Psychology in society (PINS), 1991, 15, 4-23

Back to Freud: A radicalism recalled*

Leonard Bloom
London

I intend in this paper to review Freud's understanding of human psychology, and to remind both psychoanalysts and main- stream psychologists of its essentially radical approach. The psychological process with which Freud was concerned is more complicated than the shrivelled thing described and studied by behavioural scientists. I believe, too, that Freud's style, with its subversive vein of social and intellectual anti-authoritarianism is another facet of his radicalism. Even now, psychoanalysis is opposed because of its power to strip the pretensions from the complacent conservatism of the political right and left, both in public life and in the **soi-disant** social sciences.

The paper will introduce some points of divergence between main-stream behaviourist and cognitive psychologies (on the one hand) and psychoanalysis (on the other). This will lead into a discussion of Freud's basic insights into human psychology. I then examine Freud's psychobiological assumptions, and suggest that these, far from being conservative, offer an anti-racist and progressive biological understanding of human nature. The relevance of psychoanalysis to the problem of human freedom is next evaluated, and finally, I shall illustrate Freud's essential radicalism from the humanist-psychoanalytic approach of Erich Fromm.

INTRODUCTION.

In 1991, Freud's insights into the psychology of individual and collective life still disturb. The barely-concealed hostility of, for example, Gellner

and Eysenck, hint at the emotional edginess that Freud still arouses. **The decline and fall of the Freudian empire** (Eysenck, 1985) is, I hope, the last shot in his tiresome sniping against the Freudian contention that human beings are not simply biological organisms. Gellner's (1985) bizarre historical-anthropological treatment of psychoanalysis as though it were a religion like Christianity, is two hundred and twenty pages of demonology that totally misses the point of Freud's human enquiry into the human condition.

And what is the point of psychoanalysis? Psychoanalysis " .. shows its strength in its willingness to ask 'semantic' questions of great provocativeness. It asks ... for the meaning of actions, their significance and intention, and the subjective position they hold within the life of the person concerned. In doing so, psychoanalysis demonstrates the inadequacy of the questions asked by psychology, if one is concerned to develop a discipline that genuinely engages with the experiences as well as the competencies of human subjects." (Frosh, 1989, p6).

It is possible to go further. Freud exposed the shallowness of the psychology and sociology that ignored or mocked the efforts of psychoanalysts to both describe individual and collective experience and to appreciate the obscure and tangled emotional states that motivate them. People are neither "subjects" in a psychometrician's mad game of reducing people to index numbers. Nor are people neatly-fitting components into what Gellner oddly describes as " .. a system of such seemingly self-evident connections ... known as culture." (Gellner, 1985, p105).

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PSYCHOLOGY.

Psychology and psychoanalysis have always been distinct disciplines. Their subject matter, methods of enquiry and philosophy of mind have been far apart. Few attempts have been made to bring the two disciplines together, although Freud himself was influenced by the innovative "act psychology" of Franz Brentano (Barclay, 1964, passim), and some fields within psychology, e.g. personality and motivation, have been influenced by psychoanalysis.

Both psychoanalysis and psychology have suffered by their oversensitivity to possible encroachments of their fields by other human and biological sciences. In this section I will argue that the distance between them, although wide, is often exaggerated. Moreover, Freud's determination to

study human behaviour and experience with little or no contact with psychology, has enlarged dramatically the areas of human behaviour and experience that it is respectable for psychologists to study. Even though Freud's epistemology and ontology are dramatically unlike those of psychology, they can no longer be disregarded by those psychologists who are concerned with the philosophical and methodological foundations of psychology.

Freud's approval of Brentano's psychology was eloquently expressed in his letter to his friend Eduard Silberstein of March 15, 1875. Freud sets out Brentano's departures from contemporary psychology and his new direction. Freud approved of Brentano's criticism of the sterile cataloguing of the **content** of experience by those psychologists and philosophers who ignored the **act** of experiencing. What happens when we experience a colour, an emotion or have an idea? Brentano turned psychology to the problems of "intentionality", and in doing so he anticipated the phenomenological and functional psychology. Brentano, too, was not afraid to extend the boundaries of psychology to include dreams and other experiences that were ignored by other psychologists. He was interested in psychological development and even looked at the motivation of "the will" in the almost Freudian terms of the relationships of love and hate. Perhaps Freud took from this remarkable man his distrust of mere categorising and his interest in spontaneity and the complexities and ambiguities of intention (See Freud, 1989, p143-147).

