconscious, that illusions can be contested
in ways that allow the subject to make imaginative use of their truth content and grow
beyond the illusions themselves. Freud, however, urges development where Marcuse
urges regression, and this is the critical distinction: because the psychoanalytic subject
grows, learns and by degrees to reorients himself to the world despite its challenges,
psychoanalysis prepares the subject to be truly creative in utilizing imagination to
develop alternatives without falling for the Siren’s song of demobilizing illusion.

Ultimately, the regression of the subjects that might utilize utopia resolutely
negates our capacity to deploy utopia effectively, and leads to a beautiful, but unclear,
commitment to an unclear, but beautiful, emancipation. Marcuse’s means, in short,
compromise his ends – ends that we must affirm today. The extent to which Marcuse fails
to harness a creative Eros that can create meaningful change even in the demobilizing
present is clear in his assertion that, “The uncontrolled Eros is just as fatal as his deadly
counterpart, the death instinct.”312 An uncontrolled Eros, however, is precisely what
Marcuse leaves us with; by severing Eros from the maturational accomplishments that
bind narcissism and ready the subject for autonomy, the subject’s ability to orient
productively to the world through Eros is gravely undermined. Although, indeed, “In a
world of alienation, the liberation of Eros would necessarily operate as destructive, fatal
force – as the total negation of the principle which governs the repressive reality,” his

311 Marcuse, Five Lectures, 95.
312 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 11.
understanding of Eros causes him to miss that this is precisely what we need and what psychoanalysis aims to achieve.313

Marcuse’s presentation of Freud, moreover, limits the usefulness of psychoanalysis. For Marcuse, although Freud’s analysis of repression can be approached dialectically to reveal the need for transformative engagement, psychoanalysis itself cannot support that engagement, as he affirms that, “Freud considers the ‘primordial struggle for existence’ as ‘eternal’ and therefore believes that the pleasure principle and the reality principle are ‘eternally’ antagonistic. The notion that a non-repressive civilization is impossible is a cornerstone of Freudian theory.”314 The idea that Freud grounded his theory in the eternality of a repressive order is, quite simply, undialectical and unfounded. It is not merely that Freud’s theory is a compassionate effort to undo the psychic damage done by a repressive order. Such practices have long been deployed to sure up the established system, as salves that work to reinscribe the domination that damaged the subject in the first place. Uncritical psychoanalysis can, furthermore, be used for this regressive end. It is rather that Marcuse mistakes mature self-determination, an Eros capable of strengthening self and reorienting the self to the world, for domination itself. Freudian renunciation is not acquiescence to norms and controls that benefit only the power of the system. It is, instead, a means for binding the residues of infantile mental states, the corrosive riptides of the oceanic feeling, such that autonomy can be reached, as Shengold claims:

As knowledge increases and the universe becomes transformed with repeated experiences of frustration and ‘no’ – as the unpleasurable and the not-me become part of the contents of the mind – the initially infinite inner world shrinks, as does

313 Marcuse, Essay on Liberation, 95.
314 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 17.
the global sense of self, into a registration within the child’s mind of the complexities and infinities outside the self. The space in the external world occupied by the self becomes for the most part pitifully small.” Tolerating ‘nothing,’ accepting ‘no’ and rejecting ‘everything’ make ‘something’ and being ‘someone’ possible.315

Psychoanalysis allows us to accept our limits, mortality and fragility and not be undone, engulfed or subsumed by them. It is because of the need to contest overwhelming one-dimensionality that this process has value as a radical mode of living today.

In the end, Marcuse does not overcome alienation because the divide between subject and object is part of the fabric of mature autonomy demanded by Eros. As Whitebook notes, viable social and mental frameworks need to renounce direct access to and, above all, possession of the object, in large part because, “Progressive frustrations – which later acquire an oedipal meaning – and the triangular situation enable us to keep the object at a distance, creating perspective.”316 What is remarkable about Freud’s work, particularly his late work, is that he does not escape into utopian speculation even where what he uncovers easily leads to despair. He is never more determined and radical, for example, than in Moses and Monotheism, where he smashes the very foundations for the persecution of the Jews after his exposure to the escalation of the holocaust. It is due to his persistence that Freud offers means to attain such perspective for oneself. At core, Freud refused to separate theory from compassionate practice, even when it would have been easy to believe that theory revealed the hopelessness of that practice. Although Marcuse ought be admired for attempting to maintain the same link between theory and practice in his work, we must recall that his use of psychoanalysis was a philosophical

316 Whitebook, Perversion and Utopia, 67, 66.
effort that renounced psychoanalytic practice.317 Marcuse shatters, therefore, our ability to use psychoanalysis, which is underscored in his belief that:

The successfully analyzed individual remains unhappy, with an unhappy consciousness – but he is cured, ‘liberated’ to the degree to which he recognizes the guilt and the love of the father, the crime and right of the authorities, his successors, who continue and extend the father’s work. Libidinal ties continue to insure the individual’s submission to his society: he achieves (relative) autonomy within a world of heteronomy.318

Such a view of analysis smashes its potential as a process of reflection, reimagination and communication that stretches into both the past and the future, and thus motivates potent action and feeling in the present. To be succinct, the fight for Eros is a political fight,319 which is why Marcuse’s means of liberation fall short. Critical theory requires an Eros that operates in this world, fearlessly. Marcuse notes that Freud once ponderously claimed, “psychoanalysis really ought make all patients revolutionaries,” as a means of chastising psychoanalysis for failing to achieve this end.320 We ought not, however, be so quick. Freud leaves it up to us to become revolutionary for ourselves, giving us only the means to get there. It is uncritical to fault him for this: using psychoanalysis, the subject can develop into a whole person erotically oriented to a world that emerges critically from his lived experience. Our goal should be to develop the potentialities within psychoanalysis that lead to this end.

**Psychoanalysis and Eros: Reimagining the Freudian Legacy**

In 1920, psychoanalysis made a dramatic shift with the publication of Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. To the present day, the majority of readers have taken

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320 Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 77.
Thanatos to be Freud’s pathbreaking discovery in this volume. These readers, however, are wrong; as Lear notes, Eros is the truly provocative innovation of 1920.\(^\text{321}\) In this text, Freud advances the startling notion that something more primitive and less intelligible than the pleasure principle shapes much of human mental activity. Through his consideration of post-war trauma dreams and his observation of the ‘fort-da’ game played by his grandson during the absence of his mother,\(^\text{322}\) Freud concluded that, “even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind.”\(^\text{323}\) With this discovery, Freud was compelled to revise his previous account of the factors behind human behavior, and introduced Eros and what has come to be called Thanatos, the antagonistic instinctual forces that drive human thought, desire and action.

The very discovery of Eros in 1920 underscores the value of Freud’s militant optimism for projects of critical resistance. It is remarkable that Freud - emerging from the traumas of the First World War, discovering the death instinct and suffering the initial symptoms of the cancer that would plague the remainder of his life - was able to envision an instinct that pushes men to love, grow and create. The careful reader, however, can discern that Eros was always a central force in psychoanalysis, and led directly to Freud – a Jew victimized by Anti-Semitism, an innovator resisted by the reactive bourgeoisie – discovering and practicing his new method in hostile Vienna. One of Freud’s key early discoveries was the relation of expansive sexual life - the desires that compel the

\(^{321}\) Lear, *Open Minded*, 126.

\(^{322}\) The young boy would throw a toy connected to a string away and then pull it back, all the while proclaiming ‘fort’ and ‘da.’ Freud observed that the boy took pleasure in ‘fort’ as surely as he did in ‘da,’ which led to this line of inquiry.

individual to reach beyond himself and engage reciprocally with an enchanted world - to the development of mature agency. As Peter Gay notes, psychoanalysis consistently places love at the core of life, and Freud even once went so far as to claim to Jung, that psychoanalysis is “a cure through love,” a healing process made effective by communication between mutually respecting agents. Freud’s methods, indeed, make use of Eros to craft a discourse that induces the subject to reflectively engage the self and test reality through his relation with the analyst, a communicative process that allows the subject to own the meanings created by and structures of the mind. This is communicative action in its most essential form, at its most valuable in accessing the psychological foundations supportive of domination. In this form, indeed, “the talking cure” builds autonomy while simultaneously sowing the seeds for a new mode of relating with the other. Critical theory has much to gain from a communicative process that builds symbiotic solidarity and autonomy.

The sentiment Marcuse sought to introduce in the 1960s via the Great Refusal, in other words, was not as fresh of an alternative as he believed. Eros as a social force impelling a new model of mental and shared life can already be found in Freud’s work. Psychoanalysis is based on the idea that the mind is active and imaginative in structuring its experience through Eros, as Lear claims, “The analysand comes to see that he is a dramatist: creator of meanings, rather than the passive victim of a tragic world. The possibility thus arises to take up these meanings and go on in new ways.” The ego possesses an inner potential in Eros to mature into deeper relations with the world, which

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326 Lear, Freud, 19.
327 Lear, Open Minded, 141.
psychoanalysis encourages. Although many critical theorists have noted that the typical developmental process in psychoanalytic theory is the weak ego’s defense through conformity to social norms, the goal of psychoanalysis, held in common with critical theory, is to enable the subject to overcome this defensive development. Psychoanalysis is, above all, a method meant to support the analysand – or, in the metapsychological works, society at large – in taking creative responsibility for her life and social agency. For Freud, therefore, it was Eros that mobilized the historical progress of civilization towards what he called “maturity” and the individual ontogenetically towards an autonomy made meaningful in relation to others. Critical theory today would be greatly benefited by theorizing and capturing such a drive.

**Unsettling Instinct: Eros and Mobilization**

Freud believed that mental health consists of the abilities to love and work\(^{328}\) in having achieved a fulfilling orientation to the world through Eros, and critical theory must be able to tap this quotidian orientation. To reach a state of mental health sustained by Eros requires critical reflection, as it is only a real commitment to seeking knowledge, especially where what is discovered is disturbing, that can enable one to recognize what constrains her, grow and create the new. Psychoanalysis is the best ally in the effort to develop Eros, because it leaves no excuses; as Lear notes, psychoanalysis seeks to interpret unhappy people and their motivations, but it also *refuses* to rationalize their thoughts, values and actions.\(^{329}\) It confronts us with the disowned unhappiness of human beings, reveals the irrational acts of “rational actors,” notes the malign purposes to which the highest values and powers are employed and forces us to recognize the staggering

\(^{328}\) Shengold, *Delusions of Everyday Life*, 46.

\(^{329}\) Ibid. 6
extent to which man turns from freedom.\textsuperscript{330} It is this refusal to allow the subject to persist in an unfree and unhappy condition that marks Freud’s compassion; psychoanalysis insists that man reach autonomy, or at least acknowledge his failure to be autonomous. In this way, psychoanalysis divests us of comforting illusions and the need for heroes, and demands that we interrogate what is really possible within the boundaries of human finitude. It is the science of an Eros through which we come to know ourselves as limited beings so that we can create ourselves as builders of real alternatives to the present order. By maintaining an Eros heavily grounded in the quotidian, therefore, psychoanalysis effectively taps reflection and concrete action in the present, and mobilizes the subject to resists all that throttles the promise of individual and shared life in the present. In other words, it is as an aspect of everyday life that Eros has its most potent, mobilizing impact on those who can no longer accept unnecessary suffering, be it their own or that of others.

Freudian Eros mobilizes the subject to resolute engagement with the world because, in contrast to Marcuse’s Eros, it is fundamentally disquieting, and reminds us of the humane responsibilities incumbent in freedom. Freud repeatedly claimed that Eros is a “noisy” and “conspicuous” force.\textsuperscript{331} The discovery of Eros, a richer concept than the narrow one of ‘sexual instincts’ it replaced, was the recognition that something within man resists the Nirvana objective\textsuperscript{332} by introducing new complexities, tensions and objects into life. The instincts, indeed, are the major source of impulses; they are adaptable, and seek satisfaction in diverse ways. This oldest level of mental life is ‘primary,’ a permanent foundation upon which all mental activity rests, as opposed to the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{330} Ibid. 17
\item \textsuperscript{331} For example, see Sigmund Freud, \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, 78.
\item \textsuperscript{332} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Beyond the Pleasure Principle}, 3.
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Both instincts dominate mental life, whether through the direct satisfaction of impulses, or more frequently, the effort of the higher strata of the mind to bind and repress impulses that are thought to be problematic in society. Freud saw the instincts as conservative forces that seek to return to an earlier form of life. Thanatos, for example, strives to return the subject to the earliest moments of human existence – the quiescence of the womb. Although he was dedicated to discerning and resisting the quiet operations of Thanatos under the racket generated by Eros, Freud did not fully develop his conception of Eros. We can still use the work Freud did finish to see that, even in a repressive world, Eros is a break from conservative instinct, a nascent reservoir of radical energy that, “push[es] forward towards progress and the production of new forms.” Eros, indeed, retains a “conservative” character only in that it conserves life by introducing new tensions and interests and inciting reproduction. Its core value, indeed, is that it mobilizes the subject “towards progress”: Eros, like critical theory, tolerates neither complicity nor complacency.

In sum, Freud’s Eros preserves and enriches life at each turn, and draws the individual into concrete action and real solidarity with others. Eros, in other words, is a social force, a shared instinctual will to live freely and well, a power that serves as the foundation of both autonomy and creative social agency, as Freud claims, “They are the true life instincts. They operate against the purpose of the other instincts, which leads, by reason of their function, to death; and this fact indicates that there is an opposition

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333 Ibid. 40-1
334 Lear, Open Minded, 126.
335 Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, 44.
336 Ibid. 48.
between them and the other instincts.” To dialectically access the unfulfilled promise of the present, to redeem the betrayed promise of the past, critical theory must deploy Eros as a social force that not only builds subjectivity and solidarity, but also crafts passionate and necessary links between the two. The psychoanalytic process of critique, communication and action, therefore, is an ideal model for critical theory to build upon.

**The Evolution of Eros: Beyond Sexual Instinct**

To draw upon Freudian Eros, a fuller account of its aetiology is necessary. The realization that the sexual instincts are a component of Eros stems from the recognition, most clearly in *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, that the libido is not limited to sexual objects, and can be redirected at the ego, birthing secondary narcissism (healthy self-love). The ego thus contains a vast reserve of erotic energy that is inhibited from its original, narrow aim of sexual release. This discovery is critical, because as Freud would later claim, all individuals, “require their libido, the activity of their life instincts, for themselves, as a reserve against their later momentous constructive activity…the libido of our sexual instincts would coincide with the Eros of the poets and philosophers which holds all living things together.” It is thus that Eros is not just the preserver of individual life, but of the unity of living things. Through the capacity to combine sexual desire for the object, which can be sated and forgotten, with aim-inhibited libido directed towards long-term relationships of friendship, respect and compassion, one gains the ability to make a positive impact on the world.

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337 Ibid. 49. Libidinal relations with the object even cause the partial neutralization of the death instincts, as uniting with others complicates and adds to existence (Ibid. 67).
338 Ibid. 60-1.
339 Sexual energy and impulses that have been diverted to other ends, like affectionate relations, intellectual endeavor and etc.
Through Eros, therefore, we move from the sexual instincts into an affective world where politics and ethics are possible: whereas Marcuse frames this partial renunciation as the core of domination, it is instead the key to autonomy. Marcuse hoped to break the dominance of becoming over being and achieve lasting pleasure by rejecting the aim-inhibition of instinct, but psychoanalysis recognizes that by renouncing and becoming the individual is able to learn, grow and create against domination. The ego is an uncertain thing, pressured from all sides by overwhelming demands and stimuli. Psychoanalysis is key to political development as it strengthens the ego to reflect, will and act despite the forces opposing it. That is to say, psychoanalysis develops Eros as an effective vehicle for Logos through the conscious reflection on both illusions and the underlying matrix of needs, fears and weaknesses sated by those illusions.

Psychoanalysis links the development of curiosity and critical capacity to mutually affirming social action. The “oceanic feeling,” therefore, is the antipode of truly humane feeling in which the subject operates lovingly as part of the world, to which he has a creative and not a dominating connection. To live erotically is to overcome primary narcissism without maintaining the illusions of this infantile state in other forms. Eros compels the individual towards autonomy bounded by the recognition of the independence and value of others, and maturation involves the demarcation of a sphere of action in which one chooses freely in relation to others. It is through the desire to satisfy erotic impulses, moreover, that the ability to test external reality develops:

…all of these teeming, bodily, sexual drives are, in their own strange ways, reaching beyond themselves. Even the infant who sucks his thumb and pleasurably fantasizes that he is at the breast is, in the very act, trying to make sense of the world and his position in it…there is embedded in this an elemental
desire for understanding and for orientation. This is why sexual drives should ultimately be understood as erotic drives.\(^\text{340}\)

Early sexual curiosity, indeed, feeds intellectual curiosity (this was understood even from the earliest years of psychoanalysis): the intellect remains bound to Eros, and is empowered by the aim-inhibition of libido. Through the erogenous zones, for example, through the child’s ability to satisfy herself by using a pacifier instead of the breast, moreover, independence begins to develop.\(^\text{341}\) In *The Authoritarian Personality*, one key finding was the defensiveness of the prejudiced, those unable to tolerate living openly, especially their inability to experience “genuine sexuality” and their one-sided relations with others.\(^\text{342}\) The unprejudiced, however, “emphasize desired traits companionship, common interest, warmth, sociability, sexual love, understanding, presence of liberal values.”\(^\text{343}\) Their capacity to build long-term loving relationships is immediately connected to both nurturance and their valuation of, “real achievement often accompanied by anxiety over possible failure, intellectuality and socially constructive goals.”\(^\text{344}\) It is through renunciation - the aim-inhibited ability to feel affection, friendship, solidarity and compassion - that Eros drives the individual to reach out and impact the world lovingly. To divorce Eros from the quotidian and maturational renunciations, therefore, is a grave error for any critical theory.

**Eros and Resistance**

Eros impels resistance against all that would dominate and oppress life, and builds autonomy that demands progress towards a just mode of life. The development of aim-
inhibited passion is critical to the individual’s ability to engage in political thought and practice and to find non-aggressive forms of impacting society and culture\textsuperscript{345} as this achievement allows for one to persist lovingly in seemingly passionless intervals. In other words, growth through Eros allows sublimated activity to retain the character of Eros.\textsuperscript{346} It is Eros, finally, that allows the individual to separate from the family, and orient himself towards society as a whole. Optimal parenting, the care that will enable the subject to someday embrace the responsibilities of citizenship, encourages and accepts the growth of independent identity, goals and rights.\textsuperscript{347} Authority grounded in Eros, that is to say, tolerates critique and resistance in the name of autonomous development. The test of parenting is that at the end of childhood the individual is encouraged to and supported as he enters the world on his own, as Freud attests, “One of the main endeavors of civilization is to bring people together into large unities…Detaching himself from his family becomes a task that faces every young person.”\textsuperscript{348} The ability of the growing subject to identify with \textit{and rebel against} parental authority is essential to both Eros and emerging autonomy. Because it is grounded in everyday situations like the family, Eros is intimately tied to the exposition and resistance of authority in the normative forms that most deeply touch and concern the subject.

Freudian Eros, therefore, is a powerful tool in mobilizing those who otherwise reject the need for revolution, because it problematizes the most essential and intimate elements of life by highlighting the subject’s atrophied social agency and demands a

\textsuperscript{345} As Shengold notes, “Aggression and rage must be dealt with, at each stage of psychological maturation, and much maturation and tempering of the mind are necessary to be able to love more continuously.”
\textsuperscript{346} Sigmund Freud, \textit{The Ego and the Id}, 44.
\textsuperscript{347} Shengold, \textit{Father, Don’t You See I’m Burning?}, 27-8, 70.
\textsuperscript{348} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, 58.
response. At the end of Jean-Paul Sartre’s first draft of *The Freud Scenario*, for example, Freud emerges from a long struggle with his need for father substitutes, and it is only at this moment that he comes into full possession of his new theory, his creative power.

Psychoanalysis, from Freud’s self-analysis forward, moves towards this freedom through the confrontation of the past and the recognition that one must embrace one’s inner potentiality, Eros, to build a liberated future. Marcuse’s utopian means, in spite of the dialectical uncovering of reality in his works, shield us from our responsibility to the world. In helping the subject confront the traumatizing aspects of mental life, in causing him to admit to his unfreedom and unhappiness, psychoanalysis turns him towards the traumatizing aspects of modernity. It thus deepens the subject’s ability to empathize with the suffering of others through the recognition of his own, and implicitly urges resistance against the causes of shared misery.

**Eros and Solidarity**

Although Eros is innate to each individual, it manifests only in spontaneous relation to others and is hindered by dependence, conformism and abuse. In psychoanalysis, it is the tie to the analyst that allows the repressed to be recognized and owned; in society, loving relationships are the basis of and model for constructive efforts. Where the effort to engulf the object ends, the enriching of the world through mutually regarding relationships with diverse objects can begin: the subject and object can work in solidarity to creatively shape a better world. The ability to will resolutely, act responsibly and live freely, to take full possession of the self, depends on the building of loving relationships, as Erich Fromm asserts, “The affirmation of one’s own life,  

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349 Lear, *Open Minded*, 140.
happiness, growth, freedom is rooted in one’s capacity to love, i.e., in care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge.” Eros can only act weakly where the ego is too fragile for the subject to stand alone as a creative agent, where it seeks to support self not through development, but by subsuming the object. No loving efforts, especially political ones, can last where the individual has failed to mature into a complete personality.

Like critical theory, psychoanalysis pushes forward in critique and action more forcefully when resistance arises; for psychoanalysis, however, an Eros that operates in the real world supports this effort. Lasting ties between individuals, or the erotic commitment to a cause, requires perseverance in spite of the majority of individuals who oppose such efforts de rigueur. It is this loving orientation, for example, that enabled Freud to persist in his work, particularly his calls against aggression in texts like Why War?, despite his mounting realization that the Nazism was transforming Europe into a “pure culture of the death instinct.” We must recognize, therefore, that the question of Eros is not one of object, but rather of subject; of developing the faculty to love first oneself, then others and, finally, humanity itself; as Freud claims, “The depth to which anyone [loves], as contrasted with his purely sensual desire, may be measured by the size of the share taken by the aim-inhibited instincts of affection.” To overcome omnipotence, to transform impulse into an abiding love capable of building better relationships, movements and politics – this is a true measure of Eros. Psychoanalysis,

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350 Fromm, The Art of Loving, 60.
351 Fromm, The Art of Loving, xix; Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, 32.
352 Fromm, The Art of Loving, 2.
which *demands* that man come to know, accept and control himself, is thus useful in the effort to build Eros in citizenship today.

**Eros as Social Force**

Eros is the key to conscientious citizenship because it is a social force that animates the individual: without an Eros that speaks to the real world, it is difficult to maintain solidarity in action. Early in life, children learn that to influence the environment they must form relationships with others. These early affective bonds are the models for future efforts to impact the world, and take the form of identification, in which the subject recognizes desirable characteristics of the other and incorporates them into the self. The social force of Eros rests on these identifications. Through identification, compassion grows as one recognizes oneself in the other. It is thus through identification that loving relations with the other restrict aggression, encourage empathy and spark moral growth. These psychological functions do not represent a loss of erotic energy: instead, they stabilize the subject in the erotic orientation to self and world. It is through identifications, moreover, that the ego develops towards autonomy. Through identification with the parents the superego is internalized, and through future identifications with those admired beyond the family the superego can be tempered and transformed. Identification thus allows one to develop principled conscience. Identifications are crucial to development because each stage of growth adds to the challenges the subject faces: in identification, the recognition of the value of others leads to the recognition of the value of the self, as Sartre claimed in the synopsis for his

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357 Ibid. 32
screenplay on Freud, “a man sets about knowing others because he sees this as the only way of getting to know himself; he realizes he must carry out his research upon others and upon himself simultaneously. We know ourselves through others, we know others through ourselves.” Eros can only become a way of orienting oneself towards the world when this developmental work is accomplished, as Fromm claims:

Mature love is union under the condition of preserving one’s integrity, one’s individuality. Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow men, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet it permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity.

In the best works of theory and activism, we glimpse this erotic subjectivity, which has developed into a social force, overcome dependency, learned to love life itself and supports the freedom and happiness of all that lives without sacrificing autonomy.

At the same time, it is through identification that Eros faces a crisis, the potential splitting of the unity between aim-inhibited libido and sexual impulse, as Freud claims, civilization, “favors every path by which strong identifications can be established between members of the community, and it summons up aim-inhibited libido on the largest scale so as to strengthen the communal bond by relations of friendship. In order for these aims to be fulfilled, a restriction upon sexual life is unavoidable.” It takes ample strength, which can only come from Eros, to persist in critical and emancipatory efforts at the cost of immediate satisfaction of instinctual demands. It is easy, furthermore, to regard one’s neighbor as unworthy of consideration – as Freud does in his

358 Sartre, The Freud Scenario, 505.
360 Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, 65.
blunt assessment that many are unworthy of love, that *homo homini lupus*.\(^{361}\) Eros unifies society, and allows men to live together through renunciations, as Freud contends, “Eros and Ananke [Love and Necessity] have become the parents of human civilization, too. The first result of civilization was that even a fairly large number of people were now able to live together in a community.”\(^{362}\) For Freud, supporting Eros is the best means of securing a healthy associational life; most individuals, especially in groups, are not likely to accept the rational reasons to develop a productive sociopolitical life, and will aggressively resist the restrictions civilization places on satisfaction. Civilization thus has to rely on the stopgap solution of tying groups together with emotional bonds secured in identifications. Resistance to the basic idea of civilization itself is fundamentally aggressive, and the “great task” before psychoanalysis and society, a task particularly impressed upon the critical theorist, is to resist this aggressiveness through Eros.\(^{363}\)

This does not mean, however, that Freud wanted to use psychoanalysis to support unjust forms of civilization: instead, psychoanalysis promotes the idea that a good civilization is necessary for free and fulfilling life and shows how far short the present order falls. Just as Martin Luther King, Jr. demanded the activist submit to punishment for violating unjust laws because the achievement of social justice required respect for the principle of law, Freud holds *this* civilization up to constant critique in his work without losing sight of the need for progress. One key task of psychoanalysis is, indeed, to modify the superego, to cause the agency to recognize and respect the limits of the ego’s control over the id, because only through renegotiation can punishing agency

\(^{361}\) Ibid. 67-69
\(^{362}\) Ibid. 55
become workable conscience. Psychoanalysis therefore shows that to create men that are actually *civilized*, each individual must confront and take responsibility for his actions and his mental life: the concept of healthy ordering must be taken over independently. It is through Eros, which links social agency and autonomy, that this is possible.

Freud posits, however, that ethics preach in vain, as no one is willing to place himself at a disadvantage against masses that refuse to accept moral duty; he argues that it is always necessary to coerce men and women to act correctly:

> It is in keeping with the course of human development that external coercion gradually becomes internalized; for a special mental agency, man’s super-ego, takes it over and includes it among its commandments. Every child presents this process of transformation to us; only by that means does it become a moral and social being. Such a strengthening of the super-ego is a most precious cultural asset. Those in whom it has taken place are transformed from being opponents of civilization into being its vehicles.  

For Freud, coercion is thereby avoided insofar as the subject becomes self-coercing. One, however, must move past this conception and see what is hidden beyond the limits of Freud’s own alienation: Eros itself is what makes it possible to claim that man is a social and moral being, a political animal. The autonomous subject freely imposes limits in line with the demands of Eros upon himself. In recognizing the power of Eros, one finds an ethical duty to develop and exercise this power in emancipatory praxis. Although Freud claims that man is a wolf to man, his entire life – boldly lived in the pursuit of salutary truths – and his methods stand as refutation. The vibrant subjectivity restored through psychoanalysis, indeed, demands that we at last transcend the lupine.

A key to the political struggle for Eros, therefore, is the contestation of “group psychology,” that perversion of social life that suffocates independence, thought and

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364 Ibid. 109.
conscience. In Freud’s central work on this subject, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, he argues that in groups, the heterogeneous individual and his creative powers are subsumed by the homogeneous, the common unconscious elements that remain after individual differences are muted. In such groups renunciations are abandoned as the individual, who likely feels powerless within society, finds invincibility in the numbers, common purpose and strong libidinal ties – to both the patriarchal leader(s) and the other members, who are identified with as brothers. The group is an antipode to critical solidarity: it sparks a regression to omnipotence, made more dangerous by the loss of accountability through the anonymity large groups provide, while it simultaneously effaces independence, as Freud posits, “…it would be enough to say that in a group the individual is brought under conditions which allow him to throw off the repressions of his unconscious instinctual impulses.”

The group collapses the spaces in which members could reflect on themselves and their actions; the biophilious effort to know and assume responsibility for the self, so beautifully captured in Freud’s famous phrase, “*wo Es war, soll Ich werden,*” is thereby made impossible. Although critical theory has long understood the dangers of groups and conformity, a fresh engagement with psychoanalytic methods would enrich its capacity to contest these fatal forces.

Groups, indeed, turn from Eros, reverse maturation, are intolerant of delays in satisfaction, experience simple and exaggerated feelings, feel artificial certainties - the extremities and intolerances common to the affective lives of children. Group

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366 Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 9. Freud refers not to all groups, but to those groups that draw on instinctual wishes and provoke regression. Neither Freud nor I wish to imply that all groups operate in this way or for these reasons.

367 Ibid.

368 Ibid. 10, 13, 14, 14n.
psychology, therefore, suffocates the loving, emancipatory radicalism that Eros produces and sustains. The group is vulnerable, however, because its psychological foundations in childhood needs and fears can be overcome through reflection and communicative action. Groups resist such intervention at every turn: they are inherently conservative, cause a decline in intellectual engagement and feed on illusion, as Freud claims, they “have never thirsted after the truth. They demand illusions, and cannot do without them.” The feelings engendered within the group are denuded of Eros and aimed at regressive, often destructive, satisfactions. The dependence of group members, moreover, allows the conscience to be completely subsumed by the object, as Freud contends, the ego:

...becomes more and more unassuming and modest, and the object more and more sublime and precious, until at last it gets possession of the entire self-love of the ego, whose self-sacrifice thus follows as a natural consequence. The object has, so to speak, consumed the ego...Conscience has no application to anything that is done for the sake of the object; in the blindness of love remorselessness is carried to the pitch of crime. The whole situation can be completely summarized in a formula: The object has been put in the place of the ego ideal.

The group thus exacerbates the fragility of the ego, as Freud claims, “We thus have an impression of a state in which an individual’s private emotional impulses and intellectual acts are too weak to come to anything by themselves and are entirely dependent for this on being reinforced by being repeated in a similar way to other members of the group.”

The group individual, indeed, cannot bear to be alone in thought or action and is desperate to be bound to the object, a desire that negates both self and Eros. In exposing group psychology as something to be rejected for bringing domination into the subject’s

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369 Ibid. 16
370 Ibid. 57. The object that replaces the conscience in this case is the leader and leading ideologies of the group.
371 Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 63.
mental life, psychoanalysis demands that the subjective move towards a non-aggressive non-dominating solidarity with others. It is only Eros that can feed this progress.

Marcuse posits that the productive powers of modern civilization could allow man to overcome necessity, renegotiate the reality principle and achieve a non-repressive society. There is a basic pre-political necessity, however, that antecedes the contemplation of a synthesis of Freud and Marx in practice: the work of drawing on Eros to rebuild subjectivity. First and foremost, the subject must be able to mature into autonomy. As we have seen, in healthy love, the ego enriches itself with the properties of the object and nurtures that it object, whereas in unhealthy love, the ego substitutes the object for its conscience, intellect and will.372 One inevitably belongs to many groups, is bound by identifications in many directions and builds his ego ideal on various models; because he thus shares in numerous group minds, it is vital that he also rises above them through independence.373 Freud teaches that the striving for omnipotence is only undone by respect for others and objects; it is through love alone that one overcomes aggression and acquires purpose and potency.374 The group, which mutilates even the preconditions for love, therefore, is a childish solution to childish frustrations. It would be easy to lose hope in light of the pervasiveness of this solution today. Freud optimistically demonstrates, however, that the ‘herd instinct’ is an unnatural deviation from normal development.375 Psychoanalytic methods can liberate those enmeshed in tendencies that oppose Eros. Through Freudian Eros, indeed, one becomes a creator of new meanings rather than an overwhelmed victim of the world.

372 Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 57.
373 Ibid. 78
374 Ibid. 43
375 Ibid. 65
Building on Freudian Eros

The terrors of the twentieth century stemmed from restrictions being imposed on immature masses that could not – would not – know and control themselves. Today, the psychoanalytic work of building autonomy is essential because the recent past has made it all the more clear that efforts to restrain deadly impulses through coercion or appeals to reason alone can succeed. It is necessary to support the subject in developing and regulating himself, in learning both how to lead, obey and work constructively with others. Freudian development is a complex process based in the gradual recognition of one’s limited powers and the small impact one is likely to have on history. The true test and fullest expression of Eros, therefore, is not the pursuit of unlimited satisfactions, but is rather the capacity of the individual to mature, love and create freely in a world that guarantees no satisfaction for such efforts. This is only possible where the individual reclaims the willful capacity to freely impose principled limits on himself.

Like Nietzsche, Freud critiqued Western morality as a pale attempt to curb aggression through aggressive means. This does not mean, however, that Freud rejected morality as a whole: Freud studied the disorders plaguing modern society without abandoning the pursuit of alternatives. The man who accepts the small role the individual plays in the world, and lovingly agrees to play his part to the best of his powers nonetheless, is a genuinely godless and erotic subject. He needs no higher powers and seeks no illusory solutions. To be godless is to attain a quotidian erotic subjectivity, as godlessness begins in the recognition that if there is no god, only human endeavoring can create a better future: the acknowledgment that man is responsible for his destiny, and
has a duty to act in light of this charge.\textsuperscript{376} Freud advises that truths attained through reality testing are always preferable to illusion; without an education to reality, citizenship is impossible. Erotic subjectivity requires us to be human, all too human; to accept how small and fragile the individual is in the larger scheme of things, and to learn to construct in light of that fragility and because of that smallness,\textsuperscript{377} as Freud posits:

They will have to admit to themselves the full extent of their helplessness and their insignificance in the machinery of the universe; they can no longer be the center of creation, no longer the object of tender care on the part of a beneficent Providence. They will be in the same position as a child who has left the parental house where he was so war and comfortable. But surely infantilism is destined to be surmounted. Men cannot remain children forever; they must in the end go out into “hostile life.”\textsuperscript{378}

The autonomous need no opiates. To own human weakness in this way is the best, if unpleasant, means to actualize Eros.

Although, moreover, Freud is skeptical of the masses, he believes that intellectuals must work to revise the relation of religion, and all other institutions that restrain development and intellect, to society, so that the need for coercion and illusion can fade.\textsuperscript{379} The need to invest valid cultural prohibitions, the products of human reason and will, with divine origins is truly a testament to the sense of human inadequacy. To turn love away from “worldly” matters is to turn away from creative Eros; to place faith in the power and mercy of a higher being is to reject the basic moral duty to take responsibility for and to work to the betterment of the conditions endured in this world.

Freud therefore understood that people only cease to need commandments when they can

\textsuperscript{376} See: Gay, \textit{A Godless Jew}, 110-3.
\textsuperscript{377} Freud, interestingly, explicitly rejected the ‘will to power’ as a primary drive in mental life.
\textsuperscript{378} Ibid. 63-4
\textsuperscript{379} Ibid. 50-1.
command and obey themselves, when they disinvest in promises of future worlds and invest in the world they actually inhabit.

It is only then, Freud claims, that, “they will probably succeed in achieving a state of things in which life will become tolerable for everyone and civilization no longer oppressive to anyone.”\(^{380}\) Although he does not think that the primacy of the intellect can be achieved easily or quickly, he does believe that it is inevitable, and that, “[Intellect] will presumably set itself the same aims as those whose realization you expect from your God…namely the love of man and the decrease of suffering.”\(^{381}\) Freud’s faith in man and Eros, his optimistic belief that humans can construct new alternatives despite their limits, is what must be taken away from his theory, and is the end to which his methods must be applied. Psychoanalysis is a praxis of Eros in that it remains a compassionate process that strives to enrich the individual and society, especially in the face of structural injustice. Freed from delusion, the individual is able to lovingly accept the slow work that actually leads to beneficial outcomes for self and other. Through Eros, psychoanalysis thus enables the individual to face reality without seeking compensations for suffering, because he can instead rely on the creative intellectual capacity of man.\(^{382}\)

Because psychoanalysis resists Thanatos, moreover, psychoanalysis requires the confrontation of human finitude. Reflecting on and accepting mortality, indeed, makes life possible; aggression and regression are sustained by the unwillingness to accept temporality, or as Freud notes, “We remember the old proverb: \textit{Si vis pacem, para bellum}. If you wish to preserve peace, arm for war. This might be the time to alter it to

\(^{380}\) Ibid. 63  
\(^{381}\) Ibid. 68  
\(^{382}\) Ibid. 69-70.
read as follows: *Si vis vitam, para mortem.* If you wish to endure life, prepare yourself for death."\(^{383}\) Although death is a fearful prospect, the transience of life is a powerful inducement to Eros, and can cause the individual to invest in living by adding urgency to life.\(^{384}\) Freud, indeed, reminds the reader that the first duty of all beings is to *live* and to *sustain life*, and insists that those who would follow him recognize that nothing which stands in the way of that is worth having or doing.\(^{385}\) The unwillingness to face human finitude is at core a fear of the tremendous potential of Eros.

Psychoanalysis is alarming because it ceaselessly confronts man with the necessity of choice, with the basic contention that the individual is not only responsible for what he does, but also for what he *is*. Although Freud’s work is replete with discussions of forces that structure human existence, none of this undoes Freud’s contention that to live authentically one *must* commit to creatively structuring his life. Choice, after all, contains the anguishing responsibility to create oneself freely before others. And without Eros, we cannot endure this necessary condition of freedom, as Freud did, as we must. The end of civilization is to produce civilized men, and it is precisely the godless one who recognizes that nothing save human initiative will bring about the good life that embodies the Eros. Life is self-creation; it can be nothing else.

The great optimism of psychoanalysis is that it prepares us to live as free, creative beings capable of a loving orientation to the world. The great compassion of psychoanalysis is that it *insists that we do*, and divests us of all reasons for doing otherwise.

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\(^{384}\) Shengold, *Delusions of Everyday Life*, 33.

It is little wonder that Freud, as Nietzsche before him, was fixated on the classical period, which at its best approached the mysteries of mental life and did not hesitate to work them into an account of what it meant to live virtuously. Modernity encourages us to, as many critical theorists have painstakingly shown, amuse ourselves to death at every turn; the conscious possibility of tragedy is not simply denied today, it is annihilated. Movies that fail to tack on a happy ending rarely make it out of focus groups, especially where a happy ending serves to suffocate any reflection the film might have provoked. Children are shielded to a degree that they cannot develop the ability to test reality. The same stories, songs and images reach our ears and eyes over and over in an endless cycle of consumption that leaves us unsatisfied. The average man does everything to deny that he is unfulfilled and unfree. Because of this denial of Eros, modernity is a space of terror, where tragedy surges just beneath the surface of the illusions on which modern man depends.

I could catalogue countless examples, but a few ought suffice. Twenty children around the world die from poverty, hunger and treatable diseases every second.\textsuperscript{386} In the United States, a report of child abuse is made every ten seconds, and five children per day die as a result of abuse by their caretakers.\textsuperscript{387} In a conservative estimation, 269 chickens are extracted from battery cages in which they had little more room than the volume of their bodies and slaughtered, generally without sedation, every second in the United States alone. An animal is killed for convenience, one must not muddy the waters of this issue through the incorrect use of the term ‘euthanized,’ every eight seconds in shelters

\textsuperscript{386} \url{http://www.globalissues.org/article/715/today-over-24000-children-died-around-the-world}
\textsuperscript{387} \url{http://www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics}
across the United States.\textsuperscript{388} Living through Eros is accepting that these calamities are manmade, and are neither necessary nor the unfortunate consequence of an otherwise positive development. Such abuses are the direct products of the illusory ideologies that allow modern industry to flourish even as those who ought be the subjects of history are transformed into the objects of capital. Eros, however, demands that one never lose sight of the ruined city that lurks behind the golden ideology of the end of history.

\textsuperscript{388} http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/
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Working Through the Past: Freud, Critical Theory and Bad Conscience

Despite its conscientious confrontation of modernity and recognition of the problem of guilt that is often as sharp as Freud’s, critical theory has heretofore offered no clear and consistent answers as to how the superego ought be transformed into life-affirming, self-determined conscience. Given that those who work through individual and shared guilt, particularly in the wake of systemic violence, are more likely to seek out and better able to secure meaningful democratic processes, the revision of the superego and the heightening of the capacity to persist lovingly and creatively in a messy world ought be a priority for critical theory today. I argue that psychoanalysis offers means to this end, which could be developed to enrich critical theory in the present. In this way, a return to the psychoanalytic foundations of critical theory is necessary to develop a bridge between the mature conscience displayed in its theory and the development of liberating conscience in practice and through praxis.

Breaking One-Dimensionality and the Problem of Guilt

Guilt is of particularly needful interest to critical theory today, not only because societies that confront and work through guilt are better able to secure both the affective foundations for and the functioning of democracy, but also because critical theory has done much to reveal the systematic ways in which modernity dirties the hands of its denizens. The totality of domination, its internalization by the dominated, is guaranteed only where the subject is made to participate in – and is bound by guilt to –abuses that ought engender criticism and resistance, as Paul Massing claims of the final solution, for example, “mass killing was a decision by which Hitler meant to burn all bridges. This time, no possibility of retreat or compromise should be left to the weak hearted…he
sought to tie all to his fate by making every German an accomplice in his crimes, so that no group or individual might hope for exoneration after his own downfall.”

As Horkheimer recognized, indeed, the “good citizen” is more likely to be angry at those who expose and resist injustice than at the systemic forces behind them, and is thus as guilty as the henchmen for whom “there is no infamy which will not be presented as moral by the ruling class…there is no villainy which could not be reconciled with the public conscience.”

In short, critical theory not only reveals how thoroughly mired in violence and guilt modernity is, but also insists that continued complicity – the failure to surmount the cycle of guilt enmeshed in domination – cannot be accepted, as Adorno reminds us, indeed, “Wrong life cannot be lived rightly.”

To live rightly, one must start from the recognition that the system conceals its character through a variety of mechanisms, including some within individual mental life, to take one example from Adorno, “Technology is making gestures precise and brutal, and with them men. It expels from movements all hesitation, deliberation, civility. It subjects them to the implacable, as it were ahistorical demands of objects.”

The discovery and contestation of the mechanisms that reproduce domination, one the most efficient of which is the normative superego, thus is a core question for any effective critical theory.

External evidence of the habituation of the subject to domination is found in every facet of everyday life; as such, the issue of how reification blocks the working through of guilt to secure the present system emerges. Through the adjustment to technology, to take

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390 Horkheimer, Dawn and Decline, 95, 88.
391 Adorno, Minima Moralia, 39.
392 Ibid. 40
an example, the body is habituated to brutality in step with the conditioning of the subject not to question, reflect on or refuse this conditioning. There is neither moment nor grounds (since down to the level of the body the subject is denatured and made object for the system) to consciously consider guilt. Modern language, tailored to the needs of the industrial system, further forecloses this possibility, as Marcuse claims:

It is the word that induces and organizes, that induces people to do, to buy, and to accept. It is transmitted in a style which is a veritable linguistic creation; a syntax in which the structure of the sentence is abridged and condensed in such a way that no tension, no “space” is left between the parts of the sentence. This linguistic form militates against a development of meaning... The word becomes cliché, and as cliché, governs the speech or the writing; the communication thus precludes genuine development of meaning.\(^{393}\)

This “abridgment of the concept in fixed images,” reminiscent of the “doublespeak” of Orwell’s *1984*, is the hallmark of the “irreconcilably anti-critical and anti-dialectical language” of the one-dimensional mind,\(^{394}\) which can support neither discourse nor reflection. Freud once described attempting to work with a patient who suffered from what we might call doublethink as “trying to write on water”\(^{395}\) with good reason. “Closed language” cannot hold multiple meanings, and thus offers relief for the degraded subject supported by the Manichean “‘separation of good from evil’” and the establishment of “unquestionable rights and wrongs.”\(^{396}\) Critical theory must shatter both false languages and totalities, and in this effort, as I shall argue below, working through guilt – especially in the confrontation of its sources – is a powerful weapon. The question of how to grapple with guilt where even language militates against the effort is a serious

\(^{394}\) Ibid. 97
\(^{395}\) Quoted from: Shengold, *Soul Murder*, 76.
\(^{396}\) Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 101.
one. As surely as guilt can block theory and practice by making the subject feel that he
cannot be acquitted by his “own conscience,”\textsuperscript{397} however, one can work through guilt and
towards spontaneous conscience through methods – like psychoanalysis – which promote
substantive communication.