Like Brentano, Freud was concerned to bring psychological thinking away from philosophical speculation and to scientific and empirical enquiry that took seriously the phenomena of everyday psychological activity, however bizarre they might appear to the conventional investigator. They were both fascinated by the connections, usually indirect and complex, between the surface behaviour and the deep emotional and cognitive structures that formed them. They were both concerned with those human potentialities that are only gradually revealed as infant becomes child, and child moves through adolescence into adulthood.

Ricoeur summarises his evaluation of psychoanalysis as a system of psychology by emphasising its originality in bringing together different epistemologies. Unlike psychology, psychoanalysts use interpretation to make sense of the observable. They are concerned with the minutiae of behaviour, but accept that it may be latent, based upon phantasy, motivated by the irrational. Psychoanalysis accepts that there are two

realities: the external and the individual's. Often the two coincide: the food that I eat is of a different order of reality from the food that I dream about. But both are real! The conflict between the individual's and external reality is, perhaps, most severe, in human relationships - individual and collective. Ricoeur notes that psychoanalysis resembles the organismic and holistic emphasis of Gestalt psychology. Both treat the mind as composed of many interacting structures, and look for hierarchies of integrations. He concludes that "psychoanalysis is a unique and irreducible form of praxis; as such it puts its finger on what phenomenology never perfectly attains, namely, 'our relation to our origins and our relation to our models, the id and the superego'" (Ricoeur, 1970, p418).

Perhaps the fundamental conflict between psychoanalysis and psychology is that psychoanalysis is, significantly, a **verstehende** psychology that attempts both understanding and explanation. "Psychoanalysis, advocates as opposed to ... mere description, the right of psychology to explain and construct hypotheses .... Furthermore, psychoanalysis claims that phenomenological research is only one condition, though an essential one, for the fulfilment of its task" (Hartmann, 1964, p374). In addition, " .. that method of analogy on which the analytic interpretation of unconscious processes is based has enormously broadened our knowledge of mental connections" even though it is still regarded with deep scepticism by psychology (Hartmann, 1964, p397).

But even this conflict is growing less intense with the growth of a cognitive psychology that is both more humanist and more sensitive to culture than conventional, positivistic psychology. One of the more imaginative cognitive-developmental psychologists now pleads that " .. to insist upon explanation in terms of 'causes' simply bars us from trying to understand how human beings interpret their worlds and how **we** interpret **their** acts of interpretation .... Are not plausible interpretations preferable to causal explanations, particularly when the achievement of a causal explanation forces us to artificialize what we are studying to a point almost beyond recognition as representative of human life?" (Bruner, 1990, pxiii). Both psychoanalysis and psychology deal with the ambiguities of "reality". Reality is not immediately and distinctly defined by social and cultural factors alone, because (to a lesser or greater extent), individual phantasy, originating in the unconscious and developed during the cognitive and emotional development of the child, often distorts and interprets idiocyncratically what is presented as reality by society and culture.

Perhaps the sharpest contrast between psychoanalysis and psychology - and plausibly one of the most radical features of psychoanalysis - is that psychoanalysis is both **teleological** and **reflexive**. Psychoanalysis is concerned with the reasons and goals, both rational and irrational, that motivate our behaviour and colour our experiences and our feelings about them. Unlike psychology, psychoanalysis has built in to its very foundations, the requirement that psychoanalysts are as self-aware and self-questioning as their clients are expected to be. How many psychologists feel professionally obliged to question why they are psychologists, and why they believe and practice their branch of psychology. "What fear is it, that prevents psychologists taking stock of the questions raised by their own personal lives, and asking: what has our science to say to this?" (Frosh, 1989, p256).

Finally, unlike psychology which has become fragmented into self-sealed fragments, psychoanalysis has broadly retained Freud's enthusiasm to integrate psychoanalysis with other sciences, humanities and the arts. **The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Science, The Psychoanalytic Study of Society, The Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology** and the varied publications of the Psyche Press and The Psychohistory Press, are but a few examples of the eclecticism and creativity of psychoanalysis. It has been suggested that this eclecticism is stimulated because " .. psychoanalysis as a theory of the symbolic function is a theory of the mind of man ... [It] postulates what features the mind of man must possess to be capable of creating these symbolic forms" (Edelson, 1977, p2). There is a strong affinity between such imaginative acts as working through a transference neurosis or making sense of a dream, and writing a poem. Both acts are explorations of symbolic forms and functions.

FREUD'S BASIC INSIGHTS.

Freud's basic insights are (1) the unconscious (2) sexuality and the libido (3) repression and (4) transference processes.

1. The unconscious. It is useful to bring together Freud's first and last systematic expositions. In **Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis**, he describes what occurs when unconscious mental processes are transformed into neurotic symptoms. He writes: " .. a vehement effort must have been exercised to prevent the mental process in question from penetrating into

consciousness and as a result it has remained unconscious; being unconscious it had the power to construct a symptom. The same vehement effort is again at work during analytic treatment, opposing the attempt to bring the unconscious into consciousness" (Freud, 1922/1973, p173). In his later exposition he writes of the " .. mental processes or mental material which have no ... easy access to consciousness, but which must be inferred, discovered and translated into conscious form. It is for such material that we reserve the name of the unconscious proper" (Freud, 1949, p20). We live by transforming powerful, drives, feelings and wishes that are at once biological and emotional into our conscious thoughts, feelings and behaviour. We are normally unaware of the origins of the emotions which shape our lives.

2. Sexuality and the libido. In 1905, Freud published **Three essays on the theory of sexuality**. They were rejected violently then, and still arouse hostile scepticism. In the essays Freud, once and for all, destroyed the myth of childhood innocence by recognising that the erotic lives of children shape adult personalities, relationships and moral attitudes. Freud defined "sexuality" more widely than is commonly thought. For example, " .. sexuality is divorced from its too close connection with the genitals and is regarded as a more comprehensive bodily function, having pleasure as its goal ... [and] the sexual impulses are regarded as including all of those merely affectionate and friendly impulses to which usage applies the exceedingly ambiguous word love" (Freud, 1925/1986, p38).

Children struggle with incompatible and socially unacceptable wishes and urges. Their lives are complicated by their tangled relationships with parents, other adults and their siblings. The reality of powerlessness and dependence is opposed by the striving for independence. The growth of one's own feeling of autonomous identity occurs within the identifications with others that come and go through childhood, at an individual or a collective level. Love oscillates with hate, approach with withdrawal in children's relationships with adults who are sometimes frustrating, fearsome, lovable and loved, accepting and rejecting - and often all of these together. Winnicott (1986) saw the struggle to achieve a sense of "feeling real" as the most significant developmental task. Feeling real is a developmental task in which bodily, emotional and socio-cultural elements interact, not always happily for the individual. The social significance of the interactions between the libidinous, psycho-sexual drives or needs, was most openly treated by Reich, whose **The mass psychology of Fascism** (Reich, 1975) disturbingly explored the interaction of individual biological

needs and the economic and social conditions of life, which (according to Reich) explains the infantile origins and persistence into adulthood of such collective disturbances as militarism, aggressive display, the repression of women and the racist persecution of scape-goats.

3. Repression. Repression and the return of the repressed, are another aspect of the unstable equilibria between our libidinal wishes and urges and our personal relationships. Human beings are not born domesticated. Like other mammals we are beguiled and bullied into domestication, mainly during our early infancy. Domestication ensures that only a small part of our energies and drives can be acted out. The greater part is repressed, banished from our waking, deciding and acting lives. If it is possible, the repressed energies and drives are transformed into culturally and socially acceptable behaviour and relationships. Often they cannot be. But repressed aggression or love do not evaporate if they are unacceptable to ourselves or to our fellows. The unacceptable repressed has a sinister way of returning in a disguised form, to bedevil our relationships, and our ways of thinking and feeling about events and situations. Long repressed loves and hatreds, sexual excitements and frustrations, infantile feelings of dependency, and anxieties about rejection or abandonment all return to permeate our present lives with an inexplicable and unexpected emotional colouring. Our lives are distorted and driven in directions, and made to adopt forms, that we do not consciously intend. Indeed, we often consciously and obsessively reject them.

4. Transference. The transference is the impulse to repeat early emotional attachments and rejections by transferring them to inappropriate groups or individuals - even to strangers. Much emotional energy is used in the unconscious and rarely satisfied search for a phantasy mothering or fathering one, for an idealized saviour or protector, or a sibling, or for a group or individual on whom one can void one's repressed yet still lively aggression or sexuality. Van Wyk and Voice (1990) in their discussion of the Afrikaner make the interesting point that " .. the father is not necessarily an indicator of the development of personal conscience, but of a power above the law, of omnipotence and of lawlessness" (p24). But the phantasy father can also be wild and savage and get away with it - unlike his "children". The Afrikaners can, by identifying with the omnipotent father, be as fierce and repressive towards the rejected yet envied African non-Afrikaners: the **naturmensch**, the **beaux sauvages**, who are simultaneously repulsive and attractive, the recipients of Afrikaners' own transferred "primitive" emotional turbulence.