Critical theory has long recognized the importance of dealing with individual and
shared guilt, particularly after its terribly intimate exposure to the ramifications of
fascism. To effectively respond to modernity and mobilize resistance, indeed, critical
theory must make the subject experience her dirty hands. It is not sufficient, moreover, to
merely highlight the injustices of the past and present. The dialectic demands an
accounting of the guilt stemming from the repeatedly betrayed promise of freedom and
the recognition that injustice will carry over into and determine the future if that betrayal
continues. The radical acceptance of freedom and responsibility is thus in no small
measure predicated on the recognition and working through of guilt. It is in this sense that
Marcuse had a particularly revelatory engagement with guilt and came to demand what
Bronner calls an “anthropological break” from the totality of the one-dimensional system.
Marcuse correctly found much of the radical power of psychoanalysis in Freud’s
exposition of the relatedness of unresolved guilt and the denial of the unconscious,
aggression and submission, as he claims, “Freud has pronounced an indictment which has
since been corroborated: by the gas chambers and labor camps, by the torture methods
practiced in colonial wars and ‘police actions,’ by man’s skill and readiness to prepare for
a ‘life’ underground.”\textsuperscript{398} The individual’s entrapment and complicity in the social
constellation of power, aggression and ideology is a central concern, furthermore, of his

\textsuperscript{397} See: Massing, “Is Every German Guilty?,” 443.
\textsuperscript{398} Marcuse, Five Lectures, 61.
work, and Marcuse clearly believed that both the burden of guilt and the mechanisms that constantly add to the same must be overcome. Of the “Great Refusal,” Marcuse claims:

This would be the sensibility of men and women who do not have to be ashamed of themselves anymore because they have overcome their sense of guilt: they have learned not to identify themselves with the false fathers who have built and tolerated and forgotten the Auschwitzs and Vietnams of history, the torture chambers of all the secular and ecclesiastical inquisitions and interrogations, the ghettos and the monumental temples of the corporations, and who have worshiped the higher culture of this reality.\(^{399}\)

The social rejection of one-dimensional society is meant to introduce a new mode of living together that serves as a liberating alternative for individuals otherwise subsumed by one-dimensionality (which negates the possibility of critical thought, solidarity and action). The new sensibility he seeks is thus a form of praxis that “emerges in the struggle against violence and exploitation” and represents the “negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture; affirmation of the right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminate in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the Form of the society itself.”\(^{400}\)

Whereas, however, Freud provides means of addressing the psychological needs and formations feeding the confluence of aggression and submission centered on guilt, Marcuse provides no clear means for the subject to secure an integrated conscience. Instead, despite his ability to link the sources of past and present aggression, he subtly submits to the force of the unconscious and is left with the claim that:

…there are photographs that show a row of half naked corpses laid out for the victors in Vietnam: they resemble in all details the pictures of the starved, emasculated corpses of Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Nothing and nobody can

\(^{400}\) Ibid. 25
ever overcome these deeps, nor the sense of guilt which reacts in further aggression. But aggression can be turned against the aggressor...the violence which breaks the chain of violence may start a new chain.401

Psychoanalysis’s capacity to work against the superego, to modify it through spontaneous conscience, is lost in the claim that, “Nothing and nobody can ever overcome these deeps, nor the sense of guilt which reacts in further aggression,” and in the sense that the past is too terrible to be redeemed through anything except fresh violence. Marcuse’s attempt to resolve guilt through revolution links to constructive practice, but belies constructive praxis. In short, his is an attempt to resolve guilt post hoc, to burn away and refuse one’s complicity, to start a “new chain” without making it clear how the psychological links defining the old one are to be broken and something truly new forged. Although Marcuse can thus decry that, for example, “Long before the special and not-so-special forces are physically trained to kill, burn and interrogate, their minds and bodies are already desensitized to see and hear and smell in the Other not a human being but a beast – a beast however, which is subject to all-out punishment,” he stays on the “physical” level and loses sight of the full scale of psychological foundations which predispose the individual towards the solutions offered in such training.402

Unless the question of these psychological foundations is kept in focus, no true break is possible and the subject is left as a fugitive from a system whose power remains intact at precisely the point it must be most forcefully contested. Although Marcuse problematized guilt, he divested himself of the psychoanalytic means that could be used to confront this problem not only externally through the Great Refusal, but also internally, through the integration of the repressed and projected content feeding

401 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, xx.
402 Marcuse, Essay on Liberation, 75.
aggression into the conscious, where it can be owned. In the end, therefore, although Marcuse correctly identifies the Freudian problem that, “…guilt becomes increasingly oppressive as this domination reveals its archaic character in the light of historical possibilities for liberation,” he fails to provide solvent means to overcome this disempowering situation in large part because of his wariness about Freud’s clinical practice.  

**Submission, Conformity and Bad Conscience**

The most complete consideration of conscience and guilt by critical theory, *The Authoritarian Personality*, also demands a narrow focus; it is through *The Authoritarian Personality*, indeed, that both the seriousness with which critical theory confronted issues of guilt and the paucity of solutions it could offer to them become clearest. In their study, Adorno et al. concluded that the inability to recognize, tolerate and work through guilt is a key measure of susceptibility to the false solutions prejudice offers to psychological needs, fears and weaknesses. Although the study, conducted amongst groups (mostly college students) in America, found few willing to openly identify with Nazism, many individuals whose outlooks “indicated that they would readily accept fascism” were identified through both quantitative and qualitative evaluation along the “f-scale.”  

Those who were most aligned with fascistic ideology demonstrated an inability to grapple with guilt and other emotional and developmental conflicts, and provided a clear proof of the study’s central contention that “an individual’s susceptibility to this ideology depends primarily upon his psychological needs.” Where prejudice and the disposition towards

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405 Ibid. 3
authoritarianism is found, the unconscious is dissociated. The fascistic personality, indeed, reflects the failure to achieve integrated personhood and effectively bind primary narcissism, and the resulting inability to transcend the emotional conflicts of early childhood. The dominating needs of childhood – for security, for the good authority upon whom one can depend, for clear answers that explain away a complex world, and so forth – therefore speak clearly to fascistic answers.

To put this differently, the individual who identifies with fascism does so because he has failed to develop the capacity to test and engage reality: thoughts, beliefs and conformist activities are thoroughly disconnected from the possibility of independent identity and self-formative practice. In this respect, one of the most telling findings of the study is that ethnocentrism is a general way of thinking adopted by the individual to compensate for and sanction the absence of actual experiences with others, “the more a person’s thinking is dominated by such general tendencies as those found in Mack, the less will his attitude toward a particular group depend upon any real experience.”

If prejudice is held despite a lack of experience with its objects, the possibility of feeling guilt connected to the real persons subjected to the prejudice is prima facie blocked. A stunted, closed world emerges in which the destructive power of omnipotence, which spurns meaningful creativity within human limits, is unleashed to a maximal extent, which explains “the receptivity of many individuals to any hostile imagery of Jews, and the emotional resistance of these individuals to a less hostile and less stereotyped way of thinking.”

The achievement of a mature society - in which the prejudiced individual could grow, achieve freedom and work towards happiness in solidarity with others – is

406 Ibid. 51. “Mack” is a typical high-scorer profiled in depth throughout the book.
407 Ibid. 93
thus a threat to the authoritarian subject which must be resisted at every turn. Hostile thought and action fed by “group psychology” is the primary check against the accounting of individual unhappiness, unfreedom, abdication and complicity with which that achievement might begin.

The cost of fascistic answers to the unsurmounted danger situations of development is thus the flight from the basic duty to attain individuality and autonomy; what is projected on the other cannot, under any circumstances, be accepted “as parts of the self.” Experience can only speak to conscientious principle and understanding, moreover, where the individual has the “capacity for individuated experience.” Where this aptitude is lacking, the world can only be encountered in reified and reifying ways, and “new social experiences are likely to lead, not to new learning and development, but merely to the mechanical reinforcement of established imagery.” The weakness of the ego demands immediate attention, furthermore, in that it “is expressed in the inability to build up a consistent and enduring set of moral values within the personality,” and represents the incapacity to independently impose principled limits on the self. The display of superficial toughness that links the schoolyard bully to the uncritical adult aggressor is the immediate reaction of the fragile ego faced with the possibilities for growth, constructive work, responsible freedom and the achievement of happiness only open to the mature individual in solidarity with others. The fragile modern ego described by Freud in his metapsychology and encountered as a key problem by critical theory, therefore, is at its most dangerous where it is the farthest from recognizing and

408 Ibid. 55
409 Ibid. 95
410 Ibid. 234
411 See: Ibid. 237
dealing with guilt. The integration of the negative into the conscious is both the first step towards working through guilt and in smashing the psychological foundations for the embrace of reifying and violent solutions to individual psychological needs. Only where the conscience is integrated with the ego, that is to say, can the ego become self-controlling and open to self-expression - can the democratic subject emerge.412

The varying relation of the low-scoring and high-scoring subjects to external authority uncovered by the study are therefore of major significance: the independent subject who spontaneously accepts principles because they speak to his interests as a free social being is first defined by the willingness to criticize and reject the normative authority captured by the superego. The prejudiced subject, fully under the grips of the superego, “clings to a set of rules and values only as they are reinforced by an external authority.”413 Prejudiced men not only submit to punishment, they emphatically agree with administration of harsh punishment. They identify themselves with the punisher and enjoy the punishment, moreover, because it speaks to the harshness of the superego and the unresolved emotional conflicts of childhood. Even as adults, they cannot transgress “a narrow path of seeming virtue.”414 This sadomasochistic orientation reveals that the prejudiced subject has failed to master ambivalence, the simultaneous love and hatred for another that often culminates in the splitting of the other into “good” and “bad” aspects. In this way, the prejudiced subject, immature despite having reached physical maturity, maintains a submissive, uncritical relation to “good” external authorities (which are identified with and feared) by redirecting narcissistic rage onto the “bad” other. As a

412 Ibid. 234
413 Ibid. 317
414 Adorno, The Authoritarian Personality, 351.
further gain, the subject bound in ambivalence retains the child’s helplessness and irresponsibility, and thereby distances himself from conscious awareness of guilt even as it gnaws at him through the punishing superego and the stunted demands of Eros. Because helplessness is a necessary aspect of early mental stages, the prejudiced subject cannot face guilt unless the very thing he consistently resists - the process of psychological growth - is resumed, therefore, “typical prejudiced subjects want to be taken care of like children…they want to exploit their parents like they exploit other people…not being self-reliant, they need support and comfort, first from the parents, and then from parent substitutes.”415 As such, these individuals are easily manipulated, quickly enraged and prone to efforts to orient them aggressively against both self and externality.

**Autonomy and Principled Conscience**

Selfhood requires the ability to be independent from structured authority embodied by the normative superego, and it is thus that Adorno et al. discovered that low scorers, “express disagreement with their parents more freely” and even found that “there is evidence in the records that when they disagree they have the strength to follow through their own way, though often not without paying the price of conflict and guilt.”416 Although low-scorers frequently expressed some measure of fear that, “the intensity and warmth of the relationship with the parents might be lost in disagreement,” they were marked by the integrity to stand apart from and respond critically to authorities that behaved wrongly, that threatened to engulf them and etc.417 Tellingly, the study

415 Ibid. 353
416 Ibid. 346
417 Ibid. 352
revealed that disagreement with the father, no matter what his views actually were, was significantly related to anti-ethnocentrism, as surely as, “ethnocentrists tend to be submissive to ingroup authority, anti-ethnocentrists to be critical or rebellious, and that the family is the first and prototypic ingroup.”418 One important takeaway from the study is thus that early relationships to authority, both in terms of how children are punished and made to feel guilt and also how the child is able to criticize and challenge authority, are critical for maturation and the gradual integration of constructive conscience.

Punishment is, therefore, a central site at which the subject is oriented in the development of conscience. Low scorers were found to have been punished for violating sensible principles and were punished in assimilable and non-ego destructive ways. High scorers were punished for violating imposed, often unexplained and sometimes nonsensical, rules in threatening and overwhelming ways: they were frightened into submission, which they continue to need in tandem with harsh punishment.419 Whereas low scorers were encouraged in developing individuality and independence through the integration of conscience based on principle, therefore, high scorers were subjected to deindividuating and disempowering punishments that cemented both the roadblocks preventing maturation and the punishing normative superego. In high scorers, impulses not acceptable to parents were repressed early and often, which bound them to external standards of ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ It is significant for our purposes that it is the gleanings of independence and critical thought that are subsumed and tied to guilt,420 as the development of autonomy is thereby linked to the development of principled conscience.

418 Ibid. 192
419 Ibid. 372-3
420 Ibid. 385
External force, moreover, is revealed as a fixed need only where the sources of real psychological needs are blocked from conscious recognition and mediation.\footnote{421}

The commitment of the individual to non-exploitative, emancipatory modes of practice thus demands the conscientious commitment to work through the aspects of mental and social life blocking autonomy. The study, indeed, raises a clear warning that, “…an authoritarian home regime, which induces a relative lack of mutuality in the area of emotion and shifts emphasis onto the exchange of ‘goods’ and of material benefits without adequate development of underlying self-reliance, forms the basis for the opportunistic type of dependence.”\footnote{422} The ability to relate to others without exploiting them, to stand in solidarity with them and recognize their rights and interests, requires the integration and owning of conscience, the surmounting of what Adorno et al. call the uncritical submission to “the external standards of an external superego.”\footnote{423} The unprejudiced also face ambivalence, but they are able to do so openly because they have grown into respect for self and others and are able to handle the “muddle” of aggressive impulses, needs and fears without either submitting to a punishing authority or succumbing to the satiation of primal desires. To put this differently, the unprejudiced are capable of rising above the ensnaring guilt of the superego and spontaneously integrating principles that demand ethical conduct as in their interest. Psychoanalysis, which grants access to the unconscious content supporting prejudiced orientations, provides methods

\footnote{421} It is interesting to note that many ethnocentric subjects studied by Adorno et al. were so reticent to avoid any critical attention and eager to maintain self-deception that they refused to fully participate in and/or actively expressed criticism of the study (See: Ibid. 129). Because such critical and reflective work is where the confrontation of guilt must begin, these subjects do indeed seem to be caught in a vicious bind.\footnote{422} Ibid. 386\footnote{423} Ibid. 406
for the undoing of submission to guilt. For this reason, we must carefully consider how psychoanalytic methods can enrich critical theory’s practice today.

**Guilt and the Danger of Aggression**

The consequence of failing to work through guilt is more than the loss of critical, conscientious selfhood: it is frequently the direction of rage, often at the behest of authorities to whom one submits without question, at the external world. The demand that one lose his entire identity, such as Anti-Semites make of the Jew, is easily projected onto the other who is then punished as a substitute for the failing subject. Condemning the moral “laxness” of others is a powerful means of projecting and punishing one’s own without actually working through the sources and content of guilt. The primary danger is that projection blocks reflection on oneself - on what is needed and repressed, on what one has done, on failures to take responsibility, etc. The projecting subject thus “is provided with a channel through which his deepest aggressive impulses may be expressed, even while he thinks of himself as thoroughly moral. If his external authorities, or the crowd, lend their approval to this form of aggression, then it may take the most violent forms.” Most ominously of all, this aggression is often displaced from the oppressive normativity that sparked it: this mechanism benefits external authority in that, “Conscious aggression is apt to be less intensive than repressed aggression.” Not only is the subject removed from meaningful moments of decision through the group (which further pacifies him with assurances of elite standing), therefore, it also, “arranges things so that his conscience and his deepest antisocial impulses operate in

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424 See: Ibid. 97  
425 Ibid. 233  
426 Ibid.
This leads problematically to the total dissociation of conscious guilt even as participation in injustice dirts the hands of the subject. For this subject, indeed, the superego itself remains external to consciousness, leaving morality and judgment in the hands of the external world. Where there is no ability to take an autonomous, principled stand, the only conscious ramification of guilt is the child’s fear of being caught in a naughty act, which is done eagerly and often despite the subject’s awareness of impropriety. The transgressive spirit of Eros, which elsewhere is bound to critique and resistance, is thereby tied to the domestication of the subject.

Not only does the aggressive orientation to the other crush the possibility for solidarity, growth and resistance, but also the superegos of high scorers often come to speak for the id, even becoming the rationalization for the death wish embodied by Thanatos. In other words, the prejudiced person becomes a microcosm of the totalitarian state. The immiserated subject, to put it simply, cannot draw on the potent reserves of Eros developed through individuation; the death instincts, in this unchecked state, compel a totality of aggression that seeks to destroy the self while harming as many others as possible, as Adorno et al. note, “On the deepest level, they do not differentiate so very strictly between subject and object. The underlying destructive urge pertains both to the enemy and to oneself.” The subject who so radically fails to integrate cannot but feel weak and powerless, opposed by the external world and the “internal foreign territory” of the unconscious, as Adorno et al. claim:

\[\text{…prejudiced subjects tend to repress what may be unpleasant to face, and thus to narrow the scope of consciousness. One cause of these repressions may lie in the}\]

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[^427]: Ibid. 805, 452
[^428]: Ibid. 630, 632
[^429]: Ibid. 636
type of discipline to which these subjects were exposed, a discipline which required immediate submission. Apparently in a fearful attempt to please the parents, a ‘good’ façade was presented and anything which did not fit in with this façade was presented and anything which did not fit in with this façade, such as, especially, resentment against the parents, was repressed and denied.\footnote{Ibid. 423}

To efficaciously meet social guilt, especially as it impacts the individual, critical theory must break down this façade. Psychoanalytic methods provide clear means to this end.

The low scorer, who represents in some degree the optimal development identified by psychoanalysts like Winnicott, is marked by the capacity, even eagerness, to “become aware of unacceptable tendencies and impulses in himself”\footnote{Ibid. 474} and “to think over matters and to come to a solution through their own thinking as well as their unwillingness to take over traditional and fixed concepts and ideals without scrutiny.”\footnote{Ibid. 436}

Even so, low scorers often find themselves mired in guilt – at not having done enough, for example – which can cause them to disinvest in self and world.\footnote{See: Ibid. 491} The Authoritarian Personality indicates neither how the high scorer immiserated by externalized guilt nor the demobilized low scorer can reach constructive outcomes. Psychoanalysis draws on Eros, however, to address these concerns in practice. Without a continued process of self-reflection and the willingness to grapple critically with both external and internal sources of domination, indeed, our efforts will fall short, as Adorno et al. argue:

…an aroused conscience is not enough if it does not stimulate a systematic search for an answer. Mankind has paid too dearly for its naïve faith in the automatic effect of the mere passage of time; incantations have really never dispelled storms, disaster, pestilence, disease or other evils; nor does he who torments another cease his torture out of sheer boredom with his victim.\footnote{Ibid. v}
For psychoanalysis, too, guilt demands an active confrontation that takes the form of “a systematic search for an answer,” an introspective search that reaches outwards in part through the development of principled, self-determining conscience. To explicate how, I will now turn to the psychoanalytic literature itself.

**Freud and Guilt: Psychoanalysis, Reconciliation and Working Through**

Critical theory’s wariness of Freud’s clinical practice is not without foundation. At a glance, Freud’s understanding of guilt is disempowering and pessimistic: above all, he viewed guilt as a necessary mechanism in human psychological functioning, one that, unfortunately, becomes a punitive instrument of domination in modernity. As we have seen, guilt, rather than being an aspect of healthy sublimation performed by mature conscience, is often marshaled against the subject by the superego and external pressures as an antagonistic and paralyzing force. As Freud argues in his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, guilt manifests, “as the most important problem in the development of civilization…the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt.”

The evidence of this ultimately untenable devil’s bargain is clear in both society and individuals. Freud’s typical example of this unsatisfactory answer to the problem of creating a stable social order, religion, however, reveals the full radicalism of his position on guilt. Because for Freud, indeed, religious urges stem from “the infant’s helplessness and the longing for the father,” those urges, and the feelings, beliefs and disciplines connected to them can be overcome through maturation. The child can and must grow beyond the need for Father: psychoanalysis demands and supports precisely this achievement. Religious feeling can

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only be “permanently sustained by fear of the superior power of fate,” and it is in the context this demobilizing fear that Freud posits, “I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.” The common view of Providence, which Freud frames as the reverence of an “enormously exalted father,” is deemed through psychoanalysis to be “patently infantile.” Freud understood that religion’s only true function was to undo the uncertainties and hardships of life, to limit the ego through the dread of punishment and to provide a sense of higher purpose to obfuscate the human duty to work creatively to improve the world in line with human interests.

The superego, therefore, can be owned and transformed into the affirmative conscience - based in self-imposed principles - of the mature subject, because its weakness is concealed at the point that seems to be its surest strength, as Freud notes, “It is a memorial of the former weakness and dependence of the ego. And the mature ego remains subject to its domination. As the child was once under a compulsion to obey its parents, so the ego submits to the categorical imperative of its superego.” Radical psychoanalysis exposit and critiques the past, both individual and shared history, so that through remembrance the deadening grasp of the past on the present can be escaped without sacrificing the emancipating ability to learn from and built upon history. As surely as Freud posited that religion would be overcome through the maturation of society as whole, Freud showed in his work that the originally aggressive superego could be owned and reworked through individual growth: psychoanalysis reassures by showing that dependence can be overcome, and mobilizes in that it demands this achievement.

436 Ibid. 20
437 Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, 49.
must be reached. For this reason, critical theory cannot afford to maintain its traditional wariness of Freudian practice today.