Writing of the significance of transference in psychoanalytic therapy, Symington's observations apply to everyday life. He writes that " .. every patient approaches an analyst with particular emotional expectations, and with the hope that the analyst will be able to respond to him or her in a way that was more satisfactory than the parents" (Symington, 1986, p111). In our social life we approach people, or withdraw from them, we initiate and develop relationships according to our unconscious emotional expectations. Even when we consciously plan our relationships, we are rarely fully aware of the roles we play in the dramas of everyday life. Nor are we sensitive to the roles that other people are playing. Other people are often unaware of the private dramas that we - and we alone - know that we are participating in. It is fortunate when we can see through the emotional masks that other people wear. Often we force (as it were) the masks on other people's faces. But always, every individual wears a mask that conceals, to a greater or lesser extent, his or her private self. Freud imaginatively showed in his early papers on technique (Freud, 1912/1924, 1914/1924a) how a major problem of our relationships is to make emotional sense of the strange effects that are created by the mysterious interactions of mask-and-private self and the transferred aggressive and loving, negative and erotic, emotions that we may surrender or we may displace onto targets that are personally or collectively acceptable.

The Freudian notion of transference and counter-transference is subversive and " .. delivers a subversive message in so far as it calls into question what each of us, as individual actors, have as our commonsense understanding of what it's like to spend a day in the world" (Turkle, 1987, p75). We inhabit a world populated by lively ghosts as well as real people. We are often the ghost of another because of his or her individual or collective phantasy. Africans in South Africa, Blacks in the USA, Afro-British and Asian-British are **forced** by the persecutory phantasies of domination and angry-fearful whites to act the roles of the dominated, passionate and dangerous child-figure in everyday life. It is a wonder that most subjects of these phantasies succeed in establishing a rational ego and in finding ways to resist the enforced roles.

Children struggle with incompatible and unacceptable urges and wishes. They have tangled relationships with adults. The reality of dependence, powerlessness and the need to establish a meaningful and emotional comfortable sense of autonomy is a problem of development. In establishing autonomous identity, emotions and relationships interact as

confusingly for the child as they do later for the adult.

FREUD'S PSYCHOBIOLOGISM.

Explanations in psychology that bring together biological and environmental influences are many. The radicalism of Freud's psychobiologism is in " .. **what** it regards as biological structure, **which** environmental factors it recognises as formative, and **how** it relates structural and environmental influences to each other" (Fenichel, 1982, p5). Freud uniquely traced a causal chain between the biological development of individuals and attitudes, social and political behaviour and experience. At its most basic, Freud teaches that all human beings live by trying to satisfy their urges and wishes and to reach goals. They are also forced to repress or to sublimate their urges and wishes and to seek substitute goals. The ability to reach goals depends partly upon the urgency of the urges and desires, partly upon emotional and intellectual capacities, and partly upon what is offered by the social, cultural and environmental worlds.

Freud usually used the German word **Trieb**. This cannot be adequately translated by "instinct". The closest rendering seems to be "impulse", that is, " .. an impelling force; a sudden inclination to act, without conscious thought; a motive or tendency coming from within" (Bettelheim, 1983, pp104-5). Perhaps our word "drive" is closest, as when we say that someone was driven by fear or greed or lust or curiousity. But sexuality, as we have seen, includes more than the lustful gratification of sexual acts: it includes the drive or impulse to satisfaction that contains both sexuality (narrowly defined) and all the wider impulses of loving, of feeling excited by another, of feeling comforted by another. Some cultures often compel individuals to hide from themselves that we have **tactile** impulses, needs and satisfactions. These are most directly expressed and strongly experienced in infancy, but they persist into adulthood where they are often frustrated or distorted. There is, therefore, a constant tension between the undomesticated primary drives, and the reality-testing and controlling aspects of personality. Freud's originality was to show that human individuality is a function of interacting, competing and jostling processes that are rarely, if ever, at rest.

The domestication of human biological impulses is a developmental task that is never complete.

An early step in trying to understand human relationships must be to investigate the patterns of prohibitions and opportunities that confront infants in any social group, and to assess the range of individual responses to them during the erratic processes of socialization. One of the mysteries of development is to understand " .. the ways in which a person's needs have a bearing on his relationships with the object world and vice versa, and in thus gaining insight into the mutual influence of outer and inner stimuli" (Hartmann, 1964, pp73-4). Psychoanalysis opposes the views that overemphasise the genetic patterning of human development, and those that overemphasise the environmental influences. We need to know the specific ways that groups inhibit or encourage the drives and wishes of the growing infant-child-adolescent-adult. How do individual infants find emotionally satisfying solutions to the problems of dependency, ambivalence and the anxieties that are forced upon them by the relationships in their world? Solutions must be found if the individual is to grow into maturity, because " .. stable reality relations cannot be established so long as primitive anxieties have not been mastered" (Glover, 1956, p229). Nor, as long as symbolic or realistic solutions have not been found for the ambivalences and deprivations of infancy.

Freud's concern with (1) the precarious balances between the impulsive and the reality-testing ego; (2) the individual's striving for integrity and society's imposed frustrations; (3) individual autonomy and social membership; (4) dependence and independence; (5) loving and hating, provide the theoretical basis for the liberation psychology of Fanon. Fanon refuted passionately the myth of the " .. so- called dependency complex of colonized peoples" (Fanon, 1986, p83). Even where it appears that (to use Fanon's terminology) white masks are successfully concealing black skins, the imposed mask can be ripped off. Psychoanalytic psychotherapy is intimately concerned with helping clients to rip off the masks that conceal the skins that they should be helped and encouraged to enjoy and find pride in. But "dependency" is a consequence of many other relationships such as males-females and adults-children.

ANTI-RACISM IN FREUD.

Freud's psychobiologism is implicitly an anti-racist psychology. Freud's two hypotheses of the primary drives refer to all humankind. He does not maintain the parody of Darwin's evolutionary ideas that the struggle to progress from savagery to civilization has been overcome. No group has rushed to a civilized condition ahead of the others. Humanity consists of

some six billion essentially similar women and men, who were once essentially similar babies, then infants, children and adolescents. This is radical, indeed! We are neither the pawns of a blind fate in the guise of an all-dominating economic and social system. Nor are we driven hither and thither by our uncontrollable desires and passions, as though ego, ego-ideal and superego processes were impotent.

Frosh's (1989, 1989a) discussion of racism and psychoanalysis is misleading. He maintains that " .. racism resides as a possibility in any approach that takes the individual as the unquestioned subject of its discourse [because] of the failure to recognise the power of the social world" (Frosh, 1989, p213). But, Freud was always sensitive to social and cultural influences. In **Group Psychology and the analysis of the Ego,** Freud wrote that " .. in the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model as an object, as a helper, as an opponent; and so from the very first, individual psychology ... is at the same time social psychology as well" (Freud, 1932/1985, p95). Freud's social psychology is an interactionist psychology. It shows the intricacy and many forms of the interactions throughout life between individuals' needs, urges and goals with their society.

At this point many expositions of psychoanalysis would refer to the Oedipus complex. Whether it be literally interpreted, it reminds us that societies are both bound and split by their prohibitions of certain biological relationships and by their toleration of others. "Repression and culture, intrapsychical institution and social institution, coincide in this paradigmatic case" (Ricoeur, 1970, p191). The emotional problem of racism is a dramatic magnification of the turbulent emotions, at once attraction and repulsion, of the object of incestuous love.

This approach raises many questions about the psychodynamics of racism. What are the characteristic experiences and relationships within families that encourage the growth and persistence of racist perceptions and feelings? What seem to discourage or neutralise them? Are there characteristic dreams and phantasies that racist and unracist individuals have about other individuals or groups? What are the economic, political, social and cultural circumstances that encourage (or discourage) groups to acquire hostile phantasies, and to transform them into social policy despite their economic and political irrationality? What could be more damaging economically, and irrational, than **apartheid** that has wasted the gifts of millions of Africans for generations? A neglected question is: How do

individuals who are the target of collective or individual hostility defend their integrity and need for autonomy?

The Freudian emphasis upon individual and collective self-examination and self-awareness, on the exploration of unconscious motivations and on the mysteries of transference and counter-transference, is a powerful component of anti- racist understanding. Why, we are made to ask by psychoanalysis, do we cling to the primitive values, practices and relationships of our family, our culture and our society and to that phantasy of existence, our "race"? Why are we so ready to resist those influences that might draw us away from infantile dependence and wariness of strangers? Why are there individual differences in the readiness to grow up into adulthood? Why are some individuals so firmly mothercentric, fathercentric, familycentric, ethnocentric ... ? Why do some individuals **need** to hate, destroy or exploit other individuals?

"The sense of loss around which racism often crystallizes is not an historical but a psychological one ... one version [therefore] of the Freudian message to the polity ... is that we need to establish a devisceralized Reason in the seat of government ... [that distinguishes] between feeling on the one hand as primitive phantasy and on the other as the activation of moral resources" (Richards, 1989a, p171). This suggests a psychoanalytic paradox: " .. perhaps political interests [and collective phantasies, such as racism] are first reflected into the private sphere, then internalized as character structure, and only subsequently displaced again into the public sphere" (Wolfenstein, 1989, pxviii).