Like critical theory, psychoanalysis, above all, is concerned with the entangling relations with authority that begin in the family and induce submission into adulthood. Like critical theory, more importantly, psychoanalysis seeks to target these dominating relations down to their very roots. The dominating capacities of guilt are only maintained by the failure to grow beyond dependency on external authorities, like the Father. This dependency provides the matrix of need and fear necessary to maintain the original ferocity and foreignness of the superego. As originally internalized, the superego stands against the ego as a representative of the id. It also maintains powerful links to the death instinct, of which it easily becomes “a pure culture.” Through the superego, the lowest–infantile fear, dependency, aggression, etc.–is changed into the highest: the severity of the superego comes from the child’s sadism it draws upon, as Freud notes, “in fact it often enough succeeds in driving the ego into death, if the latter does not fend off its tyrant in time by the change round into mania.” The vicious bind facing the subject who has yet to reach autonomy is thus that the more he succeeds “in not outwardly aggressing, the more aggressive the ego ideal becomes towards the ego.” Self-punishing inhibitions and repressions arise from the desire to avoid conflict with the superego, and state of general inhibition arises in which Eros is restrained, freedom is escaped and mature responsibility is shirked through childish claims of helplessness. This is the full danger of the unchecked superego and its chief weapon of guilt; it is necessary, therefore,

\[438\] Ibid. 32
\[439\] Ibid. 33, 54-5
to understand how guilt and the superego develop in childhood before the maturational surmounting of these limits can become clear.

For Freud, guilt begins with the child who envies the father’s access to the mother to the outside world, and thus repudiates the mother to forge an ideal identification with him. The child, however, is unable to match the father because of his youth, and thus is overcome by intense feelings of shame before him. The father, who values the son because he desires an heir, rewards the child when he behaves in line with his will and punishes the child when his wishes are not met. The child, shameful before the father, internalizes the father’s punishing agency as the superego to solve the untenable Oedipus complex. The superego henceforth acts as both dominating conscience and hostile source of guilt, as Freud notes:

By means of identification he takes the unattackable authority into himself. The authority now turns into the super-ego and enters into possession of all the aggressiveness which a child would like to exercise against it. The child’s ego has to content itself with the unhappy role of the authority - the father – who has thus been degraded.441

The superego, indeed, has a fundamentally aggressive relation to the ego, so long, at least, as the subject fails to disentangle himself from family and remains bound in childhood conflicts. The subject, especially when enmeshed in childhood mental states inevitably desires not only to become, but also to surpass, the father. The disembodied will of the father aligns itself against any such efforts by producing an intense guilt feeling, as Freud asserts, “the conscience, [is] a critical agency within the ego, which even in normal times takes up a critical attitude towards the ego.”442 The superego can be understood, indeed, as a reaction formation against the earliest object-choices of the id; it

441 Ibid. 91
442 Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 52.
urges that one ought be like his father and that one may not be like his father.\textsuperscript{443} The origin of the superego thus goes back to the lengthy period of childhood helplessness, to the Oedipus complex and its repression. The roots of guilt and dominating conscience are to be found, therefore, in ambivalence.\textsuperscript{444}

**Ambivalence and Guilt**

Ambivalence ought be a key focus for critical theory, because it is ambivalence that cements the subject obediently to authority, especially where the subject recognizes the hateful nature of that authority. Ambivalence is the simultaneous feeling of needful love and aggressive hatred towards the same object; the most formative and significant ambivalent relation is that to the parent. The organization of the family problematizes guilt in that the resentment the child feels towards the father as a constraining, superior force – the acrimony that might entice the child to disassociate from both oppressive social normativity and its disembodied internalization – is matched by an equal and paralyzing idolatrous love for him. Meaningful critiques of authority, much less resistance, cannot develop beyond the state of raw, thoughtless rage in this situation. The guilt-producing human conscience, therefore, is founded on a fundamentally ambiguous relationship of aggression and adoration, leaving the child suspended in a linkage that generates guilt with any attempt to overcome – and thus resist and replace the father – or to submit – and thereby obey the father’s wishes, as Freud claims, “One is bound to feel guilty in either case, for the sense of guilt is an expression of the conflict due to ambivalence.”\textsuperscript{445} As a kind of ontogenetic original sin, therefore, the guilt produced by

\textsuperscript{443} Ibid. 30

\textsuperscript{444} See: Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, 31.

\textsuperscript{445} Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, 95.
the superego mires the individual in a cycle of internal punishments, doubts and jealousies.

The superego, however, fails to check aggressive instincts. Through repression, those impulses are able to run rampant in the subject’s subterranean mental life. It becomes clear through the consideration of ambivalence that the internalization of the superego is a stopgap solution to the child’s hatred, one that comes at a huge cost. In this internalization both narcissistic rage (which must be bound) and the healthy opposition of the emerging individual to an oppressive normativity (the contestations of Eros) are subsumed by a conscience that embodies exactly that normativity. The seeds of radical conscience are thus plowed under at the precise point where the superego begins its punishing tyranny. Critical theory must forcefully join psychoanalysis in identifying this as a key problem in building and maintaining the autonomy necessary for critique, solidarity and resistance.

The ambivalent conscience, furthermore, becomes problematic because while the resistance of normativity is punished at all turns, aggression is able to flourish within the unconscious and emerges in both masochism and the intense drive to dominate others, as Freud posits:

…in all likelihood conscience also arises out of an emotional ambivalence, quite particular human relationships to which that ambivalence is attached, and under the conditions that we have shown to apply to taboo and to obsessive neurosis, that one part of the opposition is unconscious, and is preserved by the obsessive neurosis, that one part of the opposition is unconscious, and is preserved by the obsessive domination of the other.446

446 Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990), 70.
The individual faces an unbearable tension, and is left to conform to the aggressive normativity crystallized in the superego, because artificial toughness, the false assurance that might makes right, provides a convincing illusion of autonomy, as Freud claims:

What began in relation to the father is completed in relation to the group. If civilization is a necessary course of development from the family to humanity as a whole, then – as a result of the inborn conflict arising from ambivalence, of the eternal struggle between the trends of love and death – there is inextricably bound up with it an increase of the sense of guilt, which will perhaps reach heights that the individual finds hard to tolerate.\(^{447}\)

Submission, ultimately, is concretized by a guilt that dramatically fails to check the violation of the other, and works only to punish the violation of norms: the superego is the internal analogue to external forces that make human beings the objects rather than the subjects of history. Through the superego, therefore, ambivalence is easily maintained into adulthood, where the narcissistic rage and unchecked aggression are not only more portentous, but also secure domination from both within and without.

Both psychoanalysis and critical theory strike at this pivotal point; psychoanalysis is a necessary asset to critical theory in this effort because it provides efficacious methods of supporting the individual’s achievement of autonomous conscience. Critical theorists have a vital interest in contesting the alienating force of the normative superego and building mature conscience that uses guilt to block transgressions against human interests. By presenting a course of development that demands the individual move beyond the protection of the insular family, psychoanalysis creates a critical break at both the individual and social level and confronts the subject with the necessity of taming and reclaiming the conscience as a key site of individuation. Although, therefore, psychoanalysis reveals that even some individuals we might consider “normal” feel

\(^{447}\) Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 96.
persecuted by “malignant fate,” this “fate” is self-arranged; it also demonstrates, in the confrontation of this persistent feeling, the creative agency man has within individual and group existence. Even the dominating superego, we ought note, is a pivotal developmental achievement that progresses towards autonomy.

In short, psychoanalysis shows that even though repression stems from the moral trends in the ego, the return of the repressed conditions “working through” and the capacity to fully integrate conscience into the conscious self. Psychoanalysis works by inducing the subject to remember and confront the original traumatic situations of childhood. Through reflection, the subject recognizes both his vulnerability and potential constructive opposition to normative powers and ideals, which is easily obscured through the father’s subsumption into superego and the loss of the fear of his wrath in a general, prohibitive sense of anxiety. The reactive solution of obedience loses both its appeal and its tenability through the proactive process of critically laying the past upon the threshing floor of one’s genuine interests. Critical theory ought draw and build on this process of confronting the past in the name of the throttled autonomy of the modern subject: through psychoanalytic methods, the dialectical tension between the domination built through history and the autonomy, freedom and possibility latent in history is also worked through at the level of the subject. Psychoanalysis, therefore, not only redeems the past by treating it as a mobilizing problematic, it builds the subject first in autonomy and secondly as social agent.

Psychoanalysis also contributes to radical resistance by constructively working with the resistances stemming from normative superego. The most intense and

448 Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, 23.
449 See: Sigmund Freud, Inhibition, Symptom and Anxiety, 56.
debilitating resistances Freud encountered in his practice, indeed, were those stemming from the superego and operative through guilt. Such resistance is the pitched condemnation of the ego’s reaching towards autonomy by the internalized force of dominating normativity.\(^{450}\) The human is capable of far more, good and evil, than the ego is aware of, and it is the primary oppressive work of the normative superego to maintain this ignorance.\(^{451}\) The superego is not easily exposed: not only does it lay claim to “higher nature” and thereby artificially link normative morality to ethical conduct, but also it grounds social feelings and institutions in which the individual is enmeshed and on which he relies, as Freud claims, “the basis of group psychology is the psychology of the individual, and especially of the individual’s personal integration.”\(^{452}\) For Freud, indeed, individual psychology is almost invariably linked to the individual’s relation to others – from the first, individual psychology is also social psychology.\(^{453}\) A further consideration, therefore, of the role of guilt within society is necessary.

**Guilt in the Group**

Psychoanalysis problematizes the currents of domination in society as surely as critical theory does, but resolutely maintains the cutting link between these currents and their foundations in the mental life of the subject. This is why psychoanalysis adds to critical theory, even on the well-trodden ground of domination, guilt and society. In psychoanalysis, the pressures, including guilt, placed on the individual by social norms parallel the dominating role of the superego. Freud consistently related the relation of the ego and superego to the relation between the individual and the super-structure of society.

\(^{450}\) See: Ibid. 50-1, 50n  
\(^{451}\) Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 53n.  
\(^{452}\) Ibid. 215  
\(^{453}\) Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 3.
in his thought: the disempowering guilt relationship to the father is the model on which the Freudian subject takes up his citizenship. The individual fears, above all else, the prospect of being rejected by the external authorities upon which he depends, and is driven to seek relief from the tribulations of responsibility, as Freud warns, “Life, as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks.”\textsuperscript{454} Weakened by the bonds of guilt, and frightened by the possibility of transcendence through the exercise of freedom, the individual seeks to submit to the will of a new father, the leader, and finds solace in conformist obedience to that patriarch’s will, as Freud states, “The individual feels incomplete if he is alone. The fear shown by small children would seem already to be an expression of this herd instinct.”\textsuperscript{455}

The impoverished subject thereby becomes self-effacingly affixed to external supplements of identity such as the nation, as Freud attests, “our libido, so impoverished in objects, has clung all the more intensely to that which remains to us, and that the love of the fatherland, the affection for our neighbors and pride in what we have in common have been suddenly reinforced.”\textsuperscript{456} Through the conformity of the individual to group standards and the passionate belief that belonging elevates the individual as part of some grand totality, the subject feels relieved of the shame of being unable to live up to the father’s example and is able to suppress his guilt through adherence to external authorities. In the group, therefore, the heterogeneous is subsumed by the homogeneous

\textsuperscript{454} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}, 23.
\textsuperscript{455} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego}, 64.
\textsuperscript{456} Sigmund Freud, \textit{On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia}, 199.
and what remains after these engulfments of the subjective by the group, the common unconscious elements shared by its members, are amplified.\textsuperscript{457}

Through psychoanalysis, therefore, critical theory could better identify and target the affective currents and psychological foundations supporting the terrible power of the normative group. In the group, indeed, conscience and intelligence decline, inhibition falls away, feelings are exaggerated and doubt is effaced; the group tends in all ways to extremes, grows intolerant of outsiders through its artificial certainty and provides the justification for and reinforcement of aggressive thought and practice. For Freud, at core, the group mirrors the affective life of children, and enables its members to find a seeming solution to the problem of the punishing superego that simultaneously allows the individual a safe mechanism for venting rage and the capacity to escape the burdensome possibility of freedom,\textsuperscript{458} as Freud claims, “We thus have an impression of a state in which an individual’s private emotional impulses and intellectual acts are too weak to come to anything by themselves and are entirely dependent for this on being reinforced by being repeated in a similar way to other members of the group.”\textsuperscript{459} It is at this point that the group’s relation to the superego can be observed: the superego is the heir to the narcissism in which the child’s ego enjoyed the illusion of self-sufficiency without the burdens of responsibility and the awareness of human finitude. For this reason, groups too must perform the reflective work of remembering what social normativity represses

\begin{enumerate}
  \item Sigmund Freud, \textit{Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego}, 9.
  \item Ibid. 12-14, 14n
  \item Ibid. 63
\end{enumerate}
and seeking affirmative principles that speak to human interests.\textsuperscript{460} Through psychoanalytic methods, critical theory could better work towards this aim. 

Like psychoanalysis, critical theory must begin by problematizing the childhood needs and mental states which drive the subject into the group and utilizing the infantile to work through to mature autonomy. The superego emerges in tandem with the growing child’s subjection to social demands, imperatives that the child often cannot meet without navigating potentially traumatic danger situations.\textsuperscript{461} The group mitigates the pressures placed on the citizen by society as a whole - for which we rightfully struggle, within which we must embrace both freedom and responsibility – by enabling the subject to remain dependent on an insular unit which mimics the family. For Freud, indeed, the libidinal structure of the group only works because it mirrors that of the family by cultivating the illusion that the leader is a “good father” who loves all group members equally, and by creating of the members themselves “a band of brothers.”\textsuperscript{462} The group enables, in short, the individual to dodge the challenges of individuation and integration, and sanctions and conceals the regression of its members: the subjective is undone in the group in that each member is able to “put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal, and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego.”

Where this has occurred, a herd mentality emerges in which “Conscience has no

\textsuperscript{460} As Theodor Reik notes, this is quite possible: “Freud recognized in the analysis of individuals that we are not made to keep secrets for a long time and that self-betrayal oozes from all our pores. That is also valid for races. Groups and nations unconsciously reveal what they would like to suppress. They give away what is concealed, denied and disavowed in their myths, folklore, religious traditions, customs and habits.” Theodor Reik, \textit{Myth and Guilt: The Crime and Punishment of Mankind} (New York: George Braziller, 1957), 85.

\textsuperscript{461} See: Ibid. 52

\textsuperscript{462} Ibid. 33-4
application to anything that is done for the sake of the object; in the blindness of love remorselessness is carried to the pitch of crime."\(^{463}\) Freud, however, did not see the herd mentality as a natural state, but rather understood that it is an infantile solution stemming from the childhood needs and desires that haunt and shape the subject.

These needs, rejected by parents, make the child – who fears punishment and abandonment – anxious; this anxiety is carried over directly into adult life. This childish fear is appeased, however, through the group,\(^{464}\) in which narcissism can finally be unleashed and satisfactions sought by the adult, who has powers and liberties the child sorely lacked, as Freud argues:

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\ldots \text{it is a pleasurable experience for those who are concerned, to surrender themselves so unreservedly to their passions and thus to become merged in the group and to lose the sense of the limits of their individuality…The fact is that the perception of the signs of an affective state is calculated automatically to arouse the same affect in the person who perceives them. The greater the number of people in whom the same affect can be simultaneously observed, the stronger does this automatic compulsion grow. The individual loses his power of criticism, and lets himself slip into the same affect.}\(^{465}\)
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The group promises, therefore, the paradise of primary narcissism – pleasure, the absence of self, power which transcends the awareness of responsibility and limitation - whilst inducing a submission to norms and authority that, at least consciously, sates the normative conscience. The group produces and naturalizes the oceanic feeling, moreover, by demanding that everyone within it must be the same: alienation and conformity are actively embraced and reproduced by the individual member. The failings of the group solution, therefore, are evident from the start: Freud recognized that social justice is grounded in a different type of equality, that demanded by autonomous, self-determining

\(^{463}\) Ibid. 61, 57  
\(^{464}\) Ibid. 65  
\(^{465}\) Ibid. 22
individuals, which alone “is the root of conscience and the sense of duty.” As surely as the superego was internalized as a reaction against the threat posed by the ambivalent relationship with the parent, the group provides a reactive solution to the demands placed on the citizen by both freedom and the Eros that would use freedom constructively, in solidarity with others. Psychoanalysis’s militant optimism is here evident: the reactive solutions of childhood can be replaced with the spontaneous solutions of the mature subject through the resumption of maturation. If the dyad of guilt and vulnerability is the repressed source of aggression and domination, reflection and critique geared towards exposing the traumas and violences of the past is a way forward.

For the superego to be transformed from the destructive enforcer of dominating social norms into constructive, principled mature conscience, both societies and the individuals who comprise them need to bind narcissism, surmount childhood needs and find constructive solutions to the problems of rage and aggression. As Freud showed through his metapsychology, this work is possible at both levels through the production of theory that links immediately to practice and praxis and reflects human interests. The primary danger facing us today is the ease with which guilt is obscured within the conscious and is thus left as a potent, “free-floating guilt feeling in all men beyond the frontiers of races and nations, a collective sense of guilt of mankind that only occasionally reaches the threshold of conscious feeling.” It is the presence of unconscious guilt, which is experienced as a groundless and dislocated persecution that,

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466 Ibid. 67
467 Reik, Myth and Guilt, 41.
indeed, “can turn many people into criminals,” because the performance of a real violation provides relief by connecting the feeling of guilt to a genuine crime.\textsuperscript{468}

For Freud, however, unconscious guilt, “has a foundation to the extent that what is in question is unconscious thoughts and not deliberate deeds.”\textsuperscript{469} The superego, indeed, is hardly efficacious; it merely answers to the child’s ambivalent fears and does not demand – indeed, to answer these fears, it cannot demand - that the subject make a principled stand against what is taboo. The superego stems from a fear of violating the norms of punitive authorities like the parent. To take a principled stand of any kind would work against the childish solution found in the superego: self-abnegating submission to normativity, and the obfuscation of the contempt for oppressive normativity that the child feels in dialectical tension with his fear. Psychoanalysis thereby enables the theorist to contest the very fabric of the subject’s complicity in domination.

In sum, domination, at core, must persist in disempowering, deindividuating and dehumanizing the subject because it can never fully master Eros, which would drive the subject to challenge unjust norms and construct a stronger order based in loving solidarity. The superego does nothing, therefore, to turn the individual away from violation, banks only on the fear of punishment and rejection, and takes the child’s ambivalence directly into his relationship to morality, as Freud noted in \textit{Totem and Taboo}, “The persistence of taboo, however, teaches us one thing, that the original desire to perform that forbidden act persists among the taboo peoples. This means that they have an \textit{ambivalent attitude} to their taboo prohibitions, in their unconscious they would like

\textsuperscript{468} Sigmund Freud, \textit{The Ego and the Id}, 53-4.
\textsuperscript{469} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Totem and Taboo}, 90.
nothing more than to violate them. The problem of domination is thereby handed down, generation by generation, because what truly matters in the internalization of the superego is the ambivalent, maturational struggles of the child, which dictate the behavior of the parent, as Freud notes:

As a rule parents and authorities analogous to them follow the precepts of their own superegos in educating children. Whatever understanding their ego may have come to with their superego, they are severe and exacting in educating children. They have forgotten the difficulties of their own childhood and they are glad to be able now to identify themselves fully with their parents who in the past laid such severe restrictions upon them. Thus a child’s super-ego is in fact constructed on the model not of its parents’ superego; the contents which fill it are the same and it becomes the vehicle of tradition and of all the time-resisting judgments of value which have propagated themselves in this manner from generation to generation.

Externalized morality, which is maintained through the internalization of normative demands that are neither understood nor accepted by the subject, appears as a necessity in this cycle; the child and the parent alike are ultimately untamed in aggression, and both must be bridled if the system is to fit them for use. External morality, however, is another impoverished response to real social problems: it is merely a hostile force that commands submission and thus begs for violation. To tame each subject, each narcissistic child at once enraged by and dependent on these restrictions, civilization turns the subject’s aggressiveness against the self by driving it inwards, where it manifests as guilt. It is in this sense that superego is like a “garrison guarding a thoroughly conquered city.” Guilt, which binds concretizes domination and ossifies the subject, is the consequence of a bargain that accepts the condition of self-imposed misery to gain surety from threats of

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external unhappiness. The conflict of ambivalence, however, need not be permanent: they can be owned and surmounted by the subject that holds himself up to ongoing critical reflection that reflexively opens the past to discover better means of living in the future and is capable of integrating what is uncovered in this work without being undone.

Violence, indeed, only retains its appeal where its roots in the infantile remain intact. If we come to own and recognize our finitude, fragility and limitations, as both critical theory and psychoanalysis insist we must, the untenability of a morality that works through fear and does nothing to challenge the underlying sources of transgression becomes clear. Critical theory and psychoanalysis thus arrive at the same problem: unresolved guilt breeds ongoing cycles of violence and chthonian retribution, and modernity makes it increasingly difficult for the individual to account for guilt. No critical theory can adequately respond to contemporary crises without a refined capacity to recognize the power of guilt and offer means for the hashing out of guilt in non-aggressive ways that build autonomy and solidarity. Even, indeed, the best defenses are not a substitute for the honest confrontation of the superego. What matters then is “the struggle to foster…appreciation of our own individuality and, especially necessary for the sustenance of any morality or value system, that of others.” This already challenging process is complicated by the ease with which the ego defends itself from all challenges, especially introspective criticism. At this point, therefore, we must consider the basic defensive mechanisms supporting unconscious guilt and hindering the achievement of spontaneous, principled conscience.