It has been maintained that "racism is not just anti-semitic or anti-black; it is anti-world, anti-desire, anti-modernism itself" (Frosh, 1989a, p248). But how and why? These are cosmic anxieties to which Freud devoted the last (and by no means least creative) years of his life. His radicalism was to compel thinkers to seek the direction towards tentative solutions within our human nature, and not to rush into the fogs of religions and philosophies which obscure the barely-explored power and sensitivities of that nature. Freud reminded us that humankind's collective passion for mindless self-destruction is not confined to anti-semites or anti-black racists. Semites and blacks are human, too. No group is exempt from the malaise caused by the frustrations of the imperfect civilizing process. No human group can escape for long from the necessity of civilization.

THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM.

A theme implicit in much of Freud's, Ferenczi's and Reich's writing is their concern about the individual and collective influences that inhibit freedom of thought. Freud's psychobiological perspective is consistent with the reality of freedom. "The capacity to will freely proportionally as the ratio of emotional knowledge to intellectual knowledge increases and decreases as the ratio is reversed" (Symington, 1990, p100). Humankind's biological inheritance and the individual's libido, do not bind individuals to specific and predetermined patterns of behaviour and experience.

Stanton, for example, has traced the unexpected similarities of psychoanalytic practice and anarchism in their convergence on "mutualism" and cooperation, and their attack upon authority per se. Stanton opens the very question of what should be the "power" of the analyst, following Ferenczi's later positions that psychoanalysis is not a secret, a technique that only a "master" can manipulate, but is a cooperative act, where dialogue is essential. Protest is creative in psychoanalysis, because it is, essentially, about changing images, feelings, relationships to something new and emotionally more rewarding. There is no monopoly of theory nor of emotional wisdom. Even the "master" is human and may have problems to share. It is anti-Oedipus, because the Oedipus complex is one despotism that bringing up children should [but can it? L.B.] spare them? (Stanton, 1990).

Critics of Freud, however, have argued that his psychobiological perspective is reactionary and deterministic, because he overemphasises individual libido and experience and so minimises the collective and the cultural. The former position has been examined. The latter begs the very question of how the individual and the socio- cultural interact. The threats to freedom are, in reality, both internal to individuals and external. Often the two obstacles to freedom interact. The strength of psychoanalysis is that it has always been " .. the last stronghold of the interior of the individual, the ultimate respecter of the privacy of the self" (Rangell, 1988, p337). Society and culture all too easily destroy freedom by depersonalising people and forcing them into a state of learned-helplessness. Freedom is an interaction between individual and socio-cultural influences. Psychoanalysis supports the view that the " .. individual is real to himself not by reason of the contacts he shares with others, but because he reaches those contacts through a channel which he alone can know. His true self is the self that is isolated from his fellows and contributes the fruit of isolated meditation to the common good which,

collectively, they seek to bring into being" (Laski, 1937, p58).

The ultimate source, therefore, of freedom is the individual's sensitive awareness of the strengths and limitations of his/her psyche and how it uses, circumvents and is constrained by society, culture and relationships.

The psychoanalyst who is concerned about freedom should bear in mind that Freud searched for a theory that showed the way out of " .. a deterministically driven world in which sociopolitical and psychological forces interlocked to rob the individual and society of freedom. Psychoanalysis opened up a path to freedom through a deepened understanding of how these forces developed and worked" (McGrath, 1986, p23). Freud saw parallels between the enforced subordination of children within the family and the forces at the disposal of socio-political systems and the hierarchical relationships within them. A major struggle in growing up is how to "feel real", alive and autonomous in a world that is predictable, supportive and genuinely participatory. Freedom has its emotional roots within families where " .. children can grow as individuals, and each **gradually add** a capacity to identify with the parents and then with wider groupings" (Winnicott, 1986, p248). But furthermore the family must be one in which envy, hatred and destructiveness are at a minimum because there is a widely accepted and acceptable mutual trust of individual idiosyncracies.

Freedom is cognitive **and** emotional. It is " .. freedom to know our own thoughts, and that means knowing the unwelcome as well as the welcome, anxious thoughts, those felt as 'bad' or 'mad', as well as constructive thoughts ... and being able to examine their validity in terms of external or internal realities" (Segal, 1989, p63).

Freedom is blocked or discouraged by both internal and external authorities. These authorities may be realistic or they may be motivated by the individual's own phantasies and censorship. Our internal super-ego makes us fear to oppose external authority. We then are afraid to ask questions because we may be led to that final, most dangerous question: "Why should we believe that the world is as we are told to believe it is?" Parental taboos and prohibitions, ideas of virtue and wickedness are also internalised. The sentiment and intensity of sinfulness is internalised. We adopt parental styles of self-punishment and their projections of punishment onto scapegoat targets, often in a distorted and exaggerated form. Questioning is hated by many insecure individuals because it leads

to destroying individual and collective illusions. Thinking, too, may disturbingly upset our childhood omnipotence of thought, bringing us sharply against the unpleasant reality that we are **not** omnipotent, even as adults.

Symington (1990, passim) suggests that freedom occurs when individuals respond actively to their internal and external worlds and do not, merely, passively react to them. This, then, is an unrecognised aspect of the radical Freud. Psychoanalysts cannot evade a **quasi**, or perhaps more accurately, a **crypto**, political role. They cannot avoid asking how the society in which they are working and living, facilitates or discourages the freedom of individuals to respond actively. Psychoanalysts cannot shut their ears to the emotional echoes in themselves of how their clients (and the rest of the world), are constrained to deal with the social and cultural inconsistencies and injustices by which their fullest freedom is limited.

THE ESSENTIAL RADICALISM.

Freud was no easy optimist, but his theory "was undeniably radical" (Fromm, 1982, p 134). Fromm bases his assessment on four broad principles:

1. Repression is both central and radical. It points strikingly to the dualistic nature of what shapes human behaviour and experience. We are born into tensions between our needs, urges and wants and social constraints and possibilities that are only resolved by death. Neither extreme individualism nor extreme environmentalism explain human behaviour and experience - nor go far towards changing them. Hobbes and Marx are antitheses of psychodynamic error! It is little wonder that psychoanalysis has been attacked from the extremes of the political left and right.

2. The unconscious is the mental life of the infant, and in adulthood our infantile emotions and phantasies persist. Human development, individual and collective, is an endless struggle between the infantile and the mature within the psyche. Even **soi-disant** leaders, with power, authority or influence, are infants beneath their adult skins and their cloaks of authority. Freud was implicitly (and often explicitly), anti-authoritarian. His writings are permeated with subtle or brash exposures of the infantile and unconscious motivations of those who need to impose their wills, to act out their phantasies in social and political life and to try to evade their

fears and anxieties by manic defences. Freud offered humanity an innoculation against accepting at face-value the rationalisations of those whose unsatisfactory relationships, anxieties and frustrations drive them to seek security in the ambiguous relationships of power and authority. Only an immature and anxious parent **needs** children to control and to keep powerless.

3. Human life is stamped by rationalisations rather than rationality. But rationality does, nevertheless, exist, and it does sometimes influence our decisions. But our conscious more often than we dare acknowledge is complicated by dimly-heard echoes of long-vanished infantile phantasies and relationships. We humans have an almost inexhaustible willingness to bluff ourselves that we are rational, objective and sensitive to reality. Freud reminds us to ask ourselves: What **is** the reality that we perceive and for which we make our rational/irrational decisions?

4. Freud's use of the unconscious was revolutionary: " .. it could have led people to open their eyes to the reality of the structure of the society they live in and hence to the wish to change it" (Fromm, 1982, p134). It did more in that it led people to question why they often refuse to open their eyes and obstinately (because fearfully) refuse to contemplate the possibilities of change.

Freud's writings have contributed to the undermining of the conservative and hierarchical values that dominated Europe in the early twentieth century. These values, alas, are not confined to Europe. Nor have they become negligible as the century comes to an end. Freud criticised, openly and by implication, the hypocrisy of sexual morality and relationships, the authoritarian and anti-scientific basis of religion, the issue of totems and taboos that hold society together by rejecting its non-members, the terrible readiness of groups to destroy other groups, and the repressive, destructive relationships that women and children had to endure - and still endure.

At the very least, Freud exposed the infantile, aggressive and unworthy emotions that direct our far from rational world. Further: "Marx, Freud and the movements of sexual liberation, in particular the women's movement, have opened up questions which should not be recited as truths or dogmas, but which should be pursued and developed. Our civilization needs it. We cannot afford to allow the vibrations of death to continue to drown out the vibrations of life" (Irigaray, 1991, p78). Or, as Freud himself wrote: **where Id was shall Ego be.**

But above all, Freud was one of the great humanists who was passionately troubled by the conflicts between human passion and human reason. He was as concerned with human freedom as we are, and as anxious as us to understand and to diminish the obstacles to freedom that originate in the psychological process. In brief: " .. the expression of freedom lies in a person's activity of thinking his own thoughts. A person who is able to think his own thoughts is free. When someone cannot think his own thoughts he is not free" (Symington, 1990, p96).