Projection

472 Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, 96.
473 Shengold, Father, Don’t You See I’m Burning?, xii.
Projection is one of the basic defensive mechanisms detailed by Freud (and probably the defense mechanism most theorized by critical theory), and is best understood as the process by which an individual projects the undesirable aspects of his character, repressed thoughts and socially unacceptable desires onto another person or group. Projection, indeed, is for Freud:

…a particular way [adopted for] dealing with any internal excitations that produce too great an increase in unpleasure: there is a tendency to treat them as though they were acting, not from the inside, but from the outside, so that it may be possible to bring the shield against stimuli into operation as a means of defense against them…[this mechanism] is destined to play a large part in the causation of pathological processes.\footnote{Sigmund Freud, \textit{Beyond the Pleasure Principle}, 33.}

Projection is thus a means of casting one’s own failings, negative qualities and untenable emotions onto the external world where they can be avoided, or in many cases, attacked, as Anna Freud notes, “in projection the content is felt as belonging to the outside world rather than to oneself.”\footnote{Joseph Sandler with Anna Freud, \textit{The Analysis of Defense: The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense Revisited} (New York: International Universities Press, 1985), 432.} The mechanism of projection works by breaking the connection between the conscious signifiers of impulses and the ego, by cultivating repression and denial even as the dangerous content is made present through imposition onto another. In projection, therefore, the ability to process conscious guilt for one’s behavior is shut off as the subject attempts to escape the problem of guilt as a whole. The subject – and more dangerously, the group – is thereby able to ascribe an artificial virtue to himself while castigating others for his own sins, thereby neutralizing the radical possibility of recognizing and critiquing the matrix of domination and violence within which he is enmeshed.
Critical theory, therefore, has a vested interest in identifying and challenging projective processes. Projection, for example, is a core element in the mentality of the bigot: the anti-Semite who unconsciously constructs the despised figure of the Jew through the projection of his own undesirable qualities, or the hegemonic white male who enacts an aggressive sexuality on women of color while projecting conscious recognition of that aggressive sexuality onto men of color are clear examples of this phenomenon. Critical theorists must take special note, however, of the projection of affects through which undesirable or unacceptable feelings – usually anger and guilt - are projected onto another person or group. When anger is unconsciously projected, it will provoke a seemingly justified and legitimate aggressive response to the external part, indeed, “if someone is angry with another and uses projection in the way we have defined it, he will feel that the other person is angry with him.” Anna Freud posits, furthermore, that “[projection] involves doing more violence to reality, because one distorts the external world so much.” The very fabric of reality is changed through projection, which regresses to the infantile inability to reflect on and critically contest and construct the self; it allows us to satisfy ambitions vicariously and “live in the lives of other people, instead of having experiences of [our] own.” It is of immediate political consequence that the bad, which remains a festering component of the self, can be classified as ‘not me,’ cast out and disowned. The duty to achieve autonomous personhood is elided through the projection, which constitutes the illusion of solvent self through

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476 Ibid. 434
477 Ibid. 136
478 Ibid. 237
479 Ibid. 426
disintegration, the imposition of the negative onto the demonized other, in relation to whom the subject can come to an artificial self-understanding. At all costs, critical theory must undermine the fabrications of such facades, which sanitize domination.

Psychoanalysis can aid critical theory in this work by making projection conscious to the projecting subject, who is in turn made responsible for her defenses. In projection, indeed, the potent residues of childhood conflicts, which must be brought into the light of conscious investigation for genuine self-understanding to develop, are disavowed instead of integrated, which serves to block creativity, solidarity and emancipating development. The other can safely symbolize the parent, and allow for the punishment of the hated authority, and the self, and provide for the punishment of the bad child that could hate the good parent. In the projection, the traumatic aspects of this dichotomy can be repeated again and again, but are blocked from remembrance; the subject is capable of maintaining a regression that diminishes conscious guilt. Through the dehumanizing “casting out of the bad onto others,” therefore, those others become simply “monsters and persecutors or victims and deserving of persecution,” and must remain so for the defense to work – the subject, where enmeshed in projection, cannot recognize and respond to reality. As such, the humanity of the other is lost, and “both sympathy and empathy are dimmed or banished. Turning others into nonpeople in order to be able to torture and kill them is seen, as a mass phenomenon, in the atrocities of warfare, wherein it enables the perpetrator’s actions and conditions the reactions of both sides.” With the inability to recognize and value the humanity of the other, the other is fully transformed into an object for use by the subject. The subject is able, therefore, to

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481 See: Ibid. 89
482 Ibid. 90
overcome the capacity for feeling guilt at violating the other exactly as he becomes able to vent the rage and sense of failure engendered by the hostile normative superego. Through the transformation of social and internal violence into the conviction that the subject himself is hated or persecuted, in short, the ego finds "relief from the feeling of guilt." Projection is thus a key weapon in the arsenal of the ego that would remain fragile and shirk the duty to mature into autonomy and the creative powers of Eros: it is also a prime opportunity, as through the exposition, interpretation and critique of defenses like projection, both the subject’s complicity and the unconscious foundations supporting the dominating superego are opened to reflection and mediation.

**Splitting**

Some defensive mechanisms, when opened to reflection, demand that the subject take up the creative power of integration more directly. Splitting, for example, is a defensive mechanism through which the recognition of the need for and the ability to form an intervening logical process between the confrontation of an issue and the articulation of a solution to that issue is lost. Critical theory, therefore, must attend to this defensive mechanism if it is to build the critical faculty of society. Splitting arises primarily either when a child is exposed to two or more distinct authorities who have divergent and often contradictory demands and expectations (this is a rising trend in a world where women are more empowered as parents, divorce is increasingly common and childcare is often given over to daycare centers and television sets), or when authority figures makes conflicting demands on the adult. In both situations, the formation of a logical, much less a critical, argument about psychologically

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484 Conversation with Dr. Anita Schmukler, 6/23/09
compromising topics, is impossible. Splitting, indeed, functions by divorcing the narrow topic under consideration from its full historical context and related issues, principles and facts, as Anna Freud holds, splitting works through, “an artificial separation of two [or more] contents that belong together.”\textsuperscript{485} As a regression, splitting speaks to early developmental periods “marked by this terribly intense, melodramatic split into extremes: paradise or hell, bliss or torment, good or bad, black or white…[wherein the] good is taken in, swallowed – the bad is rejected, spit out.”\textsuperscript{486} For this simplistic reactivity to reality to function, a type of autohypnosis must arise wherein the subject knows, and does not know (or sees and fails to see), something all at once.\textsuperscript{487} Not only is the ego thus marked by the splitting of good and bad, but the fragile subject, who cannot but remain dependent as such, comes to require the illusion of the “good authority” to survive.

In the split, the submission to and sanitation of the real, dominating authority is made possible by the splitting off of its violent “primal” aspects, the awareness of which can then be repressed (and attacked through projection). Through splitting, therefore, the subject is conditioned by and for domination, and rendered blind and numb to structural, oppressive trends (which are also oversimplified and flattened through the split), as Shengold notes, “Splitting is one of the primal defensive mechanisms that bring on delusion and delusion like manifestations; these mechanisms can make conflicts within our minds impossible to own…One cannot analyze what is not there.”\textsuperscript{488} Even if it were possible to make challenge authority and normativity, moreover, to do so would lead to condemnation by an authority that the individual is likely, at least unconsciously, afraid

\textsuperscript{485} Sandler, The Analysis of Defense, 125. \\
\textsuperscript{486} Shengold, The Delusions of Everyday Life, 92. \\
\textsuperscript{487} Shengold, Soul Murder, 109. \\
\textsuperscript{488} Shengold, The Delusions of Everyday Life, 7.
of displeasing. The result is that in situations that trigger a defensive response, like a tense political issue or social conflict, the individual will reach for often-irrational conclusions designed to be acceptable to figures of authority.

Critical theory, at a minimum, thus ought take up splitting as a key foundation of one-dimensional thought and language. Splitting is, indeed, at the core of the ability of politicians and other leaders to induce their constituents to adhere to violent and shallow answers to nuanced questions. This process, as is frequently seen in the splitting of ambivalence, is particularly relevant to sociopolitical critique. In the splitting of ambivalence, an individual separates the hate of the object of ambivalence and displaces it onto a third party, enabling the authority figure to remain ‘good’ whilst the third party is subjected to the individual’s full and unrestrained rage. This process allows individuals to lionize the respected authority, an actual source of domination and conflict, and forecloses the possibility of critical response to or conscientious resistance against that authority. Splitting also incites a violent orientation towards the other and often results in the need to relieve psychological tensions and anxieties through aggressive interaction with the world at large. To split ambivalence, indeed, the subject must come to hate people not unlike herself: both subject and object are flattened into caricatures, and conscience is fully unmoored from the interests and rights of both parties. In modernity, where the line between victim and victimizer is often thoroughly blurred, the “defenses needed to split off and contain…traumatic, overstimulating experiences” are a growing sociopolitical problem. Splitting is symptomatic of the reification of the subject, who is at pains to embrace domination because it has entered deeply into the

489 Ibid. 188, 199
490 Shengold, Soul Murder, 107.
interiority of her mental life. Unless splitting is directly highlighted and worked through in processes that would mediate shared guilt, the underlying inducements to violence will not be shaken, and the temptation to defensive and omnipotently deny reality, in spite of real transgressions and because of the unconscious guilt before norms, will go unchecked.

**Soul Murder**

Soul murder, the ultimate consequence of unchecked defenses active in the group, is an aggressive process supported by splitting and projection. In soul murder, an attempt is made to destroy the independent identity and autonomous functioning of the victim. Trauma is imposed from outside and overwhelms the subject’s mental apparatus with feeling. The subject, conditioned to domination, has no recourse when power is turned violently against him save to turn back submissively and appeasingly to normative authority or to take on the difficult and constructive work of challenging injustice through critical thought and practice. In appeasement, by far the more common recourse, the subject takes on “a pseudo-identity marked by mechanical dutifulness and a cheerless, loveless existence,” underneath which “lurks murder and suicide.” Fueled by this aggressive matrix, soul murder works through the “inhibition of the ego’s power to remember and test reality” engendered by the dominating authority’s use of the dependent subject, who cannot be allowed to correctly experience and recognize guilt and injustice if the domination is to continue. Soul murder is thus a part of the fabric of one-dimensionality and a psychological mooring for reification: critical theory, therefore, must expose its operations within society.

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491 See: Ibid. 24  
492 Ibid. 12  
493 Ibid. 28
Soul murder, indeed, is the most dramatic attack on the general assault on subjectivity that has concerned critical theory from the start. Soul murder is best understood as, “neither a diagnosis nor a condition. It is a dramatic attempt to eradicate or compromise the separate identity of another person. The victims of soul murder remain in large part possessed by another, their souls in bondage to someone else.” The ability to differentiate fantasy from reality and thereby begin to interpret facts and make judgments can only be acquired through maturation that consciously builds autonomy, which is undermined in soul murder, as Shengold holds:

To feel that we have an identity, we must know (or at least feel that we know) what is and was ‘real’: we must trust at least some of our memories if not most of them and be able to set them apart from our conscious fantasies. Yet it is characteristic of the victims soul murder that they have lost the ability to make these differentiations.

The love an abused subject often feels for his abuser – or, more importantly for our purposes, the love and admiration felt for the despot by the population he dominates – are thus both end products of the process of soul murder. By placing the victim(s) in a psychologically unendurable condition of isolation and vulnerability, the victim is brainwashed to feel as if he genuinely merits the disciplines meted out. The ability to feel any independent emotions is severely compromised and the victim enters a state of fugue in which all feeling, identity and purpose is invested with the soul murder:

Torture and deprivation under conditions of complete dependency have elicited a terrible and terrifying combination of helplessness and rage – unbearable feelings that must be suppressed for the victim to survive. Brainwashing makes it possible to suppress what has happened and the terrible feelings evoked by the erased or discounted experiences.

494 Ibid. 2
495 Ibid. 16
496 Ibid.
Soul murder, therefore, is the extreme possible outcome of the dominating habituation of the subject to external authority and its internal representative, the superego; it is the most extreme consequence of the desiccation of the subject through unconscious guilt.

Meaningful solidarity, moreover, must attend to any traces of soul murder in the group. Soul murder subsumes Eros, hindering the individual’s ability to experience and love as a separate entity, to feel compassion for others and act as an autonomous and conscientious adult. Those victimized through soul murder cannot live up to the responsibilities of citizenship, as Shengold asserts, “Victims of attempts at soul murder find it very difficult to be responsible for their mental pictures of themselves, of others, and of the world around them. They often cannot properly register what they want and what they feel, or what they have done and what has been done to them.” In soul murder, action is needfully divorced from thought and feeling, and psychological survival is firmly tied to the denial of reality and distortion of identity. “Erasing history by cultivating denial is essential to the brainwashing that is an inevitable part of psychic murder, resulting all too often in what Nietzsche called the worst form of slavery: that of a slave who has lost the knowledge of being a slave.” The critical capacity of the soul murdered is not only thoroughly crushed and negated, but worse still an aggressively uncritical loyalty to the victimizer is implanted in its stead, leaving only the possibility of sadomasochistic modes of relation with the world; as Shengold worries, not only does “soul murder make for soul murders,” but simultaneously, “In disguise or nakedly present is a submission to a cruel morality; some massive place in the mind is dedicated to denial

497 Ibid. 3
498 Ibid. 245, 136
499 Ibid. 16-7
in the service of protecting and preserving the soul-murdering parent.”\textsuperscript{500} The individual is, indeed, thoroughly degraded and the conscience is \textit{entirely} malformed into the punitive pillar of domination through the identification with and internalization of domination.

The worst of modern violence, furthermore, is often moored in soul murder. Survivors, overwhelmed by guilt and rage, often feel an intense and overwhelming need to annihilate and be destroyed in turn, as Shengold attests, “this self-destructive current develops into a strong, conscience-distorting need for punishment.”\textsuperscript{501} Even if the subject recognizes the unacceptability of injustices directed at him, therefore, he cannot turn this awareness into a cutting indictment of either the system or the authority because he is disconnected from self and the human interests he shares with others. As an extreme process, soul murder might not seem to be a directly political problem. Shengold, however, recognizes that all subjects face engulfing challenges from many different directions, and that “a touch of soul murder can be an everyday affair. Every life contains occasions when one is the victim or the perpetrator of an assault on a person’s right to a separate identity and a full range of human responses.”\textsuperscript{502} Authoritarian regimes, moreover, “have proven that the strongest adults can be broken and deprived of their individuality and even of their humanity.”\textsuperscript{503} As the possible, perhaps even predictable, consequence of unmediated guilt and the unchecked normative superego, soul murder demands the active contestation of critical intellectuals. This contestation, however, poses a further danger that must be considered at this point.

\textsuperscript{500} Ibid. 85, 136
\textsuperscript{501} Ibid. 6
\textsuperscript{502} Ibid. 23
\textsuperscript{503} Ibid. 4
Melancholia

The full extent of the problem of guilt is only clear, indeed, when one considers the problems faced by those who do seek to engage the world through mature, principled conscience. As we have seen, some seek punishment just to get a handle on unconscious guilt feelings, which are intense because the superego’s energy stems from, and the superego therefore does not mitigate, internalized aggression. Of those mature subjects who do attempt to reach out constructively towards the world, in a solidarity with others that cannot tolerate injustice and domination, a final conflict looms, as Winnicott attests:

At the one extreme, therefore, are the melancholics, who take responsibility for all the ills of the world, especially those which are quite obviously nothing to do with them, and at the other extreme are the truly responsible people of the world, those who accept the fact of their own hate, nastiness, cruelty, things which coexist with their capacity to love and to construct. Sometimes their sense of their own awfulness gets them down. What Freud called “melancholia,” indeed, is a condition in which the subject “is mentally characterized by a profoundly painful depression, a loss of interest in externality, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction in the sense of self, expressed in self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment.” The melancholic subject expresses a moral disapproval of himself and thus actively seeks out opportunities to abdicate before responsibility (and thereby prove his vile character), suffer punishment (as if external discipline is merited because of the felt burden of crippling guilt) and submit before a strong leader or group (because the sadomasochistic authoritarian relationship seems to

504 Roazen, Freud: Political and Social Thought, 140-1.
505 Winnicott, The Family and Individual Development, 75. Adorno et al. frequently recognized this self-doubt and tendency to depression in their low-scorers.
506 Sigmund Freud, On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia, 204.
offer the only solution to anxiety and pain). This self-condemnation, however, is a
defensive mechanism, an effort to shield the loved objects with which the maturing
subject is still entangled from the criticism that he is coming to recognize they deserve;
the attack on the self is thus indicative of “accusations against a love-object which have
taken this route and transferred themselves to the patient’s own ego.” Critical theory
must draw on psychoanalysis’s effort to reorient this demobilizing critique to its true
target: the failing object.

Melancholia, indeed, turns the critical faculty of the conscience against itself, and
_away_ from the outside world that really warrants the criticism. The subject’s ability to
disentangle self from and resist domination is blocked, and is replaced by patterns of
behavior that can only serve the interests of dominating power. Because the focus of the
melancholic is the active destruction of the ego from within, the melancholic is incapable
of developing or sustaining conscientious principles and of critiquing or challenging the
world, as criticism requires courage, strength and a stable ego, as Freud asserts:

> Our suspicion that the critical agency which split off from the ego in this case
> might also be able to demonstrate its autonomy under other circumstances is
> confirmed by all further observations…the clinical picture of melancholia stresses
> _moral_ disapproval of the patient’s own ego over other manifestations.

The melancholic subject is tempted to destroy the self through self-abnegation, the final
onslaught of the dominating normative superego, _because_ he has recognized the
unacceptability systemic oppression and injustice, felt that oppressiveness as it haunts
him through the unconscious and, above all, glimpsed the possibility (and hardships) of a
creative and conscientious life through Eros.

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507 Ibid. 208
508 Ibid. 207
The superego’s final weapon, the turning of aggression fully and destructively against the self, is so dangerous precisely because it offers a certain pleasure juxtaposed against the difficult and uncertain outcomes of a constructive, principled autonomy, as Freud notes:

The indubitably pleasurable self-torment of melancholia, like the corresponding phenomenon of obsessive neurosis, signifies the satisfaction of tendencies of sadism and hatred, which are applied to an object and are thus turned back against the patient’s own person.\(^{509}\)

The melancholic, indeed, “does not behave just as someone contrite with remorse and self-reproach would normally do. The shame before others which characterizes the later state is missing.”\(^ {510}\) Freud, however, did not take melancholia as an inevitable or insurmountable obstacle facing those who would reach autonomy. Psychoanalysis is ultimately concerned with supporting and producing members of the second group identified by Winnicott, “those who accept the fact of their own hate, nastiness, cruelty, things which coexist with their capacity to love and to construct.” Although the mature subject might mourn the consequences of social violence and human finitude, Freud assures, “We know that mourning, however painful it may be, comes to an end.” Even as he faced the destruction engendered by the First World War, Freud recognized that transience induces constructive effort, that, “We will once again build up everything that the war has destroyed, perhaps on firmer foundations and more lastingly than before.”\(^ {511}\)

Despite the great power of the superego, indeed, psychoanalysis awakens the subject to his responsibility to become subject, to develop his constructive powers in solidarity with the other in line with human interests and because of human finitude.

\(^{509}\) Ibid. 211
\(^{510}\) Ibid. 207
\(^{511}\) Ibid. 199, 200
Guilt and the Critical Method

Psychoanalysis, indeed, offers concrete means of confronting and mediating guilt; namely the renegotiation of the superego, the demand for healthy forms of authority in society and the contestation of illusion; it is thus of great service to critical theory. Through psychoanalytic methods, the subject is able to see the full problem: the unwillingness to deal with the sources of guilt becomes clear as a concrete failing that demands the subject’s immediate response. This in turn demands practice (in the context of the compassionate psychoanalytic situation that leaves the subject only one way forward), which in turn builds identity, independence and principled conscience through reflection and critique. Through this process, normative authorities, beginning with the parents, to whom the superego compels submission, are exposed in their domination of the subject. The subject, furthermore, can thereby develop a principled, critical opposition to oppression by working through these relationships.

The central insight about conscience reached in the working through of guilt, therefore, is that, as Jessica Benjamin claims:

Freud’s theory of internalization showed how individuals transform themselves by doing to themselves what has been done to them…internalization is often understood as the creation of conscience…[but] the creation of an internal censoring agency involves the conscious denial of the experience of fear and is helpless in the face of the authority figure. It means the repression of the reality which demands repression. Internalization, in the sense of self-blame and guilt, means not only assuming the attitude of the other as one’s own, but also assuming responsibility for the other’s acts as inevitable responses to one’s own behavior.\footnote{\textsuperscript{512}}

Working through guilt demands, therefore, that domination must be recognized as an intersubjective process, and not something inherent in or produced by the nature of the

\footnote{\textsuperscript{512} Jessica Benjamin, "Authority and the Family Revisited: or, A World without Fathers?" \textit{New German Critique} 13 (1978): 38 (my italics).}
subject. Because submission to authority and the desperate internalization of aggression are a response, moreover, starts with the love of the other, any social process that works through guilt must expose and contend with the fact that, “domination is anchored in the hearts of the dominated.”

Vergangenheitsbewältigung, literally “coming to terms with the past,” undertook by Germans in the 1950s and 60s examples this need. To effectively “work through” guilt, the sources of the actions and desires that precipitated the guilt must be exposed and challenged. In this case, the sources of Nazism were subjected to rigorous exposition and contestation. Where the past was hashed out in active social discourse, areas were better able to rebuild mature democracy. Where the working through of the past, however, was not actively taken up as a social need (in, for example, Poland, Austria and to a certain extent France), domination remains problematically “anchored in the hearts of the dominated,” because the psychological needs producing domination remain untouched. In these places, right wing movements retain their appeal and power to a greater measure. The mediation of guilt, to work efficaciously, must develop the Eros of participants and unleash their creativity to find new ways to build, on and through love, against domination. Psychoanalysis offers a crucial clue that indicates how this can be accomplished. To directly attack domination grounded in love, psychoanalysis exposes the ways in which the dominating normative authorities that haunt the subject are themselves marked and mutilated by fear, insecurity and alienation.

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513 Ibid. 43
515 Thanks to Stephen Eric Bronner for this insight.
In Freud’s work, indeed, the ruthless exposition of domination by state authorities increased as the situation in Vienna made it harder and more dangerous to speak out. Although it is easy to overlook the connection of Freud’s critique of modern society to the broader body of psychoanalytic theory, to do so is to commit a serious error. Freud’s challenge to aggression and authoritarianism was the direct product of a life spent producing and theory and putting it into action in both the clinical setting and through the production of work that transcended the narrow limits of psychology. An example of this work demonstrates that psychoanalytic insight demands the exposition and resistance of internal and external patterns of domination when pushed to its radical limit. In “Timely Reflections on War and Death,” Freud does not ignore the severe problem of unconscious guilt, as he notes:

> Every hour of every day, in our unconscious impulses, we remove everyone who gets in our way, everyone who has insulted or harmed us. The cry of ‘the devil take him’ that crosses our lips so often in joking annoyance, and which actually means ‘death take him’, is in our unconscious a serious, powerful desire for death. Indeed, our unconscious murders even for trivial reasons.