Acknowledgements.
Once again, and far more than he realises, I am grateful to Memoye Abijah Ogu, for his interest, encouragement and sympathetic criticism.

* Based upon a paper delivered at the fourth **Free Association** Conference, "Psychoanalysis and the public sphere", Polytechnic of East London, London, 2-3 November 1990.

REFERENCES.

Barclay, J R (1964) Franz Brentano and Sigmund Freud. **Journal of Existentialism, 5,** 1-36.

Bettelheim, B (1983) **Freud and man's soul.** London: Chatto & Windus.

Bruner, J (1990) **Acts of meaning.** Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press.

Edelson, M (1977) Psychoanalysis as science. **Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases, 165(1),** 1-28.

Eysenck, H J (1985) **The decline and fall of the Freudian empire.** Harmondsworth: Viking.

Fenichel, O (1982) **The psychoanalytic theory of neurosis.** London: Routledge (1945).

Fanon, F (1986) **Black skin, white masks.** London: Pluto Press.

Freud, S (1905) **Three essays on the theory of sexuality,** in Freud, A (1986) (ed) **The essentials of psychoanalysis.** Harmondsworth: Penguin Freud Library.

Freud, S (1912/1924) The dynamics of transference, in **Collected Papers - Volume 2.** London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S (1914/1924a) Observations on transference, in **Collected Papers - Volume 2.** London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S (1922/1973) **Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis.** Harmondsworth: Penguin Freud Library.

Freud, S (1925/1986) **An autobiographical study.** Harmondsworth: Penguin Freud Library.

Freud, S (1932/1985) **Group psychology and the analysis of the ego.** Harmondsworth: Penguin Freud Library.

Freud, S (1949) **An outline of psychoanalysis.** London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S (1989) **Lettres de Jeunesse.** Paris: Gallimard.

Fromm, E (1982) **Greatness and limitations of Freud's thought.** London: Abacus.

Frosh, S (1989) **Psychoanalysis and Psychology.** Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Frosh, S (1989a) Psychoanalysis and racism, Richards, B (ed) op cit.

Gellner, E (1985) **The psychoanalytic movement.** London: Paladin.

Glover, E (1956) **On the early development of mind.** London: Imago Publishing Co.

Hartmann, H (1964) **Essays on Ego Psychology.** New York: International Universities Press.

Irigaray, L (1991) No title, in Mortley, R (ed) **French philosophers in conversation.** London: Routledge.

Kovel, J (1988) **The radical spirit: Essays on psychoanalysis and society.** London: Free Association Books.

Laski, H J (1937) **Liberty in the modern State.** Harmondsworth: Pelican Books.

McGrath, W J (1986) **Freud's discovery of psychoanalysis.** Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Reich, W (1975) **The mass psychology of Fascism.** Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Richards, B (1989) Introduction, in Richards, B (ed) op cit.

Richards, B (1989) (ed) **Crises of the self: Further essays on psychoanalysis and politics.** London: Free Association Books.

Richards, B (1989a) **Images of Freud: Cultural responses to psychoanalysis.** London: Dent.

Ricoeur, P (1970) **Freud and Philosophy.** New Haven: Yale University Press.

Segal, H (1989) Psychoanalysis and freedom of thought, in Sandler, J (ed) **Dimensions of psychoanalysis.** London: Karnac Books.

Stanton, M (1990) Psychoanalysis and anarchism: Mutualist perspectives on power and desire in individual and group transference. Paper given at the fourth Free Associations Conference, "Psychoanalysis and the public sphere", Polytechnic of East London, London.

Stein, H F (1985) **The psychoanthropology of American culture.** New York: PsychoHistory Press.

Symington, N (1986) **The analytic experience.** London: Free Association Books.

Symington, N (1990) The possibility of human freedom and its transmission. **International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 71(1),** 95 - 106.

Turkle, S (1985) Comment in Hartman, G et al **Psychoanalysis: nothing sacred?,** in Bourne, B et al (eds) **Psychoanalysis.** Nottingham: The Hobo Press.

Van Wyk, J and Voice, P (1990) Afrikaans as symptom-formation. A Freudian reading of "Afrikaner" history. **Psychology in society (PINS), 14,** 17-27.

Winnicott, D W (1986) **Home is where we start from.** Harmondsworth: Pelican Books.

Winnicott, D W (1986a) Fear of breakdown, in Kohon, E (ed) **The British School of Psychoanalysis.** London: Free Association Books.

Wolfenstein, E V (1989) **The victims of democracy: Malcolm X and the Black Revolution.** London: Free Association Books.