Instead of taking guilt, however, as a problem of individual psychology to be met in therapy, he here takes it up as a social problematic driving the current crisis, one that must not be allowed to transform into a check against critical responses to that crisis. Freud, indeed, poses guilt as a problem in this essay as it impedes mature citizenship; his worry is that in an overwhelming and violent crisis, the ability to test reality and reach autonomous decisions will be lost in society as a whole, “we begin to have doubts about the meaning of the impressions crowding in on us, we begin to doubt the value of our own judgments. It seems to us that no event has ever destroyed so much of the precious

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common property of humanity, so many of the clearest minds have been made confused, the high has been brought so thoroughly low.\textsuperscript{517} The rebuke that the “high has been brought so low” and the linking of the high to the “clearest minds” shows that morality, for Freud, is a question of testing reality and making constructive use of the truths thereby uncovered.

Conscientious opposition, therefore, is a fundamental duty; we ought tremble neither before the fearsome state nor the frightening need to reflect upon our own interiority. In pushing against internal and external sources of domination, the normative superego is exposed and contested as a key pillar of both. The mature citizen, therefore, is unmoored from punishing guilt because he can tolerate the truth and utilize it in line with his genuine interests, as Freud proposes, “Concern for the deceased, which is no longer of any use to him, is more important to us than the truth, and to most of us it is surely also more important than concern for the living.”\textsuperscript{518} This claim, the fundamental demand of constructive Eros, extends to how the citizen would use history, both personal and social, each of which are “filled with murder,” as Freud explains, “Even today, what our children learn as global history is essentially a sequence of genocides. The dark sense of guilt that has hung over humanity since primitive times, which in some religions has been condensed into the hypothesis of original sin, is probable the manifestation of a blood-guilt.\textsuperscript{519} Freud, indeed, is able to look critically at the crisis of the First World War, because psychoanalysis afforded him the ability to dialectically interrogate this history; from this grounding he finds that the unfolding war “is at least as cruel, bitter and

\textsuperscript{517} Ibid. 169
\textsuperscript{518} Ibid. 184
\textsuperscript{519} Ibid. 186
merciless as any previous war."\textsuperscript{520} Through psychoanalysis, therefore, Freud came to see the First World War not as a demobilizing crisis or a "war to end all war," but instead as another forceful example of what remains to be overcome: the historical crisis of the collective unconscious, which must be subjected to reflection before society will be capable of pursuing emancipation.

It is thus a meaningful consolation when Freud claims, "our injury and painful disillusion at the uncivilized behavior of our fellow citizens of the world in this war were unjustified. They were based upon an illusion to which we had yielded. Those citizens, in fact, have not fallen as far as we feared, because they had not risen nearly so far as we imagined."\textsuperscript{521} The hopeful element here is that the current crisis does not speak to or reflect an inherent limit in civilization, which has yet to mature into the rational direction of human activity in line with genuine human interest. The work psychoanalysis demands impels society to advance, especially where crisis exposes its present failings, as Freud critiques:

\begin{quote}
In this war the individual member of a people is able to convince himself with horror of what he sometimes found himself thinking even in peace-time, that the state has forbidden the individual to do wrong, not because it wishes to abolish wrongdoing but because it wishes to monopolize it, like salt and tobacco...The belligerent state permits itself any injustice, any violence that would disgrace the individual...The state demands extremes of obedience and sacrifice in its citizens while at the same time treating them like children, with an excess of secrecy, and censorship of information and expression of opinion, that renders the spirits of those who are thus intellectually oppressed defenseless against any unfavorable situation or any grim rumor.\textsuperscript{522}
\end{quote}

In the context of a war of unparalleled destruction, a war in which the lives of workers were used mercilessly as pawns in the great struggle over which nation ought dominate

\textsuperscript{520} Ibid. 172
\textsuperscript{521} Ibid. 179
\textsuperscript{522} Ibid. 173-4
the masses and resources of the third world, Freud therefore is able to castigate the current, oppressive order in the name of human potentiality.

Although, therefore, Freud sees the wish to wipe away human aggression as futile, he affirms that a society capable of supporting each individual in the achievement of autonomy, an achievement that requires the sublimation of aggression, can and must be reached. His ideal condition, that of “a community of people who have subjected their drives to the dictatorship of reason. Nothing else could prompt such a complete and robust unification of humanity, even if there were no emotional bonds between them,” is revealed through psychoanalysis to be no utopia. It is instead the goal of Eros, the necessary end to which human effort can and ought be directed.\(^{523}\) In his contribution to *Why War*, indeed, Freud would have us begin not with the relation between law and power, but the relation between law and violence, as he claims, “Today we see law and violence as opposites. It is easy to see that one developed out of the other, and if we return to the very beginnings and check how it was that this first occurred, the solution of the problem presents itself to us without any difficulty.”\(^{524}\) Only through the juxtaposition of law and violence, indeed, can one discover the insolvency of current norms and the aggressive, dominating character of the normative superego: only through critical insight can human power and the creative possibility inherent in human legislative activity be owned and redirected conscientiously at the *problem* of violence. Freud, furthermore, shows the full dangers of violence precisely by highlighting its ability “to forge only partial unifications…the conflicts of which have cried out for violent resolution,” to

\(^{523}\) Ibid. 229-30

\(^{524}\) Ibid. 222
block solidarity through the internalization of a superego that demands submission to the group and forecloses the meaningful confrontation of human aggression.\textsuperscript{525}

In psychoanalysis, the constructive Eros gathered and maintained in civilization at its best is thus the foundation for the critique of civilization as it exists, as Freud notes, “The mental attitudes that the process of civilization imposes upon us are most harshly contradicted by war, which is why we must rage against it, we can simply bear it no longer, it is not merely an intellectual and emotional rejection, among us pacifists it is a constitutional intolerance.”\textsuperscript{526} If the superego is a child’s solution to the child’s conflict, reflection integrates the adult who can find a better way forward. Even aggressive experiences, where consciously reflected on, indeed, help us grow: the ruthless stage encourages the growth of concern, learning to tolerate guilt, making reparations and building a better life in solidarity with others. Aggression, where maturely sublimated, fuels and inspires creative effort.\textsuperscript{527} It is at this point, therefore, where we must turn directly to the psychological mechanisms inherent in maturation, with a particular focus on sublimation and identification.

\textsuperscript{525} Ibid. 225
\textsuperscript{526} Ibid. 232
\textsuperscript{527} Winnicott, \textit{The Family and Individual Development}, 37.
Critical theory’s effort to restore subjectivity and resist domination rightly leads to the search for and rejection of all tendencies which cause the subject to introject and become complicit in reproducing his own domination. Because psychoanalysis focuses in large part on the developmental path by which the subject is transformed into a social being accepting of the reality principle, many Freudian categories (and ultimately, psychoanalysis itself) have been consequently called into deep question by critical theory. Sublimation and identification, the two forces with which the maturing subject most clearly meets the challenge of the reality principle, have been met with particular suspicion and thus remain undertheorized by critical theorists. At least partial blame has been cast on these categories for the decline of subjectivity so evident within the advanced industrial system. This treatment is not entirely unwarranted: sublimation and identification both can come to support the subject in conforming and adapting to the outraging trends critical theory has identified in modernity. These categories, however, also represent the clearest means by which the subject can overcome these same social, political, cultural and economic pressures. There is nothing inherently alienating, in short, in Freud’s presentation of these categories, and they are necessary aspects of the emancipation of the subject from dominating inner trends. Their sociopolitical implications depend entirely on their deployment: it is just as possible to identify with institutions, ideas and individuals that oppose the disempowering and dehumanizing aspects of modernity and sublimate one’s impulses, including aggression, in life-affirming and creative ways as it is to cave and conform. Supporting individuals in the process of utilizing identification and sublimation positively (and in the metapsychology,
challenging negative uses of these categories by groups) is a major, although underdeveloped and easily missed, aspect of psychoanalytic theory and practice. Drawing from this current in psychoanalysis is an especially urgent task. Critical theory, especially Adorno’s effort to restore nonidentity between subject and object in *Negative Dialectics*, often insists on viewing freedom only in terms of “the unique and reflective experience of subjectivity” and thus loses the capacity to speak to solidarity as a vital need. In this chapter, I will argue that because of the potential of sublimation and identification to allow the subject to mature into a creative opponent of the forces immiserating life, critical theory has everything to gain from theorizing sublimation and identification as aspects of new modes of practice. Because they can be legitimately engulfed, as so many potentially emancipatory forces are, by dominating modernity, critical theory also has much to lose from a failure to reengage.

**Critical Theory, Sublimation and Identification**

To this point, critical theory has approached sublimation and identification at best skeptically and at worst, notably in the case of Adorno, with obvious contempt. Critical theory’s distrustfulness, however, begins with a very legitimate concern: because reification touches every moment of the totality, it seems that, “any compromise with the world of alienated social relations would taint the prospect of liberation, radicalism became an existential matter of either/or: it would have to manifest itself either as a ‘great refusal’ …or nothing.” In contrast, I argue that optimal, what Hans Loewald calls “genuine” and non-defensive, sublimation and identification enable the subject to engage constructively within the system without conforming to it. As such sublimations and

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528 Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*, 34.
529 Ibid. 32
identifications are necessary aspects of radical praxis that would marshal Eros constructively against the outraging and dominating tendencies of modernity.

Before making that case, however, it is necessary to understand the concerns that have been expressed by critical theory. Marcuse saw the radical potential of psychoanalysis, but he also assumed that its radicalism was betrayed in clinical practice, as he argues, “The concept of man that emerges from Freudian theory is the most irrefutable indictment of Western civilization – and at the same time the most unshakable defense of this civilization.” Sublimation and identification, furthermore, appeared to be key aspects of Freud’s “defense of this civilization” and failure to harness the radical potential of his “most irrefutable indictment,” as Marcuse contests, “Force, identification, sublimation co-operate in the formation of the ego and superego. The function of the father is gradually transferred from his individual to his social position, to his image in the son (conscience), to God, to the various agencies and agents which teach the son to become a mature and restrained member of his society.” For Marcuse, indeed, psychoanalysis “reveals the power of the universal in and over the individuals,” but does not contest this force, which “dissolves” the autonomous individual. Freud, however, understood that resistance against the tendencies that immiserate human life must occur at both the individual and social levels, and that these levels of resistance must be consciously linked through reflection. Sublimation, which constructively channels Eros towards the world, and identification, which builds vital links between individuals, are

530 Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 11.
531 Ibid. 75
532 Ibid. 57
key loci in building solidarity and practice. Critical theory, in its current crisis of meaning, must work to reclaim this aspect of psychoanalytic practice in the present.

In Marcuse’s reading of psychoanalysis, however, identification is a key site at which the individual is fitted for domination in ways that reach down to the level of instinct. Marcuse understood identification simply through the aim-inhibition of passion, which in turn he connected to the suppression and subsumption of Eros by the advanced industrial system. Through identification with normative authorities, which the subject submits to out of a love increasingly divorced from life-affirming passion, the individual internalizes and comes to reproduce, most potently through the superego, his domination. On the level of society, moreover, Marcuse contends that, “the totality of which the psyche is a part becomes to an increasing extent less ‘society’ than ‘politics’…society has fallen prey to and become identified with domination.” To envision an alternative to the present system, therefore, one has to refuse any identification with what is being rejected: resistance must be “removed from and incongruous with the established universe to defy any attempt to identify them in terms of this universe.” Identification is, therefore, problematic under any circumstances, but particularly in the context of revolutionary theory and practice. Marcuse is painfully aware that “every revolution has also been a betrayed revolution,” and places primary blame for the abdication of radicalism on the revolutionary’s lingering identifications with what he revolts against. For Marcuse, at core, identification is something to be resisted in revolutionary practice

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533 See for example: Ibid. 44
534 Marcuse, Five Lectures, 1.
535 Marcuse, Essay on Liberation, 84.
and exposed by revolutionary theory: the theoretical foundations for positive uses of identification are smashed by this sweeping critique.

Marcuse’s views on sublimation are even more revealing, as Marcuse’s engagement with this category begins with, and is blocked by, the undialectical simplification that “sublimation and domination hang together.” For Marcuse, indeed, sublimation represented the moment where psychoanalysis falls for and is ensnared by the fetishization of work and “productivity,” where despite the frequent portrayals of the artist as the exemplar of sublimation in psychoanalytic theory, Eros is hampered through the subject’s conforming to normative work relations. It is through sublimation, which channels the instincts of the individual in line with his existence as a social being, that psychoanalysis checks the “return to nature or to natural man” and through which “the process of civilization is irreversible.” For Marcuse, indeed, Freud’s rationalism “is aimed at showing that the irrational forces that still operate in men must be subjected to reason if human conditions are to improve in any way.” It is thus through sublimation in psychoanalytic theory and practice that the individual and group are most dramatically transfigured by and for domination.

In this light, sublimation must be understood as the antipode of genuine transcendence, as “the psychological transcendence in which civilized freedom consists, the negation of a negativity which itself still remains negative – but also because it perpetuates itself as transcendence: the productivity of renunciation, which spurs itself on

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536 Ibid. 215
537 Ibid. 84-5
538 Marcuse, Five Lectures, 24.
endlessly.” Efficacious resistance, therefore, must take the form of the “desublimation” of culture and sexuality; Marcuse, in other words, posited that to make revolutionary use of psychoanalysis, one had to not only reject, but smash, sublimation, as he argues, “This is Freud’s revolutionary insight: the conflict that is decisive for the fate of civilization is that between the reality of repression and the almost equally real possibility of doing away with repression, between the increase of Eros necessary for civilization and the equally necessary suppression of its claims for pleasure.” As Whitebook notes, Marcuse makes it seem that the unity of the self in psychoanalysis is entirely based on the repression and exclusion of instinct. The easy correlation between repression and sublimation, however, is unraveled by a fuller theorization of sublimation. It is worth noting that Freud begins by precisely rejecting the idea that sublimation simply represses instinctual energy and impulses, and consistently showed that sublimation harnesses instinctual energy for, at its best, creative purposes. Marcuse presents sublimation and identification, moreover, as the moments where the radicalism of psychoanalysis is irreversibly betrayed. As such, the ability of critical theory to speak to the constructive capacities of these categories, and to accurately highlight the real dangers incumbent in these nuanced processes, is sacrificed because of the total rejection of the present order. The question of how the activist can work within the modern world, against domination, withers as the psychological categories that support such efforts are lost for critical theory.

Marcuse, Essay on Liberation, 23.
Ibid. 48
Marcuse, Five Lectures, 18.
Whitebook, Perversion and Utopia, 32.
Freud’s favorite example of sublimation, Leonardo da Vinci, evinces this constructive process. This example will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.
The most damning and totalizing rejection of the maturational categories linked to Freud’s reality principle, particularly sublimation, was made by Adorno and Horkheimer; in their works, Freud’s developmental categories are denuded of all positive viability. Horkheimer located identification as a key component of domination, both in the connection of success to identification with normativity and through the limitation of what can think and become through identification with the father, as he contests, “The father – reality – demands, forbids, teaches. The immutable, that which denies – and which one would like to change nonetheless – forces us to identify with it so we can bear it.” For Horkheimer, indeed, identification “is the precondition for control,” and enables the objectification of the subject in that it pushes against him at his most vulnerable; because identification is a response to the subject’s ambivalence, it seems to capture him invariably in a disempowering dichotomy of fear and love, as he claims, “Love derives from fear, domination from love.” The concern with identification is rooted for both in the decline of the individual: parents have lost their “awesomeness” through their “economic impotence.” Both fear that the modern family is denuded as a site where identification can function as a form of contestation wherein individuation and the development of autonomy can occur. In modernity, for example, Adorno is concerned that:

Once we rebelled against their insistence on the reality principle, the sobriety forever prone to become wrath against those less ready to renounce. But today we are faced with a generation purporting to be young yet in all its reactions insufferably more grown-up than its parents ever were; which having renounced before any conflict, draws from this its grimly authoritarian, unshakeable power… The end of the family paralyses the forces of opposition. The rising collectivist

545 Ibid. 117
order is a mockery of a classless one: together with the bourgeois it liquidates the Utopia that once drew from motherly love.\textsuperscript{546}

Adorno and Horkheimer each posit that the family is no longer able to support the individual in challenging normative authority and working towards identity and autonomy, as such, identification now occurs dangerously with the system as a whole.

In \textit{Minima Moralia}, Adorno adds that this form of individualism poisons what’s left of unique subjectivity, claiming, “He who is not malign does not live serenely but with a particular chaste hardness and intolerance. Lacking appropriate objects, his love can scarcely express itself except by hatred for the inappropriate, in which he admittedly comes to resemble what he hates. The bourgeois, however, is tolerant. His love of people as they are stems from his hatred of what they might be.”\textsuperscript{547} Identification with and within an immiserating totality, therefore, is framed as the royal road through which that totality invades, engulfs and reifies the subject, who henceforth is complicit in his own domination and easily induced to dominate others. Although Horkheimer acknowledges that identification might have positive potential uses, for example in claiming, “Perhaps it is the meaning of the ever increasing power of the state in our time that man will be able to rise above it, once he has internalized it through the pressure it exerts on him,” we cannot work towards this potential within his framework: identification as a tool for and subject of theory has already been vitiated by his account.\textsuperscript{548}

Sublimation, however, fares worse than identification in their work: it is directly indicted for the worst abuses of modernity. For Adorno, for example, sublimation is not merely a form of submission; it is submission itself - internalized domination at work. In

\textsuperscript{546} Adorno, \textit{Minima Moralia}, 22-3.
\textsuperscript{547} Ibid. 25
\textsuperscript{548} Horkheimer, \textit{Dawn and Decline}, 124.
Minima Moralia, Adorno contests that Freud ultimately encouraged adaptation to the reality principle because he was ensnared in the immiserating bourgeois system despite his ruthless exposition of its psychological underpinnings, as he claims, “The fatality was rather that, in the teeth of bourgeois ideology, he tracked down conscious actions materialistically to their unconscious instinctual basis, but at the same time concurred with the bourgeois contempt of instinct which is itself a product of precisely the rationalizations that he dismantled.”

Because he is so captured, Freud “vacillates, devoid of theory and swaying with prejudice, between negating the renunciation of instinct as repression contrary to reality, and applauding it as sublimation beneficial to culture”: this “unenlightened enlightenment” plays directly into the hands of “bourgeois disillusion.” For Adorno, therefore, Freud is fundamentally ambivalent between desire for open emancipation of the oppressed and “apology for open oppression,” but it is his apologism that must ultimately concern critical theory in its use of his methods. In his ambivalence, indeed, “Truth is abandoned to relativity and people to power.”

It is thus that Adorno finds psychoanalysis’s failure precisely at the point of sublimation, where it becomes “part of the hygiene” of domination, suiting the individual to domination by adjusting him to the “prescribed pleasure” of the system rather than aiding him in reclaiming the lost pleasures of instinct. Psychology thereby helps objectify man by dissecting him down to his faculties within the present system. Via sublimation, in other words, psychoanalysis:

549 Adorno, Minima Moralia, 60.
550 Ibid.
551 Ibid. 61
552 Ibid. 58, 62, 63
...incorporates personality as a lie needed for living, as the supreme rationalization holding together the innumerable rationalization by which the individual achieves his instinctual renunciation, and accommodates himself to the reality principle...Alienating him from himself, denouncing his autonomy with his unity, psycho-analysis subjugates him totally to the mechanism of rationalization.  

As Whitebook theorizes, therefore, Adorno’s hostility to sublimation seems to stem from his reading of the ego as a defensive organization, rather than as an organization possessing defenses. It is for this reason indeed that Adorno radically divorces from sublimation from creativity, solidarity and love, for example in his claims that “Artists do not sublimate” and that “He alone loves who has the strength to hold fast to love. Even though social advantage, sublimated, performs the sexual impulses, using a thousand nuances sanctioned by the order to make now this, now that….an attachment once formed opposes this by persisting where the force of social pressure…does not want it.” Divorcing Eros from sublimation, however, is exactly what Freud feared and sought to overcome in his clinical practice, which seeks to direct passion at the world by feeding Eros through reflection, communication and critique.

The devastating critique and rejection of sublimation is even more evident in Adorno and Horkheimer’s masterful Dialectic of Enlightenment, which frames enlightenment itself as a disempowering and deindividuating project of sublimation, and contends that, “The history of civilization is the history of the introversion of sacrifice – in other words, the history of renunciation.” This renunciation, carried forward by sublimation in which the subject adapts to functions sanctioned by the system, marks

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553 Ibid. 64  
554 Whitebook, Perversion and Utopia, 247.  
555 Adorno, Minima Moralia, 212, 172.  
556 Adorno and Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 43.
self-transformation into a thing usable by the system. Adorno and Horkheimer thereby locate sublimation at the core of the fatal collapse and engulfment of subjectivity, claiming, “Not only is domination paid for with the estrangement of human beings from the dominated objects, but the relationships of human beings, including the relationship of individuals to themselves, have themselves been bewitched by the objectification of mind…industrialism makes souls into things.” The subject’s “adaptation to the power of progress furthers the progress of power,” we can only listen to instinct, so to speak, if we willingly bind ourselves helplessly to the mast. By correlating sublimation absolutely with repression and domination, all that remains open to the subject’s constructive impulses is the hunger artistry of circling in the aporia. Adorno, indeed, arrives at this point because he frames sublimation as submission and contends in contrast that, “only the preservation of inner nature could prevent the whole self-vitiating dialectic of enlightenment from unfolding.” A dynamic account of sublimation including its constructive, integrating uses, however, could lead us out of this trap.

In The Authoritarian Personality, indeed, critical theory moves towards a more nuanced and constructive view of sublimation and identification; in this study, the distinction between high-scorers and low-scorers demanded a careful inspection of the divergent patterns of development and mental life present in the two groups. The findings not only prove the potential dangers of sublimation and identification, which are revealed as crucial aspects of the psychology of authoritarianism and prejudice. Sublimation and identification are also shown, in mature form, to be necessary to the achievement of the

557 Ibid. 21
558 Ibid. 28
559 Whitebook, Perversion and Utopia, 150.
openness, tolerance and compassion of the low-scorer. The high-scoring subject, indeed, is noted for a rigid, stereotyped glorification of parents devoid of real content and divorced from meaningful contact. This flattening devotion reveals an uncritical, self-serving identification with the family, which can be idealized to meet lingering infantile needs, used as a defensive check against critical thought and reflection and modified to reflect the prestige and power high-scorers take up as necessary ends.\textsuperscript{560} This seeming identification with the family, therefore, is really one aspect of a submissive identification "with the existing setup. In order not to undermine their own pattern of identification, they unconsciously do not want to know too much and are ready to superficial or distorted information as long as it confirms the world in which they want to go on living."\textsuperscript{561} The identification with the system and the status quo is a key aspect of the perpetuation of domination, which is clearly internalized by the high scorer. As in the case of the worker who enthusiastically endorses the advanced industrial system because of the comforts and range of material choices he seems to enjoy, indeed, the operative category in this identification is not love, but self-interest in its basest form.

For the high scorer identification is conditioned on the promise of the "most in terms of material goods and backing to some release from restrictions which seem intolerable," which indicates that instead of maturing through identification, the high scorer regresses to the infantile, "longing to overthrow the troublesome moral restraints and to live fully according to the pleasure principle. The repressed, unsublimated, and unmodified tendencies are ready to break through and to flood the tenuously maintained

\textsuperscript{560} Adorno et al., \textit{The Authoritarian Personality}, 357.
\textsuperscript{561} Ibid. 662
social superstructure.”

Even where the high scorer is aware of his unhappiness and unfreedom in distorted forms, as in the feeling that he is being compromised by the malevolent other, moreover, “It is important to note further that his feelings of being persecuted do not lead to sympathy for other persecuted people nor to any inclination to eliminate persecution generally, but only to the thought that justice would consist in his group becoming the powerful one.”

The need for the other, who must be aggressively opposed, is the antipode of solidarity, and makes the “identification with humanity as a whole which is found in anti-ethnocentrism” impossible. The rigid identification with the status quo, indeed, is based in the incapacity to care for and identify with actual individuals and is haunted by the failure of the developmental identifications shown by psychoanalysis as crucial to emerging compassion, conscience and solidarity.

Psychoanalytic methods target this failure, and radically pursue the ends of Eros in practice. Psychological resistance is driven by the challenges of reaching autonomy in any circumstances, but psychoanalysis is hopeful: modernity renders alienation and domination so naked that they can be recognized, rejected and resisted in the name of human interests, freedom and autonomy.

It is uncritical, unmediated infantile identifications that thus mark the rigid defensiveness of the high-scorer: such identifications, psychoanalysis reminds us, must be overcome. The low-scorder’s capacity for critical reflection, which “goes with a greater readiness to look more objectively at man and society in general,” indeed, speaks to an

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562 Ibid. 455
563 Ibid. 48
564 Ibid. 148
565 See: Ibid. 684
566 See, for example, Freud’s discussions of the First World War and fascism.
ability to forge meaningful identifications from a mature and autonomous standpoint.\textsuperscript{567} For low scoring individuals, the, “affect-laden sense of justice is not a mere surface ideology, or a means of narcissistic gratification in one’s own humanitarianism,” and instead, “has a real basis within the personality…The sympathy for the underdog leads towards action, towards attempts to correct in concrete, individual situations what is felt to be general unfairness.”\textsuperscript{568} The basis for their “sensitivity to the suffering of human beings,” and “compassion, [which] makes them keenly aware of the dangers of racial persecution,” therefore, is found in the use low scorers make of identification to love and tolerate others as ends in themselves, to link with humanity as a whole.\textsuperscript{569} The study thus deploys a nuanced conception of identification that ought be a model for critical theory, one capable of exposing the real dangers connected to identification without losing the necessary, constructive and radical uses of the same.

A similarly sophisticated theory of sublimation also begins to emerge from the study. The high scorers, indeed, are reported as making “less sublimation and more use of defenses such as projection, denial and reaction-formation, defenses which aid the individual in maintaining a moral façade at the expense of self-expression and emotional release.”\textsuperscript{570} The paucity of curiosity and indifference of the prejudiced subject to “politics”\textsuperscript{571} is firmly linked to the absence of meaningful sublimations which channels passion into the constructive reaching out towards the world. Low scorers indeed, effectively sublimate where high scorers repress and attempt to escape from the

\textsuperscript{567} Ibid. 485
\textsuperscript{568} Ibid. 648
\textsuperscript{569} Ibid. 652
\textsuperscript{570} Ibid. 595
\textsuperscript{571} See: Ibid. 190
unconscious.\textsuperscript{572} The “genuine” sublimation I will describe below works by releasing the passion of impulses, which can be tolerated and integrated into the self, for creative use, and it is striking that the study uncovered that, “The ego defenses of the lows are relatively more impulse-releasing: at best we find considerable sublimation, to perhaps a greater degree we find that impulses have been assimilated into the ego without being fully integrated.”\textsuperscript{573} For low scorers, indeed, even aggressive impulses could be sublimated into “creativity, nurturance and autonomy.”\textsuperscript{574}

The happiness low scorers expressed finding in work, the independent position they took towards institutions and authorities, their tendency to “be more creative and imaginative than the prejudiced” and “characterized by a fuller integration of their personalities,” the integration of sex and passion more fully into their social relations and, above all their self-sufficient orientation, “toward real achievement, toward intellectual or aesthetic goals, and toward the realization of socially productive values” all speak to successful sublimation.\textsuperscript{575} Whereas, therefore, repression weakens the ego and ties it to domination and aggression, sublimation – the foil of repression - supports the achievement of autonomy and principled character. The predisposition to authoritarianism and prejudice, in the end, comes down to a lack of success in adjusting “to the world, in accepting the ‘reality principle,’” the high scorers, indeed, “failed, as it were, to strike a balance between renunciations and gratifications, and whose whole inner life is determined by the denials imposed upon them from outside, not only during childhood but also during their whole adult life. These people are driven into \textit{isolation}.  

\textsuperscript{572} Ibid. 456-7  
\textsuperscript{573} Ibid. 595  
\textsuperscript{574} Ibid. 543  
\textsuperscript{575} Ibid. 384, 389, 395, 475
They have to build up a spurious inner world. At this point, it is necessary to investigate the processes of that correct adjustment to the social world.

**Creatively Confronting a Challenging World: The Reality Principle in Focus**

Critical theory’s disavowal of the emancipatory moments of sublimation and identification stem from a common source: the tendency to castigate the reality principle, especially psychoanalysis’s demand that the individual adjust to it, as the ultimate embodiment of and submission to dominating, alienating normality. This understanding of the reality principle, however, oversimplifies the case. For Freud, civilization contains the sum of the knowledge humanity has acquired to control nature and meet necessity; the need for these controls stem not only from necessity, but also from Freud’s insight that the subject experiences nature as a hostile force that “destroys us – coldly, cruelly, relentlessly, as it seems to us, and possibly through the very things that occasioned our satisfaction,” and thus, “the principle task of civilization, its actual raison d’être, is to defend us against nature.” Civilization thus removes man from an unmediated relation to nature; this alienation is made particularly problematic in the antagonism between instinct and the demands of civilization.

For Freud, civilization, therefore, also contains the regulations necessary to enable cohabitation and progress, which take many forms. Such regulations are necessary, because the individual must make sacrifices – namely that of the illusory Eden of primary narcissism – to exist as a mature social being, Freud notes that as “little as men are able to exist in isolation, they should nevertheless feel as a heavy burden the sacrifices which civilization has to be defended against the individual, and its regulations, institutions and

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576 Ibid. 765
577 Ibid. 19
commands are directed to that task."^{578} The reality principle therefore represents a bargain wherein “Civilized man has exchanged a portion of his possibilities of happiness for a portion of security.”^{579} This sacrifice entails resistance, as the subject is frustrated by the inability to directly satisfy instinctual impulses. Forces that bind the subject to civilization (education, religion, etc.), therefore, are the mental assets of civilization. The chief asset is the superego, which internalizes the social norms and values, as Freud claims, “Every child presents this process of transformation to us; only by that means does it become a moral and social being. Such a strengthening of the super-ego is a most precious cultural asset…Those in whom it has taken place are transformed from being opponents of civilization into being its vehicles.”^{580} It is easy, therefore, to look at Freud’s discussions of civilization and correlate his views with domination. This easy interpretation of psychoanalysis, however, is undialectical.

Freud understood that productive forces collected in civilization have tremendous emancipatory potency, but also can be utilized for annihilation and the interests of raw power:^{581} For Freud, therefore, civilization is necessary not just in that it contains the constructive powers of mankind, but also has an essential function in determining the uses of the fruits of human endeavor. To this end, Freud appears to simply demand coercion and oppression, noting that most loathe work and few heed argument over passion, as he claims that “It seems rather that every civilization must be built up on coercion and renunciation of instinct; it does not even seem that if coercion were to cease the majority of human beings would be prepared to undertake to perform the work

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^{579} Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 73.
^{581} See: Ibid. 7
“necessary” and “It seems just as impossible to do without control of the mass by a minority as it is to dispense with coercion in the work of civilization. For masses are lazy and unintelligent; they have no love for instinctual renunciation, and they are not to be convinced by argument.”

What Freud is describing here is a historical condition wherein the vast majority of human beings have failed to reach autonomy and defensively reject meaningful reflection on self and world. In this condition, Freud posited that much depended on the accountability of leaders, that the best societies – those supportive of the growing identity and autonomy of their members – require leaders who, like any healthy authority, relax their controls as the people become able to step into the responsibilities of freedom. In other words, psychoanalysis uncovers a process of emancipation unfolding through the historical advance of subjectivity. Where leaders can master their own instinctual wishes and grow into an autonomy that tolerates the independence of the other, the individuals composing that society are provided with an example of the necessary movement towards autonomy.

To consider this differently, Franz Neumann located the value of “the materialistic psychology of Freud,” in the rediscovery of the “ancient truths” that “optimistic theories of human nature are one-sided” and that leadership is necessary both because of the darker aspects of human nature and as, “Man, although endowed with reason, frequently knows not – or is not permitted to know – what his true interests are.”

In this sense, leaders have the interrelated capacities to both smash and build the

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582 Ibid. 8-9
583 Freud repeatedly claimed that autonomous, critical thinkers did not require these coercions.
subject’s awareness of his own interests, a critical step on the path towards autonomy. Psychoanalysis orients the subject critical towards both authority and the psychological foundations upon which he relates to authority: psychoanalysis thereby promotes both the recovery of the emancipatory aspects of the past and present (the genuine progress made through history and captured in civilization) and demands the rejection of all authorities and restrictions that suppress mature autonomy and Eros. We can best understand the reality principle, therefore, not as the black heart of domination, but as a historical process marshalling Eros and the knowledge man has gained towards the ends of autonomy. Freud consistently framed modernity as existing at the early stages of this process, and showed that both the individual and the group actively defend against emancipatory outcomes (which require the hard work of critical thinking, the toleration of difficult truths about self and world and the acceptance of responsibility. Through this vision of history, however, it becomes possible to achieve a deeper understanding of Freud’s “reality principle”: the reality principle, above all, is the adjustment of the individual to the realities of human life, but once that adjustment is made, the self-determining autonomous subjects that emerge can and must contest domination as an infantile need which answers infantile fears. Autonomy thus necessarily demands and links critique and resistance at the psychological and social levels. So understood, psychoanalysis has much to offer critical theory in terms of the categories most intimately tied to this historical process: sublimation and identification.

Psychoanalysis reveals, indeed, that although anti-social trends exist in all individuals, each subject contains irrepressible Eros, the core of civilization and “the builder of cities.” It is, indeed, Eros that provides a window to the crucial insight: the
“reality principle” refers to the need of each individual to affirm and commit the constructive project of civilization, constructive powers that can be used to smash shared illusion and enable the maturation of the individual and society. For Freud, therefore, it is not that domination is inherent in civilization, but instead that domination is produced and tolerated in civilization’s present condition. Domination emerges because the superego, as we have seen, does not touch the aggressive currents of infantile ambivalence: even the oldest renunciations of the things claimed in infantile omnipotence – those against incest, cannibalism, etc. – still engender resistance, as Freud notes, “There are countless civilized people who would shrink from murder or incest but who would not deny themselves the satisfaction of their avarice, their aggressive urges or their sexual lusts, and who would not hesitate to injury other people by lies, fraud, and calumny, as long as they can remain unpunished for it.”

Freud firmly believed, moreover, that “our god Logos” would cause us to mature beyond this condition: resistance is undone as it is made present to the conscience, reflected on and integrated into the self. In other words, just as the integration of the superego can lead to principled conscience, society can achieve the “proper regulations” (it is worth noting that a regulation need not be a restriction) capable of raising children in “kindness” and habituating them to work and think rationally – that is to say, capable of ending the need for coercion. Critical theory, which above all needs a fresh identification with those who suffer modernity, must take up this pursuit as well.

In the short term, therefore, the alternative to opposing civilization as a whole, the “better path…of becoming a member of the human community, and, with the help of a

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585 Ibid. 14
586 See: Ibid. 9-10
technique guided by science, going over to the attack against nature and subjecting her to the human will,” is a necessary step.587 Rather than allowing our inability to fully master nature limit and mutilate us, human finitude should liberate us through the recognition of the need to construct a society that reflects the interests and passions of ultimately fragile subjects. That is to say, theory must speak to social beings who can create in spite of the fact that they can be destroyed and injured, that they will die. For such subjects, the reality principle is emancipating, a source of pleasure, the principle of a society in reciprocity with its members, as Jessica Benjamin notes, “Reality is thus discovered, rather than imposed; and authentic selfhood is not absorbed from without but discovered within. Reality neither wholly creates the self (as the pressure of the external world creates Freud’s ego) nor is it wholly created by the self.”588 Overcoming the hostility towards the project of civilization is thus the first step in achieving, through constructive Eros which grows as autonomous individuals join in solidarity to build a more humane world, and Freud clearly indicated that this was the work of the present society (which has finally attained the scientific and technological situation to live without and even against illusions), as he notes, “…if it were feasible merely to reduce the majority that is hostile towards civilization today into a minority, a great deal would have been accomplished – perhaps all that can be accomplished.”589 Even the phrase “perhaps all that can be accomplished,” especially when juxtaposed against the optimistic belief that society would mature presented later in the same text, is not an absolute limit on what can

587 Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, 27. One must note that Freud’s alienation, which critical theory is right to recognize as a limit in his work (as with all theorists, however, this alienation need not limit our use of the theory in question) is evident here in the aggressive positioning of man against nature.
be achieved under the reality principle as Freud presented the category.\textsuperscript{590} The goal of psychoanalysis, a goal critical theory must share, is to move beyond this, wherever possible, in solidarity and out of compassion for the suffering of individuals who can and must be free.

**Identification**

Critical theory’s evaluation of identification is grounded in a real danger situation: it is indeed through identification with parents and other normative authorities that many individuals conform and submit to a dominating system. A nuanced approach to identification, which also highlights the emancipatory qualities of this mechanism, is needed to expose and actively challenge the disempowering aspects of identification. Identification is mostly studied as the mechanism through which the superego is internalized, as Freud notes, “The super ego arises…from an identification with the father taken as a model.”\textsuperscript{591} This original identification with the father, driven by ambivalence, is, therefore, at the roots of the limits and aggression of normative conscience. Parents, moreover, often raise children in strict, conservative adherence to the demands, values and principles they in turn internalized from their parents. This regression to rigid

\textsuperscript{590} Just as the reality principle need not be linked to domination, the parallel temptation to glorify the pleasure principle as the lost, natural and passionate condition of man contains an oversimplification. Freud shows that the “pleasure principle, then, is a tendency operating in the service of a function whose business it is to free the mental apparatus entirely from excitation or to keep the amount of excitation in it constant or to keep it as low as possible…the function thus described would be concerned with the most universal endeavor of all living substance – namely to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world,” and thus, “The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts; it is true it keeps watch upon stimuli from without, which are regarded as dangers by both kinds of instincts, it is more especially on guard against increases of stimulation from within, which would make the task of living more difficult.” Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 77.

\textsuperscript{591} Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 56.
normative authority enmeshes children in a conservative ethos and sows the seeds of the frustration and fear that will engender aggressive responses when the child becomes a citizen, as Freud asserts:

As a rule parents and authorities analogous to them follow the precepts of their own superegos in educating children. Whatever understanding their ego may have come to with their superego, they are severe and exacting in educating children. They have forgotten the difficulties of their own childhood and they are glad to be able now to identify themselves fully with their parents who in the past laid such severe restrictions upon them. Thus a child’s super-ego is in fact constructed on the model not of its parents’ superego; the contents which fill it are the same and it becomes the vehicle of tradition and of all the time-resisting judgments of value which have propagated themselves in this manner from generation to generation.592

This identification with the father, or other patriarchal authority figures within society, moreover, is connected to the declining rates of participation, the desire to maintain order and stability at all costs, the hesitancy to accept change even when it is clearly necessary and the loss of basic competence amongst citizens in modern society: it is through identification that social cohesion is engendered and maintained.593

Critical theory requires a richer engagement with identification to grapple with this infantile dimension of identification in light of the sociopolitical consequences such identifications breed. The submissive identification with patriarchy, unless the repressed matrix of fears and needs incumbent in the ambivalence which drove and defensively relies on the identification is recognized and owned, limits the conscientious capacity to have genuinely ethical relations with others. The basic tool of identification is then deployed as a check on the aggression stemming from ambivalence, as Freud notes:

In consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration. The interest of work in common

593 See: Roazen, Freud: Political and Social Thought, 156.
would not hold it together; instinctual passions are stronger than reasonable interests. Civilization has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man’s aggressive instincts…Hence, therefore, the use of methods intended to entice people into identifications and aim-inhibited relationships of love, hence the restrictions upon sexual life, and hence to the ideal’s commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself…

Such identifications, indeed, are a defensive solution to ambivalence that precisely blocks the challenges of owning and integrating – and thereby moving beyond – ambivalence. Because, in other words, the ambivalence is maintained, the identification is made with both the loved, good parent who must not be questioned or lost and the primal, negative parent who generates fear and aggression. It is thus that identification “can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone’s removal.” Through defensive identification, aggression is at least redirected away from members of one’s own community by enabling one to internalize aspects, traits and faculties normative to the group, and thus encourages the individual to submit to group standards uncritically as an alternative to venting frustration with those standards within society.

Passions, along with the remaining overwhelming impulses fled from in defensive identification, furthermore, are repressed in this process, immiserating life for both the individual and the group. This form of identification, in short, supports and encourages what Freud called the “horde mentality” and wherein many individuals find security in the ovine submission to herdish norms and behaviors, as Freud argues:

The individual feels incomplete if he is alone. The fear shown by small children would seem already to be an expression of the herd instinct. Opposition to the herd is as good as separation from it, and is therefore anxiously avoided. But the herd turns away from anything new or unusual. The herd instinct would appear to be something primary, something which cannot be split up…Speech owes its

595 Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 47.
importance to its aptitude for mutual understanding in the herd, and upon it the identification of individuals with one another largely rests.\textsuperscript{596}

The internalization of values through identification, indeed, makes them suspect. As Lear notes, identifications are ultimately problematic because they are made to repress anger (and thus shield our real feelings from view) and create the interrelation between id and superego through which anger can be troublingly redirected at the self.\textsuperscript{597} Critical theory’s suspicions, therefore, are warranted where identification is carried out by a defensive, immature ego. The central question then becomes: can the mature, autonomous subject make emancipating, progressive use of identification?

The adequate theorization of infantile identification will provide critical theory with the necessary space to seize upon the emancipatory dimension of the mechanism. Although his earlier works framed identification as a limited, pathogenic process, however, by the writing of \textit{The Ego and the Id}, Freud came to see identification as a necessary and central aspect of normal development.\textsuperscript{598} To workably integrate a theory of identification into critical theory today, therefore, it is insufficient to focus on its ambivalent character. It is by finding and developing the emancipatory moments within the forces currently utilized for domination that domination is best undermined. Today, indeed, it is precisely a fresh, conscious identification with the “lowly and insulted” that critical theory needs. Not only would this identification deepen solidarity and mobilize action, it could also – through the conscious reflection on the process of identification – strengthen the autonomy of the theory and theorist and thereby enable the contestation of

\textsuperscript{596} Ibid. 64
\textsuperscript{597} Lear, \textit{Freud}, 186.
\textsuperscript{598} Whitebook, \textit{Perversion and Utopia}, 103.
It is through identification, indeed, that the subject comes to tolerate an autonomy that necessarily includes the renunciation of the felt right to his objects. Identifications made the conscious subject of reflection, integrated actively into the ego, can be utilized to build character and identity in ways that move beyond engulfment of lost objects. Winnicott makes a distinction that is useful here; he opposes unhealthy, immature identification with authority that arises out of dependence to mature identification with authority that arises out of self-discovery. Critical theory must analyze this distinction so that the former can be challenged and the second promoted in practice. Only, indeed, by strengthening the self through conscious identifications that do not seek to engulf the other, and by actively theorizing this process, does the full danger of subsumption and submission in identification become clear, as Shengold claims:

In the course of the never fully completed struggle to throw off our initially dependency on parent, we should gradually become able to turn to people other than parents as objects for emulation and interaction; these dependent ties also ought to become more flexible. If the parents are grossly paranoid, depressed or schizophrenic, this will of course profoundly affect the children who identify with them – but not always in predictable ways, although disturbed and traumatizing parents inevitably evoke an increased need to hold on to them by identification.

Healthy narcissism developed through the achievement of autonomy allows the subject to identify with the other and to consume them without destroying them. This ability permits us to resist the desire to take the other absolutely in, for the self; in shaking lose

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600 See: Ibid. 23
this felt need, the subject is better able to recognize and reject domination just as he becomes capable of genuine, mobilizing solidarity with the other.  

Psychoanalysis and critical theory, therefore, have a shared interest in supporting, “The adult who is mature is able to identify with the environment, and to take part in the establishment, maintenance and alteration of the environment, and to make this identification without serious sacrifice of personal impulse.” In supporting this mature condition in theory and practice, we are better able to discern the threats to autonomy, notably what Winnicott calls any, “pro-society tendency that is anti-individual,” the building of democratic facades which can then be exploited in domination. It is worth noting that Freud consciously identified himself as a “Jew” for the first time, and broke his identification with Germany, as a challenge to and disentanglement from the rising threat of Nazism. The emancipating and radical aspects of identification, deployed by Freud in this case, are necessary and potent weapons against domination that ought be developed and deployed by critical theory.

**Sublimation**

Sublimation also could add mightily to critical theory’s arsenal if theorized adequately. As indicated above, the key factor in the rejection of sublimation is the assumption that sublimation is a particularly damaging: it must be made clear from the beginning, therefore, that sublimation is a form of *ego integration* that “contribute[s] to the growth of the ego and its adaptation to reality,” and does not block and stunt the

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603 Ibid. 69  
605 Ibid. 233  
607 Roazen, *Freud: Political and Social Thought*, 69.
passions fueling autonomy, creativity, solidarity and constructive efforts. It is, indeed, sublimation that supports the building of identity and autonomy and links them firmly with social agency and solidarity. In Freud’s early works, although he already recognized that the developments of latency were enmeshed in cultural achievement and was clear about the connection of curiosity to the sexual drives, latency was connected to repression that moderated sexual impulses.\(^{608}\) Sublimation, therefore, was immediately connected to defense and repression. With the expansion of the conception of the instincts and the crucial discovery of Eros, however, a more nuanced categorization of sublimation emerged. Over the course of the development of psychoanalysis, indeed, as Roazen notes, Freud smashed the popular idea of childhood as a paradise, and showed that, “A child’s desires are of an intensity out of proportion to his biological and physical capacities, and he is assailed by murderous inclinations which terrorize him. One index of the connection…between the child’s aggressive impulses and the positive function of restraints is that Freud sees the uses of culture precisely in his essay on war.”\(^{609}\) Finding solutions to the overwhelming force of instinct, so intimately connected with primary narcissism, is thus a key developmental task at each stage of maturation, particularly in terms of binding aggression.\(^{610}\)

Critical theory, therefore, needs to seize on sublimation as both a progressive moment in shared history and in the ontogenetic development of independent, erotic relations to the external world. Sublimation, in Freud’s late theory, is portrayed as a crucial means through which instinctual and emotional life can be mediated, as Freud

\(^{608}\) Sigmund Freud, *The Psychology of Love*, 212, 170, 175.
\(^{609}\) Roazen, *Freud: Political and Social Thought*, 200.
\(^{610}\) See: Shengold, *Father, Don’t You See I’m Burning?*, 16.
notes, “The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world”⁶¹¹ and “the ego, by sublimating some of the libido for itself and its purposes, assists the id in its work of mastering the tensions.”⁶¹² Sublimation is key, therefore, to retaining the plasticity and potentiality of the ego and to the binding of primary narcissism and primal rage. It is precisely where sublimation is developed and supported that repression is avoided and the subject can develop into autonomy.⁶¹³ For Freud, the instincts are “diffused” and “liberated,” not blocked and repressed, through sublimation: this creates the danger that aggression rises in being made available for sublimation, and as Freud notes, “After sublimation the erotic component no longer has the power to bind the whole of destructiveness that was combined with it and this is released in the form of an inclination to aggression and destruction.”⁶¹⁴ In The Ego and the Id, however, Freud evidences that sublimated energy retains the character and constructive purpose of Eros.⁶¹⁵ By Civilization and Its Discontents moreover, Freud was able to claim that through sublimation, aggression comes to fuel the work of Eros, noting, “The instinct of destruction, moderated and tamed, and, as it were, inhibited in its aim, must, when it is directed towards objects, provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature.”⁶¹⁶ This fusion is made possible by the mutability of aim-inhibited instincts, as Freud argues, “Those sexual instincts which are inhibited in their aims have a great functional advantage over those which are uninhibited. Since they are not capable of really complete

⁶¹¹ Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, 29.
⁶¹² Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, 47.
⁶¹³ Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanism of Defense, 103.
⁶¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, 44.
⁶¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, 81.
satisfaction, they are especially adapted to create permanent ties.”

Sublimation is therefore the chief means by which Eros, which is marked by constructive pursuit and can never find satisfaction, is strengthened and directed within society. It is thus of necessary moment to any critical theory seeking to strengthen and call upon Eros as a social force.

Sublimation is a key ally, moreover, in building the capacity for critical thought and action: it is absolutely necessary to the development of intellectual and cultural work, which alone can smash illusion and channel the constructive force of Eros, as Freud notes, “Sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life.”

Freud, indeed, notes that when a mature individual is able to freely choose and develop with a certain field, work can feed the autonomous and happy functioning of the individual, as he argues, “Professional activity is a source of special satisfaction if it is a freely chosen one – if, that is to say, by means of sublimation, it makes possible the use of existing inclinations, of persisting or constitutionally reinforced instinctual impulses.”

Freud describes genuine sublimation as an emancipatory achievement: work is chosen such as it speaks to the interests and passions of the individual, which are thereby able to be directed at society as a whole in active communication and production, as Winnicott claims,

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619 Ibid. 30n
sublimation enables us to “become persons in our work” and makes the work itself “interesting and rewarding.”\textsuperscript{620}

Freud’s consistent example of this optimal sublimation was Leonardo, with whom Freud clearly identified, who exampled the unleashing of Eros, the channeling of sexual passion, through the constructive pursuit of knowledge. For Freud, as Hans Loewald notes, sublimation is intimately linked to human creativity, as it transfers erotic energy to “newly learned human activities” and enables their “transmutation into something higher, purer or more sublime.”\textsuperscript{621} Through work, indeed, passion and fantasy can be embodied “in a solid material” and communicated to a public, and the genius is even able to “change the grammar of the discipline to bring a greater range of content into relief, in part by curiously reaching out and drawing on all available knowledge,” in sublimation.\textsuperscript{622} Freud’s fascination with Leonardo, ultimately, comes back to his interest in the “untiring impulsion towards further perfection” found in a minority of human beings; of this drive, Freud claims, “The \textit{dynamic} conditions for its development are, indeed, universally present; but it is only in rare cases that the \textit{economic} situation appears to favor the production of the phenomenon.”\textsuperscript{623} It is possible, therefore, that through discovering the correct economic situation – by working towards the maturation and liberation of society – this erotic drive can be enhanced and broadened within society: this is a key task facing critical theory today. In short, as Whitebook notes, Freud, as opposed to Kant, read autonomy not through “the repression of inner nature,” but

\textsuperscript{620} Winnicott, \textit{The Family and Individual Development}, 155.
\textsuperscript{621} Hans Loewald, \textit{Sublimation: Inquiries into Theoretical Psychoanalysis} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 8, 12.
\textsuperscript{622} Joel Whitebook, \textit{Perversion and Utopia}, 233.
\textsuperscript{623} Sigmund Freud, \textit{Beyond the Pleasure Principle}, 50-1.
“through the maximization of ‘free intercourse.’” Sublimation is the process that supports this maximization, and therefore must be at the core of any theory concerned with rebuilding subjectivity and opposing domination through solidarity that seeks to realize human potentiality.

Sublimation is also essential because it allows the subject to experience and own the perverse aspects of his mental life, and to work with them rather than simply denying them or giving in to them. It thus serves as a bulwark against conformity, reification and one-dimensionality that can be deployed by critical theory. In other words, a libratory and empowering theory of sublimation is integral to achieving theory and practice that are linked and grounded in secure autonomy and mobilizing compassion.

Whereas Otto Fenichel’s famously categorized sublimation as “successful defense,” a process through which the ego is able to channelize – not dam, as would be the case in a narrow meaning of “defense” – the instincts. Building on this distinction, we must reject the categorization of sublimation as a form of defense, claiming that sublimation ought instead be understood as a form of reconciliation. It is not just that sexual energy drives culture, therefore, it’s that in sublimation at its best, the split between instinct and passion on the one hand and culture and society on the other (a break which impoverishes life in myriad ways) is overcome through integration of passion with spontaneous thought and action that answers the demands of Eros. Sublimation is thus a process of conversion, but the move from impulse to mature action hardly indicates that the activity in question has lost its fueling connection with instinct. Psychoanalysis reveals these hidden, ongoing

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626 Ibid. 33
linkages, indeed, and aims to expose and own these links at each turn. Sublimation thus can only be genuine where it is tied to ongoing critical reflection and integration, and put in conversation with Eros.\textsuperscript{627} It is this work which critical theory demands and psychoanalytic methods entail.

In sum, the traumatic renunciation of the object inherent in infantile omnipotence is answered by the gains of sublimation, which draws constructively on passion to build self and reach out to world. Sublimation is thus the work of widened sexuality – of Eros – and adds to the non-repressive organization of the autonomous ego;\textsuperscript{628} in contrast to repression, “in sublimation instinctual impulses are said not to be averted, but diverted from their aim of satisfaction in immediate discharge.”\textsuperscript{629} Sublimation is thereby allows for the instincts to be retained, owned and directed towards uses that enrich both self and society. It utilizes “instinctual forces for particular acceptable or highly valued purposes through channeling and modulating them,” which reveals repression (the real source of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse’s wariness) as the antipode of genuine sublimation.\textsuperscript{630} Psychoanalytic methods that challenge repression, the \textit{recherché de la temps perdu} consistently affirmed by critical theory, support sublimation.

Sublimation holds the seeds of a new mode of relating to each other grounded in autonomy and fueled by Eros. Psychoanalytic methods enable the patient and the analyst to become creative in reference to each other, to harness the power of symbols

\textsuperscript{627} Ibid. 14
\textsuperscript{628} See: Whitebook, \textit{Perversion and Utopia}, 252.
\textsuperscript{629} Loewald, \textit{Sublimation}, 37.
\textsuperscript{630} Ibid. 38
and constructively invent their use.\(^{631}\) Through psychoanalytic communication, the link between the symbol and its content can be owned and the power of words can be reclaimed to oppose repression and build autonomy and solidarity. Through the linking of symbol and symbolized, the sublimatory work of theorizing, we gain a new sight, which invests world with potent possibility from the seat of creative agency.\(^{632}\) Sublimation, above all, supports the development of a passionate mastery of self and subject that eschews and opposes domination. Critical theory thus has nothing to lose, and everything to gain, from reengaging with psychoanalysis even here — especially here — where it has been most radical in disavowing the categories and methods of Freud’s work: the reenchantment of the world and development of subjectivity, creativity and potency through sublimation is precisely what it has been seeking all along.

\(^{631}\) Ibid. 75-6, 82
\(^{632}\) Ibid. 67-82
Conclusion

In 1931, Max Horkheimer, having assumed the position of director of the Institute for Social Research in 1930 following the retirement of Carl Grunberg, laid out a new direction for critical theory in his inaugural address “The State of Contemporary Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research.” Horkheimer’s new vision began with a warning against the rigid effort to separate academic disciplines into their jurisdictions and the radical contention that social philosophers coming from disparate fields ought work together to produce, “the philosophical interpretation of human fate – insofar as humans are not mere individuals but members of a community.” Social philosophy, so understood, “must therefore primarily concern itself with those phenomenon that can be interpreted only in the context of the social existence of humans,” with those political, cultural, social, economic and other phenomena that capture both the creative power of a species capable of living without cruelty and domination and the repressive and reifying tendencies blocking historical advancement towards emancipation.633 Whereas Hegel, indeed, “assigned the realization of the goal of Reason to the objective spirit, in the last instance to the world-spirit,” Horkheimer recognized that philosophy has either the power to become a consolation that “reconciles, it transfigures a reality that appears to be unjust, making it appear rational” or to disrupt that reality in its injustice as a means of reclaiming the emancipatory truth content concealed in the moment.634 Because Hegel, indeed, placed the realization of the “true essence of human beings” in the hands of the state, critical theory must work to place this

634 Ibid. 26, 27
essential duty back on the shoulders of finite human beings.\textsuperscript{635} As I have shown, psychoanalysis, if reengaged, can be a critical ally in this effort.

There is no better time to reimagine the role of psychoanalysis than the present. The modern system, far from realizing freedom, not only blocks historically-possible emancipation, but also engulfs the subjectivity of the individuals who – if they were able to test reality, think critically, relate to others and reflect on human interests – would recognize the need to move beyond a repressive order that hinders human creativity, freedom and happiness. Critical theory has an immediate, compassionate responsibility to the individual, that is to say, because of “the contradiction between the unbroken progress of the happiness of the individuals within a given social context on the one hand, and the prospects of their actual situation on the other.” The immediate response of social philosophy, “to provide individual human beings with access into a supra-personal sphere that is more invested with being, more meaningful, more substantial than their own existence,” is thus insufficient.\textsuperscript{636} For Horkheimer, indeed, social philosophy in modernity can only be fruitful where it turns to “the relationship of the individual to society, the meaning of culture, the formation of communities, or the overall status of social life…the great, principle questions.”\textsuperscript{637} Without psychoanalysis, however, the ability to access the inner life of the subject, especially in relation to social life, is compromised.

Critical theory’s great strength has long been its openness to interdisciplinary modes of exposition, criticism and action. Because of the need to address urgent social

\textsuperscript{635} Ibid. 28
\textsuperscript{636} Ibid. 29
\textsuperscript{637} Ibid. 31
questions, the success of critical theory is neatly dependent on interdisciplinary work conducted by scholars mobilized by the rejection of domination and the pursuit of freedom. Above all, these researchers must “never lose sight of the whole.”

The basic question, therefore, becomes that of, “the connection between the economic life of society, the psychological development of its individuals and the changes within specific areas of culture to which belong not only the intellectual legacy of the sciences, art and religion, but also law, customs, fashion, public opinion, sports, entertainments, lifestyles and so on.”

Individual subjectivity and psychology, therefore, is necessarily intertwined with the theorization of society, and cannot be disentangled from that work, work that remains essential today. Given the myriad ways in which individual psychology, especially in light of the sweeping systemic assault on uniqueness and subjectivity, is entangled with the production, stability and concealment of domination in the present, there is a pressing need for fresh work in this vein by contemporary critical theorists.

This dissertation has taken up the serious challenge laid out from the first pages of the introduction: the subsumption of the vitiated subject by a system that dominates in complete opposition to the genuine human interests in compassionate solidarity, vibrant subjectivity and meaningful emancipation. I have shown that psychoanalysis contains neglected strains concerned precisely with these necessary and imperiled ends, and thus ought be picked up anew by critical theory. In short, I have reread Freud as a militant optimist compassionately building autonomy and contesting the systemic engulfment of the subjective. His autonomy, critically, does not simply speak to the challenges of being

638 Ibid. 32
639 Ibid. 33
in any society. Freud’s metapsychology reveals a progressive concept of history, in which society progresses gradually towards the potential for what Freud called “maturity.”

Several facts, when connected to Freud’s view of history, reveal that psychoanalysis is primarily a method for contesting the specific challenges to autonomy posed by capitalism. Firstly, Freud was increasingly concerned with temporal problems of aggression, authoritarianism and so forth over the course of his productive life. Secondly, Freud connected these social problems to the need for coercion in civilization, which in turn is a factor hindering autonomy. Thirdly, Freud – especially in *Civilization and Its Discontents* – claimed that the need for coercion (and related problems like guilt) increased as the discrepancy between the creative power collected in society and the immature state of that society grew. Fourthly, he targeted the major pillars of alienation – religion, ideology, technology, the state, aggression, conformity, etc. – *as they exist specifically under capitalism.* Finally, Freud optimistically persisted in the belief that mankind would mature and reach autonomy, drawing particularly on the promises of sciences enabled to flourish by capitalism. He thus, above all, portrayed capitalism as a *dangerous historical stage meant to be surmounted.* Although psychoanalysis, therefore, reveals social dynamics that restrict autonomy beyond capitalism, its critical lens is turned firmly towards the specific and intense psychohistorical challenges to autonomy posed by capitalism. Freud’s consistent rejection of illusion and his methods for smashing the mollifying facades obscuring the real and unacceptable nature of contemporary life are potent, moreover, in the contestation of capitalism.

I have shown Freudian autonomy, moreover, to be linked to *social* solidarity and resistance, especially through the reimagining of Eros as a quotidian social force, and not
to merely monadistic opposition. Because psychoanalysis causes the subject to simultaneously realize that the current mode of living is untenable and that he has a heretofore disavowed agency to shape the world through reflection on his suffering, it impels him to recognize and reject the suffering of others. Because, furthermore, psychoanalysis exposit the concentric layers of domination in which the individual is enmeshed, reaching from the unconscious to the superstructure of the system itself, it connects that suffering to systemic modes of domination. The recognition of the suffering of others as like one’s own supports identification, solidarity and compassion. In recognizing the causes of that shared suffering in modernity itself, one is mobilized against the system. At its most radical, therefore, psychoanalysis forges bonds between individual and social agency and between introspective and extrospective criticism. Through psychoanalytic methods, it is possible to smash the internal moorings of domination while turning the subject towards the need for resistance that is at once deeply personal and wholly social.

Freud’s critical method demands fresh attention in light of the untapped emancipatory potential of psychoanalysis. By reading psychoanalysis as an evolving process, which initially emerged from Freud’s self-analysis and developed through his clinical experience with his patients, I traced the development of a method concerned with progress, emancipation and autonomy. In prompting reflection on the inner conditions constraining the subject from achieving a fulfilling mode of relating to society, psychoanalysis directly uncovers and interprets the internal foundations for unfreedom and unhappiness. By showing the common social roots of trauma and repression, particularly in the family, psychoanalysis causes the subject to recognize and reject the
suffering of others and thereby builds the groundwork for solidarity. By, furthermore, expositing these shared sociopsychological problematics, Freud contested the structural illusions and fallacies poisoning social life. Psychoanalytic practice, moreover, models a mutually regarding, affirmative relationship with the other that can be carried far beyond the clinical setting. For these reasons, Freud’s methods beg for fresh theorization to develop their potential contributions to critical theory.

In analyzing Freudian methods, I highlighted two critical and emancipatory moments in Freud’s worked that have been largely obscured by previous interpretations, Freud’s militant optimism and compassion. Freudian optimism is important to critical theory today because it evidences that the psychological level of reification, both for the individual and society, is open as a site of contestation. Because his methods are oriented optimistically, indeed, towards an emancipatory autonomy, they provide concrete means of building self-determination without reinscribing dominating tendencies. It is paramount, moreover, that the compassionate strain in critical theory, found especially in the work of Horkheimer, be reclaimed and developed today. Psychoanalysis is grounded in Freud’s compassion, which was fueled by his self-analysis and clinical exposure to suffering subjects. Psychoanalysis, indeed, constructively uses its compassion to heal, to model alternative modes of relating to the other and to mobilize resistance against the systemic tendencies responsible for man’s present immiseration. Critical theory, therefore, has more of an ally and aid in psychoanalysis than has been heretofore recognized.

Communication is one site where critical theory can concretely develop the Freudian legacy. I identified communication as a need by considering the problematic
reification of the social relations, such as the family, wherein individuation is meant to occur. By picking up Habermas, who began the work of radically developing psychoanalysis as a democratic form of communicative action in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, I showed that psychoanalysis has the potential to greatly inform needful modes of communicative action. Habermas’s engagement with psychoanalysis is a useful start, but has limits that my reading of psychoanalysis helps to clarify. Habermas, to take one example, deradicalizes the powerful unconscious by positing the possibility of a fully undistorted form of communication and failing to maintain the subjective as an ongoing concern of his work in its own right. I proposed that a better starting place for the communication so urgently necessitated by modernity is with the opacity of the unconscious, which can never be fully conquered. To develop psychoanalysis as a current of communicative action, therefore, could add to critical theory not only by developing new forms of honest discourse, but also in capturing the perverse and primal roots of social behavior.

An Eros balanced heavily in favor of real world social agency also emerged from a close reading of psychoanalysis. I argued that Freudian Eros, indeed, militates constructive, loving work within human limits and an unjust world without the support of comforting illusions. I contested the traditionally utopian reading of Eros by critical theorists, particularly Marcuse, and showed that by speaking to Eros as a social force in the real world, psychoanalysis crystallizes the constructive capacity of man to create and love as a social agency turned against all that suffocates life. By building loving modes of relation with the other in the flawed present, moreover, Eros serves as a crucial support of solidarity in action. Eros, therefore, reconciles the subject to utilize, in cooperation with
respected others, his social agency precisely in a world that owes him nothing. It thus emphasizes the social value of autonomy. Critical theory, which wants for an Eros that works fearlessly in the present, therefore, has much to gain from the further theorization of Freud’s drive.

The problem of guilt was held up in light of the current importance of the individual and social mediation of the same. In short, societies that work through the social ramifications and psychological foundations of guilt build surer democratic processes. The typical reading of psychoanalysis as rendering guilt an eternal problem was countered with a psychoanalysis that utilizes guilt as a productive problematic capable of building principled conscience and channeling Eros towards society in needful times. I showed that the superego itself could be encountered and contested through the deployment of psychoanalytic methods. This is, indeed, an end of the psychoanalytic process, which seeks to build principled conscience where before there was punitive internalized social normativity. As conscience is a major concern for critical theorists contesting the vitiation of the subjective in modernity, fresh engagement with psychoanalysis is also needful on this point.

I contested, finally, the rejection of sublimation and identification by critical theory by reading these categories as capable of building and energizing autonomy and vibrant subjectivity that stands opposed to domination. The concerns of critical theorists, particularly Adorno and Horkheimer, about these categories possess some validity: sublimation and identification can adapt the subject to domination. This, however, is the result of these categories operating in immature forms. Because, therefore, they also contain the developmental capacity to build autonomy, they must be the subjects of
further theorization. In other words, I argued that critical theory must sharpen its analysis of the negative aspects of these categories so that their emancipatory potential can be reclaimed. Because critical theory has a core interest in building autonomy and unique subjectivity, capturing the empowering strains of sublimation and identification is a necessity.

As a whole, this dissertation reveals that psychoanalysis is not only opposed to external forms of domination, but is oriented – through reflection and communication, through theory linked intimately to practice – against the internal manifestations of and supports for domination. The overriding concern of psychoanalysis, indeed, is to support the maturation and autonomy of subjects who can work toward the maturation and improvement of society, as Freud did in his anti-war works. Because critical theory still needs to build subjectivity and autonomy today, psychoanalysis provides absolutely vital foundations for those who would still seek to answer Horkheimer’s as-yet-unanswered question.

In concluding his inaugural remarks, Horkheimer proclaimed, “May the guiding impulse of this Institute be the unchangeable will to unflinchingly serve the truth!”

Throughout this dissertation, I have shown that psychoanalysis is resolutely fixed in the same humble will. We must recommit, as critical theorists, to the contestation of illusion and the work of educating society about both the festering nature of the reality mankind has created and the real creative powers of human beings to address and work through the systemic injustices for which we are ultimately responsible. Psychoanalysis takes up this charge without pity and without pause; all the while building the faculties that will

\[\text{Ibid. 36}\]
become more necessary as growth occurs in society. If we are to continue to take up Horkheimer’s hopeful will in our work in an age where one-dimensionality has advanced, reification has become all the more complete and domination poisons life in large part because it works ever deeper into human psychology, psychoanalysis must attend our efforts. Fresh engagement with Freud, therefore, must occur to support and empower critical theory today.
Bibliography


